

The Evolving Cultural Heritage Concept: A Theoretical Review of Cultural Heritage in Indonesia

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Abstract: - The concept of cultural heritage offers an idea about recognising and appreciating culture. This idea considers culture as a representation of human civilisation inherited through generations. It is interesting to explore how a concept, which is initially introduced by an international platform, is relevant to the local culture. Regarding this, Indonesia is the best example in explaining this situation because this country has evolved this concept for many years since the colonial period. This inquiry is addressed in a theoretical study regarding the development of cultural heritage concept in Indonesia. A reflection on case studies articulates theories with the context. At the end of this paper, this study proposes an approach inquiring cultural heritage from the global and local perspective.

Keywords: -Cultural heritage, conservation, symbol, local wisdom, historical memory

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I. Introduction

The discourse of cultural heritage relates to the way people recognize and appreciate culture. It is crucial since heritage is “multiply constructed” [1]. According to this idea, various agents recognize cultural significances of a heritage object in different ways.

At the international level, UNESCO and ICOMOS support the recognition of cultural heritage through international conventions [2,3]. These conventions are essential for developing a common sense about cultural heritage and promoting heritage to local, national and international levels.

As a country influenced by colonialism, Indonesia cannot get away from the influence of the colonial system in regulating cultural heritage. After Indonesia proclaimed its freedom in 1945, this country joined international associations such as UNESCO in the 1950s [4]. This situation influenced the way Indonesia formulate its cultural heritage concept.

It is worthy to know that Indonesia has abundant cultural richness due to its ethnical varieties and history. This cultural potential is closely associated with the locality of each region and cannot be separated from values perceived by local people and traditional philosophy. This situation leads to a question of how the generic concept of cultural heritage is compatible with this locality. This paper aims at addressing this question.

This paper elaborates the discourse of architectural heritage by exploring the process of cultural heritage formulation in Indonesia and expanding to theoretical perspectives regarding the global and local context of cultural heritage. Then, the discussion narrows topic by exploring cases in Indonesia heritage sites.

II. The development of cultural heritage concept in Indonesia

In 1778, the colonial government introduced heritage concept as an effort to protect antiquities in Indonesia archipelago [5]. The protection focused on antiquities representing the diversity of Indonesian culture [6]. In 1931 colonial government legalized a heritage act: *Monumenten Ordonnantie* No. 19 *Staadblad* 238 [5]. This act aimed at taking control Indonesian artifacts and providing access for European scientist.

The second phase held after the proclamation of Indonesia freedom in 1945, or after the World War II. In 1972 the convention of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage introduced the term of “cultural heritage” [7]. Indonesian government adopted this convention through Presidential Decree number 26 / 1989 [8]. As a response to this legislation, in 1992 the Indonesia government regulated its first heritage act [9].

The second convention ratification was in 2007 when Indonesia government adopted the UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage [10]. This ratification was followed by the legalization of the Heritage Act number 11 / 2010. Under this act, the definition of heritage object was expanded including spiritual value and national identity.

The awareness of conserving heritage as formerly introduced by colonial government demonstrates the penetration of new thought and conceptual adaptation. Regarding this, it is essential to recognize some theories relevant to the cultural heritage in Indonesia and how it accommodate the foreign influence and locality.

III. Theoretical perspectives in the concept of cultural heritage

There are two aspects essential to theoretical perspectives associated with cultural heritage concepts in Indonesia, such as the influence of thought from other countries and the characteristic of Indonesian locality. This section discusses literature relating to the current cultural heritage discourse in Indonesia.

The influence of other countries is called as a global perspective, because this perspective promotes a “global common-sense” as encouraged by international conventions [11]. These conventions introduce generic way in understanding cultural heritage.

According to Indonesia Heritage Act, the registration of cultural heritage uses a set of criteria representing some values such as age, history, science, education, culture and national identity [12]. These criteria are in line with criteria globally promoted by international conventions. For example, Burra Charter suggests that, the criteria relate to some values such as history, science, social and aesthetic [13]. Meanwhile, Getty Institute concerns two aspects, such as socio-culture and economy [14]. It is obvious that there are some overlaps with Indonesian legislation. The social and aesthetic value of Burra Charter is in line with the educational, religion and cultural value of Indonesian heritage act; the socio-cultural value of Getty Institute overlaps all values and adds economy in a different category.

