



From Sacred Sanctuary to Profane Cubicle: Transformation of the Krobongan in the Javanese House

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Abstract. Most of the literature on Javanese architecture is about tectonics, and very little is available about its origin and development. The paper tries to remedy this by offering an approach to the problem, namely tracing the earliest forces that drive the birth of the Javanese house. The paper begins with the introduction of rice cultivation in Java which produced the granary for harvest storage, and the division of the community into two phratries, the wife-giver, and the wife-receiver. The condition resulted in gendered living spaces, the basic paradigm of the Javanese house. Focusing on the feminine space, which was more complex, as it combines the worship of the rice goddess and domestic living activities, the paper, then traces its development from a family shrine to a countrywide royal dynastic temple later. However, modern lifestyles and universal religions disrupt its further evolution. By studying this history, the paper suggests a deeper understanding of the Javanese spatial attitude, and considering that this aspect is more durable, it would contribute to better architectural practice in serving the largest group of the population in Indonesia.

Keywords: Javanese House, Origin, Development, Demise, Spatial Attitude.

1 Introduction

1.1 Javanese Houses as Places of Worship and Dwelling

My late great-grandmother used to walk around the main building of our house holding a censer with burning incense every Thursday evening. To us, kids, in the early 1960's this was amusing, - and a bit frightening – as she used to tell us that this was done to appease the spirits (*danyang*) protecting our home.

Only much later did I realize that a Javanese house was first a shrine, a place of worship, and human residence second only. And this condition has roots deep in the past. When Java interacts with other cultures, from India, China, Islam, European colonialism, and lastly, global technology-based modern lifestyle; she exchanges ideas and absorbs new patterns molded into the old core.

So, it happens that the Javanese house is adapting and reacting to new influences, until in the present century, a house is just a residence for humans only. Gods, deities, and spirits have been shoved out to another building.

1.2 Rice, Lineages, House

It all began when newcomers from mainland Southeast Asia – in many waves – entered the Nusantara archipelago, and introduced rice cultivation. Rice was already the staple food for these people and soon replaced earlier tuber, roots, and sago consumed by the earlier hunter-gatherer people.

But, evidence of intensive wet rice cultivation (*sawah*) found only after 500 BC, as a result of Austronesian people finding fertile volcanic landscapes and plenty of water for irrigation is available (Bellwood 2011: 98) [1]. The geography and climate of Java (and Bali and a couple of other spots in Sumatera, Kalimantan, and Sulawesi) fits well with *sawah* cultivation. The plentiful harvests supported population growth, which gave rise to polity building and external trade. But, for now, we concentrate on the importance of rice as proof of wealth and, thus, a status symbol. More importantly, veneration of a rice deity.

The Javanese dependency on rice as the staple food made them very careful with its cultivation. Every step is taken care of, and to ensure the process and avoid unpredictable natural forces, they plead with the owner, the ruler of rice through worship and offerings. She is *Dewi Sri*.

Another aspect the Javanese accepted from the Austronesian is the bilateral lineage, in which both phratries own the descendants together. A person's descent is traced through both the male and female lines (Blust 1994: 32) [2]. This condition is rooted in the fact that men and women typically had different roles and responsibilities. Men were often involved in external activities such as farming, fishing, and trading, while women were usually responsible for household tasks and child-rearing. These roles influenced the arrangement of living spaces, resulting in separate living quarters for men and women (see Fig. 1).

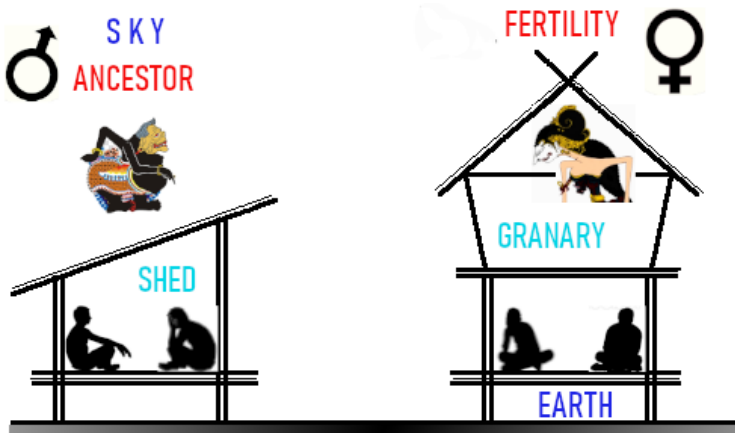


Fig. 1. Gendered living spaces in Javanese culture [Source: Author]

As food production and preparation traditionally was women's task, the rice deity they worshipped was also of the same gender and placed inside the granary, which was their 'territory', detached from the men's house. While under the storage was a platform used for sleeping for women, children, and girls as guardians of the rice deity.

In Java, the separation was horizontal, the women and storage turned into fully closed *omah* at the rear and the men stayed in an open pavilion at the front, the *pendopo*. Each housed both the people and place of worship and ceremonies.

