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A New Characteristic of Colonial House in Kudus
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A NEW CHARACTERISTIC OF COLONIAL HOUSE IN KUDUS

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ABSTRACT

The Dutch East Indies occupancy in Java had brought a lot of changes to the local social-culture aspect. In Kudus, the presence of the Dutch had influenced the perspective of the local in expressing their social status in the community. In the period of pre-colonial, the local in Kudus used to live in the wood-carved traditional house, known as Kudus traditional house. The quality of the wood and the complicated technique of wood-carving symbolize the social status of the owner. But since the Dutch East Indies officially occupied Kudus, followed by the establishment of the Sugar Industry and the construction of railway connection by them, a new construction of Kudus traditional house was hardly found. The rich local, represented by the Kretek entrepreneurs, started to build houses similar to those by the Dutch. Although at glance very similar in appearance, those houses are not exactly the same to the Dutch colonial houses. In fact, this tendency had stimulate local creativity and created a new house characteristic, a mixed of colonial and local culture.

Keywords: local creativity, mixed-culture, colonial house, Kudus

INTRODUCTION

Creative community, creative city and other theme on creativity had become a hot issue in this late decade. Several interpretation and implementation can be found on the daily practice all over the world, whether claimed as a product of creativity or not. The creativity had been believed by most people is the answer of the city problems, especially in revitalizing and re-ordering the city.

Creativity is not only a monopoly of modern society. Even in the old time, the local people of Kudus already thought in creative way, even though they didn't know the word creative itself. Creativity is usually seen in the community that has very dense interaction to other communities. Kudus as transit city is often visited by merchant from other cities. The interaction of multi-cultures had stimulated the born of a new culture, usually called as mixed-culture. The result of mixed-culture can be seen physically as product or just the change of value in social life.

Kudus is a good example to explain the interaction between local creativity, local culture, new culture and mixed-culture. Kudus as industrial city began during the colonial period. The sugar industry, which was constructed in Kudus in 1840 and the railway transportation from Semarang to other city in the east side through Kudus in 1881, donate a big impact to the city development as well to the social structure. The increase of interaction between local people and those from outside Kudus influence the local creativity in the positive term.

Local creativity in this paper means creativity by local people, by creating, composing or even just modifying an element or a part of an element that at the end produce a new element which has a new characteristic, different from the original.

CREATIVE ENTREPRENEURSHIP

The local people in Kudus have a good sense in trading and merchand as well as their appreciation on arts. It had been century since local people known as talented entrepreneurs and wood-carver. The location of Kudus in the intersection between Semarang, Jepara and Juwana made Kudus become a trading city. Almost every kind of goods can be found in Kudus. One of the most successful trading commodities from Kudus was kretek.



Fig.1, Kudus in 1913: Railway passes inside the city.



Fig.2, Colonial House in Kudus

Kretek made of tobacco and clove at the very first period was only available at drugstore, as medicine for asthma. At that time Kretek was produced in limited number by some family as home industry product. It was a man named Nitisemito that made Kretek, in 1913's, as a commercial commodity and produce it in large number. With his creativity, he changes the kretek image, from medicine into lifestyle. He didn't stop just at that point. Since then, he worked hard to promote and distribute Kretek to all over Java and Sumatera.

His effort to sell his product had stimulated his creativity in marketing. To attract buyers, he offers prizes, such as bicycle and cups. Posters and direct promotion on street were also used to introduce his product. As the result of his creative efforts, in a few years he became the most successful entrepreneur in Kudus. Even more, some said he was the richest local people in Java. Following his successful entrepreneurship, some start to produce kretek as well, including Chinese and Arabs. Although they didn't get spectacular success as Nitisemito did, but they still get many profit from kretek.

The kretek story was one of the creative entrepreneurship in Kudus by local people. Nowadays the kretek manufacturing still become the most important economy activity in Kudus, although the biggest kretek manufacture at the moment is not the one found by Nitisemito.

CREATIVE ARCHITECTURE

Arts and crafts are very familiar to the local people of Kudus, especially wooden carving. This can be proofed by just looking at their wooden traditional houses, which are full of complicated wooden carving. Their talent on arts were improved and developed thanks to the infiltration of several cultures, such as Javanese local culture, Arab culture and Chinese culture. This gave the opportunity to combine all aspect of the culture in one element.



Fig.3, Floor tile

The other aspect of local creativity found in Kudus developed during the Dutch colonial period was the sense of the art, especially applied on houses. Kudus itself had been recognized since long time ago for their wood carving quality. The sense of the art was already developed through generations in the Kudus culture. Based on the local value, the more complicated wood-carved available on their houses, the higher social status they belong. This way of thinking was applied also on the later houses built in Kudus.



Fig.4, Mosaic Glass

As we can find many brick houses constructed in the beginning of 20th century was fully decorated with complicated architectural details. Just like the local traditional houses, those architectural details applied in every elements of the house: floor, wall, door, window, roof and many other elements.

Most of the brick houses, or we called colonial houses, was build by Kretek entrepreneurs as they were the richest people in Kudus. The using of floor tiles on their house was one of the symbols of the wealthy, instead using usual soil flooring or wood panel flooring. For some person floor tiles was not enough as an upgrading. The use of complicated design was more preferable to meet their sense of the arts. This kind of tiles was commonly used on colonial houses made by local Kretek entrepreneurs. More extreme floor tile design was also found in some houses. Owners put their Kretek's logo on every floor tile used on their house.

Other interesting building elements in the Kudus colonial houses are decorated doors and windows. Just similar to the floor tile, the Kretek's logo can be found in almost every window of the house. The uses of coloured-glass mosaic on windows were very common at that moment. This type of aesthetic elements were never found in the local traditional house, which means this was influenced by outer culture.

Surprisingly, almost all colonial houses owned by Kretek entrepreneurs were not designed by the Dutch, but by local people. It is still unknown, from where they imitate such house design. Because, there is no evidence those design imitated from colonial houses in Semarang, as the nearest big city from Kudus. The only explanation at the moment is that local people of Kudus had developed their own design.

CONCLUSION

Creativity can create new products. The product of creativity could be a very completely new or just a modification or manipulation from something that already exist. A new function can be introduced in a product that commonly use for something else, as a discovery of new benefit or just as lifestyle consumption. An infiltration of different culture into the one culture will stimulate the creation of new culture. The new culture can be a completely different culture from those original or an application of value of one culture in the medium of the other culture. The coming of the Dutch in Kudus gave a big impact in architectural aspect. New materials and building typology were introduced in Kudus. Wealthy family had the opportunity to express their local sense of the arts and creativity with new materials and new way. As the result, new characteristic of colonial house was born in Kudus.

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