

A Strategy of Two Different Cultures for Dealing with Housing Issues of Shop Houses in Yogyakarta City

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Abstract

Recent concern of Chinese immigrants who lived in Java, Indonesia, has risen as an effort to recognize their existence and cultural uniqueness as part of local potential. A major change in political realm has abolished the law that restricted Chinese from having equal right with the other culture groups¹ during New Order era (1966-1998). This paper is addressing particular housing issue; (1) establishing shop house and (2) land ownership of shop houses which may reflect the change in society and interactions between the two culture groups, Chinese and native Javanese. This paper is aiming at revealing the strategy of developing shop house building by Chinese and Javanese exist in current observation (2010), in order to see the respond toward those housing issues and how these issues have impacted their choices. Finally, this study concludes that in some way, Chinese seem to retain their identity through the physical environment that is typical shop house building in urban scale. Javanese in their adjustment to the current need do not undergo major change in the physical environment but simply add or turn some functions in the house without necessarily affecting the urban scale.

Introduction

The primary motivation of this paper is the relationship between minority-majority group in society which may affect and be represented through the physical environment of their living space. We are particularly addressing Chinese minority group and native Javanese majority group in their current housing issue based upon recent observation and interview. For immigrants and during periods of rapid culture change or culture contact, the process of learning may occur later in life is then known as acculturation (Rapoport, 1982: 65). As there are numerous examples of ethnic groups who managed to revive their ancestral language and culture (Fisherman, 2001 in Padilla, Perez, 2001: 38), acculturation was not solely seen as a process of cultural change but as a more complex process with multiple outcomes (Padilla, Perez, 2003: 38).

Parallel to what Rapoport said that dwelling is the primary setting for most people (2005: 19), the house is also where cultural life styles are expressed (Ng, 1998: 63). House forms, the internal layouts, and the layout of dwellings in a neighborhood can be disruptive or supportive of the life styles and values of their occupants (Bochner, 1975 cited in Ng, 1998: 63). Buildings can symbolically represent an attitude about what is taking place inside (Sanoff, 1991:37).

Method of Study and Context

Yogyakarta is located in Middle Java, within an hour drive from Surakarta, and is considered as having a close relationship with Surakarta and Semarang in terms of development of Chinese settlement particularly after the construction of the first railways in Middle Java connected Semarang, Surakarta, and Yogyakarta (Zahnd, 2008: 36). An

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¹ Berry (in Padilla, Perez 2003, 39) prefers to use the term *cultural group* rather than *minority*.