# A Transitional Space for Raising Public Heritage Awareness: A Preliminary Study

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#### **Abstract**

The Heritage awareness is an important element in ensuring the preservation of cultural heritage. Religion and cultural similarities are known to play an important role in heritage awareness. The problem in this research was the low awareness of the local community of their heritage, which was built from different religious cultures. In line with this, it is important to build an identity that can connect the community's religion with the religious context of the cultural heritage so that the community is aware of this heritage. This research aims to propose an architectural solution for raising public heritage awareness using religious similarity. Using literature review, the authors suggest the existence of a time tunnel that becomes a transitional space that connects people's current religious awareness with the past. The time tunnel is the context of cultural heritage in sites as well as in educational programs to raise awareness of the community's heritage as part of their identity. In general, the idea is supported by the liminality theory and threshold concept learning theory. We show the idea of using Buddhist heritage in contemporary Islamic Indonesia. These results provide concrete ideas based on architectural psychology and education and encourage the development of heritage conservation in areas that already have significant cultural differences from the communities that produce this heritage.

Keywords: architectural solution; Buddhism; heritage awareness; Hinduism; Islam; time tunnel

# Introduction

On March 14, 2001, the Taliban government in Afghanistan announced that it had destroyed Buddhist statues in their country, including the giant Bamiyan Buddha statue over two thousand years old. The issue may seem religious but it is more complex (Centlivres, 2008). The Afghan authorities were angry that foreigners were coming to the country to see the Buddha statues, not caring about the poverty that afflicted the Afghan people. However, the problem is, would they have destroyed the heritage had it been a mosque or the heritage of Islamic civilization?

Moreover, couldn't the revenue from tourism be managed with good governance to alleviate the poverty of the people around the site?

We certainly sympathize with the poverty of the Afghan people. Good sustainable heritage tourism management should be able to alleviate some of the poverty of the local communities around the Buddha statue. The Taliban government is simply incapable of managing this and blames tourists.

The above case exemplifies how low heritage awareness can destroy that heritage. Afghans do not think the statue is their heritage, but people from abroad do. Shore (2006) asks a similar question about cultural heritage in multicultural Britain: "Whose heritage?"

The heritage awareness is the awareness of the local population, not foreign tourists from afar. Of

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course, they do not feel that conservation is their responsibility and would not destroy it because they realize they are in a foreign country. The problem here is with the local people. How often do we find vandalism committed by local tourists in heritage destinations such as temples?

Unlike Europeans who highly value their heritage, In Indonesia, the problem of heritage awareness is blatant. From Borobudur to small temples, they are not spared from the target of vandalism (Taufik & Atmosudiro, 2005). Most heritage sites in Indonesia are located in rural areas far from supervision, have many access obstacles, and are in less educated social environments (Prima, 2020). Community groups oriented towards heritage conservation only emerged in 1987, long after Indonesia became independent from the Dutch in 1945 (Patria, 2021). Many Indonesian heritage statues and artifacts are bought and sold on the black market, taken from Hindu-Buddhist temples that are hundreds of years old (Smith et al., 2023). Conditions like this certainly demand more attention from all of us to act to make efforts that can increase public heritage awareness.

# Methodology

Researchers in this study used a literature study research method. Literature data in this research is generally a secondary source, in the sense that researchers obtain data from second hand and not original data from the first hand in the field. Library sources indeed contain more or less bias (prejudice) or the point of view of the person who made it (Zed, 2004). The data in this study were obtained from reputable scientific journals, books, mass media, and the Internet. The researchers conducted a review process of the literature sources that had been obtained. The information obtained becomes data that needs to be recorded and adjusted to the topic discussed. The final stage of this research is summarizing all the necessary data, which the researcher then abstracts.

#### **Result and Discussion**

#### **European Context**

Europeans are believed to be a nation that highly values their past heritage. The European nation's appreciation of its past heritage is inseparable from the embedded awareness that past heritage is a source of inspiration and aspiration. Both can generate a sense of pride and obligation (responsibility and obligation) (Kartodirdjo,

2005). Historically, this is a new thing. Awareness of European heritage only came to a head in the 20th century, when rulers connected their people to past glories to create a modern state (Cameron, 2010). As a newly formed modern state, it certainly needs a narrative to persuade, transform the subject into a new state, include them in the new nation, and convince them that the future belongs together (Nordholt et al., 2008).

