

Cirebon Palaces in Cosmology Perspective

Ina Helena Agustina*, Astri Mutia Ekasari, Irland Fardani, Hilwati Hindersah

Department of Urban and Regional Planning

Bandung Islamic University

Bandung, Indonesia

*ina.helena@unisba.ac.id

Abstract—The palaces in Cirebon has been established since the 13th century, and still show its existence until now. Then ancient customs and traditions are still practiced until today. The palaces are located along the Java Sea coast and facing northward, which becomes the position maintained by the three palaces. The position of the tombs of the kings is located on Mount Sembung is the north part of the three palaces. There are sacred spaces scattered in various locations outside also within the palace. The sacrality of space and the findings of previous studies show that Palaces in Cirebon have the cosmology perspective within its spatial system. Thus, the aim of this paper is to describe cosmological exploration of the Cirebon palaces. The approach taken is a qualitative method from the findings of previous studies, especially those related to the space system that is formed. Then a dialogue on cosmological theory was conducted. The result of this study is the findings of cosmological results from the location and position of the palaces in Cirebon. The results are expected to give consideration to spatial policy especially for the development of the space in Cirebon.

Keywords: Cirebon palaces, cosmology, spaces

I. INTRODUCTION

Cirebon city, has three palaces, those are Kasepuhan Palace, Kanoman Palace, and Kacirebonan Palace. The three palaces still show the same existence. The actual form of existence is the existence of kings, palace buildings, primordial traditions, and the palace community such as, abdi dalem, magersari, and para wargi. Of the three palaces, there are sites of the forerunners of Cirebon City that is Witana building which located in Kanoman Palace. Witana is not only a sign of the forerunner of the Cirebon City, but it is also a sign of the spread of Islam in western Java. Islam is the majority religion that is believed by many Indonesians. The role of Sunan Gunung Jati as a member of wali songo and as the influencer of Islam as well as the King of Cirebon Kingdom is very important. Sunan Gunung Jati is the ancestor of the three Palaces in Cirebon.

Primordial traditions carried out by the three palaces are Islamic traditions spread by Sunan Gunung Jati. The traditions are Islamic esoteric traditions. Esoteric is a derivative of the word "bathin" which means "in" or "inside" [1]. It can be said that the teachings of Islam that were propagated considered as traditional Islamic teachings which did not separate the study of the soul from cosmology. Cosmology is part of empirical science which contains traditions, mystical, religious and philosophical endeavours that answer human longings a.k.a

origins [2]. Islamic cosmology is knowledge about the universe and the key to the immortality of our souls [1]. Thus, the primordial traditions must be preserved because they have a philosophical value for the self and the universe. This is a heritage value from the palaces. This value is an innovation value that belongs to the palaces in Cirebon and as well as a heritage of the palace. Similarly, the Burra Charter that has social or spiritual values The Burra Charter was first adopted in 1979 at the historic South Australian mining town of Burra given by ICOMOS [3]. ICOMOS (International Council on Monuments and Sites) is a non-governmental professional organisation formed in 1965, with headquarters in Paris. ICOMOS is primarily concerned with the philosophy, terminology, methodology and techniques of cultural heritage conservation. It is closely linked to UNESCO, particularly in its role under the World Heritage Convention 1972 as UNESCO's principal adviser on cultural matters related to World Heritage. The heritage value of the palace in Cirebon has an opportunity to get the attention from ICOMOS, thus the heritage values of Cirebon Palace need to be carried out to enrich both the cultural treasures of the palace and Indonesia.

Indonesia became a member of World Heritage Committee at the general session of the State party to the World Heritage convention on 18-20 November 2015. Indonesia has a lot of cultural heritage that must be protected as intangible cultural heritage, one of those is palaces in Cirebon. One of the intangible cultural heritage values in Cirebon palaces is sacrality of space value [4,5]. The understanding of this value is limited by certain communities, therefore it will be extinct if it is not documented. Though it is the ancestral knowledge of the Indonesian's culture, especially West Java. The intangible cultural heritage knowledge become an inheritance to next generation. Besides, it can be useful as a tourist attraction.

