

ROOM ARRANGEMENT CONCEPT: THE SACRED-PROFANE OF HEIRLOOM HOUSES IN HUTAGODANG VILLAGE, MANDAILING

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Abstract

Traditional societies have always retained unique experiences and understanding about their houses. The experiences and understanding tend to be subjective, yet there is a real manifestation. This study aims to explain the concept of sacred-profane on room arrangement of heirloom houses at Mandailing society. This rationalistic study has been conducted in a descriptive-explorative way of using sacred-profane theory. The result shows that the room arrangement on heirloom houses of Mandailing society retain one space that is persistently existed, although the house is continued to grow, i.e., "Pantar Tonga" (middle room as living room). The room has become a universal pillar or axis mundi as well as sacred object. The sacred value of pantar tonga has reinforced the existence of the heirloom house until now without any significant change.

Keywords: Heirloom House, Sacred-Profane, Axis-Mundi, Pantar Tonga

INTRODUCTION

Indonesian traditional society has abundant wealth, it is not only related to nature, but it also is related to architecture. The architecture of Indonesian traditional society is shown through the creation without architect, in the form of heirloom or heritage houses, and the design of settlement, housing, even the residential houses of the society. Architecture has a broad meaning, including the phenomenon of places that related to inner space to form

a typical interior order. The object of this study is the inner space or room arrangement in a number of heirloom or heritage houses of Mandailing society which became the living space. Sitte in Collins and Collins [1] reveals that the essence of architecture is an enclosed space surrounded by serial walls. The enclosed in question is a continuous building environment. So, the concept of enclosed space is an artistic principle of the creation space. All architectural spatial effects are based on the physiology of space perception.

Architecture according to Brinckmann in Veen [2] is the unity between space and time. Space is a superior element, thus architecture is a coalition between space and time. The essence of architecture according to Zevi [3] is space. Zevi [3] believes that a spatial point of view is the most appropriate way to understand architectural phenomenon, because the essence of architecture is the space. Further, Zevi [3] highlights that architecture covers up to the fourth dimension that is time dimension which does not terminate at the third dimension. Architecture that understood as a space is related to integrated human being. Understanding architecture at once means understanding humanity that wealth of dimensions and values.

Mandailing society residing in Hutagodang has a unique architecture in the form of layout that is wealth of dimensions and values. Spaces are

arranged in such a way that always allocates the spatial profane space surround the sacred space. This fact founded especially in some *bagas pusako* (heirloom or heritage houses) society of Mandailing in the *Huta Adat* village.

The fact raises a question, i.e., what is the concept of sacred-profane on room arrangement of heirloom houses in Hutagodang village. This study aims at identifying the sacred-profane concept on room arrangement of heirloom houses in Hutagodang village.

THEORETICAL REVIEW

1. Architecture and Space

Awareness of space is a fundamental experience in architecture. Base for architecture is interrelation between space and time. Bacon [4] recounts that architectural forms the point of contact between time and space; the expression of philosophy from the interaction of power or power of time and space. An architectural form also reflects the relationship between humans with nature and humans with the universe. Bacon [4] formulates that architecture is a space articulation to produce a clear space, to experience the past relation and to anticipated future life. Architecture is a container that provides continuity of human life from time to time harmoniously through its former elements.

Architecture has different understanding because architecture is not universal. Studies on meaning and definition within the scope of architecture are developed intensively by the experts. Architecture is not only defined by Vitruvius such as utilities (function), firmities (structure)

and venusity (esthetics) but it is more than an awakened environment which also has the meaning [5].

Rapoport [6] states that environment is built by two types of architectural creation, that is architectural elites (grand architecture) and folk architecture. Effort to understand a dwelling as a folk product, the background (force) and the formed process from the designer point of views a good learning for architectural creation at present time. Thus, Rapoport in Nuraini [6] emphasizes that architectural object perceives cultural attachment and architectural creation of society, whether in the form of buildings, settlements, and environments should be explored seriously with all its spatial balanced.

According to Rapoport, [6] spatial understanding is defined as the physical environment which there is an organizational relationship between various objects and humans separated in certain spaces. He also reveals that the spatial concept emphasizes the process among three important phases, namely (1) functional process, (2) process of procuring physical facilities that answered the need of space for activities such as workplace forms, (3) process of procurement and merging spatial between the various parts as an integrative one.