The most sacred part is the *senthong tengah* (central room) or *krobongan* (that which is covered), or more candidly, *pasrén* (where the rice deity, *Dewi Sri* resides). This is where the deity is venerated by the womenfolk, and where the bride and the groom meet at the wedding ceremony. On the other hand, the *pendopo* is used to attend to guests and men enact reverence to the ancestors through a *wayang* (leather puppet) performance (Rassers 1959: 245-247) [3].

This two-part house formed the nucleus of the Javanese traditional house. For simpler folks, the two parts are compacted under one roof (*kampung* style), the distinction is shown by a slight rise of the floor of the rear part, the *senthong*, from the front part, the *jogan* or *jrambah*. Three *senthongs* formed the closed part of the house, with the one at the center, *senthong tengah* is dedicated to the deity, Sri, and not approachable by menfolk. One use to keep rice, along with family heirlooms and treasures, and the other for the house owner. Other family members sleep on *ambèn* (raised platform), in the *jogan* space, which is also used for other daily activities.

For aristocrats and royalties, the separation manifested into two different buildings, the closed *omah mburi* (house at the rear) and the open pavilion, the *omah ngarep* (house at the front) or *pendopo*. Between the two, usually also another building, the *peringgitan*, where the wayang ensemble play. Inside the *omah mburi*, (Rassers 1959: 249) [3] which is similar to the simple ones but without *ambèns*, are the usual three rooms, with the central one, the *senthong tengah*, lavishly decorated.

In a traditional Javanese house, other functions are housed in different buildings around the main building. Until the last century, virtually every Javanese house centered on this configuration. Each has its distinct features, activities, and guardian spirits. Of course, it's much simpler in a simple peasant's house, while aristocratic mansions and ruler's palaces would be much more elaborate.

However, entering the new century, with the introduction of a global urban lifestyle and adoption of world religions, the old patterns wearied and nowadays survive only in particular circles. Common folks renovated their houses, adopting modern urban space organizations and disposing of the old patterns following world religions' teachings that forbid worshipping other than their one god. Even preserved aristocratic mansions retain their buildings but cleanse the *senthong tengah*. Only in a handful of palaces, is the room still maintained and preserved, but to see an original *krobongan*, we must go into the museum.

2 Methodology

In his studies, Rassers concludes that the Javanese before Indian influence had a two-fold classification system, based on a double unilineal kinship system (Rassers 1959: 278) [3]. In systems of double unilineal descent, society recognizes both the patrilineage and the matrilineage but assigns to each a different set of expectations. This opinion is reinforced by Pigeaud: “*The Javanese conception of duality, by division into equal moieties, no doubt was an important factor ...*” (Pigeaud 1962:146) [4].

In spatial arrangement, this classification system which is based on the fundamental duality idea manifests in the appearance of opposition between up-down, left-right, and front-back which are based on the position of the human body determining the importance, restrictions, and uses of each area. Later, developed also distinctions between parent-child, man-woman, sacred-profane and so on. Of course, each society, culture, and place have its own privilege in its preferences, priorities and manifestations.

For rice consuming societies with double unilateral descent, the Javanese, it is apparent in the male-female division of space. Women was more concerned with the gathering, storage, and processing food for the whole family, while man do the hunting of (big) animals and defense of their territory against hostile neighbours.

This approach will be used to trace the origins and development of Javanese houses from the beginning until now using comparative data from the literature and field observations that I have done. The most important materials are the writings of Godard Aren Johannes Hazeu (1922) [14], and Willem Huibert Rassers (1959) [3] from the anthropological and ethnographic side plus studies of architectural history by Koji Sato (1991) [5], and Revianto Budi Santosa (1997) [6].

The terms *pasarean* (literally, sleeping place), *senthong* (room) and *krobongan* (that which is shrouded) are sometimes used indiscriminately as they usually refer to the same object, at least in this discussion. In this discussion, Java is considered as part of the WMP (Western Malayo-Polynesian) branch of the Austronesian culture complex, following Robert Andrew Blust (2022) [7] and Peter Bellwood (2011) [1].

3 Results and Discussions

3.1 Of Rice and Granaries

Right now, rice is the staple food for the Javanese, no, the FAO writes that over 50 percent of the world population depends on rice (<https://www.fao.org/>). Rice cultivation began around 8000 BC in the lower and middle Yangzi River; and later spread to the north and south after 4000 BC. The Austronesians or Austro-Asiatic people brought rice cultivation to the archipelago and Java between 1500-500 BC (Gutaker 2020: 13) [8].

The island of Java has a humid tropical climate and lies under monsoon wind that regulates the season into wet and dry. Java is also highly volcanic resulting in highly fertile soil on robust topography. This condition proved ideal for rice cultivation, dry (*ladang*) and wet (*sawah*). Rice is superior to earlier food supplies such as tubers, yam,

and sago, which are lower in calories and stored only for months, while dried rice can hold out for even two years. An abundance of food drove population and wealth, and in its turn, gave birth to polities, which later coalesced into kingdoms.