According to the explanation above, thus the purpose of this study is to describe the results of the exploration of the palaces in Cirebon based on cosmological perspectives. It is because these palaces still hold the primordial tradition which is the heritage value of palace and is related to Islamic cosmology.

II. METHODS

This paper used data from previous research that has been conducted since 2010 until today. The research is explorative and explains the local culture phenomenon of the palaces, as basis to dig more about the heritage value of the palace. The

approach method used is through hermeneutics approach, particularly the esoteric traditions.

Data collection was carried out from primary sources, using field surveys, interviews and observations to record activities. The respondents were chosen purposively and by snowball sampling. Respondents were chosen based on mastery of the subjects and objects studied and the recommendation results from previous respondents. Respondents were also chosen from the Kings of the palace, abdi dalem, and Cirebon City government officials.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. Sunan Gunung Jati as a Figure of Holy and Perfect Human

Sunan Gunung Jati is an ancestor from the three palaces in Cirebon. Besides Sunan Gunung Jati is a member of wali songo that spread Islam religion all over Java island. Wali or wakil are sacred people that being called as rijal al ghaib which means “the unseen people” [1]. In Sufi Treasures, they are the representatives of God that live the life with the inner consciousness and control things that are seen [1]. In Ibn Arabi view, stated that there is a perfect human, which inside them works universal grace, that is a change of a state from being blessed (marhum) into giving a blessing (Rahim) [6]. Perfect human is endowed with all the perfect “comprehensiveness”, that is an ability to combine every form inside himself, both individually and universally. Perfect human has characteristics: (1) as a servant of Allah and (2) aware that he is the Absolute himself [6]. Wali is a human that knows Allah best and as a consequence he is a form of fundamental structure, in other words wali is a perfect human [6]. A perfect human has magical perfection that is known as himmah. Himmah is a spiritual energy which is concentrated and able to conquer as his order [6].

Sunan Gunung Jati as wali sure has capacity as a holy and perfect human, proven by his ability in spreading Islam all over the western Java. His teachings tradition is still maintained until today because of his charisma. Human Perfection is ideal through spiritual tranquillity and peace from an impenetrable depth [6]. Undeniably, all humans are dreaming for spiritual tranquillity and peace, therefore through the teachings of primordial tradition in Cirebon palaces is the procedure towards spiritual tranquillity and peace that is inherited.

Sayyed Hossein Nasr, a Moslem scholar stated about the disappearance of Islamic traditional world’s view and a change of Moslem views on belief in God and belief in objective facts of knowledge [1]. Nasr said that human receive God’s guidance anytime and anywhere on various level. Islamic Traditional gives an understanding towards an access to recognize the Absolute. The access is conferred in the sense that it comes from another direction without being achieved by efforts of one own’s motivation. This is the condition where humans are in needing of wali/ wise person that give guidance from generation to generation. Palaces in Cirebon, still maintain the primordial tradition which is an Islamic traditional. There is also the place of Sunan Gunung Jati as wali. Therefore, Cirebon Palaces, have roles in maintaining the

teachings of Islamic traditional from generation to generation, which according to Seyyed Hossein Nasr view it is important because the world has developed secular ideas. Whereas, Islamic traditional leads to the Khaliq guidance, so it is not unreasonable, but instead there is truth that is guided by God.