For modern Europeans, the creation of heritage consciousness is a form of nostalgia for Roman unity and glory that was able to unite Europe, the greatness of King Arthur, and the advancement of art and culture in the Renaissance. It can be said that the thinking paradigm of modern Europeans is in line with the opinion that history is a form of psychology where culture makes an account of its past (Kartodirdjo, 2005). In contrast, in the case of Bamiyan Buddhism in Afghanistan, the driving factor for heritage awareness was a centurieslong cooperation between Buddhists and Muslims on the Silk Route, as realized by Elverskog (2010). Nevertheless, of course, Elverskog's efforts came too late. The Bamiyan statue had fallen nine years earlier.

Different contexts and different motivations can support the emergence of heritage awareness. Bernard Lewis (2009), in his book History: Remembered, Recovered, Invented, states that awareness of past heritage is inseparable from historical reality. views of remembering history is more of a statement about the past rather than history in the strict sense. This type of history is compiled based on personal collections that are claimed to come from past generations to living traditions. Secondly, Recovered History is the history of events, movements, figures, and ideas that have, to some extent, been forgotten and rejected by a community's collective memory. Then, it is rediscovered by experts by studying historical and archaeological records over a long or short period. Third, invented history is written with a new purpose extracted from the two types mentioned above of history and engineered when necessary (Lewis, 2009).

### **Indonesian Context**

For Indonesia, which is very pluralistic, the factor of past greatness is less relevant, and Srivijaya was indeed great, and so was Majapahit. However, what about the hundreds of other kingdoms scattered across the archipelago? These kingdoms were local with local glories and,

therefore, local consciousness. It is not surprising, then, that local consciousness has sometimes led many cities in Indonesia to try to find their "birthday" and sometimes without questioning what they mean by city (Abdullah & Surjomiharjo, 2019).

The solution for Afghanistan must be recognized as more suitable for Indonesia. Indonesian Muslims have interacted with Hindu-Buddhist societies. If we look at the collection of archaeological objects from the early 15th century AD, there was a close relationship between art and religion. Therefore, many art objects show the influence of religious thought at that time, especially Hindu-Buddhist and Islamic religions in the following historical phase (Coedes, 2010; Soemadio, 1997). They were intertwined, just as Afghan Islamic society cooperated with Hindu-Buddhist society on the Silk Road.

In line with this, much Hindu-Buddhist heritage has been absorbed into the architecture of the Muslim communities of the archipelago today (Tajudeen, 2017). Such cultural acculturation is evident in the architecture of old mosques in Indonesia, which, although restored, still retain their architectural principles. These old mosques are sometimes adorned with decorations taken from traditional motifs that were used before the arrival and spread of Islam. This type of architecture and decoration can be traced back to elements of earlier religious architecture, namely Hindu temples symbolizing the Meru (sacred mountain in Hinduism), which can still be recognized from the reliefs of several temples in East Java and Bali (Tjandrasasmita, 2009).

This form of acculturation can also be seen in the concept of traditional houses in Indonesia. The concept of the eight Buddhist paths of virtue could be the origin of the Batanghari nine on Palembang pyramid houses (Aziz, 2020). The form of residential buildings in the settlements of the Arab ethnic group, for example, illustrates how the Arab community adapts, namely the shape of pyramids, houses on stilts, and indies (Apriana, 2020). Many Hindu-Buddhist ornaments in Borobudur and Prambanan Temples are preserved in the ornamentation of mosques in Java (Lee-Niinioja, 2011). Similarly, the Hindu paduraksa gate pattern can be found in the Kudus mosque (Wahby, 2007). The preservation of these ornaments is remarkable, even though the original architecture of the ancient Hindu-Buddhist kingdoms was left stranded in the jungle (such as Muara Takus temple) or buried underground (such as Borobudur temple) and awaiting

recognition by European explorers in the colonial era.

This awareness should motivate cultural heritage awareness in Indonesian Muslim communities. This awareness will correlate the culture and identity of the Muslim community with Hindu-Buddhist temples in Indonesia. It should prevent them from coming and vandalizing them intentionally. Many instances of vandalism, such as in Cangkuang and Borobudur temples, result from visitors' lack of awareness of their cultural heritage. It would be different if the cultural heritage were closely tied to their identities, such as a mosque or a sunan's tomb.

Studies show how a sense of identity (identification) can positively impact management and conservation concerns (Gallou, 2022; Roslan et al., 2021; Salameh et al., 2022). The more psychologically close a person is to a heritage, the more he or she will have a vital concern for the physicality of that heritage (Massara & Severino, 2013). Therefore, it is easy to recognize problems and provide concrete solutions.

