

UDK 726:27-523.42  
27-523.42:27-312.47(594Klaten)  
27-523.4:316.72(594Klaten)  
<https://doi.org/10.53745/bs.94.5.1>  
Received: 30.10.2023  
Accepted: 26. 6. 2024  
Review article

## THEOLOGICAL MEANING AND ARCHITECTURAL VALUE OF SANTA MARIA ASSUMPTA CHURCH BUILDING (KLATEN, INDONESIA) AND ITS CONTRIBUTION TO MULTICULTURAL SOCIETY

Dionius B. MAHAMBORO

Universitas Sanata Dharma, Yogyakarta  
Jl. Kaliurang Km 7, Yogyakarta 55283  
[dionius.bismoko@usd.ac.id](mailto:dionius.bismoko@usd.ac.id)

Parmonangan MANURUNG

Universitas Kristen Duta Wacana, Yogyakarta  
Jl. Dr. Wahidin 5-25, Yogyakarta 55221  
[monang@staff.ukdw.ac.id](mailto:monang@staff.ukdw.ac.id)

Michael R. PABUBUNG

Universitas Atma Jaya, Yogyakarta  
Jl. Babarsari 44, Yogyakarta 55281  
[michael.pabubung@uajy.ac.id](mailto:michael.pabubung@uajy.ac.id)

### Abstract

This research aimed to explore theological-ecclesiological meaning of Santa Maria Assumpta Church Klaten in the socio-cultural context of Indonesian society. Architectural insights were also considered for designing Catholic church buildings in Indonesia, particularly Java. In addition, a qualitative method was carried out through interviews and content analysis of architectural literature, exploring theological-ecclesiological meaning with 3 (three) perspectives, namely historical-ecclesiological context, architectural value, and *genius loci* of church building. This research contributed to the architecture of the building to strengthen the cohesion of a multicultural society. The results showed that (1) church design could communicate the values, beliefs, and traditions of Christian faith, and (2) the location could transmit a message of inclusivity and openness.

*Keywords:* St. Maria Assumpta Church Klaten, *Wastu Citra*, Mangunwijaya, *genius loci*, multicultural society

## Introduction

In the dynamic landscape of East and Southeast Asia, the growth of Christianity across diverse dominions has been remarkable, showing an increase of 3.1% per annum between 1970 and 2020, as observed by Zurlo.<sup>1</sup> This increase in Christian adherents represents the most rapid expansion among the major religions in the region. From a specific perspective, Catholic faith experienced a substantial growth rate of 2.3% during the five-decade period in Indonesia. The population increased to 8,100,000 by 2020 starting with 2,620,000 adherents in 1970, as reported by Irianto.<sup>2</sup> In this context, Catholic presently comprise approximately 3% of the overall population of Indonesia.

There is an increasing need for additional places of worship and church buildings since the community continues to expand in the Archdiocese of Semarang. This demand manifests in the construction of new church or chapel and the renovation of existing ones. Over the past 5 years (2017-2022), 9 new chapels and church buildings have been inaugurated and refurbished. Obtaining permits for new construction or renovations has encountered relatively few obstacles. However, Catholic is perceived as a potential threat by the majority community as a minority group.<sup>3</sup>

In examining the challenges faced by numerous parishes in Java, specifically in West Java region, and witnessing the anti-diversity groups opposing the presence of Christian, the difficulties encountered in church construction extend beyond Catholic community.<sup>4</sup> Church construction requires sociological, political, and cultural considerations. The planning must acknowledge the enormous impact of sociopolitical and sociocultural issues. Church building construction, specifically in Indonesian Catholic community, goes beyond technical and financial issues.

A transformative shift occurred during the Second Vatican Council, where a new awareness was developed concerning the important role of Catholic communities beyond Europe, recognizing the rightful place in church.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Gina A ZURLO, A Demographic Profile of Christianity in East and Southeast Asia, in *Christianity in East and Southeast Asia*. Edinburgh, 2020, 3.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Sulistyowati IRIANTO, Indonesia, in *Christianity in East and Southeast Asia*, 201.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. ZURLO, A Demographic Profile of Christianity in East Asia, 3.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Myengkyo SEO, *State Management of Religion in Indonesia*, New York, 2013, 32; Manotar TAMPUBOLON – Norazlina Abdul AZIZ, Violating Christian Minority Freedom of Religion in Indonesia, *The International Journal of Religion and Spirituality in Society* 11, 1 (2021), 235–253; Broto WARDOYO, Minority in Politics. The Javanese Christian Church and Post-Ahok Politics, *Bandung* 7, 2 (2020), 259–278.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Y. B. MANGUNWIJAYA, *Gereja Diaspora*, Yogyakarta, 1999, 91.

During the groundbreaking event, bishops from mission territories actively participated and shared the experiences of living outside Europe, emphasizing the rich tapestry of local cultures. An important outcome was allowing liturgical celebrations in local languages, liberating church from the previous Latin requirement. In line with theological transformation, the architectural landscape of church buildings experienced the development of »modern church« designs, offering an alternative to classical styles such as Gothic architecture, which symbolized an »old« and »Euro-centric« method.<sup>6</sup> However, the reforms advocated by the Second Vatican Council aimed at revitalizing the liturgy, were only accepted. A case in point is the response to the architectural design of church buildings, where enthusiasm varied. Some churches were committed to preserving the classical design that had evolved before the Council. This classical style is distinguished by the configuration of pews, converging toward the »holy section« where the tabernacle is situated at the rear of the building, with the main entrance at one end as well as the tabernacle and altar at the other. In the United States, architects who restored the pre-Council design were exemplified by Steven J. Schloeder and Duncan Stroik.<sup>7</sup> Church, as a »sanctuary,« should exude a majestic, noble, and authoritative character. Conversely, architects such as Richard Vosko interpreted the liturgical renewal of the Second Vatican Council as an invitation to reconsider church building design with a minimalist model. This prioritizes functionality reflects the concept of »church as the people of God.« The concept shifted from hierarchical atmospheres to emphasize equality.<sup>8</sup> In the Indonesian context, the tensions appear to be less pronounced.