B. Cosmological Space of Cirebon Palaces

Cosmology is a unique science because the universe is also unique. As far as is known, there is no other universe [2]. God created the universe, as is mentioned in hadits, “to be recognized”. Among all the Gods creatures, only human that has the ability to discover how big and the greatness and glory of God perfectly. According to Islamic Traditional views, someone cannot separate the study of the soul from cosmology [1]. At one time the King was the holder of the highest governmental authority and played a very central role. The King has magical and sacred character [4,5,7]. A palace is in charge of a nagari / village which became his territory [7]. In Islamic times the cosmic spatial structure divided its territory into kutanagara, nagaraagung, mancanagara, pesisir, and nagrisabrang [4,5,7,8]. The King is the representative of God back in the Islamic times. As well as what happened in Islamic Kingdom in Cirebon, besides that the King is a wali, so the King as a holy and perfect human-being attached to the Kingdom in Cirebon. The space in palace also became sacred, because it was a place for holy person.

The space of the palace is very concerned to the harmony between the universe and human’s life, this is shown by the nature symbols such as mega mendung (clouds), flowers, trees symbol in the palace [5]. The building of Kasepuhan Palace shows the gajah nguling (elephant’s trunk) room, therefore the front room is not parallel with the back room. The shape of the space is understood so that human can skimp on their lives. Moreover, there is a message that human must prepare for the death. This message is marked by the Cirebon Palaces which their building is facing north, in northern part, there is Astana/tomb (can be seen in Figure1).



Fig. 1. The Cirebon palaces which their building is facing north, in northern part, there is Astana/tomb.

Even there is a myth on Karang getas street area became a symbol the fading of human abilities and this road is still called Karanggetas street until now (See Figure 2).

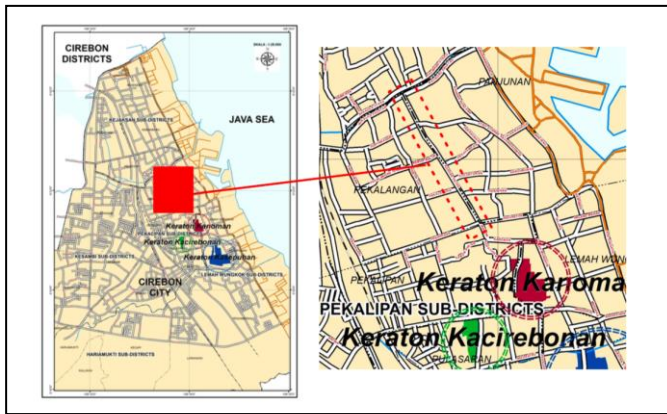


Fig. 2. Karang getas street area became a symbol the fading of human abilities and this road is still called Karanggetas street until now.

According to the explanation of spatial cosmology in Cirebon Palaces, there are some messages that is sent to the human, i.e.:

- Life is only for God, humans have to believe that life itself is God's will, then it is proper for humans to trust God. Because as great as any human will still disappear.
- Life must be in harmony with nature, humans as cosmic micro elements become an integral part of the universe.
- Life must be what it is, life does not need to be excessive but live as what it is.
- Life must be prepared for death, all humans will be dead and this cannot be avoided, then humans should prepare to die.

Cultural heritage that is owned by the palaces in Cirebon is something that is intangible and that can be used as tourism assets. Moreover, the opportunity for Indonesia to become a member of the World Heritage Committee is an opportunity to elevate the values contained in Cirebon Palaces as world heritage. Now it is the time for Cirebon palaces to be raised into the world level because of the local knowledge it has is very useful for the progress of the nation and the ummat. Besides, it can be used as a lesson for other people and the nation's next generation.

IV. CONCLUSION

According to the explanation above, there are several things that can be concluded, namely that the Cirebon Palaces are the palace that still maintain the Islamic Traditional. Islamic Traditional is an understanding which almost closed by the secularism view. Though this Islamic Traditional is worth defending because of the inherent belief in life in God Almighty. The existence of Sunan Gunung Jati in the Cirebon palaces became a figure that continues to exist with primordial traditions that are still run by the palaces. Cosmology of the palaces has a meaning to human life, that is: (1) Life for God, (2) Life must be in harmony with nature, (3) Life must be what it is, (4) Life must sustain death. With all the values it contains, it is the time for the Cirebon palaces to be submitted for Indonesia World Heritage.

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