#### **Multi-faith Space**

A deep understanding of this sense of belonging is undoubtedly related to historical insights gained at school and in the public sphere. Historical insights gained at school and in the public sphere have a strategic meaning in efforts to shape the character and civilization of a dignified nation and in the formation of Indonesian people who have a sense of nationality and love for the country (Tariq & Jinia, 2013). Pride in the heritage of the past is an effective medium to realize a sense of nationality and love for the country. Awareness of heritage gained directly from insights obtained through learning in schools and the public sphere is very important to be taught, aimed at transferring knowledge and noble values of the nation's civilization (Latif, 2017).

Based on this thinking, we can raise the concept of multi-faith space as a particular form of interpretation. The space is multi-faith because we want to raise heritage awareness from the noble values of Indonesian people, which is pluralism. From the ancient era, Indonesia has been a cultural melting pot for various ethnic civilizations from the northern side of the Indian Ocean and the western side of the Pacific Ocean. This cultural diversity is a national pride, symbolized in the national emblem, Unity in Diversity.

A multi-faith space is where multiple identities, relationships, and histories of people, cultures, and religions exist simultaneously (Biddington, 2013). The space is transitional; in a sense, it connects two different spaces: outside space and the heritage itself as the inside space.

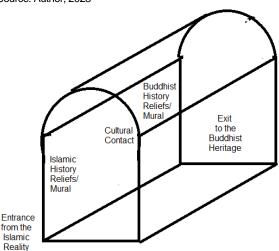
This space can be a tunnel or hallway that displays the history that connects the cultural heritage to the present context of the community or at least to the early history of Islamic civilization. We will call it a time tunnel to distinguish it from multi-faith spaces generally explicitly used for worship (Crompton, 2013).

Visitors who enter the passage of time can feel how the temple relates to its reality in the present. For example, in the case of Muara Takus Temple, the space can tell the story of how Buddhist priests from China and India came and studied at the Muara Takus complex. Some of these priests interacted with Muslim traders from Arabia. Arabs sold goods needed by the priests, such as sitting mats to study at Muara Takus. The story can then go back to when many Muslim traders entered Srivijaya, and some may be paintings depicting Muslim traders dealing with Buddhist priests in the background of the Muara Takus Temple.

The narrative could continue with how Buddhist priests taught the concept of the eight paths of goodness to the community. Then, the community saw it as compatible with Islamic teachings and built pyramid houses inspired by the concept. Part of this story is undoubtedly drawn from the historical facts of Islam and Hindu-Buddhist relations in the past (Sholeh, 2018). The richness of Srivijaya's cultural heritage is wellknown in publications written by experts (Razzaq et al., 2017). The most authoritative reference on Srivijaya's cultural heritage can be found in George Coedes and Louis-Charles Damais's phenomenal work that has been translated under the title Kedatuan Sriwijaya (Coedes & Damais, 1989).

An example can be seen at the entrance of a shopping mall in Beijing, where visitors enter the mall through a hallway with screens on all sides (roof, floor, walls) that present videos about mall promotions or tourism promotional videos. In Indonesia, the walls, roof, and floor do not have to be high-tech. It is enough with some colorful paintings, murals, or reliefs. The ceiling should be curved for the relaxation from the transitional space stress (Li et al., 2022). Figure 1 illustrates the structure. The structure will be placed in front of the heritage as the entrance into the complex.

Figure 1. A Time Tunnel Source: Author, 2023



Theoretically, time tunnels can work based on threshold concept learning (TCL) theory (Land et al., 2014). TCL theory is a theory that departs from the application of architectural psychology in an educational context. TCL uses the concept of liminal space that departs from architectural psychology literature and the threshold concept from educational science literature.

Liminal space is a point in physical or conceptual space-time where humans transition from one state to another (Cuthelll et al., 2011). Examples of liminal spaces are ports, vehicles, airports, beaches, and any space that is a stopover place after someone has finished something and will enter the following state (Huang et al., 2018). The time before bed or commuting home or work can also be seen as a liminal space. The time tunnel proposed by this paper can be viewed as a liminal space. It is a liminal space that transitions from the condition of tourists outside and inside the heritage.