Farming and preparing food are the continuation of the main activities of women, while men rely more on hunting as their main activity (Lee 1968) [9]. Therefore, all rice processing is carried out by women, starting from planting, weeding, harvesting, drying, storing rice, then pounding it into rice until cooking it into ready-to-eat rice. It's only natural to worship its 'ruler', which manifested in a goddess or female deity. She is known as 'the rice mother', locally called *mbok Sri* in Java, *pohaci* in West Java, *nini pantun* in Bali, etc.

In order to keep the content dry, the place where the rice is stored must be far from the ground, which is (usually) moist, so it is necessary to make a raised floor, in addition to being covered with a roof to avoid rainwater. This stilted building is where the women (and their children) live.

Koji Sato has shown that the preservation and storage of rice is the origin of the house in peasant society. The storage of rice to make it last longer and avoid damage, both by animals and weather, is done by drying and storing under the roof, namely *lumbung* (*leuit*, *sopo*, *geneng*). Sato (1991 [5]) The rice storage is 'guarded' entirely by women. They are the ones who process the rice during the day and guard it at night. Women live, and sleep, in the *lumbung*, a special building erected with special conditions, while men live (and sleep) in detached makeshift buildings.

In the wet rice farming (*sawah*) community, ownership is more prominent, so that the house is used only for the nuclear family, unlike dry field (*ladang*) farmers, who live communally. However, there is still a distinction between the house of the wife-receiver clan and the wife-giver clan (giver). The nuclear family house consists of two buildings, one for men (and unmarried youths), and the other for women, and girls, with their minor children. This gendered space evolved from an original system reckoning with both patrilineal and matrilineal kinship (Rassers 1959 p. 278) [3].

Rice is divided to *padi* or *pari* (dried rice), which is still with the stalk, and *beras*, which is has been pounded, separated from the stalk and unhusked, ready to be cooked into *nasi* (cooked rice). *Padi* is stored in the *lumbung*, while *beras* is kept in the women's house, in the *dapur*, (*pawon* or kitchen), as the *tungku* (stove) is always in the women's house. The place where *beras* is stored, the *pedaringan* (Javanese) or *goah* (Sundanese) remains very special; men are strictly not allowed to approach or open this container or cubicle.

In the sketch below (see Fig. 2 and Fig. 3) we can see the room usage of a *lumbung*. The upper floor is used to store harvested rice for later use. At the top of the room is the room for the Goddess of Rice, who is shown symbolically, equipped with a serving dish. The lower part of the *lumbung* is covered with planks, becoming the floor of the platform above the stiffening beams of the *lumbung*'s legs, and is used as a place for women to sleep as the goddess's attendants and/ or a meeting place for the local community.

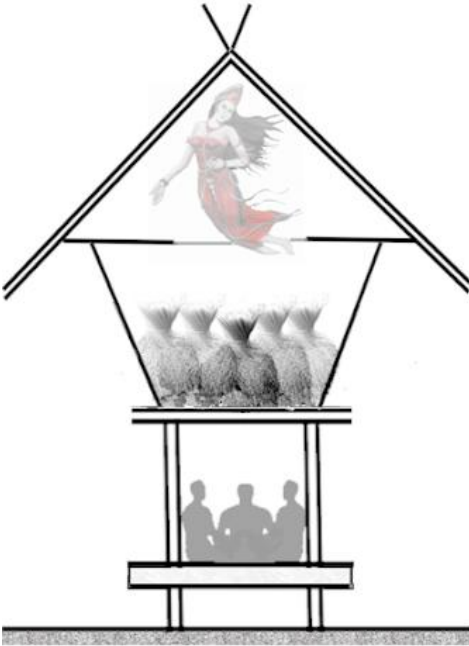


Fig. 2. Sketch for a *lumbung* (rice granary), its partition, and usage. [Source: Author]

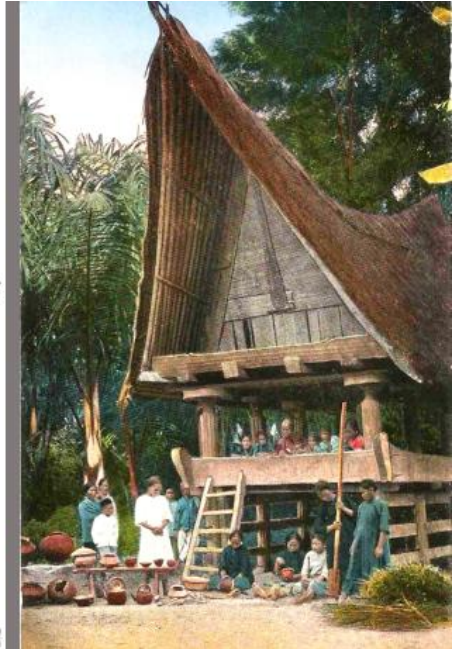


Fig. 3. *Sopo*, the rice granary of the Toba Batak people. Notice that only women and children in and around it. The photograph was taken in the early 20th century. [Source: Coll.Tropenmuseum]

While the granary is maintained and used by women, the men sleep in another simpler unwallled pavilion, perhaps just a platform protected by a lean-to roof. It seems that later, probably when *sawah*, wet-rice cultivation, expands, the more demanding task of preparing the soil and building irrigation canals, calls for support from, not to say more appropriate, for the men's responsibility. The influence of masculine political power and Indic religion, they come to the fore and build a better, more permanent, pavilion for themselves.