The design of Catholic church primarily revolves around the function of gathering places for people to partake in liturgical ceremonies, such as the Eucharist. A glimpse into the history of Christianity during the Middle Ages shows that church buildings served a dual purpose, as places of worship and tools for imparting moral teachings. Charles Bouchard reports the exquisite stained glass windows adorning European cathedrals, featuring personified embodiments of virtues, with a particular focus on justice, self-control, cour-

<sup>6</sup> Steven J. SCHLOEDER, *Architecture in Communion. Implementing the Second Vatican Council Through Liturgy and Architecture*, San Francisco, 1998, 47.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Duncan G. STROIK, *Church Building as a Sacred Place: Beauty, Transcendence, and the Eternal*, Chicago, 2012, 1-7; Cf. Duncan G. STROIK, *Church Architecture Since Vatican II, The Jurist: Studies in Church Law and Ministry* 75, 1 (2015), 5–34.

<sup>8</sup> Richard S. VOSKO, *God's House Is Our House: Re-Imagining the Environment for Worship*, Collegeville, 2006, 42.

age, and prudence.<sup>9</sup> The ornamentation of church, from stained glass to statues, wall reliefs, and spatial design, is crafted to evoke sensory impressions. Therefore, the architectural aspects of church buildings become a conduit for moral instruction.<sup>10</sup>

In the Indonesian context, few Catholic church buildings are constructed with specific theological concepts to facilitate moral instruction. However, in the more localized context of the Archdiocese of Semarang, church designs embedded with precise theological concepts can be identified. This church was envisioned by Yusuf Bilyarta Mangunwijaya (1929-1999), a priest and architect renowned for contributions as a culturalist.<sup>11</sup> His architectural works within the diocese include structures such as Santa Maria Assumpta (Klaten, Central Java), St. Albertus (Jetis, Yogyakarta), St. Theresia (Salam, Central Java), Our Lady of Sapta Duka (Mendut, Central Java), St. Maria Fatima (Sragen, Central Java), and St. Pius X (Blora, Central Java). The work extends beyond church buildings, including the Trappist Monastery in Gedono (Salatiga, Central Java), the pilgrimage site Sendang Sono (Kulonprogo, Yogyakarta), and several other architectural creations.

Among the architectural works, St. Maria Assumpta Church in Klaten justified in-depth analysis to show theological, ecclesiological, socio-cultural, and architectural significance in the complex socio-cultural milieu of Indonesian society. Therefore, this research addresses important questions, namely: What is the theological and ecclesiological significance of St. Maria Assumpta Church in Klaten in the socio-cultural context of Indonesian society? What contributions can the architectural insights from St. Maria Assumpta Church offer to the broader landscape of Catholic church building designs, particularly in Indonesia and Java?

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Charles BOUCHARD, *Whatever Happened to Sin. Virtue, Friendship, and Happiness in Moral Life*, 2013, 59; John A. H. LEWIS, *The Architecture of Medieval Churches: Theology of Love in Practice*, New York, 2018, 67.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Anne-Françoise MOREL, *Glorious Temples or Babylonian Whores: The Culture of Church Building in Stuart England through the Lens of Consecration Sermons*, Leiden/Boston, 2019, 199.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Mudji SUTRISNO, Sosok Romo Mangun: Inspirasi-Inspirasi & Karyanya, *Jurnal Seni Nasional Cikini* 3, 3 (2018), 7-14; Rudy TRISNO – Fermanto LIANTO – Denny HUSIN, A Typological Investigation of The Y.B. Mangunwijaya's Urban Church, *DIMENSI (Journal of Architecture and Built Environment)* 47, 1 (2021), 1-10.

## 1. Theoretical framework

### 1.1. Theological-ecclesiological meaning

To comprehend the theological thoughts of Mangunwijaya, it is important to position life as a Catholic priest in the historical framework of the Archdiocese of Semarang. Albertus Soegijapranata SJ (1896-1963) is the first indigenous bishop of the archdiocese and serves as an important figure. The life narrative shows the broader struggle of the Catholic Church to establish and shape its identity as a community deeply rooted in the society and culture. Bishop Soegijapranata bore witness to the colonial era, where resistance against European colonial powers coexisted with the multifaceted role and significance of the Church introduced by European missionaries.

In the pursuit of grounding the presence of the Catholic Church in Indonesian society and culture, Soegijapranata entrusted Mangunwijaya –newly ordained as a priest– with the task of studying architecture in Aachen, Germany.<sup>12</sup> The existing church still bore a distinctly »colonial« character and aspired to construct a church infused with more indigenous Javanese identity. Meanwhile, Justinus Darmojuwono (bishop from 1964 to 1981), carried forth the ideals of the predecessor. After the return of Mangunwijaya from Europe in 1967, the indigenous Catholic church building St. Maria Assumpta Church in Klaten was created as an inaugural masterpiece. The context of renewal from the Second Vatican Council profoundly marked the Catholic Church during the era. An important paradigm shift was the transformation in ecclesiological understanding, emphasizing the Church as »the people of God.«

The »indigenization,« or the effort to firmly root the Catholic Church in Indonesian society, remains a persistent challenge. However, this process is often confined to liturgy, focusing primarily on connecting local cultural elements with expressions of faith during worship rituals. There is also a tendency to regard church buildings as functional places of worship. In contrast, Mangunwijaya, through thoughts and architectural innovations, expanded the vision of indigenization initiated by the early leaders of the Catholic Church in the Archdiocese of Semarang.

Church buildings bear a significant title with profound meaning. This shows the importance of considering theological and philosophical dimensions in shaping the form and function of structures. Church is the commu-

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<sup>12</sup> Cf. Karel STEENBRINK, Y. B. Mangunwijaya's Blueprint for a Diaspora Church in Indonesia, *Exchange* 27, 1 (1998), 18.

nity of God's people and a symbol of the presence of Christ in the world. The conception of the Church as a community from the Greek »*ekklesia*« predates the development of physical building.