Another opinion about spatial is also raised by Hillier in Nuraini [7] which asserts that space is always related to humans realistic and its life that have two structures, space as something that is visible (tangible) and superficial while the invisible is the deep structure aspect as its dimension space. Architecture according to Hillier in Nuraini [7] loaded with human content that formed space

because there is a relation with the artifacts thereby evolves toward the spatial and cultural concept. Human organizes spatial milieu in order to produce construction which is called spatial culture. Spatial order is a way or order of a certain space that reveals the artificial relation order based on the principle of the social order. In this concept there is a very close mutual relationship between the spatial artifacts as spatial culture with the social order or relationship that inhabits or uses the artifacts in its living space in the society. At a certain moment, the spatial is influenced by the social order and at the other moments the social order is influenced by the physical order of the space. Therefore, Hillier in Nuraini [7] states that the architecture of the settlement is a socio-spatial artifact.

In line with Hillier in Nuraini [7], Neil [8] raises the term on stock of knowledge as a daily life that also comes into contact with the spatial of an architecture entity. There is a shift of knowledge that is pragmatic from generation to generation through a natural process. Daily life is a reality that continuous to be attached through, rational and routine, so it becomes a habit. Another character, Schatzkii [9] uses the term time space to declare that space and time attached in human life. Activities undertaken by humans in their daily lives can institutionalize space and time. According to Schatzkii [9] time space is the key and the center of organizing social life activities of the society. Human existence is created because of the relationship among human and activities, space, time, and activities. The existence of the relationship is manifested in the form of braid space, time and activities. The form can be in terms of coordination, orientation, harmonization, institutional-

zation of events and social phenomenon. Dynamics and practice of everyday life is the convention, duration, sequence and time of is performed. Existence of the conventions creates rhythmic and different routine activity [9].

Previous explanation by some experts can be concluded that the spatial arrangement can describe the dwelling as one form of architecture in terms of visible appearance and the invisible appearance (the deep structure) as the spatial order. Visible and invisible surface aspects have mutual relations. The appearance aspect as the most physically accessible form of visibility can become a manifestation of the invisible aspect (the deep structure) which actually has a greater role in forming a space. To understand an architectural creation in the form of occupancy and spatial, various aspects must always be considered so that the meaning of a form of architecture can be fully understood.

2. House and Spirit

Elliade [10] explains that a place or space is manifested into two forms, namely as a container and as a content. Container refers to the container of social activities, while the content is the actualization of the spirit (mental thing or mental spirit). Mental space is manifested in the form of values, symbols, spirits that recognize space as something that is intangible or is not touchable. In people with religious thought, a place or space is not homogeneous but distinct to form a sacred and profane place or space. Sacred is the conception of a reality that its order is considered to be different from reality of nature because of the perception or view of the presence of a

force. These forces can come from nature, spirit, and the creator. A place or space is profane because it is considered homogeneous, neutral, and doesn't exist in the sacred nature in a space or place. The space or place gives rise to what is called the universal pillar (axis mundi) which connects three kinds of worlds, that is the upward (the heaven, heavenly world), the center (the world/cosmos/earth) and the downward (the underworld/world of death/other worlds)[10].

The concept of sacred-profane is conceptualized as a space and time that is subjective (up world and bottom world) and objective (middle world) relationship of traditional experience of the society [11]. Time can serve as a measure of distance quality, so it is known as temporal world spatio that time can be objective world (timeless) and a subjective world that is not measured by distance and time, in which Tuan [11] regards it as timelessness.

Another opinion, Geertz in Nuraini [7] reveals that a sacred profane assumption would be manifested in conception of the circular space. The central figure is in the central region and further weakens towards the periphery. This can be seen in places or areas where there are places, temples, sacred tombs and centers of activity surrounded by secondary and tertiary activities. In such a socially, culturally, and politically place or space, power differences will influence the formation of hierarchy of space and the stratification of social status.

Some view points of space and spirit that have been described show that the dwelling or house as a place of human activity does not only serves as a place

of life and lively, but also actualizes the spirit that contains certain values. Human as a user has a thought that every place in the house has different values and brings up the spaces with sacred and profane. Places containing differences in quality (sacred) will be different from places that are considered neutral or do not contain differences (profane) in the house. This spirit influences the people's perceptions in dividing the room's based on hierarchy values.