Humans carry out various behaviors in liminal space that they do not usually do in other spaces. Huang et al.'s (2018) study at airports revealed that passengers use the airport as a liminal space to observe other passengers, assist strangers, show social traits, make it a mobile office space, relax, enjoy the free time available, and think. Huang et al. (2018) show that liminal space can be used as a tourist, social, and personal space. Tourist space is when visitors treat the airport as a tourist attraction. The airport's role as a tourist attraction is most likely to occur to people visiting the airport for the first time (Huang et al., 2018).

The role of liminal space as a tourist space can be in line with the time tunnel and only works for visitors coming to the tourist destination for the first time. For visitors like this, they do not treat the time tunnel as a transitional space but as a destination space itself. For them, liminal space is a journey from their place to the tourist destination.

TCL theory further argues that in liminal space, humans can also learn. This learning ability relies on the terminology of the threshold concept. The threshold concept is a concept that is difficult for students to learn, but it is essential to understanding a subject (Heading & Loughlin, 2018). If someone can learn the threshold concept, they will have a broader and more profound idea of the subject. Examples of threshold concepts are the atomic concept, evidence-based management, and the theory of biological evolution.

According to TCL theory, the threshold concept has implications for forming a conceptual liminal space. Liminal space occurs because students who learn threshold concepts will relinquish their old understanding of the subject area and enter a new, unfamiliar understanding. Students will enter some phases analogous to tunnels, including the confrontation phase between the threshold and understanding, old concept troublesomeness of the threshold concept phase, the integrative and bounded phase, the irreversibility phase, and the transformative phase (Irving et al., 2019). So, on the journey through the liminal tunnel, students will feel doubts, generate negative emotions such as confusion, begin to experience enlightenment, arrive at a position where they can no longer understand a problem using the old paradigm, and use the new paradigm to understand further various material subjects.

In line with TCL theory, heritage awareness in different cultural contexts is a threshold concept because it involves building historical relationships and expanding identity. Heritage awareness as a threshold concept. Various efforts were made to increase cultural awareness. In architecture, cultural heritage promotion has included heritage trails and heritage walk programs, which have proven effective in encouraging cultural awareness (Shimray, 2019; Thomas, 2010). The idea of the time tunnel as a physical TCL space is similar to these two programs in that it encourages tourists to move through space while being provided with knowledge. From the perspective of TCL theory,

the time tunnel will be effective because the narrative built along the hallway enlightens and guides tourists from their initial conditions to a historical journey that finally arrives at the reality of the destination. Throughout the process of the time tunnel, tourists learn both intentionally because they consider this tunnel no longer a liminal space and accidentally because they are exposed to unfamiliar concepts, leading to a transformation of thinking.

The multi-faith time tunnel will become an emergent space. An emergent space is one in which people accept their differences and can collectively reframe their goals (Qureshi, 2019). Here, people build awareness that what they are coming to is a heritage they must care for because it aligns with their current identity. Awareness of this shared heritage will undoubtedly foster a sense of pride and a sense of responsibility and obligation to the shared heritage.

Designing the concept of awareness of this common heritage in the public sphere in Indonesia will give rise to an archaic attitude in looking at the nation's civilization. Superior wisdom and wise attitudes will be obtained by deepening historical events through heritage traces, including cultural, socio-economic, and socio-political relations between actors and community groups. Deepening historical events will encourage the general public to be able to understand the behavior of mutual respect (self-respect), brotherhood (human brotherhood), social equality, protection (security of life), fairness (justice), and encourage people to be educated (education) (Garvey & Krug, 2015).

#### Conclusion

Heritage awareness is an inseparable element of conservation. Efforts to raise and maintain this heritage awareness can be achieved through education and architectural and historical engineering. In this article, the author suggests establishing a multi-faith space called the passage of time as an introductory tunnel for visitors who come to a non-Islamic cultural heritage destination. This multi-faith time tunnel describes the history that connects the Hindu-Buddhist heritage with Islamic culture, assuming that most visitors are Muslim. In this way, a cognitive continuity between past heritage and present cultural life is established. The content of this multi-belief space is the result of historical studies on the civilization that shaped the heritage of the Islamic period and, if possible, the present.

This content can also be transmitted to learning materials in schools or for heritage awareness education programs so that it impacts visitors and the broader community who have never been and only know the name of the heritage. Of course, in the process, the architects should consult with the locals to ensure that the ideas are compatible with the local wisdom. This research, however, still a preliminary study. Experimental research could be performed to test the effect of a multi-faith time tunnel on Moslem heritage awarness.

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