

Construcion of the Spatial Concept of Art and Culture in Keraton Kacirebonan, Indonesia

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Abstract—Art is an integral part in the spread of Islamic religion in the past. Keraton Kacirebonan as one of the three Keratons in Cirebon, was initially built with the purpose of spreading Islam in Java island. Until now, art and cultural activities remain intact in Keraton Kacirebonan. It has a studio specifically designed for this purpose namely Sanggar Tari Topeng Gaya Slangit as tari topeng or traditional mask dance itself conveys the meaning of life. The purpose of this paper is to construct the spatial concept of art and culture in Keraton Kacirebonan. The method applied in this paper is a theoretical dialogue between themes derived from inductive reasoning and viewed from the perspective of humanism and the Sundanese identity of Keraton Kacirebonan. The result of this paper deals with a local wisdom concerning values of life that need to be preserved, mainly those that are being eroded by modernity in conjunction with the globalization agenda.

Keywords—art-cultural space; humanism; Keraton Kacirebonan

I. INTRODUCTION

There are 3 Keratons located in Cirebon namely Keraton Kanoman, Keraton Kacirebonan and Keraton Kasepuhan. This division of Keraton into 3 separated locations was ordered after the death of Prince Girilaya in the year 1667. The three remain in existence in the present time [1]. Keraton Kacirebonan was once part of Keraton Kanoman [1]. The separation occurred in 1797 under the reign of Prince Anom Abu Soleh and prince Anom Muhammad Khaeruddin. Yet, the ruling Dutch favored Prince Anom Abu Soleh as the Sultan of Keraton Kanoman and considered Prince Anom Khaeruddin as an insurgent [2]. Sultan Khaeruddin ruled from Sunyaragi and refused the subsidy offered by the Dutch. But after he died, Empress Resminingpuri took what the Dutch offered and used it to build Keraton Kacirebonan in 1814 [2]. Keraton Kacirebonan, located on Jalan Pulasaren is the smallest in size compared to the other two. It features in appearance more of a residence than a Keraton. Nonetheless, it preserves its history well, its historical relics and traditions alike. In terms of art and cultural activities, it surpasses the other two Keratons with the existence of Sanggar Seni Sekar Pandan that preserves the art of Tari Topeng Slangit.

From an interview carried out in 2018, it is understood that when Cirebon was the center of the spread of Islam, Sultan

Cirebon who was also a member of Wali Sanga and held the title Sunan Gunung Jati, together with Sunan Kalijaga took advantage of using the mask dance and other means of cultural performances such as Wayang Kulit and Gamelan as a form of preaching and to expedite the spread of Islam. Art wasn't meant for the sake of art itself, but as a means of teaching the religion and practical purposes [3]. Such statement supports the notion that the art of mask dance which uniquely belongs to Cirebon and its people is not merely an expression of art but also has its own meaning from its existence. Cultural space is a medium of transformation in order to deliver what lies behind the art. Hence, Keraton Kacirebonan is an epitome of preservation of the art Seni Tari Topeng Gaya Slangit as well as the continuation of communicating the message that lies beneath the very mask itself.

Constructing a cultural space that exists in Keraton Kacirebonan into an interesting phenomenon is something that the other two Keratons simply could not offer. In addition to the results of research from Agustin (2011), globalization has resulted in various problems in the field of culture, for example: the loss of native culture of a region or a country, erosion of cultural love and nationalism of the younger generation, decreased sense of nationalism and patriotism [4]. In accordance with the aforementioned phenomenon, the purpose of this paper is to construct a meaning of art and cultural space in Keraton Kacirebonan. It gradually becomes a space used with high intensity with a growing number of students eager to learn the art. A tight schedule in lessons shows a good commitment between the teachers and the students. It is a phenomenon worth observing and to be celebrated given the fact that most traditions appear to be pale in comparison when faced with the ever-imposing influence of modern art through all sorts of information media. Keraton Kacirebonan's consistency in preserving its art and culture from the past is not only an interesting subject to study, but also offers the importance of understanding the meaning of its art and cultural space.