This shows an intriguing logical consequence that the architecture symbolizes the church as a community. As an architectural creation, the building embodies the authentic Church, which exists as a community in German, »*Gemeinschaft*.« This is because church building is integral to the »Mystical Body of Christ« (*Lumen Gentium*, Article 7) and functions as a »Sacrament.« Architecture includes diverse forms and functions, each carrying specific meanings. In the ecclesiastical context, these meanings include notions of community, inclusivity, and the presence of Christ in the world. The meanings must determine the expression in architectural works to harmonize with principles of form, aesthetics, and function.

Church is an institution and a living sacrament, serving as a sacred symbol through Christ. Karl Rahner described the Church as a fundamental sacrament,<sup>13</sup> and a sacred symbol to show the handiwork of God. Additionally, the virtues of Christ's life are embodied, emphasizing accessibility to the small and weak, companionship with all people, as well as the proclamation of the message of salvation and liberation to humanity. In this context, Jesus Christ assumed the full spectrum of human experience, including joys and sorrows. Church is immersed in the world to reflect the sorrows and joys of humanity, as expressed in *Gaudium et Spes*, Article 1.

The Church is called to be a presence in the world, engaging with diverse cultures, as emphasized in *Gaudium et Spes*, article 59. In line with the principle, the Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC), in Number 1180, shows the importance of the role.

»Where the exercise of religious freedom is not hindered, Christian citizens build buildings designated for worship. This visible church is not a place of ordinary assembly, but rather depict and testify to church, which lives in this place, the dwelling place of God among men reconciled and united in Christ.« [emphasis by author].

The vision of Mangunwijaya for indigenization resonates with an ecclesiology that is attuned to the sorrows and joys of the world (*Gaudium et Spes*, article 1) in diverse global cultures (*Gaudium et Spes*, article 59), and actively dwells among the people (*Catechism of Catholic Church*, number 1180) in the vicinity.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. Karl RAHNER, *Foundations of Christian Faith*, New York., 1992, 342–346.

## 1.2. Architectural value

Architecture is a profoundly meaningful art form, deserving in-depth exploration for a comprehensive understanding.<sup>14</sup> The concept transcends the confines of visual art as the most multifaceted and enriched forms. The actual scope of architecture is more than the aspirations of the architects.<sup>15</sup> The reduction of architecture to visual art or a discipline of design understates the essence. In this context, architecture is not confined solely to visual aesthetics or design principles.

These limited perspectives arise from a particular mindset influenced by the spatial matrix of human existence. The spatial matrix wields a substantial influence on the perception of things, including preconceived notions. However, architecture possesses a vast spectrum of interpretations in influencing relationships, evoking emotional responses, as well as shaping actions and self-perceptions.<sup>16</sup> Architecture is a practical, poetic, and philosophical art to structure and imbue space with meaning.<sup>17</sup> Moreover, this dimension narrates and expounds on physical and spatial lived experiences of the world.<sup>18</sup> The essence of a building is to merge with the surroundings through spaces intricately connected to the context.<sup>19</sup>

Analyzing an architectural work is similar to using a literary work brimming with meanings, correlations, and symbols. The examination of a creative work diverges significantly from dissecting a natural phenomenon such as geological formations, flora and fauna distribution, as well as biological organism systems. An architectural work demands an appreciation of the underlying intellectual vision. This includes delving into unique concepts and the creative use of architectural methods. Existing buildings pulsate with the vitality of humanity—the »*animal symbolicum*«, infused with human dispositions, inclinations, desires, and ideals. In this context, a building shows the character of the individual.<sup>20</sup> Architecture embodies the idea of life and expresses the aspiration for an ideal existence.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>14</sup> Cf. Alberto Pérez GÓMEZ, *The Space of Architecture. Meaning as Presence and Presentation*, in *Questions of Perception: Phenomenology of Architecture*, San Francisco, 2006, 7–25.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. Simon UNWIN, *Analysing Architecture*, New York, 2013, 6, 11, 12.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, 34, 67, 74, 110.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, 163, 187, 193.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. Daniel LIBESKIND, *Breaking Ground: Adventures in Life and Architecture*, London, 2005, 3–18.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. Simon UNWIN, *Analysing Architecture*, 134, 295.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. Y. B. MANGUNWIJAYA, *Wastu Citra: Pengantar ke Ilmu Budaya Bentuk Arsitektur, Sendi-sendi Filsafatnya, beserta Contoh-contoh Praktis*, Jakarta, 2009, 149–168.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. Juhani PALLASMAA, *An Architecture of Seven Senses*, in *Questions of Perception: Phenomenology of Architecture*, San Francisco, 2006, 27–38.



### 1.3. *The value of »genius loci«*

The term »genius loci« includes the essence or »soul« of a place or structure. In Roman mythology, *genius loci* were connected to the protective spirit of a particular location. A synonymous term for *genius loci* is »aura« (Latin), signifying »wind« or »breeze.« Church building is expected to possess a distinct aura expressed through statements such as »The aura of this place is peaceful, calming, eerie, or unsettling«. In this context, a unique charm or ambiance is emitted to influence human interaction with the surroundings. A building designer can infuse »spirit« into designs by incorporating material and non-material elements reflecting life experiences. Therefore, discussions surrounding *genius loci* include inter- and multidisciplinary methods, drawing from philosophy, geography, architecture, cultural anthropology, ethnography, history, spirituality, and theology.<sup>22</sup>

Christian Norberg-Schulz meticulously articulated the intricate connection between people and place. A shared identity was developed, giving rise to relationships, friendships, and communities when connected with a group of people<sup>23</sup> in terms of the »concept of place«. <sup>24</sup> Norberg-Schulz shows the idea that the value of a place transcends the physical dimensions. This is connected to the geographical, historical, cultural, architectural, social, economic, and various other dimensions.

