Pekong, the symbol identity of Chinese at Pekan Labuhan Medan Indonesia

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Pekong, the symbol identity of Chinese at Pekan Labuhan Medan Indonesia

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Abstract. Urban architecture has always been combined by physical and non-physical components. The physical is formed by spatial pattern, space and history. The non physical is formed by social and cultural life of the community. The combination of that space would give the meaning as a place for the people that use it. Pekong has existed since 1890 in the area of Pekan Labuhan. The presence of two Pekongs in this area gives the symbol for distribution patterns of Chinese residential and community in Pekan Labuhan district. Symbolizing the Pekongs is sourced from being able to shape and influence the components such as the market, shophouses, and houses. Beside that the Pekongs also identify of districts and social influence of the community. The component activities enliven Pekongs make spaces for Pekongs grow to become a magnificent buildings in the community settlement. The aim of this research is to examine and describe the Pekong that has became the identity and attraction to the area. By using the qualitative method this research found that the Pekongs are the important buildings in identifying of the district.

1. Introduction
The architecture can describe the values, cultural and community activities that occurred at that time. It is then known as the symbol which is a sign of man-made are used not only to introduce an object but at the same time host it (Langer, 1942). The symbol is also a doctrine to guide human thought towards an understanding of something in depth. The symbol is also often used as a conducting medium of communication between each other, so that despite the absence of firsthand information about a building, but through the symbols we got information about the history, identity, function and meaning of the building.

Responses of human vision or against symbols that are present in space depends greatly on its ability to recognize the symbol with a capital of memory in the brain and the shape of the symbol in the description on the man who saw it. The spaces in the area in the form of location, buildings and landmarks can be understood by human beings when there is one symbol that is able to explain the whole meaning of the area.

Furthermore, the spaces around the symbols are clearly have established human activity or the communities that live in it. The occupants of the space make use of the venue for the struggling defending life through a wide range of interests, such as economic, social, cultural or religious. The human activity will slowly form a social relationships because their lives are different background but coexist in the same space. Intercultural community life together in it cannot be separated from the attractiveness of the region's symbol, so that the symbol is not only becoming a marker of the region, but also has become a strength of communities that live in the spaces around the symbols. These
spaces have become the identity of the area both for the people that live in it as well as people from outside the area.

The district of Pekan Labuhan is one of the important areas in Medan (Fig.1). The area of the cross which is very near from the port of Belawan is not only rich in values and meanings of the historical development of the city. This area is rich in values and the meaning of symbols, the phenomenon of space and activity of the community that lives in it. The symbol of this area is characterized by the presence of two Pekong as places of worship of the Chinese community, the spaces of old building with Chinese architecture and the Dutch Colonials influence.

![Fig. 1. (a) Medan, (b) Pekan Labuhan](image)

Based on current population, more than 60 percent of the community in Pekan Labuhan is Malays, while the remaining less than 40 percent is ethnic Batak, Javanese and Chinese. This means that today Chinese people does not dominate this place. However a row of shophouses of Chinese style buildings, Pekongs dominate the main spaces. Physically the building describe the identity of the Chinese villages. Based on the phenomenon of space and human activity in this area, this article describe how the space can identify the existence of Chinese people eventhough the area dominated by Malay communitiy nowadays.

2. Methodology
This research venue is located in Pekan Labuhan, Medan. Since the type of this research is qualitative, hence the most effective method to collect data was by interview and direct observation. With interview, the researcher can get the thoughts and ideas that are stored in the minds of respondents who are the people from the community who live in the area. The process of interview was conducted in a relaxed way with the snowball system. Furthermore, researcher directed observing the space and interpreted as the qualitative method analysis. In this method, the social phenomenon and space phenomenon that occurred is concluded as a result of in-depth interpretation and clearly described.

3. Discussion
There are two kinds of architectural components, namely physical and non-physical component. Physical components focused to look buildings and physical objects that exist in a district formed by the interlacing of masses and spaces (the history and development of the city) and the spatial scale (the character and appearance of the space). Non-physical component is the social and cultural life of society which aspects influenced the formation of physical, environmental and utilising human
relationships and physical urban. According to Rapoport (1969), culture, values, social interaction, and the relationship of humans with nature, are factors that influence the physical form of a building.