The global perspective shares an idea that heritage objects should be registered and connected to relevant meaning from the past. Without neglecting this perspective, the Indonesian culture should also be understood through a local context. Therefore, it is essential to continue the discussion by exploring the concept of culture in the Indonesian context.

In Indonesian language, *culture* means *budaya*. This term corresponds to an intellectual endeavor to shape a good society according to spirituality and morality [15]. Spirituality shapes people’s consciousness and develops the local knowledge. This local knowledge, which is also recognized as local wisdom, influences the way local people develop their society and settlement in a balance between human life, universe, and God [16]. Some architectural features of this concept are present in architectural designs symbolizing social status and building construction representing environmental sustainability [17].

It is essential to reflect global and local thought in the actual situation of Indonesian heritage. Regarding this, two cases are addressed in exploring this topic, those being Borobudur temple and the city of Yogyakarta.

IV. The characteristics of heritage in Indonesia

In Asian countries, culture is a complex of “value system, tradition, and beliefs” [18], which is adaptable to the social change [19]. Thus, culture is a construction of a set of values shared in everyday practices. Culture shapes the community specifies the identity [20].

Indonesian heritage has two features. The first feature is documentation or recording represented by material heritage [21]. Borobudur temple is the best example of this feature. This temple is a world cultural heritage [22]. It is located in Central Java Province, at the South West of Semarang. This temple was built in around the 9th century resembling a great achievement of Indonesian culture. It is also a historical evident of the role of central Java region as the centre of Buddhism activity in the Asian region. Fig. 1 is a photo of Borobudur temple.



Figure 1. Borobudur Temple [22]

Another example is the city of Yogyakarta. Currently, this city is the capital of Yogyakarta Special Region Province. This city, which is founded in the 18th century, expresses the ability of local people in designing a city using traditional symbols [22].[23]. Beside traditional heritage, this city also has colonial heritage. This type of heritage represents the historical memories such as heroic wars and colonisation. Through this type of heritage, people can trace the influence of western thought on Indonesian culture during colonisation period [24]. Fig. 2 shows a photo of Gedung Agung, a colonial building, which in 1946 was used as the first Indonesia presidential office.



Figure 2. Gedung Agung building (author's documentation)

The second feature of Indonesian heritage is local wisdom. This type of heritage is a combination of ideal and social aspects [21].Yogyakarta is the best example of a traditional city developed using traditional concept. This city symbolizes Javanese philosophy representing a harmony between human, nature, and God [23]. This kind of philosophy is also expressed in Javanese architecture [25] and traditional architecture from other ethnical groups [26], [27]. Fig. 3 shows the city of Yogyakarta and a diagram of its symbolical axis.