II. METHODS

This research is based on exploration of phenomena rather than research on the basis of "gap" theory, so this study uses the phenomenology approach. Constructivism is the paradigm used in this research sheltered by phenomenology, one that is

suggested by Husserl [5]. The flow of the phenomenology approach would be to observe Keraton Kacirebonan as it is in its current state. Afterward, to intentionally see the functions and shape of the spaces in Keraton that are divided into inner space and outer space. And finally observe the function of space in Keraton that is responsible for preserving the art of Tari Topeng. The space in Keraton not only serves as the resident for the king, but also encourages activities relating to the preservation of the dance art in the community. An awareness emanates from Keraton Kacirebonan, one that emphasizes the importance of preserving its art and the meanings that it holds, of morality in human's life. Field data is collected using a voice recorder and photo camera. Interviews were conducted without a questionnaire sheet, focusing on interviews with the phenomena that occurred at that time. Data processing is done through writing transcription results of interviews and visual results. Then the classification of

phenomena is carried out and the connectivity between these phenomena is seen.

III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

A. Keraton Space, Cultural Space, and Reflective Humanism

Keraton Kacirebonan which is located on Jalan Pulasaren Cirebon city, is the smallest in term of size compared to the other 2 Keratons. Its court is divided into three parts. The first court has an entrance in the form of Candi Bentar. The second is connected with a Paduraksa door. On the second court, there are pasebans in both left and right-hand side, on the right functions as a ticket counter and on the left as a cafeteria for public use [4]. Figure 1 below shows the location of Keraton Kacirebonan:

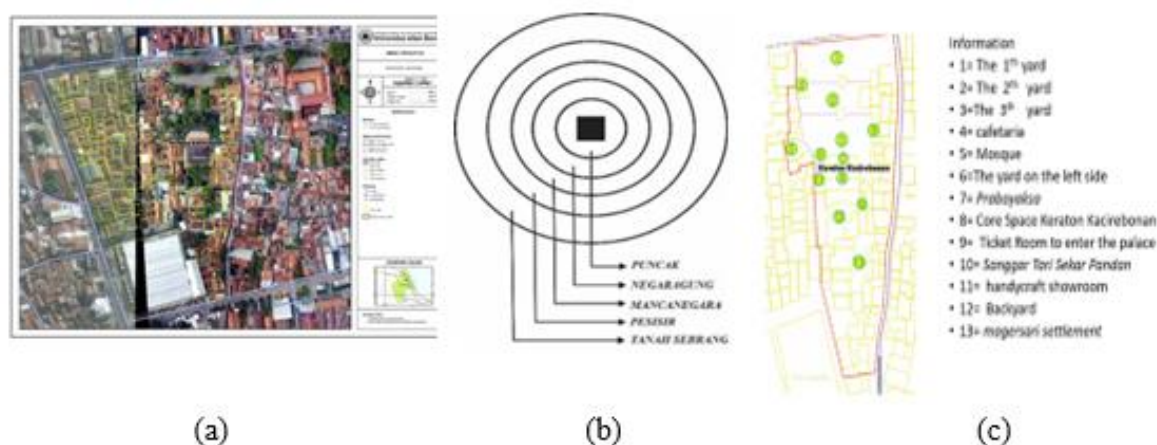


Fig. 1. Keraton Kacirebonan. (a) Keraton Kacirebonan [6], (b) Spatial concept of keraton [5-8], (c) building layout in Keraton Kacirebonan [6].