3. Bincar-Bonom Theory

First study about the Mandailing settlement has been done by Nuraini [12]. *Bincar-bonom* is a local theory of Singengu village settlement that has become a principle guidelines in arranging a living space in the residential areas [13][14]. *Bincar*, which means sunrise and *Bonom*, which means sunset are not merely the terms to indicate the directions of sunrise and sunset but they become the base of forming Singengu village spatial plan which is empirically translated in the form of placement, setting or location of physical elements of settlements in the three spatial scales. Thus, it is always on the *Bincar-Bonom* axis with an emphasis on three important relations, i.e. the relation between people, present day people to the ancestors, and all people to the Creator. As a local theory, *Bincar* is identical with youth, junior, and new, while *Bonom* is identical to the aged, senior, and old [13][14]. The theory of *Bincar-Bonom* and the application of it on bedroom arrangement for parents and son in Singengu Village are illustrated on Figure 1.

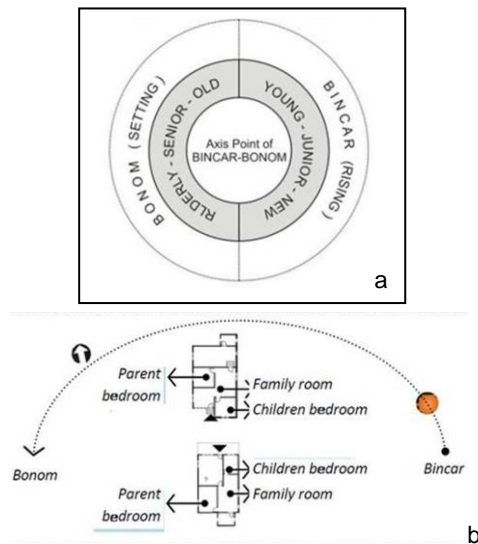


Figure 1. (a). The theory of *Bincar-Bonom* and (b). The application of the theory *Bincar-Bonom* on bedroom arrangement for parents and son in Singengu Village (Sources: Nuraini et al, 2014a)

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This is a descriptive explorative study [15] that reveals the spatial layout based on sacred-profane theory as described in the theoretical review section. Methods of data collection were conducted by field survey and interview techniques. Field surveys were conducted to find a number of heirloom or heritage houses that can be traced back to the history and process, and have spatial arrangement that persistently existed over the last ten years. Interviews were conducted to reinforce the spatial findings and the reasons for their placements in the residency. The analysis is done rationally based on the theories that have been described in the theoretical review.

Previous research in Singengu shows that there are eight heirloom or heritage

houses in Singengu village, while further surveys shows that there are eight heritage houses in Hutagodang that can still be traced back to the history, process and spatial setting. Map of distribution of heirloom or heritage house in Hutagodang can be seen in figure 2.

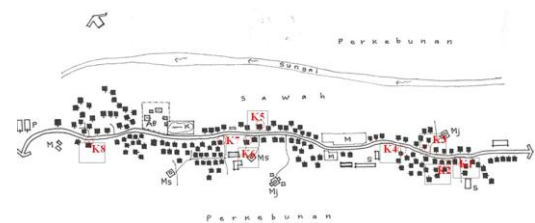


Figure 2. Distribution of 8 heirloom houses in Hutagodang village (Sources : redrawing by author based on Nuraini, 2004 and field surveys, 2016)

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

1. Room arrangements of heirloom houses in Hutagodang village

Eight heirloom or heritage houses in the Hutagodang village demonstrate that the position of *tonga* as the axis has determined the location of other spaces around them in terms of the nature and the value space. The private room for elderly that is *pantar bilik-1* (bed room for parent) is placed in the western of *pantar tonga* (living room), while the private space for the child (youngest son as a heir) in the east direction of the living room. Private room settings such as those found in cases of C1, C2, C3, C4, C6, C7, and C8. In the case of house C5, there is only one bed room that is parent's bed room setting in the west of living room. This shows the consistency of arrangement of the spaces with the center space as the axis. The locations of *pantar tonga* space (living room) as the axis in each case of the heirloom or heritage house can be seen in figure 3 and 4.