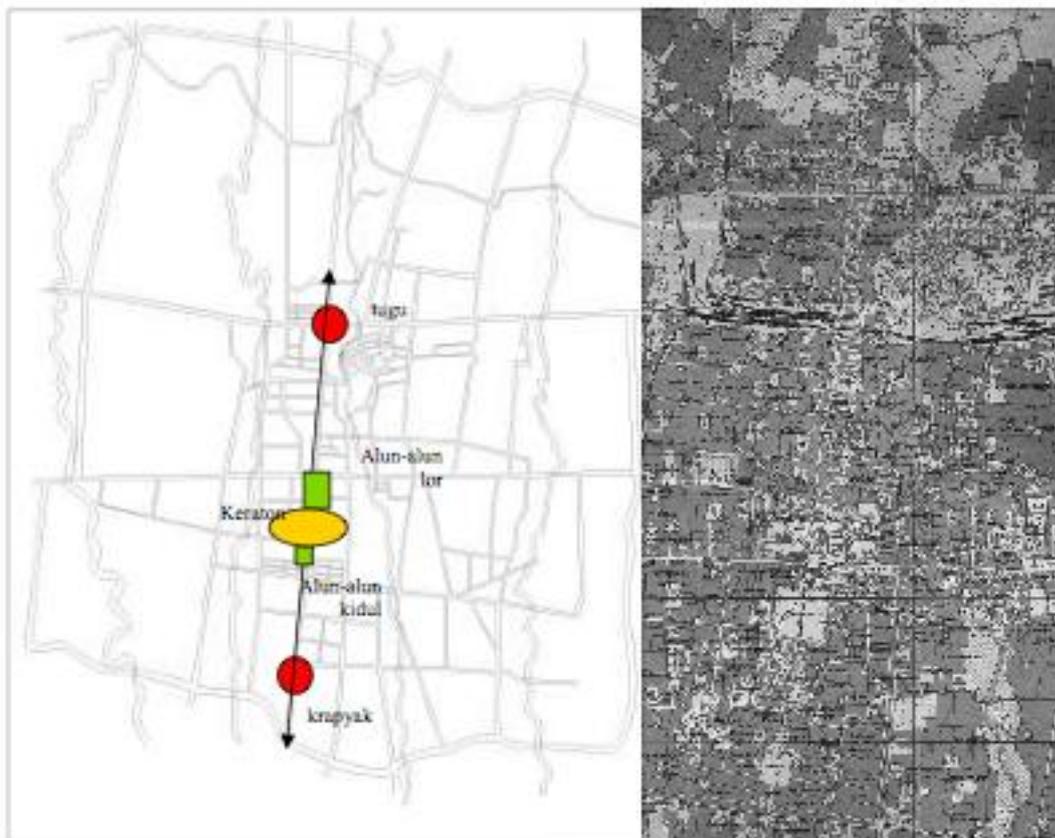


Figure 3. The map of Yogyakarta [22]

V. Discussion

It is essential to explore how both global and local perspectives enlighten the understanding of cultural heritage. Global perspective concerns with the formal conception of heritage because it uses generic criteria in disseminating meaning to different agents. On the other hand, local perspective more concerns with recognising cultural heritage from the lens of locality, which is usually associated with traditional philosophy. This perspective is in the realm of local people. This section discusses different features of Indonesian cultural heritage according to both perspectives.

As a perspective developed on the stage of international agenda, global perspective is used to register and promote intercultural knowledge at different levels, such as local, national and international [2]. This registration is not only useful to conserve cultural value, but also use it as economic potential in the tourism market. It is accepted that currently cultural heritage has been interpreted as a commodity in promoting local economy [28,29,30].

The application of global perspective is obvious from the celebration of Indonesian heritages as the world heritage. Borobudur is one of many sites in Indonesia recognized by UNESCO [22]. It is not including Yogyakarta, which is in the temporary list of the world heritage [31]. In Indonesia, the government is a primary institution in initiating the registration process as imposed by Heritage Act number 11 / 2010. The purpose of this action is to conserve human inheritance, strengthen national identity, supporting economy and promotion at international level [30].

Borobudur has become an archaeological object since the colonial period in 1849 [32]. Dutch experts initiated some research to reveal history and significance of this temple. Some information such as its historical role in Buddhism teaching, construction technique, design uniqueness and its landscape represent the cultural significance.

Another example is the urban form of Yogyakarta, which is well known as a traditional city. Heritage Act number 11 / 2010 protects many historical objects of this city, such as the King Palace (*Kraton*), monuments, and some colonial buildings. The same heritage law protects Borobudur and the city of Yogyakarta because the cultural significance of these objects is confirmed using the same criteria.

Regarding local perspective, the local wisdom represents the locality of culture [20]. It represents the way local community deliver their daily life mannerly which reveals unique solutions for each ethnic [27]. Cultural artifacts symbolize the way people think of their life including spirituality, morality, and prosperity. This situation makes the attachment of local people to the heritage site is unavoidable. The succession of this attachment contributes to the conservation of cultural values. Another important aspect of locality is the local wisdom.

A research argues that Borobudur is a symbol of the Great Buddha [32]. This temple has reliefs depicting Buddhism teaching about the stages of *Bodhisattva*. It means that the temple is not only an antique and biggest monument in the South East Asian region but also a medium of religion teaching. In this sense, Buddhism as a spiritual thought resembles the locality of the site.