Seen from the picture above, Keraton Kacirebonan has neither the size nor the spatial complexity like other Keratons in general. The spatial division is laid out according to the arrangement of Mount Mahameru, from the outer side gradually towards the inner side as follows: Tanah Sebrang, Pesisir, Mancanegara, Negara Agung and finally the Peak of Mahameru [1,5,7,8]. Picture (b) explains the concept of the spatial arrangement of a Keraton: based on the above spatial concept, Keraton Kacirebonan does not fulfill all the category. Because of its relatively smaller area coverage (less than 5 hectares) compared to the other two Keratons, its spatial category only consists of Puncak Mahameru, Ruang Negara Agung and Ruang Mancanegara. While the building layout in Keraton Kacirebonan consists of: Paseban, Prabayaksa, Pringgodani and Kaputren. The layout does not include Pancaratna, Pancaniti and Siti Inggil. The open space also does not have a square. The building layout that does not have all the category of the other two (Keraton Kasepuhan and Keraton Kanoman) reflects its history. Keraton Kacirebonan was once part of Keraton Kanoman. Its establishment was due to the initiative taken by Empress Resminingpuri, the wife of Prince Anom Khaeruddin in 1814. Prince Anom Khaeruddin refused to cooperate with the Dutch, and the establishment of Keraton Kacirebonan

only took place after his death. This explains the incompleteness in planning since Keraton Kacirebonan was not planned by the reigning Prince Anom Khaeruddin. The prince totally refused everything that had got to do with the Dutch, not only with the gifts and subsidy offered to him, but also the political intervention from the Dutch government. His residence during his reign was in Sunyaragi, a place for meditation that belonged to his ancestor (Sunan Gunung Jati). Sunyaragi is a name that consists of two words that are, Sunya or Sunyi meaning quiet, and Ragi or Raga meaning body. A place to let go the physical world and enter a spiritual one. His character was on the contrary with his wife's. The Empress took what the Dutch offered and built the Keraton after the death of Prince Anom Khaeruddin. She had the funding to build the Keraton by accepting the whole lifetime subsidy that Prince Anom refused. It is understood that the building of Keraton Kacirebonan was not politically motivated to serve as a place to govern, but as a residence, hence the lack in categorical space and building layout compared to the other Keratons.

In the present time, Keraton Kacirebonan no longer serves as a permanent residence for the Royals. Most part of the Keraton has turned into public space. The second court

that has pasebans on both sides that was used to receive guests has now turned into a cafeteria and a ticket counter. As well as the Prabayaksa building that is now commonly used as a gathering place for communities of many different hobbies. The Pringgawati building has now turned into souvenir store and the back side of Kaputren building turned into a studio to rehearse the art of mask dance Seni Tari Topeng Gaya Slangit. Prabayaksa and Pringgawati stand higher than other buildings. Prabayaksa is a more open design while Pringgawati a more enclosed building. The Keraton is surrounded by residential buildings. A narrow alley leads to the Kaputren building, on the left-hand side of Prabayaksa. Surrounding them are permanent residential buildings. The mosque is located on the left wing of the Keraton, just outside of the wall and used as a public facility for the people living nearby. The height of Prabayaksa and Pringgawati symbolize the hierarchy, the higher status of the king who resides inside those buildings. It is a common symbolism used in Keraton, where the king has the same status as the gods [1,8], While the horizontal arrangement represents binary parts, like the pasebans on the left and right-hand side. The core buildings (Prabayaksa and Pringgawati) are located in the middle with symmetrical pattern representing balance on both the left and right. Prabayaksa building is more open with high ceiling dan columns. From the front court to the back side of the building, the building structure is facing to the west and the main facade to the north. The cultural space is located in the core of the Keraton, an open space with columns carved on the pedestal.

Cultural space in the Kaputren building functioned as a studio Tari Sekar Pandan located in the back side of Keraton. The dance art that is taught in the studio is Tari Topeng Gaya Slangit. An interview in 2018 revealed that the word Tari Topeng is derived from the word "Taweng" which means to cover while Topeng or mask is commonly known to be used to cover up a face. It is a traditional dance of the people of Cirebon using masks to cover their faces when performing the art. There are 9 types of the mask used in the performance; panji, samba/pamindo, rumyang, tumenggung, kelana, pentul, nyo/semblep, jingganom and aki. Of the nine, five are used mainly; panji, samba/pamindo, rumyang, tumenggung and kelana. The meanings of each of the five (Panca Wanda) are as follows:

- Panji represents the purity of the newly born. It moves smoothly and softly. Not all of body parts used when dancing.
- Samba/Pamindo represents the agility of a juvenile. It moves nimbly, hilarious and flexible.
- Rumyang represents the life of an adolescent. It moves tenderly yet at times assertive.
- Tumenggung represents an adult that has formed an identity. It moves firmly and decisively. It is noble, responsible and has a perfect soul.