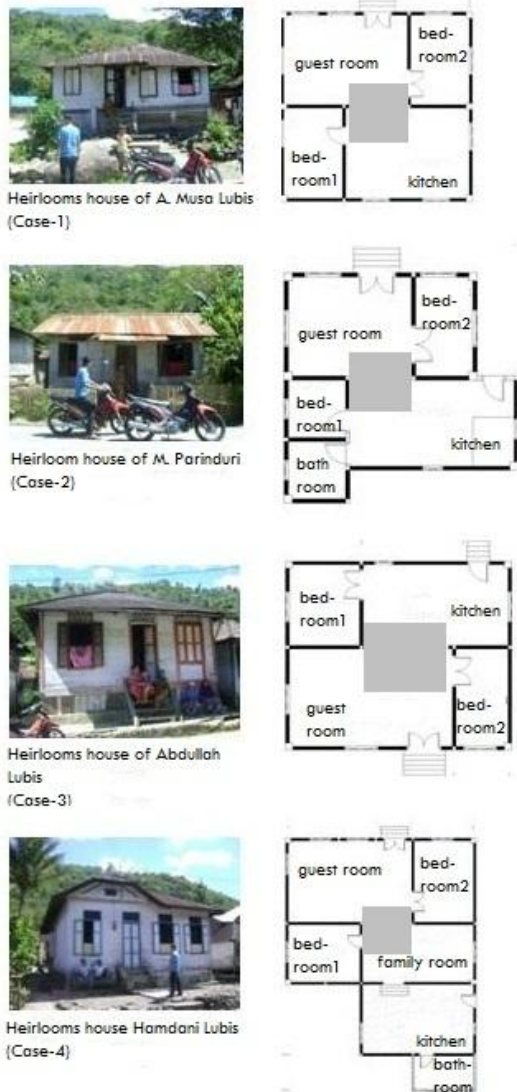


Figure 3. The position of *pantar tonga*(middle room as family room) in four heirloom houses (C1-C4)



Figure 4. The position of *pantar tonga*(middle room as family room) in other four heirloom houses (C5-C8)

2. Sacred-Profan on room arrangements of heirloom houses in Hutagodang village

Previous research suggests that the base (origin) of all things is intangible and it's beyond human comprehension. Something magical is infinite and endless, will never end. To achieve the glory of life (or in local terms called *hamoraon*) that constantly sustained, human must always be guided by the base of all things in the world, namely *Datu* (creator/god). From the beginning, the ancestors of Mandailing

people realized that this world had been created by *Datu*, so there was an understanding of the world of *Datu* (creator) and the human world. The first man created by *Datu* (the creator) is an ancestor whose spirit is very closed to *Datu*. Continuous contact with the ancestors (in local term is called *mangulaki pangkal*) is believed to bring magnificent life (*hamoraon*) so that the ancestors as the 'base' of the current generation should be in the *somba* (respected) and followed *uhum dohot ugari* (provisions and custom rules made by ancestors)[13][14].

In the ancestral thought of Mandailing people, to establish a continuous relationship with the creator, the people should always ask guidance through the direction of rising and setting up the sun. This is because the assumption that the sun as messenger or an instrument that is used by *Datu* (creator) to provide *tondi* (spirit) to all creatures on earth. The direction of the rising sun is regarded as the sacred direction, while the direction of the setting sun is considered to be profane direction. This concept is called *Bincar-Bonom*[13][14]. At dwellings or residential extents, the concept of *Bincar-Bonom* has placed a particular element as the axis or midpoint, that is *pantar tonga* (middle room as family or living room) which becomes the development of other spaces.

Sacred-profane according to Geertz in Nuraini [10], Eliade [10], Nuraini et al [13] and Nuraini et al [14], is manifested in the form of a circular space concept with a central point in the center. It is the place in which artifacts can be positioned in the middle as a sacred object. In the villages of Singengu and Hutagodang, the sacred object as the midpoint on the baggage scale (house) is the *tonga* (living room). The sacred value of *pantar*

tonga is located on its function as the axis. The development of other spaces in a dwelling serves as the midpoint of the imaginary line connecting human life in the micro cosmos with the *Datu* (creator) in the macro cosmos through the axis of *Bincar-Bonom* as shows on figure 5. This sacred value has confirmed the existence of *pantar tonga* until now without any significant change as shows in figure 6.

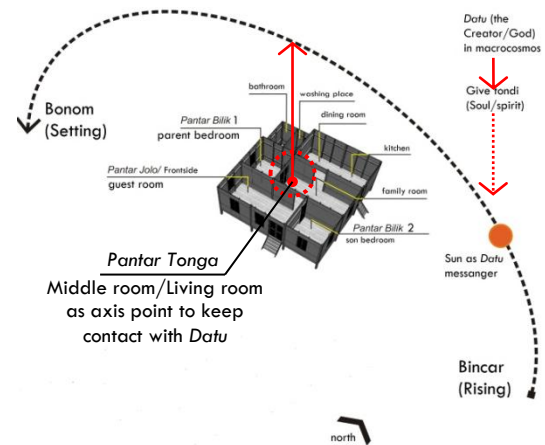


Figure 5. Imaginary line connecting human life in the micro-cosmos with the *Datu* (creator) in the macro-cosmos through the axis of *Bincar-Bonom*