3.2 Coupled Spaces

Remnants of this kind of building couple could be found in Trusmi, near Cirebon, and north Lombok, in villages Segenter, Bayan, and Senaru, aside from some bas-relief stone carvings from Majapahit era in the collection of National Museum, Jakarta.

In Trusmi, there is a mausoleum from ca. 15th century, of Ki Buyut Trusmi. He had eight adherents whose descendants still guard the legacy, each had a *bale gede* in the village. One is left relatively intact, that is, Ki Warlan's, about 100 meters to its west. The compound consists of a wooden platform with six wooden posts; and a small enclosed pavilion in its front. Both are indoors now (see Fig. 4 and Fig. 5).



Fig. 4. The *bale gede* inside Ki Warlan's house in Trusmi. On the left is the now roofless wooden platform with the six original posts. The most venerated post is dressed with white cloth, where the heirloom krisses hung. [Source: Author]

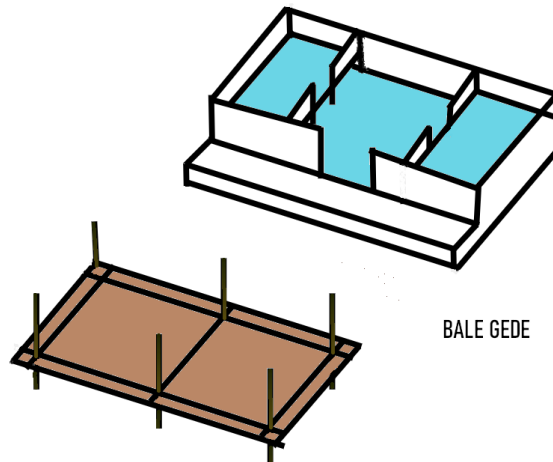


Fig. 5. The schematic diagram of the *bale gede* in Trusmi, shows women's pavilion in blue and its counterpart, the male platform, in brown. [Source: Author]

The open (now roofless) pavilion is clearly masculine, with its heirloom hanging on one of the posts, and guests are allowed to sit on it. But its counterpart is entirely enclosed with wooden panels as its frontage and woven bamboo strips around the other three sides. Nobody can enter it without special permission.

One other example of this space pairing can be seen in North Lombok, in the Senger, Senaru, and Bayan villages (see Fig. 6).



Fig. 6. The *berugaq* and the *bale* in Segenter Village, from Lombok. Inside the *bale* is the *inan bale* (mother of the house) a closed raised floor at the center, used as a sleeping place for virgins of the house, and family heirlooms. [Source: Author]

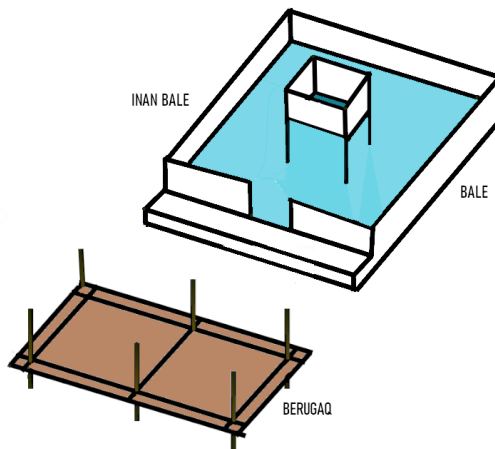


Fig. 7. Outline of the pairing of *bale* and *berugaq*, with the *inan bale* (mother of the house) at the *bale*'s center. The color blue represents the women's area, fully enclosed with only one opening at the front, the entrance. *Berugaq* in brown, is without walls, sometimes a woven bamboo screen is set at the south side. [Source: Author]

The open pavilion, the *berugaq* or *sakanem* is open on all sides, a partial partition sometimes installed at its south side. This part is used as men's sleeping area, and social gathering or rituals. While the *bale*, is built on a stone platform and closed on all sides, except one door facing the *berugaq*. In its center is a small wooden structure, also closed with only one opening, named *inan bale* (mother of the house) used as sleeping place for virgins and to keep family heirlooms. It's obviously a remnant of the *geneng* or granary in the past (see Fig. 7).

The Bali Aga, the indigenous Balinese who live in the northern mountainous area, the whole nuclear family lives under one roof, on elevated wooden floor. The interior is divided into male and female spaces, separated by a common space on a platform, the *trojogan*, directly opposite the entrance. This is where guests are seated, while the host sits at the other platform next to the walled *slatan kaja*, the sleeping room of the head of the house. At the other side is the *slatan kelod*, another room where the women sleep. In front of it is the hearth, where the women prepare meals for the family (Tjahjono 1998 38-39) [10]. So, the dual-gender opposition is there, albeit inside one building (see Fig. 8).