- Klana represents a king that can never fulfill his thirst of worldly ambitions and also symbolizes the dark side inside a human being that is wrath.

While the other 4 masks have meanings as follows:

- Pentul represents a pawongan/punakawan who is humble, rejects vanity and always loyal to his master.
- Nyo/Semplep represents a maid or a caregiver.
- Jingganom represents a public servant who constantly put the people's interest ahead of his own.
- Aki represents a life of the elderly.

Tari Topeng is filled with commandments found in Islamic religion such as: Panji is an acronym from these words; mapan ningkanng siji which means keep believing in the one god and no other god but Allah SWT. Samba derived from the word sambang or saban which means that at any given time, we are required to carry out His commands and stay away from His prohibition. Pamindo is derived from the word dipindoni or do repeatedly, meaning that other than carrying out what is prescribed as His commands and prohibitions, we are recommended to do what is Sunnah. Rumyang is an acronym from the words arum which means fragrant and hyang meaning God. Meaning that we must always praise God's name through prayers and dzikir. Tumenggung means to give kindness to a fellow human being, to respect each other and constantly develop asah, asih, asuh meaning to educate, love and nurture. Tari Topeng is a performing art that is filled with meanings in life. The art of Tari Topeng Gaya Slangit taught to the students not merely in terms of its physical movement but in a deeper sense, the transformation of morality represented in its every move. Cultural space is an important medium in the transformation process.

The transformation of Kaputren into a cultural space with a growing number of students is a phenomenon of how successful Keraton Kacirebonan in preserving the art and tradition of Tari Topeng in the era of globalization. The concept of domesticating globalization into glocalization will influence the community life with the influx of values, norm, ideology, revealed and expressed in the life of mankind [9]. Globalization has a negative impact predominantly in eroding a nation's identity and dignity. The phenomenon of students eager to continuously learn the art proves that there is an evidence of success in preserving traditional values as well as in transforming humanism within the motion and dance sequence.

According to such a notion, humanism explains the interests of human being's dignity. Through a discipline in learning the art continuously, the intentionality of transforming the message through motions could as well build an individual's dignity.



Fig. 2. The transformation of *Kaputren*. (a) *Kaputren* that has transformed into a cultural space, *Sanggar Tari* or dance studio [6], (b) The activity of learning *Tari Topeng Gaya Slangit* in the studio filled with enthusiastic young students [6], (c) Interview with the head trainer of *Sanggar Tari Sekar Pandan* [6].

B. The Construct of Meaning in Keraton Kacirebonan's Cultural Space

This research uses the phenomenology Husserl's method, which is inductive research. The theory is only background knowledge and not to be used as the basis for producing research variables or for verification. The construction of the meaning of cultural space is based on the inductive construction of the palace phenomenon. Space is not only a function of dance practice but also means the transformation of the moral message of human life. Where humans are an integral element of the existence of the universe. The world of the human body is a microcosm of its closest environment, namely the universe (macrocosm) [10]. Thus, to create a sustainable universe, it begins with the continuation of the soul in the human body.

The palaces in Cirebon make art a tradition to spread religious messages that are rich in the morality of human life. The concept of 'tradition' who defines it as 'that which is handed down': Tradition includes material objects, beliefs about all sort of things, images of persons, and events, practices and institutions. It includes buildings, monuments, landscapes, sculptures, paintings, books, tools, machines. It includes all that a society at a given time possesses and which already existed when its present possessors came upon it. This definition emphasizes the continuity of tradition, its persistence in the present time or otherwise it would not be a 'tradition' [11]. The art of dance is a palace tradition that is rich in the message of the morality of life.