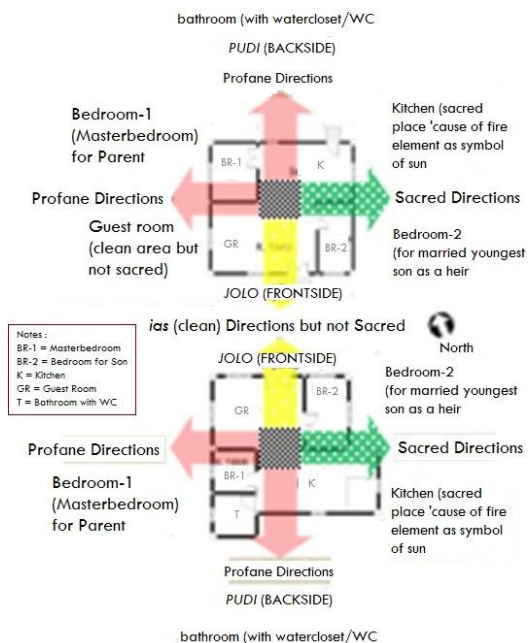


Figure 6. Sacred-Profane on room arrangement of two sampel of heirloom houses which are face-to-face

The results of data analysis show that there is a space in the room arrangement of heirloom houses that has never been changed its position even though other spaces have changed or developed. The space is *pantar tonga* (living room) and old man's chamber which has *halan-halan* (sacred area in parent bedroom and the function is for prayer) as a symbol of 'origin place' of the man's parents in the house. *Pantartonga* area becomes the reference point of *Bincar-Bonom* axis at the home scale. Therefore, the sacred object in Hutagodang residential spaces which is in line with the theory of *Bincar-Bonom* spirit, as illustrated in figure 7, has the concept of sacred-profane on a private space scale (bed room) in a *bagas pusako* (heritage house) in terms of sacred-profane which was introduced by Geertz and Eliade

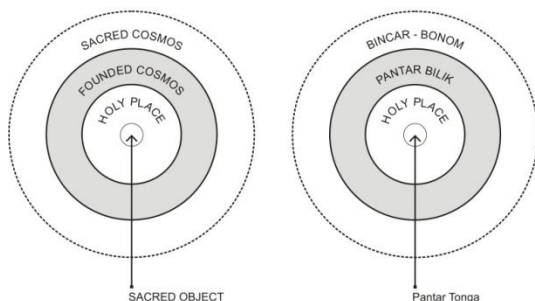


Figure 7. The concept of sacred-profane on a private space scale (bed room) in a *bagas pusako* (heirloom house) in the context of the sacred-profane Geertz and Eliade

CONCLUSION

The sacred-profane concept on room arrangement of heirloom houses in Hutagodang village demonstrates that it is always on the axis of the *Bincar-Bonom*. *Bincar* is identical with the sacred directions, while *Bonom* is identical with the profane directions. The

understanding of sacred-profane in the context of *Bincar-Bonom* is strongly influenced by the value and nature of space. A private profane space is placed in the direction of *Bonom*, the parent's bed room. Private room which sacred, placed in the direction of *Bincar*, that bedroom for the youngest son as an heir. The findings from Hutagodang village reinforce previous finding from Singengu village. The sacred-profane assumption is manifested in the form of a conception of circular space by placing a central point in the center which does not weaken the periphery, as it is emphasized by Geertz's circular space theory. The central point is not always identical with something sacred. The direction to periphery can be a sacred direction, as described by previous findings in Singengu and Hutagodang. The local theory of *Bincar-Bonom* has added knowledge to the theory of spatial spiritual as well as accumulated empirical evidence about the hierarchy of space, center, and periphery. Geertz with its circular conception of space emphasizes that container is related to the cosmology, whilst the local theory with the concept of spiritual space emphasizes more on the spiritual concept of content. The *Bincar-Bonom* theory approves the theory of Eliade's manifestation space that a space and a place can be different and can give rise to the term *axis mundi* (center). It can, therefore, be concluded that space is manifested into two forms, the container and the content. The local theory constructs empirical evidence of space manifestation theory by placing *Bincar-Bonom* as the content as well as spiritual concept. Whereas, the container as the spatial scale of space forms space or container as the actualization of content or mental spirit. The *Bincar-Bonom*

theory supports and provides empirical evidence on Hillier's space and time theory that space and time always consist of two elements: 1) physical, visible, alert, tangible and 2) non-physical, invisible, incomplete intense, and intangible. Both of them have mutual relationships which provide significant historical and time dimensions which are very influential. Local theory asserts that the intangible element as the actualization of the spirit is the most important aspect in forming or shaping space and time.

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