Møystad stated that Norberg-Schulz crafted the »concept of place« in responding to the profound question of meaning: What constitutes meaning, and how can related environments be created? This question analyzes semiotics, exploring how one entity can symbolize or represent another. Therefore, a semiotic perspective is indispensable to understanding Norberg-Schulz's concept of place. In the semiotic framework of Ferdinand de Saussure,<sup>25</sup> place functions as the 'signifier' and the 'signified', rendering the concept open-ended.

Architecture is developed through the intricate connection of space, time, communication, and meaning. The relationship between meaning and space, time, as well as communication is profoundly significant.<sup>26</sup> Meaning

<sup>22</sup> Cf. Jūratė MARKEVIČIENĖ, *The Spirit of The Place – The Problem of (Re)Creating*, *Journal of Architecture and Urbanism* 36, 1 (2012), 73–74.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. Christian NORBERG-SCHULZ, *Toward A Phenomenology of Architecture*, New York, 1979, 53–54.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 6, 8, 11, 14.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. Ferdinand DE SAUSSURE, *Course in General Linguistics*, New York, 2011, 75.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. Amos RAPOPORT, *Human Aspects of Urban Form: Towards a Man - Environment Approach to Urban Form and Design*, Oxford, 1977, 270.



can be considered an unspoken communication between humans and the environment, influencing actions toward objects and individuals.<sup>27</sup> To apprehend the meaning of an architectural creation, it is essential to fathom the myriad phenomena.<sup>28</sup>

## 2. Methodological approach

The theological-ecclesiological significance of St. Maria Assumpta Church in Klaten and the architectural insights were investigated through qualitative research. The methodology proves invaluable considering the values of participants, interpretations, and meanings concerning St. Maria Assumpta Church building.<sup>29</sup> Among the qualitative methods, the phenomenological method is the most apt for exploring meaning.<sup>30</sup>

This research used two distinct data collection methods. Firstly, unstructured interviews served as a method of gathering insights from users and non-users of church building, including the perspectives, interpretations, beliefs, and impressions of parishioners, priests, viewers, and non-Catholics. A total of 5 informants from each category of users and non-users were included. In qualitative analysis, the emphasis lies on depth rather than breadth, making the sample size comparatively modest compared to quantitative analysis.<sup>31</sup> Secondly, a content analysis of architectural research and critiques was conducted to capture the perspective of architects on church buildings. Data for the content analysis were drawn from publications such as books and journal articles that reviewed St. Maria Assumpta Church in Klaten. In addition, content analysis extended to information derived from authentic sketches and notes. This was attributed to Mangunwijaya, a prominent architect, documented by Erwinthon P. Napitupulu, who was honored by the Indonesian Architect Association (IAI) for documenting the architectural creations in 2001.

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<sup>27</sup> Cf. Michael Quinn PATTON, *Qualitative Research & Evaluation Methods: Integrating Theory and Practice*, Thousand Oaks, 2014, 56 .

<sup>28</sup> Cf. Amos RAPOPORT, *The Meaning of the Built Environment: A Nonverbal Communication Approach*, Tucson, 1990, 12.

<sup>29</sup> Cf. John W. CRESWELL – J. David CRESWELL, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*, New York, 2022, 92.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. John W. CRESWELL – Cheryl N. POTH, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches*, New York, 2016, 314.

<sup>31</sup> Cf. Matthew B. MILES – A. Michael HUBERMAN, *Qualitative Data Analysis: An Expanded Sourcebook*, Thousand Oaks, 1994, 10-12.

A total of 2 distinct sets of data were collected and analyzed, representing the perspectives of architects and non-architect groups, including users and non-users of church building. The analytical process followed a structured framework outlined by Ritchie and Spencer.<sup>32</sup>

### 3. Research results

#### 3.1. *St. Maria Assumpta Church in theological and socio-cultural context*

St. Maria Assumpta Church represents the second architectural effort of Mangunwijaya after research and study in Germany. The formative academic years coincided with the Second Vatican Council, an important event that catalyzed the exploration of novel ideas about church design. The initial foray into this effort was manifested with the design of St. Maria Fatima (in Sragen) church building. In this context, Mangunwijaya introduced the concept of the »church as the house of God and men.«

In the Judeo-Christian tradition, places of worship have been termed »houses of God.«<sup>33</sup> However, the innovative perspective of Mangunwijaya was profoundly influenced by the Javanese notion of »sacred place,« which integrated with the »profane place.« This integration is inherent in the design of the traditional Javanese house, distinguished by the zoning system. Mangunwijaya further developed the concept in the design for St. Maria Assumpta Church in Klaten, completed in 1968.

In the method of Mangunwijaya to church design, the emphasis does not revolve around the functional aspect of facilitating liturgical ceremonies. The concept is grounded in a socio-historical theological comprehension of the »Church as an entity.« This is discernible in the writings of Mangunwijaya, showing the intrinsic connection between »church buildings« and »community culture.« Mangunwijaya comprehensively examined church building

<sup>32</sup> Cf. Jane RITCHE – Liz SPENCER, *Qualitative Data Analysis for Applied Policy Research*, in *Qualitative Data Analysis*, New York, 1994, 173–194; Liz SPENCER, *Analysis in Practice*, in *Qualitative Research Practice: A Guide for Social Science Students and Researchers*, London, 2013, 296–309. It consists of five key steps: (a) acquainting the researches with the data, (b) establishing a thematic framework, (c) indexing the data, (d) structuring the data methodologically, (e) interpretation of the data.

