



VERNACULAR ARCHITECTURE

Week 10
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April 2020

Space and the Shaping of Social Relations

- Examine how the daily uses of spaces within the house contribute in shaping the relationship of its inhabitants
- One important rule: environment helps mould and reproduce a particular pattern of social relationship
- Meaning can be produced through:
 - Positioning and manipulation of objects in a space, and
 - In people's spatial interaction with each other

Space and the Shaping of Social Relations

- Strict unwritten rule about a certain person's position in the house, may be differentiated by:
 - Gender; men or women
 - Age; old or young
 - Marital status; married or unmarried
 - Social status; senior or junior
 - Relationship with inhabitants; relatives or strangers

Space and the Shaping of Social Relations

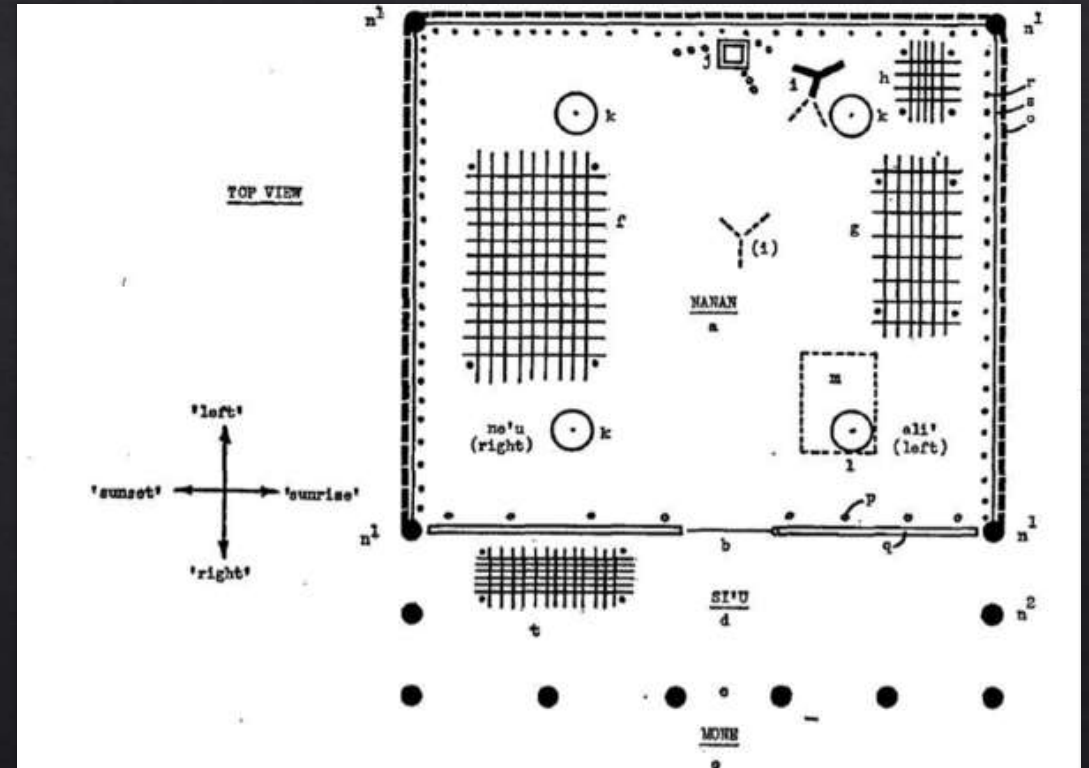
- The rules also affect the placement of objects
 - Left or right
 - Front or back
 - High or low
 - Inside or outside
- Main dimension used is domestic (inside the house) or public (outside of the house)
- Women in Western and Arab societies are mostly oppressed into being only in the domestic sphere

Space and the Shaping of Social Relations

- However, SEA societies mostly apply a different view on this segregation of living space
- The house, in many tribes, is considered very important
- Some tribes are matrilineal, where women actually own houses and other assets
- Men and women are different, but generally acknowledged as similar beings, their biology underplayed
- Male/female are considered pairs, not opposites

The Atoni House

- ◇ Women = inner left part
- ◇ Men = outer right part
- ◇ Gender contrast is acknowledged, but subordination is complex
- ◇ Older women of high rank may be allowed to perform tasks usually given to men
- ◇ Women = sacral ruler, men = secular ruler



Symbolic Duality in Eastern Indonesian House Form

◇ Ema house

- ◇ Marriages are virilocal
- ◇ The floor is divided by a raised beam into two unequal parts: great and small platform
- ◇ Great platform: rituals, heirlooms, house treasures,
- ◇ In-marrying wives whose bridewealth has not been paid yet are not allowed to be in the great platform

◇ Rindi

- ◇ Pairing of male and female is very distinct and it governs all dimensions
- ◇ House is considered the domain of women, who were not allowed to wander too far
- ◇ Right posts = male posts; left posts = female posts
- ◇ In-marrying wives whose bridewealth has not been paid yet are not allowed to be in the right side of the house

Matriliny, Uxorilocality, and the Uses of Space

◆ Kamthieng house

- ◆ Related family houses surrounded by fence, extra houses in the compound are for married daughters
- ◆ The rooms are odd number
- ◆ Houses have different floor levels
 - ◆ 0 – washing place
 - ◆ 1 – Entrance and kitchen
 - ◆ 2 – Guest room
 - ◆ 3 – sleeping room (large house)
- ◆ Houses face south

◆ Aceh

- ◆ Front entrance – male; rear entrance – female
- ◆ ‘dalam’ or the inner part is only entered by family, women, or close relatives
- ◆ Back of the house = female, private, everyday area
- ◆ Front of the house = male, public, formal occasion

◆ Lampung

- ◆ Uxorilocal husbands are like guests, only allowed on the veranda and the front of the house
- ◆ Kinship structure change from patrilineal to matrilineal, partly because of Islamic influence which forbids bridewealth

Women, Rice, and Granary

- ◆ Granary is a sacred place, mostly only allowed to be accessed by women
- ◆ Rice and fertility are strongly associated to goddesses (Dewi Sri, Lady Koosok)
- ◆ In Iban, women are the 'custodian of fertility'
- ◆ Women have key roles in the household economy, centred on rice cultivation, controlling stored crop and the rituals associated to it
- ◆ Women are considered child-bearers and farmers, and is well respected
- ◆ This respect is reflected in the spatial rules surrounding the granary or rice store

The Theme of Immobility

- ◆ Women in West Torajan hold important office position in overseeing the rice harvest cycle because they 'stay put'
- ◆ West Torajan holds uxori-local marriages, meaning women are houseowners and are attached to their natal community
- ◆ Bride and groom in traditional weddings sit in front of the guests, not moving, treated as 'king and queen'
- ◆ Immobility represents a concentration of fertility, or of supernatural or political powers

Short Essay Topic

- ◇ According to you and your relative experience, what is the most important lesson in this chapter?
- ◇ Does separation of space based on a person's identity still apply in modern houses? Why/why not?
- ◇ Do you know a story from your parents/grandparents about such event occurring in your hometown/houses of older relatives? Tell the story!