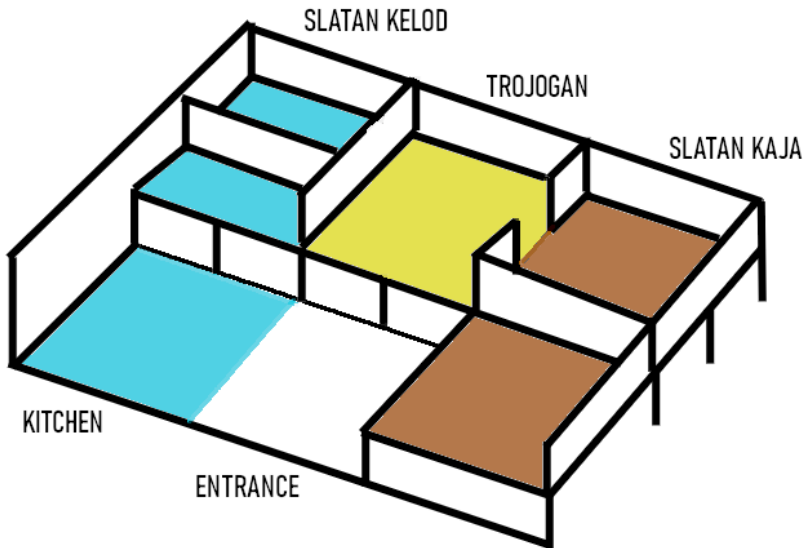


Fig. 8. Schematic plan of a Bali Aga house [Source: Tjahjono]

The lowland Bali is developed further. Most probably caused by massive adherence to Indian influences after the fall of Majapahit in the 15th century. In this period, the Bali middle age (*Bali Pertengahan*), spiritual leaders, and rulers fostered the synthesis of Indian religion and indigenous belief into a distinctive Hindu-Bali amalgamation (*Tri Hita Karana*) (Ardika cs. 2018 p.327-329) [11]. The house is a compound of several separate buildings inside an encircling masonry wall.

The *sanggah* (family shrine) is situated at the most revered corner, the *kaja-kangin* direction, while the closed building, *bale meten*, where the head of the house next to it. At the opposite area, the downhill *kelod*, is the *bale gede* used for daytime activities, such as carving for men and weaving for women. Its back is exclusively used by women, consists of the kitchen (*paon*) and lumbung (*jineng*). The two areas are separated by open space, the *natah* as the center of the compound with other pavilions. And the *bale sakanem* or *bake dauh*, is somewhere between, used for socializing, and young men's sleeping place (see Fig. 9).

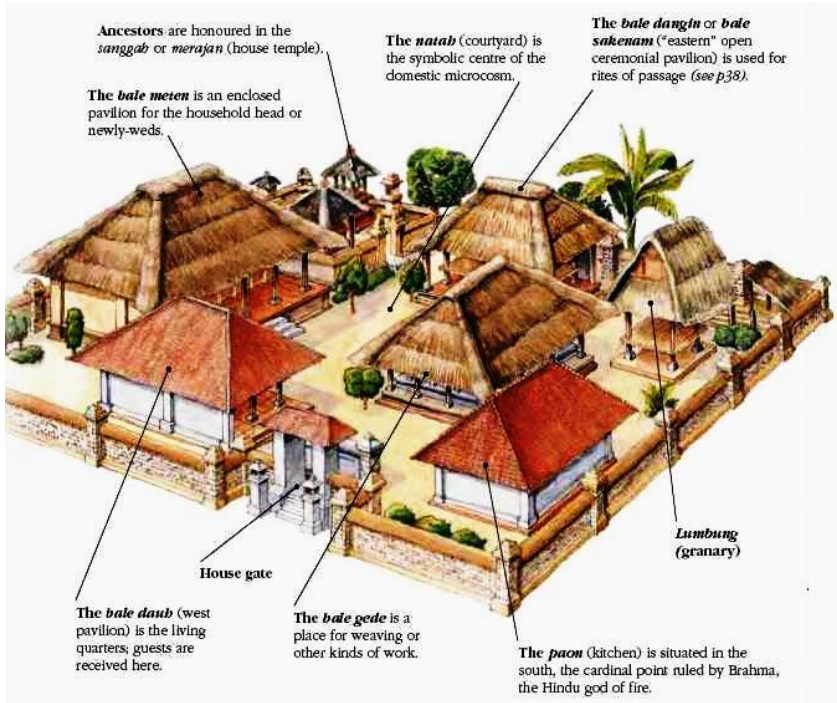


Fig. 9. Layout of a commoner's house in Bali [Source: Tjahjono]

3.3 The House of the Javanese

The Javanese developed a different approach to their paired house arrangement. This seemed to happen after the Indian culture penetrated, adopted first by royalties and the aristocrats. The house was divided into *omah* for women and open *pendapa* for men. The name for the masculine front hall is derived from a similar building in North Indian architecture, the Sanskrit *mandapa*, temple vestibule. Alas, we do not have positive proof for this, as wooden buildings tend to decay rapidly without proper maintenance (see Fig. 10).