In the case of Yogyakarta, the urban form symbolizes its local wisdom. The first king of Yogyakarta developed the city based on the North-South symbolical axis representing traditional Javanese belief [22,23,33]. This axis symbolizes the human journey from the birth, getting maturity and reaching a unity with God. The Sultan Palace is located in between as a representation of Sultan's role in keeping the balance and harmony in people's life.

Each site demonstrates different values of spirituality and morality; and represents material culture in different ways. However, they reflect two aspects in common. The first aspect is an attention to cultural values related to spirituality and morality, which resembles the main reason of heritage conservation. Secondly, the sites have a close attachment to local people because the values are constructed locally. In the plural society of Indonesia, the religious symbols of Borobudur are especially meaningful for Buddhist community because it delivers spiritual dogmas and principles specific to the religion [34,35]. And so do in the case of Yogyakarta. The philosophy of this city is meaningful for a Javanese person or someone admitting Javanese tradition [15]. It means that a wide-range promotion is not the concern of local thought.

The global and local perspectives are different in four aspects as described in Table 1. As an international approach, global perspective uses generic values in recognising cultural significance. It is different to the local perspective, which concerns with spiritual and moral values. Government uses the heritage criteria in registering heritage object and protects heritage using law as exemplified in the cases of Borobudur and Yogyakarta. The registration supports heritage promotion to agents at different levels. On the other hand, local perspective does not recognize the standardized criteria and registration because it concerns with the internalization of spiritual and moral values in people's daily life. Thus, the values are usually only relevant to the local community.

Table 1. Differences between the global and local perspective of cultural heritage

Aspects	Global perspective	Local perspective
Values	Generic values such as age, history, art and culture, national identity, etc.	Spirituality and morality
Conservation	Initiated by valuation and registration conducted by expert. Conservation policies follow these activities.	Inherited through the internalisation of traditional teaching in which people practice local tradition and conserve the symbols or representations of the values.
Dissemination	Tend to promote heritage from local site to a larger context such as national and international.	Internalising values in local or relevant community.
Agents	Agents from different level: local, national and international	Local and relevant community

Despite these differences, it is essential to combine both perspectives. Proper attention to local perspective can maintain the spiritual and moral values, which cannot be formally registered using generic criteria. It is also relevant to consider heritage as an economic generator through tourism [29,36]. It needs a wide-range recognition through heritage registration in promoting the cultural significance at different levels. As the heritage site is recognized widely, it is also essential to maintain the internalization of traditional values at the local level.

A new approach is needed to understand cultural heritage from the two perspectives. Conservation should concern the contemporary way in appreciating and commercializing heritage while maintaining the internalization of local thought. Therefore, cultural heritage should be understood as the conservation of cultural symbols representing values appreciated by various social contexts. Symbolism contributes to delivering cultural meaning, and social context provides a situation in which meaning is created and recreated [37,38].

VI. CONCLUSION

Cultural heritage in Indonesia can be recognized using two perspectives. The first one comes from an idea from other countries and the second one presents the locality of Indonesian thought. These perspectives give a different insight into the traditional philosophy and current concept of cultural heritage.

Case studies show that heritage sites represent values, which are recognized at local, national and international levels. These values are introduced by international conventions and adopted in Indonesia heritage law. Through this way, the Indonesia government performs heritage registration and relevant conservation programs. This action represents the concept of cultural heritage according to the global perspective. On the other hand, the second perspective demonstrates local wisdom as the primary concern of heritage conservation. According to this perspective, Borobudur and the urban form of Yogyakarta are only meaningful for local communities, which believe the spirituality and morality represented by the heritage.

It is essential to combine these two perspectives in understanding Indonesian heritage. Global perspective offers a systematic way in documenting and confirming cultural significant as well as continuing the process with a wide-range promotion. Local perspective provides a potential in developing a good society through the internalization of local philosophy in people's daily life. Therefore, a heritage object is regarded as a medium of transferring local wisdom through generations as well as disseminating memory and cultural values to different societies.

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