

Place Familiarity as the Base of Place Interaction between Youth Generation and a Sacred Place

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Abstract— Religious places, as sacred places, have stories and memories from past phenomena that can be felt in the present. The Ampel Surabaya settlement is marked by the growth of Islamic culture and makes the residents of the neighborhood live from generation to generation. This older generation plays a role in passing on the memory of the past to the youth generation so that a deep attachment comes from familiarity arises. The study uses place interaction to explore how a person's familiarity with a place contributes to how their relationship with a place. This study uses qualitative strategies to identify how interactions are formed based on familiarity between the youth generation and the place. In-depth interviews were conducted with 9 participants conducted online or face-to-face. The results showed that the lack of familiarity given by the previous generation to the youth generation led to a lack of interaction formed. The interaction that occurs is only limited to passing way and as a shortcut path to another path. So, it is important to maintain the familiarity that is established between generations. With familiarity formed through the exchange of sources of information and behavior between generations, the closeness/familiarity of the individual with the place will be better maintained.

Keywords— Familiarity, Sacred Place, Interaction.

I. INTRODUCTION

The formation of a built environment based on religious buildings will form a society rooted in the same system of religion and belief. (Britton, 2015; Senbel, 2005). In Islamic belief, 'Masjid' is considered a sacred place used to perform worship activities (Najafi & Shariff, 2014; Mazumdar & Mazumdar, 1993). With this condition, it means that an attachment arises between humans, religion, and places based on the same beliefs. The emergence of this attachment is centered on religion to form a relationship between divine entities, God, religion, or religious figures with the place as the object of attachment (Mazumdar & Mazumdar, 2004; Counted & Watts, 2019).

The attachment that occurred at the study site, namely the Ampel settlement in Surabaya, Indonesia began in the 15th century when Sunan Ampel (*Raden Ali Rahmatullah*) spread the teachings of Islam in Java (Kusumowidagdo & Wardhani, 2019). With this, the teachings spread by Sunan Ampel – a religious figure at the time – attracted people who had the same belief system to live and form a group centered on the Ampel Mosque. At this time, religion has played an important role in shaping the attachment to places (Mazumdar & Mazumdar, 2004). The relationship of sacred places to their

stories and memories is part of a past phenomenon whose impact can be felt until this day.

The emergence of this attachment eventually made the residential community in Ampel from generation to generation. This phenomenon gives rise to connectivity so that intergenerational learning occurs which creates an exchange of sources of information among the older and youth generations (Mazumdar & Mazumdar, 2004; Tuan, 1977). This allows each generation to be involved in acquiring knowledge of the environment they live in. This knowledge is formed through stories that are told repeatedly from one generation to the next thus forming a "collective memory" (Mazumdar & Mazumdar, 2004).

The collection of "collective memory" created from generation to generation will contribute to the formation of familiarity. According to Tuan (1977), a deep attachment comes from familiarity with an environment. There is a familiarity that is present from this memory of the past, then people will be more familiar with and tend to choose the place to carry out their daily activities. Ultimately here familiarity plays a role in shaping long-term bonds between people and their neighborhoods (B. B. Brown & Perkins, 1992). The presence of familiarity with this place is characterized by the large frequency of visits and interactions formed between people and places.

II. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

A. Sacred Place

According to Pallasmaa (2015), a place can be said to be sacred because it fulfills a religious role. This ultimately determines 3 identifications of places that are considered "sacred". First, as a place to be able to feel a connection with their God, whom they consider the most glorious. In Islamic beliefs according to Najafi & Shariff (2014), the 'Mosque' is considered the most important sacred structure. With this, the Mosque can represent the majesty that at the same time becomes the center of Islamic worship for them to be able to create a spiritual connection with their God.

Second, a sacred/sacred place is a special place where Divine power manifests itself. This manifestation will be felt by its visitors because the place will have a certain meaning and representation of the significance of the beliefs they believe in (Asogu, 2020). So that the mosque here is a representation of majesty and has a meaning about spirituality. Meanwhile, the religious leaders who played a role at that time

represented the tauladan that he did during his lifetime and gave meaning during the spread of religious teachings.

Third, a sacred/sacred place is often regarded as a reflection of how the world of mankind should look as it should as it is with its Divine. This can be interpreted as the fact that mankind has a close relationship and focuses all on its Divine. These sacred places play an important role in building their built environment through relationships of common faith (Britton, 2015; Senbel, 2005). These three identifications become a reference in seeing the extent to which the sacred place at the study site, namely the Ampel Mosque, is interpreted as a "sacred place" by the younger generation living in the Ampel settlement. Religious values embedded between Divine entities i.e. God, religion, or religious figures will be interconnected with the place to play an important role in the entanglement of places (Counted & Watts, 2019; Desmarais, 1995; Mazumdar & Mazumdar, 2004).