But we can still find similar pattern arrangement in simpler, commoner's houses, albeit in a compacted version. An *omah*, a commoner's house usually consists of a single-roofed building, enclosed in its four sides, except for the main entrance at the front side and a smaller door at the rear left side, allowing women traffic to the kitchen at the back or a separate quarter.



Fig. 10. A simple commoner's house in Java. One building on a low compacted soil platform, and a simple *kampung* style roof. [Source: Muqoffa]

Under the roof, the interior space is divided into two parts, a third rear part is the women's domain, compartmented into three parts, with the one in the center is dedicated to the rice deity, *mBok Sri* or *Dewi Sri*. The left side (*senhong kiwa*) are used to store foodstuffs and family treasures, while the right one is for the head of the house (see Fig. 11).

The rest is men's or family space. Respected guests are received in front of the *senhong tengah*, under the four main pillars of the house. On both sides, there are elevated platforms (*ambèn*) for doing daily activities in the day and for family members to sleep at night.

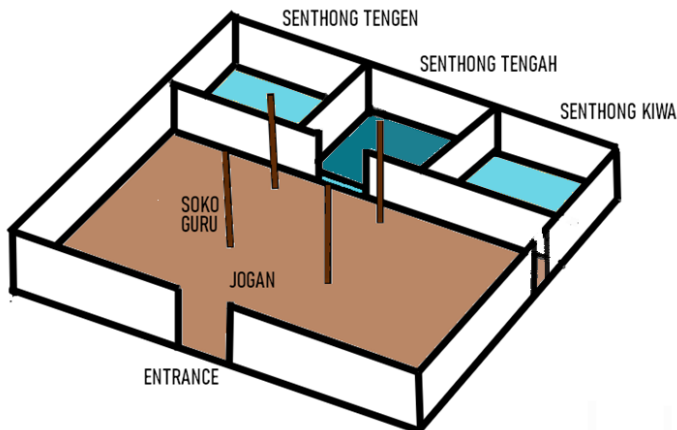


Fig. 11. Schematic plan showing area separation between masculine common, in brown, and feminine, in blue. The darker central chamber is sacred to the rice deity. It is fully furnished and decorated. [Source: Author]

Senthong tengah is the most sacred and limited access, that is why it is decorated with a carved wooden partition (*gebyok*) at its front. Usually, a curtain is draped over its entrance. Inside the room is a bed with mattress and pillows beautifully arranged, complete with toiletries (see Fig. 13). At the front of the bed is a pair of dolls in Javanese custom, representing Sri her partner, *Sedana*. Only women enter the room to offer incense on certain days, and maintain the room.

A bride receives her groom in front of this room, and both do the wedding rituals there, witnessed by the deities, parents, family members, and honored guests. Marriage is the most important initiation ritual, aside from birth and death, and in Java, the bride-receiver goes to the bride-giver's place to formalize the wedding.

In an aristocrat's house, the two regions are formally separated into two buildings, in line with the older pattern, but far more elegant. The back part, the *dalem* (court language for *omah*, house) *ageng* (=great) is of the same disposition as the simpler one, but much bigger and grander. The vast space is virtually empty as it is not to be used for mundane affairs, and is considered as a family sanctuary, where rituals, ancestor veneration, and important ceremonies enacted.

The most sacred and important part is the *senthong tengah*, a room with a huge lavishly decorated bed fully furnished with paraphernalia fitting royalty. At this level, the cella symbolism is not just for the rice goddess, but represents the ancestors, the main-spring of all of us. They propagated the family, and protect the family, and ensure the family's prosperity, all the time. It is a shrine (see Fig. 12).

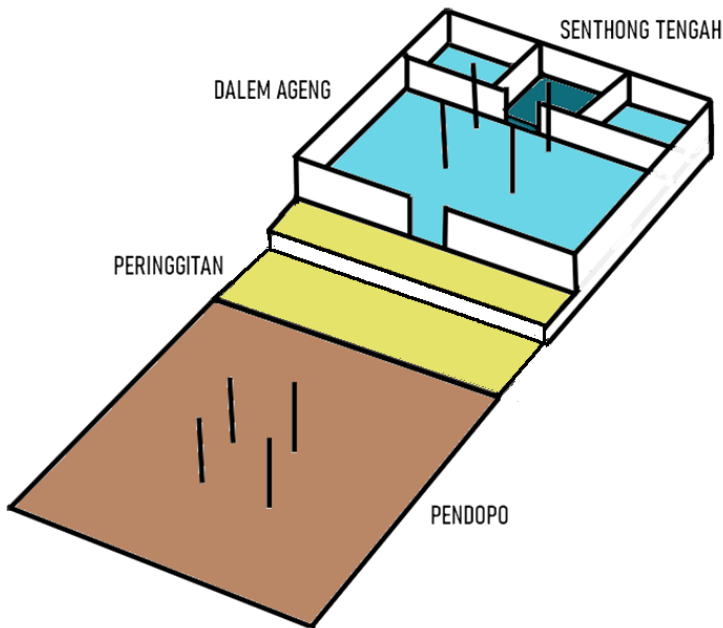


Fig. 12. Simplified Map of A Javanese Aristocrat's House [Source: Santosa]