The district of Pekan Labuhan is one of the important areas in the city of Medan (Fig. 2). The place is originated in the old town area of early development of the Sultanate of Deli (1669). The initial location of the conveniences of the growing city of Medan as a plantation town on the Dutch colonial period (1887). The arrival of Chinese community from Singapore and Penang to Indonesia as workers started in 1870 when the Dutch colonial government built a tobacco farm at Tanjung Sepassi, Tanah Deli, North Sumatera. At first, they occupied an area around the Deli River and then in 1890, along with the expansion of tobacco plantations in Tanah Deli, this area became more advanced and crowded with houses, shops, business centre and a growing market due to the strategic river port of Deli. Since then, this district had been named as Pekan Labuhan.

The physical components of the area of Pekan Labuhan, Medan is the heritage of the old city, the early development the city of Medan on Dutch Colonial Government. Facilities such as shop houses, pekong, former port and market centre in colonial era can still be found in this area. The non physical components in this area also has a wealth of relationships between communities that have long been intertwined. The Malays community as early as the Chinese arrivals established social relationships.
Fig. 3. Architecture of Chinese at The Area

The physical architecture component which gives the looks of a building in general can be seen directly by public coming to the district. However basically the physical architecture components are formed by non-physical components (culture, values, social interaction, and the relationship of human beings with nature), so by the building we can recognize what ethnicity live on. The physical architecture components that describe the characteristics of Chinese in the area of Pekan Labuhan, directly pass on the information to public that Chinese ever inhabited in this area.

The Chinese occupied along Syahbuddin Yatim Street, they settled in a shop houses with the concept of residential and commercial uses. Architectural style is influenced by Chinese and Dutch Colonial. In terms of the roof top of the is influenced by Chinese and in terms of the façade is influenced by the Dutch Colonial.

The existence of Pekongs with Chinese style of architecture in the district, became a marker of the presence of the Chinese community in this area. The construction of Pekong in the area is to fulfill the need of houses of worship because of the increasing Chinese community in the region. Therefore in the year 1872 built a pekong who was given the title of Liat Sim Kong, Pekong but considering the large number of Chinese society who serve in this place, then in 1890 in the wake of a much bigger pekong and location development pekong is also positioned on the main area Pekan Labuhan overlooking the main road i.e. JL. Yos Sudarso, the named pekong Pekong Siu San Keng. Nowadays both Pekongs are the oldest temple for Chinese house of worship in Medan. based on fenomenon, Chinese architecture influence is found in two Pekongs which are used as places of worship of Chinese society. Both pekong have become the landmark of this area so that later became the symbol for the area of Pekan Labuhan.

Fig. 4. (a). Pekong Liat Sim Kong. (b). Pekong Siu San Keng.
Pekongs very lively visited by the Chinese community from various places in Medan. The activity community perpetrated by Chinese is then attract the attention of public and interpret the Pekongs as the object that represents the entire Chinese community in the district. Then public associate the buildings as location for the market where Chinese society once runned the business. Pekongs as the symbol of the area of Pekan Labuhan have provided an based information that the area is the location where the Chinese community live and survive. Symbol pekong in Labuhan also used as marker of market that have existed since the Kingdom of Deli in Dutch Colonial era.

The existence of the symbol in the Pekong Pekan Labuhan be succefull to reinforce the identity of the Chinese community in the area, but political incident in May 1998, a reform movement undertaken by the youth gangs and political parties. The movement is anarchist and the destruction of public facilities, the dispossession of non-indigenous property rights, the destruction of the offices of feudal society. These incident took place almost in the whole area of Indonesia, including in the area of Pekan Labuhan, Medan. At the time the espropriation of property rights, the destruction of the home store, and selling physical violence against the Chinese community in the Pekan Labuhan were happend. Therefore, many of the Chinese community left from the area.

The Reformation in 1998 led the change of the owner of the shop houses in this area, since then the process of buying and selling the shop houses occured and many indigenious house were sold in very chip price. The phenomenon shows why the Malays and other indigenous communities such as ethnic Batak, Javanese, and other ethnic group remained inhabiting the area. The new owner still preserved the authenticity of the structure, the pattern of buildings and facades until nowadays.