<sup>33</sup> Shulamit LADERMAN – Yair FURSTENBERG, *Jewish and Christian Imaging of The »House Of God«*. A Fourth Century Reflection of Religious and Historical Polemics, in *Interaction between Judaism and Christianity in History, Religion, Art and Literature*, (2009) 431–456, accessed September 24, 2023, [https://brill.com/display/book/ed-coll/9789047424826/Bej.9789004171503.i-626\\_024.xml](https://brill.com/display/book/ed-coll/9789047424826/Bej.9789004171503.i-626_024.xml).

development from the Early to the Colonial Era, Post-Vatican II, and Asian society. Even though the holistic interpretation was presented in the book *Diaspora Church*, the fundamental concepts underpinning the architectural design of St. Maria Assumpta Church show a consistent progression of the ecclesiological understanding, evolving from early ventures to the eventual formulation.<sup>34</sup>

After the Second Vatican Council, the prevailing conception of the church evolved with an increasing emphasis on inclusivity and a departure from the hierarchy. The insights of Mangunwijaya into traditional church layouts reflected »Church of Triumph,« where the priest, symbolizing Christ, occupied the forefront. The architectural representation was transformed into a »*Punakawan*/servant Church,« an emblematic figure of a devoted servant in Javanese tradition.

The reimagining of church is from the interpretation of the Asian and Indonesian context. Meanwhile, the Catholic Church community exists as a »minority,« dispersed in the diaspora, in contrast to the historical dominance in Europe, which assumed a triumphant and authoritative stance. The qualities of *Punakawan*, as humble servants, epitomize the image of the Church as a community (*communio*), an emphasis articulated in the Second Vatican Council (*Lumen Gentium*, Chapter II).

Mangunwijaya recognized that the presence of the Catholic community as a minority in Indonesian society led to distinct characteristics. In this context, importance is accorded to local culture in shaping the physical aspects of places of worship. Mangunwijaya also reported elements such as the »open pavilion« (*dalem keramat* in Javanese language), »*paguyuban*, familiarity, appreciation of nature, and profane-sacred psychology.« These elements harmonize with the vision of the Second Vatican Council from a closed (characterized by monologue, authoritarianism, and hierarchy) to an open Church (promoting dialogue, partnership, and community). The notes serve as fundamental guiding principles in the design of church buildings, according to the perspectives of Mangunwijaya.

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<sup>34</sup> Cf. Christian Aldo KUSUMA – Dionius Bismoko MAHAMBORO, *Inklusivitas Komunitas Katolik menurut Y. B. Mangunwijaya. Penelusuran terhadap Karya Arsitektural dan Teologis*. Presented at the *Seminar Nasional Sanata Dharma Berbagi: Sosial dan Humaniora 2023*, Yogyakarta, 2023, 983–904.

### 3.2. *Mangunwijaya's architectural insights for the construction of places of worship*

The architecture reflects a profound commitment to simplicity. Church and chapel designs typically adhere to a square plan, embodying open pavilions without walls crowned by pyramid-shaped roofs. These structures faithfully adhere to the fundamental tenets of the architectural philosophy, which advocate minimizing height, using lightweight construction materials, particularly in upper sections, and isolating complex functions into distinct, unadorned buildings.<sup>35</sup>

The architectural journey begins with simplicity, a characteristic deeply rooted in the immediate environment of each project. The materials are sourced from the surrounding milieu, engaging local artisans who bring specialized skills and knowledge to the construction process. This simplicity extends beyond mere aesthetics to embody profound meaning and symbolize deep-seated affinity for the unassuming people.

The method of Mangunwijaya to architecture is intrinsically bound to a profound respect for cultural values. In this context, culture reflects the human experience, including thoughts, preferences, and sensibilities. The concept is dynamic and inherently relative, shaped by the unique attributes of a region. According to Mangunwijaya, the architectural expression of a desert culture must differ from a lush tropical region continuously drenched in rainfall. Shared religious affiliations, as seen in the variations between Chinese and Japanese architecture, also lead to diverse architectural cultures.<sup>36</sup>



**Figure 1.** *The simple red ornaments on the pillars symbolize the Holy Spirit.*

<sup>35</sup> Cf. Erwinthon P. NAPITUPULU, *Wastu Citra dan Citra Wastu* Y. B. Mangunwijaya: Kesesuaian Antara Yang-Dituliskan dan Yang-Diwujudkan, in Y.B. Mangunwijaya, *Wastu Citra*, Jakarta, 2013, 1-5.

<sup>36</sup> Cf. MANGUNWIJAYA, *Wastu Citra*, 85.

In the construction of St. Maria Assumpta Church, the perspective showed the central concept of Mangunwijaya. Catholic church architecture in Indonesia, specifically in Java, should not be constrained by European conventions. Java possesses a distinctive cultural heritage replete with symbolism that can seamlessly integrate with the Catholic faith through architectural forms. This amalgamation of symbols, deeply embedded in *wastu*, is a powerful communicative medium for individuals considering profound imagery.

The method of Mangunwijaya on cultural values does not imply an anti-foreign sentiment. In *Wastu Citra*, the European architect Le Corbusier (1887-1965) was considered. The architectural exemplar that captivated the interest of Mangunwijaya was Le Corbusier's Notre-Dame du Haut Chapel in Ronchamp, France. This masterpiece left a profound imprint on St. Maria Assumpta Church in Klaten. The Chapel of Notre Dame du Haut, distinguished by the sensuous, curved planes and the composition of substantial walls, collectively form a sculptural mass. Mangunwijaya held the architectural marvel in high regard, concerning the concept as an accomplishment of the late 20th century.<sup>37</sup>



Figure 2. Light shines into church through the glass windows.

Mangunwijaya embarked on an architectural revolution with the groundbreaking *Wastu Citra* concept, which found vivid expression in the works. The most iconic architectural creations in the extensive discourse were not cited on architectural principles and inspirations. This creative innovation and the proliferation of brilliant ideas shattered the traditional constraints of architecture to obtain the well-deserved title of the Father of Indonesian Modern Architecture.<sup>38</sup>

In the design of Le Corbusier, Mangunwijaya perceived a transformation of the *Alma Mater* Maria, shifting from the iconic 'queenship' depicted in the grand European church to an embodiment of motherhood, reminiscent of the

<sup>37</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, 238.