Fig. 13. The interior of *dalem ageng* with the *senthong tengah*. Notice the ornate bed under the lamp inside. Its frontage, is also richly decorated with carved wooden *gebyok*, while the two side *senthongs* are practically plain. [Source: Sato]

Both buildings have similar size, and the same imposing *joglo* style roof, but while the *dalem ageng* is encircled with walls, and its floor a bit higher, its partner, the *pendopo* is open on all sides. The masculine atmosphere is strong in the *pendopo*, mengather there to socialize and discuss community matters.

Between the two is another structure, the *peringgitan* which formed the *dalem ageng*'s porch, where the head of the house usually welcomes and entertains guests. More important is the fact that the *peringgitan* is the place for wayang play, after all, *ringgit* is the court language for wayang. When the dalang and his ensemble enact the wayang play, they face toward the *dalem ageng*, so the ancestors could attend the ritual, along with the men at the *pendopo*, behind the *dalang* and the screen. The women folk watch the wayang from the other side, their side, the *dalem ageng*.

In these houses, the commoners' and the aristocrats', the *senthong tengah* or *krobongan* is closely connected with woman, sky, and agriculture and regarded as being united in marriage with the *pendopo*, which is associated with man, earth, and hunting (Rassers 1959:248, 270) [3]. However, in the royal palace, things get heightened considerably.

The palace or *keraton* in Java is the pinnacle of Javanese domestic architecture. As a royal palace, it accommodates a large number of people and is much more elaborate than the previous examples. The palace complex consists of several layers, from the outermost, the *alun-alun* (palace squares) on the north and south sides, down to the core, the royal residence, the *kedhaton* courtyard which extends from west to east in the center.



Fig. 14. Gedhong Prabayeksa (left) and Bangsal Kencana (right) in the innermost court of Keraton Ngayogyakarta Hadiningrat (Yogyakarta). [Source: Googlemaps]

The centerpiece of this courtyard in the palace is a pair of buildings: Gedhong Prabayeksa and in front of it, Bangsal Kencana. This ward is completely open without walls, used as an audience hall and theatrical stage, the place for expressing power (Santosa 1997: 46) [6](see Fig. 14). With the same function as the *pendopo*, the building is predominantly male.

Gedhong Prabayeksa at the back is completely enclosed by wooden-planks wall (*gebyog*), resembling *omah mburi* or the back part of a commoner's house. But the similarity ends here (see Fig. 15). This closed building is divided into two parts, front and rear with a *pasarean-tengah* on each half. The western half, Kedaton Kilen, faces south with its counterpart Bangsal Sekar Kedhaton, as is usual in a Javanese house orientation. But the other half, Dalem Prabayeksa, stands toward the east, coupled with Bangsal Kencana. There is one *pasarean-tengah* with a shrouded bed (*krobongan*) on both sides, in front of each is placed a lamp, lighted with fire originating from the ancestral land of the royalties. Naturally, this building is exclusively women's domain. Only women could enter this building, caring for the sacred *pusakas*, maintain the house, or preparing occasions.

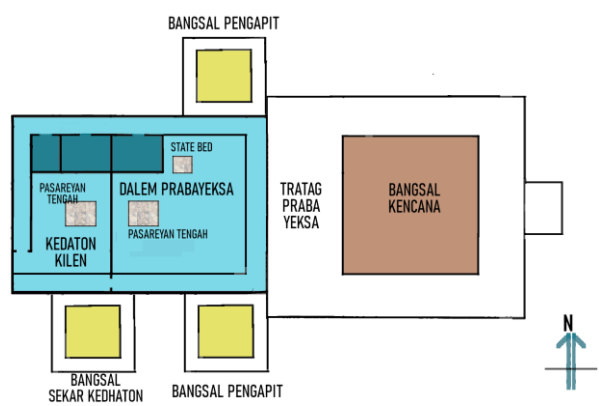


Fig. 15. Schematic plan of the original Dalem Prabayeksa [Source: Yulianto]



Fig. 16. Pasareyan Tengah inside the Dalem Prabayeksa [Source: Raka Putra Humardani]

In former times, Dalem Prabayeksa was the place where the first Sultan Hamengku Buwana slept on a bed close to the *pasarean Tengah* (see Fig. 16). But later rulers used the northern Bangsal Pengapit, which was rebuilt in the reign of the second Sultan, and named Gedong Jene (Yellow Mansion) (Adam 1922) [12].