At the beginning of the process of substitution in Pekan Labuhan residents trading activities had ceased in the area. This led to the site being very quiet until some time. Since left the Chinese community, this area as the "City of Death", look no further the crowd selling process at home stores, look no further the hustle in the stalls, in other open spaces. Malay people as native Pekan Labuhan feel deep sadness over move Chinese community who they consider as their companions for a long time.

Since the migration of Chinese communities outside rollicking the region of Pekan Labuhan in 1998, the Malay people and indigenous who still live in the region are struggling to survive. As a space of the ordeal, they sell the spaces on the street side of Syahbuddin Yatim Street who the main street in the area. This street so much shop houses owned by Chinese before nowadays the shop houses are occupied and used become a morning market by the new malays and indigenous owner. Then society also add commercial spaces up to the patio and sidewalk of Syahbuddin Yatim Street. So the house on the first floor, terrace and sidewalks have been met to trade places daily needs. This market is open from 6.00. am until 12.00. am.

![Fig. 5. Pekong Market at The Area](image)

Commercial spaces formed by the society became more developed and vibrant. So in addition to traders from the region, many traders from outside region choose to sell here with the rental kiosk system. In addition, the number of buyers is also much more, buyers from within and outside the
region daily needs love to shop at the market this morning, the reason they're prefer shopping in this market because of the garbage clean and safe from theft. Communities in the area not only succeed economically, but also socially, as between buyer and seller have known each other and feel comfortable doing economic transactions in this region.

But basically, the reason for the growing market on the main road cannot escape from the influence of the existence of a Pekong Siu San Keng which located at the junction of the road entrance to the area. That is the answer why the location of the market is nicknamed "pekong market" Pekan Labuhan. It is understood that Pekong as the signposts area Pekan Labuhan has become a magnet for people to still pay a visit to the region. Identity markers into Pekong that market area clean and comfortable is located at “Simpang Pekong Pekan Labuhan”.

The symbolism of pekong has also been attached to the memory of the community and still describes the area as a place Pekan Labuhan of historic for Chinese community. To the Chinese community Pekong have strong inner bond, they often visit and worship at both Pekong. A large part of their save the ashes of a dead body of family at the Pekong in Pekan Labuhan. When comes to the area, the Chinese community feel like go to hometown, due regard had lived in this area and missed the atmosphere while still living here. Pekongs are markers for ethnic Chinese that they are worshipping in the historic district and has its own impression for them. This makes the presence of the two Pekong grow and survive, even more magnificent and thriving since the renovation in both building the pekong.

Although Chinese society is no longer lives in the Pekan Labuhan, but the spaces created on Pekong Liat Sim Kong and Pekong Siu San Keng and commercial space created at the point of the main street can be a magnet that pulls back the city community Medan. Not only Chinese, but also the wider community from various points in the city simply shop at "Market Pekong" as well as the roads around the area. So that results from the creation of the space pekongs are able to attract the attention of tourists who want to see the layout of the building and the city's oldest pekongs and continue to be objects representing the Chinese housing in the area as a symbol of the history of the Chinese civilization there.

4. Conclusion

Pekong Liat Sim Kong that was build in 1872 and Pekong Siu San Keng in 1890 have been able become new magnet and markers of identity and attraction, specifically for the community of Pekan Labuhan and general for the people of Medan. Besides Pekongs illustrate the old town, the Chinese civilization and its historical relics in the past, they also illustrates the identity the district at this time. The Pekong have managed to become a symbol of the naming of the place or location that explain the existence of the spaces. That Pekongs also form commercial space in the main street which create the name of “Pekong Market”.

Important incident in the year 1998 made many Chinese community move out from the area. Through the two Pekongs, the existence of the Chinese community can be maintained. The presence of two Pekongs are like hometown for the Chinese community and their family so that it become a historic place for them. Many of those who have lived outside the district paid a visit to Pekong to do the religious activity and culture, so the day after day Pekong more growing. Then the existence of religious activity and granting blessing of the Pekong has become a fortune for the community around the two Pekong.
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