<sup>38</sup> Cf. Noor Cholís IDHAM, Riverbank Settlement and Humanitarian Architecture, the Case of Mangunwijaya's Dwellings and 25 Years After, Code River, Yogyakarta, Indonesia. *Journal of Architecture and Urbanism* 42, 2 (2018), 177–187.

womb known as »*gutra garba*« in Javanese language. This innovative architectural vision broke away from the verticality characterizing Gothic architecture, replacing the Gothic and Baroque styles with a form similar to Modern Expressionism. The architecture exudes the graceful lines of an unyielding village woman, skilled and resolute, bearing the weight of suffering. The design of Le Corbusier, rooted in archaic and unadorned natural forms, embodies a captivating poetry similar to the undulating rhythms of untamed natural vitality. The Chapel of Notre Dame du Haut is envisioned as a womb bathed in divine grace, starkly contrasting with the darkly foreboding abyss.<sup>39</sup>

Mangunwijaya, a devoted culturalist with a profound connection to nature, invokes the realm of cosmology to exemplify appropriate architectural insights for different structures, with a particular emphasis on houses of worship. Cosmology analyses the intricate relationships in the universe leading to a profound harmony and order known as '*kosmos*'. According to Mangunwijaya, each architectural creation should remain connected to the cosmos. This connection is specifically crucial for houses of worship, which serve as sacred spaces where humanity communes with the Divine. Architectural forms serve as powerful cosmological symbols when appropriately conceived.<sup>40</sup>

### 3.3 »*Genius loci*« values

St. Maria Assumpta Church acquired the name following a restoration effort led by Mangunwijaya. Before the renewal, the church bore the name »Church of Our Lady of the Blessed Sacrament.« Mangunwijaya conferred the title »Maria Assumpta« as a name selected through a deliberate and meaningful process. Certain aspects of the church, specifically the altar, entrance, and pond, maintain a deep connection with Our Lady. The church construction was finalized in 1968, and the structure remained unaltered since the original construction.

The groundbreaking ceremony of the church carried out by the Regent of Klaten was an important moment in history. Several influential figures played integral roles in the construction of church.

*»Romo Mangun built the church, but there were several figures included in the process of building church, namely: Mr. Suwondo (Regional Government employee in the Finance Department), Mr. Sutiyoso (Regent) who*

<sup>39</sup> Cf. MANGUNWIJAYA, *Wastu citra*, 115.

<sup>40</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, 77-120.



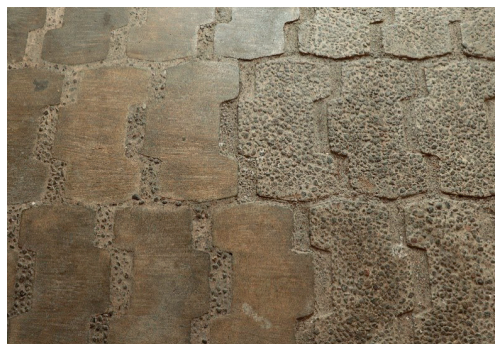
*laid the first stone, Mr. Mintarjo (draftsman of the Public Works Department).*« [Mr. Hari Waliman, a Muslim neighbor]

The participation shows the profound significance of the church-building effort for the congregation and the people of Klaten, reinforcing the role as a spiritual and communal symbol. The architectural design is distinguished by the deliberate openness, providing unimpeded access to the spaces. This design has consistently ensured the security and safety of church premises, with no recorded losses or thefts. The openness embodied in the architecture serves as a tangible testament to the inclusive ethos of St. Maria Assumpta Church. In addition, the design creates a welcoming and comfortable environment for parishioners, the broader public, and individuals of diverse religious backgrounds.

According to Muslim informants, the design is different from other churches. In this calm setting, the altar area is sacrosanct. Therefore, the architectural openness enhances the social component without diluting the profound religious experience of different religions. The altar has a more sacred atmosphere than the church entryway and congregational seats.

The informants expressed a profound appreciation for the distinctive design and recognized the potential to shape and cultivate a unique ambiance. The architectural design of St. Maria Assumpta Church caters to the needs of a small community, enhancing an environment that emulates the warmth and familiarity of home and village life. This atmosphere imparts a sense of belonging, contrasting the notion of being in an unfamiliar place. The impact of the environment is palpable, extending to the worship experience since the concept engenders a solemn atmosphere.

The design method of Mangunwijaya for St. Maria Assumpta Church shows an exceptional commitment to comprehensiveness, extending beyond architectural and interior elements to include the furniture of the church. The benches provided for the congregation, intentionally designed without backrests, exemplify the meticulous attention. These benches offer a com-



**Figure 3.** *The floor tiles made from cement and gravel; not shiny but familiar to ordinary people from middle class.*



bination of aesthetic appeal and durability crafted from locally sourced *glugu* wood (coconut wood) found on-site. Moreover, the selection of *glugu* wood as a primary material is shown by the local availability and affordability. This choice enhances an environment of inclusivity, ensuring that church does not convey a sense of luxury or favor any particular socio-economic class. The method resonates deeply with churchgoers, reflecting the ethos of St. Maria Assumpta Church in supporting and accepting ordinary people. The ethos is palpable in every aspect of the design and material selection, with a particular emphasis on the unique character of the floor tiles.

*»This church is very populist. Just look at the tiles. Not like this (while pointing at the ceramic tiles). Since this was originally church for commoners. Therefore, the tiles were made like that.«* [Mrs. Nawang, a parishioner]

The use of reclaimed materials is an homage to the inherent worth of materials that possess the capacity to contribute to the design and essence. This choice embodies a respect for the continuity and potential of materials in line with profound philosophy transcending the physicality of the structure and extending into the realm of values and meaning.