B. Familiarity and Place Interaction

A place can acquire a deep meaning for a person when emotions that grow over the years are created (Tuan, 1977). Quoting from Tuan (1997):

"Familiarity is a characteristic of the past. The home provides an image of the past"

The growth of emotions here occurs because of the images of the past that are represented in the place where they live. The presence of familiarity gives rise to a deep attachment formed from knowledge of behavior and strong social aspects (Tuan, 1977; Rheingold, 1985). With this, the picture of the past will make the individual bound because it relates to their current living experience.

Stories that are told repeatedly from generation to generation have an important role in shaping "collective memory" thus creating an attachment to place (Mazumdar & Mazumdar, 2004; Tuan, 1977). The collection of "collective memory" from previous generations will contribute to creating a familiarity with the place so that each generation will have the same memory base. Together with this, creating and increasing familiarity requires the contribution of previous generations in conveying how the story of the past to what habits they did.

An individual's habits toward a place will form an attachment between the two (Hummon, 1992). These habits of an individual are related to the activities and interactions they have with the place. The existence of interaction is important for a place so that the place has activity and a sense of the presence of the environment (L. Manzo & Devine-Wright, 2021). This continuous interaction is one of the important foundations for understanding familiarity. Place interaction is related to the attachment of a place in which a person becomes involved with the familiarity which refers to a typical event in a place that involves more or less regular actions, behaviors, situations, and events in a place (Seamon, 2021). The interaction that is created will become a habit carried out by individuals continuously in the same place.

III. METHODOLOGY

The method used to explore how familiarity plays a role in forming place interactions by making intense contact with participants in natural conditions to investigate the daily life of the participants. The use of qualitative strategies will allow participants to describe their diverse experiences of the place from their perspectives (L. C. Manzo & Carvalho, 2021). With the phenomenon that occurs in the Ampel settlement where the community lives from generation to generation, this research is focused on the youth generation to see how the interactions formed between them and the sacred place. It aims to see how the role of intergenerational learning creates an exchange of sources of information among older and youth generations as a base of familiarity (Mazumdar & Mazumdar, 2004; Tuan, 1977).

In the process of data collection, observation and in-depth interviews are required. The data collected during the observations are regarding the environmental conditions in which they live. During the observation process, participants were also sampled using the snowball sampling method to find key informants who helped to direct them to the next informant (Chaim Noy, 2008). The results of the snowball sampling method show that Rina (pseudonym) as a key informant plays a role in directing the next informant (Figure 1). After sampling the participants, an in-depth interview was conducted which then analyzed the content of the interview data transcript to explore the familiarity that was formed.

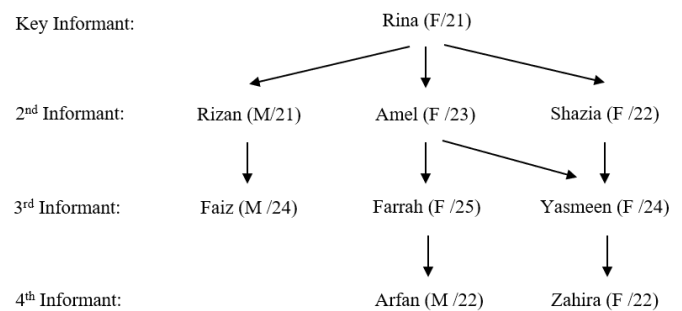


Fig. 1. The snowball sampling of participants.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. Research Location

The location of participants' houses is located in 4 parts of the Ampel settlement, namely in the North, West, East, and South of the settlement (Figure 2). The location is both near the Ampel Mosque and in the outermost area of the settlement. It aims to see how the interaction formed between them and the Ampel Mosque is based on familiarity, not based on distance.

B. Youth Generation's Perception of the Ampel Mosque

In the 15th century, the Ampel Mosque served as a place for the spread of Islam by Sunan Ampel to apply religious values that could be felt by his followers. The Ampel Mosque at that time had religious values obtained from God, religion, and a religious figure, namely Sunan Ampel. To keep a place alive and meaningful, it takes the role of past historical stories told by previous generations. This story that is told over and

over again from the previous generation to the younger generation will contribute to forming a “collective memory” of the place, especially for the youth generation.



Fig. 2. The location of the participants' houses.

A person's relationship with the place does not depend only on the quality of the place but can be learned through the process of socialization. One of them is a story or history given by parents or previous generations. Participants who are willing to participate are the 4th to 6th generations living in the Ampel settlement. The result found that the previous generations did not fully describe in detail how the Ampel Mosque was at that time. The previous generation only told that today the Ampel Mosque is a religious tourist attraction. It can be seen from the results of the interviews that the most perception appears is highlighting the crowd (Figure 3).

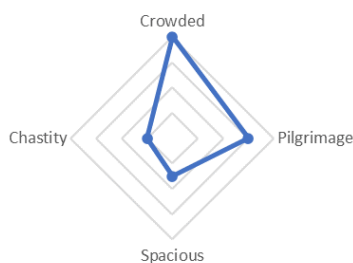


Fig. 3. Collective Results of Participants' Perceptions of the Ampel Mosque.