In Islamic scriptures, it is stated that one will face fundamental choices in life. Living with morality is the way to salvation. Therefore, one should rest on moral values to obtain salvation. Keraton Kacirebonan is a landmark in the spread of Islam in West Java. Although the growth of Islam has taken place for centuries, but the method of how it is taught still applies to this day, that is through the teaching of *Tari Topeng Gaya Slangit*. The phenomenon taking place in the dance studio is not merely the process of teaching the art but also the teaching of life's moral values. The spatial theme that emerges is life activity pattern, a social pattern regarding faith dan relation to the king. From such themes, it

can be constructed that the concept of cultural space in Keraton Kacirebonan is the Islamic existence. From the time of initiation in the past to the reality of the present. The spread of Islam has become the spirit of place that materialized into the place's own existence. The conceptual meaning of space in the Keraton described in figure 3 below:

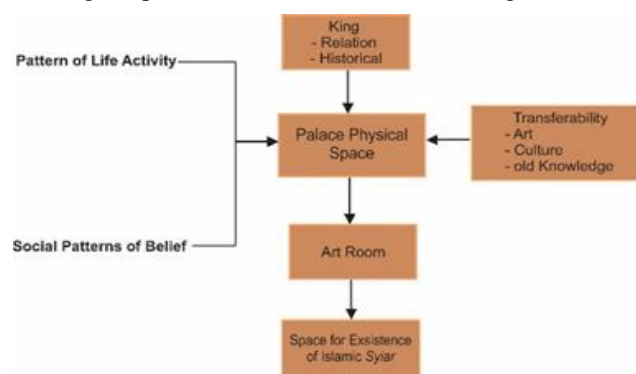


Fig. 3. The conceptual meaning of cultural space in Keraton Kacirebonan [1].

Tuan states that the meaning of a place is related to the spirit, personality, and sense of the place [12]. According to him, a place has its own "spirit" not in terms of profane. Especially places that have become a historic site, the spirit predominantly inhabits the place. Keraton Kacirebonan is a historic site, and it also has a spirit of place that lives on to this day. The cultural space was once the *Kaputren*, and learning the dance art is an activity with high intensity carried out regularly inside it. *Kaputren* was once a place for the king's daughters to live in, but at the present time has transformed into a dance studio where common youth rehearse. There is a transformation in how space is functioned from the past into the present time, an effort in utilizing space and building with the involvement of the public. It also reflects the Keraton's endeavor to harness earnings from renting spaces for the sake of its own conservation. The steps are taken to utilize spaces in Keraton Kacirebonan emphasize on the reintroduction of traditional values, for example, a cafeteria that is serving specific food uniquely made for royals but can now be consumed by

common people and the utilization of Kaputren as a traditional dance studio. Therefore, the spirit of the past is predominant, traditions and identity alike and life values in accordance with the teaching of Islam. Identity that builds human spirituality. The concept of spirituality is the concepts of meaning in life, the purpose of life, self-acceptance or the world, respect for transcendence, the highest level of well-being, the highest level of consciousness, and a sense of idealism. The concepts of meaning in life, purpose in life, acceptance of the self or world, appreciation of the transcendent, highest levels of well-being, highest levels of consciousness, and sense of idealism as being representative of spirituality [13].

IV. CONCLUSION

According to the explanation above, it is concluded that cultural space in Keraton Kacirebonan is a functional transformation from Kaputren. It is utilized to teach the art of Tari Topeng Gaya Slangit. This performing art uniquely belongs to Cirebon and its people and has been used as a means to spread Islam, along with other kinds of the medium in art. Keraton Kacirebonan holds on to its traditions and actively search for ways to preserve them. According to empirical themes that emerge, life activity pattern, social pattern, faith and relation to the king. It is concluded that cultural space is a spatial construct of the Islamic spread's existence.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

I would like to thank the Ministry of Research and Education for supporting the grant that funds this project. And to Keraton Kacirebonan and Keraton Kanoman for having me over the course of this research with great acceptance.

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