*»...the altar was made from the remnants of the building's wood. The chairs are the same. ... made like the table of sacrificial offerings in the days of the prophets.«* [Mrs. Nawang, a parishioner]

*»Romo Mangun chose the basic material for the altar from used building materials. He did not want to throw away the remains. The meaning of the altar in church is as an altar of offerings«* [Mr. Bowo, a parishioner]

The congregation has remained unwavering in its commitment to preserving the design of Mangunwijaya. The church building, interior, and furniture continue to be meticulously maintained. The parish management has consistently declined the donations despite well-intentioned offers to donate new benches. Church persists in retaining the backless benches initially designed by Mangunwijaya, which carry profound philosophical and sociological significance. The parish board has selected to return the donations as a gesture of appreciation for the thoughtfully conceived design and a collective commitment to the preservation.

The attention of Mangunwijaya extends beyond the architecture and interior of the church, including the external ambiance. The presence of lush trees contributes to a tranquil and welcoming atmosphere, while the fish pond

enhances the sense of shade and coziness. The gentle sound of splashing water from the pond enriches the serene atmosphere, imparting a sense of peace. Visitors and parishioners appreciate the contribution of ponds to the ambiance of the church, enhancing comfort during liturgical celebrations.

## 4. Discussion

### 4.1 *St. Maria Assumpta Church design meaning*

The informants, including the parishioners, non-Christian neighbors, the parish priest, and visitors, collectively recognize that St. Maria Assumpta Church possesses a compelling and distinctive concept and character. This differentiation sets the church apart from conventional buildings. The essence is deeply rooted in the idea of locality, which permeates every aspect of architectural design, interior decor, and furniture. These informants perceive a clear contrast between St. Maria Assumpta Church and other structures. The uniqueness is not solely attributed to the divergence from standard church architecture but the innate harmony with the local environment. The informants witness the profound ability to resonate with the surroundings, including the physical, social, cultural, and religious dimensions.



**Figure 4.** *Altar area.*

St. Maria Assumpta Church integrates with the physical terrain, social fabric, cultural history, and religious milieu. The design is based on local dwellings and reflects the culture of the area. In addition, Javanese culture is reflected and firmly ingrained in the area. The architecture emphasizes that Javanese and Indonesian Catholics can celebrate faith while preserving and showing unique local identity. Indigenous architecture enhances local identity in Indonesia and Java.

*»Romo Mangun is a Javanese. Therefore, with St. Maria Assumpta Church, Romo Mangun wants to state that Javanese people should not*

*leave their culture. Through the pillars of church, he wanted to give a message that we should be Catholic with Indonesian characteristics. This church appears to face various directions, hence the altar is also placed on the side to face multiple directions. The church has many faces to care about many things.» [Mr. Bowo]*

The design of St. Maria Assumpta Church embodies simplicity and a deep balance with the daily lives of ordinary people. The concept is tangibly expressed through the entrance, which welcomes individuals from various directions, providing an atmosphere of openness and approachability. This emphasis on accessibility



**Figure 5.** *Wooden benches in church hallway.*

imbues the church with an aura of simplicity and friendliness. The architectural simplicity is evident in the design, which shows the shape of local houses with gable roofs, a common feature of nearby village dwellings. Socially, the church stands as an open and inclusive space, extending a warm invitation to individuals of diverse ethnicities, religions, and affiliations. This is drawn from Javanese architectural heritage and integrates religious symbolism into the design in the shape of the altar, which resembles the Virgin Mary's womb and carries a profound theological meaning.

The design philosophy that champions social openness also serves the practical purpose of creating a comfortable environment, facilitating a relaxed and pleasant atmosphere for worship. The interior design and the choice of furniture contribute to the atmosphere of relaxation and comfort. The bench design, precisely without backrests, embodies the idea of sitting quietly, attentively receiving, and appreciating the Word of God. The design and materials used for the pews emphasize a sense of equality among parishioners. There is an absence of extravagance since everyone shares the same experience in the house of God.

*»I felt calm when I entered this church, making me think I was living the Eucharistic celebration. That way of sitting makes me relaxed and live the word of God. Therefore, the backless chair has its own philosophy. It means*

*that when we sit with our bodies upright, we realize that we are in the presence of God. Also, there is no difference between the rich and the poor.«*

[Mrs. Kris, a parishioner]

Church design epitomizes simplicity and openness, underlining the important role of context in shaping the design. A comprehensive respect for context is woven into every aspect, from architectural elements to interior decor, furniture, and the exterior. The physical environment, situated in the broader context, is meticulously considered to create a comfortable space. Similarly, the social milieu, marked by diversity, obtains a welcoming and egalitarian expression in the simplicity and openness of the design. This reflects a commitment to accommodating individuals from all fields of life.

#### *4.2 Inclusivity in Mangunwijaya ecclesiology*

The Second Vatican Council emphasized the significance of »dialogue« as a critical concept. Dialogue includes reaching out to accept differences, underpinning the importance of inclusivity. In Indonesia, inclusivity is ingrained in the nation's fabric, symbolized by the state emblem, Garuda Pancasila, with the motto »*Bhinneka Tunggal Ika*.« This includes the fundamental nature and aspirations of every individual residing in the archipelago, regardless of diverse ethnicities, cultures, languages, religions, skin colors, or social classes.