This lack of socialization will reduce the positive relationship between people and the place. The impact of the lack of history from previous generations makes it difficult for them to perceive the sacred place. Whereas the story or history has an important role to form “collective memory” (Mazumdar & Mazumdar, 2004; Tuan, 1977). Therefore, in the process of forming the memory given by the previous generation about the Ampel Mosque, it is still considered quite lacking, causing their lack of knowledge about the Ampel Mosque in the youth generation.

C. Interaction and Intensity of Visits to Ampel Mosque by the Youth Generation

A sacred place, according to Pallasmaa (2015), has 3 identifications. First, the mosque is a holy place as a representation of greatness which is also the center of Islamic worship for them to create a spiritual connection with their god (Mazumdar & Mazumdar, 2004; Najafi & Shariff, 2014; Pallasmaa, 2015). Second, sacred places are special places where divine power manifests itself so that it has a certain meaning, representation, or significance to a culture or belief (Asongu, 2020; Pallasmaa, 2015). Third, a sacred place is often regarded as a reflection of how the human world should look as with its divine because it plays an important role in building its built environment through a relationship of shared trust (Britton, 2015; Pallasmaa, 2015; Senbel, 2005).

From the sacred place identification, the Ampel Mosque has these criteria when viewed from the history of Sunan Ampel's arrival at that time. However, it is different from what was expressed by the participants. This is caused by the lack of visits and is dominated by outsiders or pilgrims. The lack of participant visits led to minimal interaction. Most interactions are formed only as shortcuts (Figure 4) because the Ampel Mosque is located in the middle of a residential area, and the roads are interconnected. The participants did not feel their religious role because they did not specifically worship there. This can happen due to a lack of memory inherited by previous generations. Through memory, people will create the meaning of place and connect it with themselves so that an attachment is formed between the individual and the place. The lack of memory, and the lack of visits, caused no positive relationship between the participants and the sacred place.

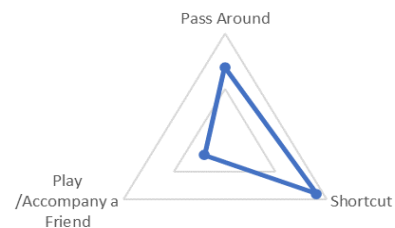


Fig. 4. Collective Results of Participants' Use of the Ampel Mosque.

Visits to places of worship can encourage the socialization process to create a learning experience in religious matters. Everything that is religiously oriented is a reflection of priorities related to one's motivation to explore actions based on the desire to stay close to places of worship (Meagher, 2016; Scannell & Gifford, 2010). However, this orientation was not seen in the participants who explained explicitly that they did not intensively visit the Ampel Mosque. The highest visit intensity was recorded 5 times and the least was 1 time. The purpose of their visit was not for worship or pilgrimage, but only as a shortcut. The least number of participant visits is due to the distance that is too far. The constraints experienced by these participants provided a challenge in accessing the place because it was constrained by distance and spent more time (Ingram, 1971; Niedzielski & Eric Boschmann, 2014)

D. Alternative Use of Places of Worship

From the results of the analysis, it was found that all participants chose to find alternative mosques other than the Ampel Mosque. This was revealed by the participants that the Ampel Mosque Area was full because of the large number of pilgrims who came. Later, this statement was also supported by other participants that many of the people there – including their own families – were looking for alternatives to other Mosques to worship and fulfill the deepening of their spirituality. The alternative mosque chosen by all participants is masjid Al-Irshad (Figure 5). The location of the Al-Irshad Mosque is to the north of the Ampel section. The selection of this Mosque is based on a collective attachment created through religious activities carried out simultaneously by several generations.



Fig. 5. Behavior Mapping Participants Towards alternative places of worship.

The results of the participants' exposure proved that the role of past stories passed down from generation to generation will increase attachment collectively. Together with this, the role of the previous generation in providing information and passing on habits to the next generation will increase familiarity in a place. When familiarity has been formed, they will explore actions and create interactions based on the desire to stay close to the place (Meagher, 2016; Scannell & Gifford, 2010). This suggests that past stories and derived behaviors have an important role to play in creating familiarity. So there needs to be a stronger commitment for each generation to provide information and stories of the past so that collective attachment is maintained.

V. CONCLUSIONS

Religion gives symbolic meaning to these places not only helping to differentiate them from the ordinary place but also encouraging the formation of attachment and spirituality. However, the presence of religion and the Ampel Mosque is still considered not enough to encourage attachment and

spirituality. This is due to the lack of familiarity formed by "collective memory" from the previous generation to the youth generation. As a result, the interaction between the youth generation and the sacred place is considered very minimal.

In addition, this study found that all participants were no longer able to feel the connection of spirituality with their god when they were in the Ampel Mosque. This is because the density of visitors is so high that they cannot focus on feeling the connection with their god. To meet these points, participants chose other alternative places to worship and explore their spirituality. Therefore, it is important to maintain familiarity with the place by each generation so that the attachments formed do not fade.

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