But the most important thing that makes *kedaton* different is the fact that Dalem Prabayeksa is not only the place where Dewi Sri resides, but the building is primarily a dynastic temple enshrining the ruling family's lineage. [Santosa 48], the place where the sacred heirlooms (*pusaka*) are kept and revered with annual rituals, and more than that, memorabilias and pictures of former Sultans. *Prabayeksa* is the womb of the *kraton*, even the axis mundi of the realm [Behrens]. It embodies the Sultan's regnal name, Hamengku Buwana (ruler of the world) in Yogyakarta or Paku Buwana (nail of the world) in Surakarta.

3.4 Present State

We have explored the origins and development to the peak of sophistication of Javanese houses in the palace. The palace taken as an example is the last palace built in Java, the Yogyakarta Palace, in 1755 by it's first Sultan.

Starting from a storage place for agricultural products, it then developed into a place to worship a fertility deity, which is the main force of the community building. It continued with the consolidation of the kingdom into the ruler's residence and became the royal ancestral shrine. But, entering the modern era, around middle of the last century, the role and function of the kingdom were abolished, and the life of the palace declined

drastically, so that maintenance was mostly neglected. The Surakarta palace even experienced a severe fire in 1985, although it was rebuilt, however, the sacredness has declined considerably.

Modern urbanization and its lifestyle forced people to think and act utilitarian, family structure shrinks to just parents and one or two children, living space is reduced, and houses are built with a functional approach. Every inch of space is accounted for. There is no longer space for rituals or ceremonies inside the house. The development and spread of universal religions made people think that all the old beliefs and rituals could no longer be maintained. Ceremonies and the mystic practices that surround them are considered superstitious and must be abandoned.

Research in Kotagede, the capital and first palace of Mataram dynasty, showed that the old *pendopo* and *dalem* have been adapted to modern living, even divided into two separate residences, with the space between becoming a public street (Ismudiyanto 1986) [13]. In addition, the development and spread of universal religions made people think that all the old beliefs and rituals could no longer be maintained. Ceremonies and the mystic practices that surround them are considered superstitious and must be abandoned. Traditional beliefs changed to Islam after the “Reislamization” of 1910. The *senhong tengah* in the *dalem* changed physically and functionally, it is used for other functions, or not used at all (Ismudiyanto 1986) [13].

The aristocracy has lost much of its significance and fortune in modern times, their once-dependent income from the palace having been mostly cut off. Many mansions have been sold to (newly) rich businessmen and government officials. Even in surviving aristocrat's mansions, it is rare to find a preserved and intact *pasarean tengah*. We can find them only in museums and rich antique collectors (see Fig. 17).



Fig. 17. An effort to preserve the tradition was found in a Javanese restaurant. In the dining room, the owner retains a corner as a shrine – *pasareyan-tengah*, dedicated to the Yogyakarta Dynasty. [Source: Author]

4 Conclusions and Sugestions

Up to now, most discussions on Javanese house focused on its formal appearance and symbolism. Most take it for granted that those were formulated once sometime in the past and survived intact until now, and apply the term traditional architecture as a frozen legacy.

In this paper we try to see Javanese house from a different viewpoint; we try to understand the ‘why’ question, its origin, and development. We begin with the basic condition that gave birth to the initial shelter, to the primary sustenance of their life, food, and soon to its personification, the goddess of fertility to ensure the continuing, and abundance of its product, rice. This feminine side stood vis-à-vis the male-dominated ancestor worship in two closely related buildings. The feminine house, instead, is fully enclosed, dark, domestic, secretive, the *omah*; while the other completely open shelter without walls, the public, social, *pendapa*.

The pattern continues to sophisticate in aristocrats’ mansions, the *dalems*, and ultimately in the royal palaces, the *Gedhong Prabayeksa* in Yogyakarta, and *Dalem Ageng Prabasuyasa* in Surakarta. However, in these palaces, the *pasarean-tengah* has been elevated to not just the feminine fertility deity, but, incorporates the ancestor of the ruling dynasty, which was always kings, thus masculine in ambiance. The dalem was elevated into the center of the world, mirroring the regnal titles.

Alas, the modern progress in nationalistic politics, lifestyle, and universal religion’s attitude, brought the old customs down. *Pasaren-tengah* with its *krobongan* can not withstand the onslaught and nowadays become museum or collector’s item. Even, knowledge on this subject has faded, only a handful of academicians and researchers still have an interest in it.

Yet *omah* and *pendapa* hold fragments of the development of culture, particularly architecture, which is a discipline that studies and discusses the relationship between humans as members of a particular society and their living space. Through the study of this heritage, we can better understand the Javanese spatial attitude towards their living space and the world (especially the ‘inner world’).

Spatial attitude changes much slower than form manifestation. Through the study of these relics, it may be possible to recognize patterns that will be very useful for the practice of architects. Research in this direction needs to be expanded and deepened, as this paper only touches the surface, but may be a foothold for further research.

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