The insights are rooted in theological renewal enhanced by the Second Vatican Council, with the motto »*aggiornamento*« often elucidated as »renewal« or »contextualization.« Mangunwijaya embodied the idea through the design of an open church. The abundance of doors, windows, and open walls signifies the readiness to accept people from various backgrounds. Moreover, this design symbolizes the openness of a nurturing mother who, with open but strong and resilient arms, welcomes everybody without discrimination. Mrs. Nawang, a parishioner, shares:

*»I find deep meaning in this place...I experience a sense of tranquility as if I were in my own home rather than a foreign place. This church feels like my second home, where I never feel out of place. Sometimes, when I am bored, I seek solace in this church.«*

The architectural design of the church exemplifies external inclusivity that extends to non-Catholics. The ideals of inclusivity put forth in *Gaudium et Spes* and *Nostra Aetate* are reflected in the design, creating a welcoming and

comforting atmosphere for non-Catholic visitors. Anggun, a Muslim student, shares her perspective, saying,

*»This exceeded my expectations... I used to think that church was dark and scary. It turns out that church does not have to be dark, as I have seen in movies. It turns out that church can also be open like this, not dark and not scary.«*

Indonesia is a diverse country often plagued by religious violence, including the refusal to build houses of worship or the destruction and burning of these places. St. Maria Assumpta Church has been an exception, having remained untouched by these incidents. During the socio-political conflict in 1965 (the rebellion of the Communist Party, known as G30S/PKI), when rumors circulated concerning the destruction, non-Catholic neighbors guarded and protected the church. Pak Wali, a Muslim neighbor, recalls:

*»It is safe, it is okay. When G30S incident occurred, there was news that this church would be burned down. At that time, I was still an RT administrator. When I had a child, just born on G30S, in 1965, this will be burned... At that time, when at mealtime, I gave food to people, they came in turn. Therefore, there were still people guarding the church.«*

The church's presence has unexpected positive effects on the local community, a testament to the inclusive principles underlying the architectural work. The spacious and open design can accommodate a large number of people attending the Eucharistic celebration. The increased number of parishioners does not pose a threat or disturbance to the local community. Mr. Jaka, a Muslim neighbor, shares his happiness,

*»I am very happy because this church is the biggest here... The residents feel helped by the presence of this church.«*

The concept of inclusivity has deeply influenced the ecclesiology of the Catholic Church, reaching the zenith during the Second Vatican Council and continuing to resonate in subsequent documents, such as *Fratelli Tutti* (2020). In this document, Pope Francis eloquently describes inclusivity as »fraternity,« a term that has gained prominence in social teachings. Fraternity embodies a sense of shared humanity, characterized by closeness and empathy toward others, starting within families and small communities.<sup>41</sup>

<sup>41</sup> Cf. Roland MINNERATH, Fraternity as a Principle of Social Ethics, in *Fratelli Tutti*, Vatican, 2021, 10.

### 4.3 Church building as a means of communication

Indonesian Catholic Church is still working toward indigenization in the society. However, this process is typically restricted to liturgy, particularly the expression of local culture during worship activities. Mangunwijaya has expressed the concept of indigenizing church buildings through thoughts and architectural inventions. According to Mangunwijaya Murray A. Rae, a theologian and architect from New Zealand, architecture extends beyond the utilitarian purpose of fulfilling practical requirements, including a poetic dimension capable of transforming the views of the surrounding environment.<sup>42</sup> Rae states that architecture can engender novel perspectives and enhance the understanding of the environment.

Architecture is a poetic effort, including more than the construction of physical edifices. The process comprises the creation of spatial environments with emotional and symbolic responses. In addition, architecture is regarded as an artistic medium capable of engendering aesthetic appeal, evoking a sense of wonder, and facilitating novel and profound modes of engagement with the surrounding environment. According to Rae, architecture possesses the capacity to shape the perceptions of reality. Architects can influence emotional states and cognitive perceptions by constructing aesthetically pleasing, balanced, and proportionate physical spaces. Therefore, unexplored novel perspectives and ideas may be endangered. The perspective of Rae concerning architecture as a »poetic activity« shows the importance of aesthetics in influencing the understanding of the constructed surroundings. Architects can construct environments with novel perspectives and facilitate unique encounters with the world by conceptualizing architecture as a creative expression rather than a utilitarian requirement. The utilization of the »aesthetic space« in the design of St. Maria Assumpta Church building by Mangunwijaya has been well implemented.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, church buildings could function as a source of communication in a heterogeneous culture such as Indonesian society. First, the design of the church communicated the values, beliefs, and traditions of the Christian faith. This was evident in the design components, the symbols, and the architectural plan. Second, the location of the church in a multicultural neighborhood represented the commitment to be a part of a larger community, transmitting a

<sup>42</sup> Cf. Murray A. RAE, *Architecture and Theology. The Art of Place*, Waco, TX, 2017, 2.



message of inclusivity and openness. Third, religious activities were used as a source of communication, namely worship services, community gatherings, and outreach programs. These activities united people from different cultural backgrounds, promoting understanding and dialogue. However, building the church in a heterogeneous culture might be difficult. For instance, local governments politicized the ability to issue permits for establishing places of worship, potentially leading to discrimination against minority groups. Therefore, the establishment of the church respected and recognized cultural and religious diversity.

The church architecture of Mangunwijaya considerably added to the contextual discussion of a heterogeneous culture. The concept of indigenization in the design showed an ecclesiology concerned with the pains and joys of the world. This strategy was prevalent in different cultures worldwide. The architectural creations showed and testified to the church as the dwelling place of God amid reconciled men and women in Christ. This method supported religious freedom, tolerance, and acceptance in a multicultural society.

### *Sažetak*

## **TEOLOŠKO ZNAČENJE I ARHITEKTONSKA VRIJEDNOST ZGRADE CRKVE SANTA MARIA ASSUMPTA (KLATEN, INDONEZIJA) I NJEZIN DOPRINOS MULTIKULTURALNOM DRUŠTVU**

**Dionius B. MAHAMBORO**

Sveučilište Sanata Dharma, Yogyakarta  
Jl. Kaliurang Km 7, Yogyakarta 55283  
dionius.bismoko@usd.ac.id

**Parmonangan MANURUNG**

Sveučilište Kristen Duta Wacana, Yogyakarta  
Jl. Dr. Wahidin 5-25, Yogyakarta 55221  
monang@staff.ukdw.ac.id

**Michael R. PABUBUNG**

Sveučilište Atma Jaya, Yogyakarta  
Jl. Babarsari 44, Yogyakarta 55281  
michael.pabubung@uajy.ac.id

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*Ključne riječi: crkva sv. Marije Uznesenja Klaten, Wastu Citra, Mangunwijaya, genius loci, multikulturalno društvo*