

# Tradition Concept in Kauman Yogyakarta Settlement As A Representation of Javanese Cultural Values

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## Abstract

The Kauman settlement in Yogyakarta is an urban village settlement that is almost three centuries old and located at the heart of the Yogyakarta business and tourism center. The settlement was founded in 1775 by Sri Sultan Hamengkubuwono I as housing facility for the abdi dalem (palace employees) on religious affairs. The settlement has undergone many changes influenced by politics, power and globalization that eventually brought modernization to the settlement. Starting from 1912, the settlement began to be strongly influenced by Muhammadiyah organization. Even though the Kauman settlement is now an open community and no longer part of the palace bureaucracy, its people still practice the way of life based on Javanese cultural values supported by piety in practicing Islamic rules in daily life from generation to generation. The Kauman settlement today exist authentically as both a Muslim society and part of the Javanese traditional culture. This authenticity is visible in the settlement layout and the buildings within, which reflect a calm and cozy urban village settlement with its own characteristics amidst the business and tourism center of Yogyakarta.

**Keywords :** Settlement, Kauman Yogyakarta, Tradition, Javanese culture

## 1. Introduction

In February 1755, VOC through Giyanti Treaty (*Palihan Nagari*) divided the Mataram kingdom into two: the first is Surakarta, headed by Susuhunan and the other is Yogyakarta Hadiningrat, headed by Pangeran Mangkubumi who later changed his name into Hamengkubuwono I. After the Giyanti Treaty, Sultan Hamengkubuwono I built the Kraton Yogyakarta and in 1773, a mosque was built in front of the palace to the west of the north square. The mosque is called Keprabon or Gedhe Mosque, which complements the kingdom as an Islamic Kingdom (Darban, 2010). The management of the mosque was handed to the group of abdi dalem who handled religious affairs and were headed by a *Pengulu (Pengulon)*. This group was granted a piece of land as their settlement, which started to grow in 1775. Situated behind the mosque and to the west of the north square, the land is called *Pakauman*, meaning "the place where the *Kaums* live" which would later turn into Kauman, from the Arabic word *Qoimuddin*, meaning religious leaders. Kauman settlement exists in every Javanese traditional government and is considered a very important area since it is compulsory for a Javanese ruler who chose Islam as the religion of his/her kingdom to make the settlement integral with the palace. Historically, the existence of this settlement is inseparable from the influence of and relation to the palace of Yogyakarta with its own history, since for three centuries the kingdom has gone through a number of historical, cultural, political and social events since the Dutch colonial government, Japanese occupation, revolution of independence and the formation of the Republic of Indonesia. Besides, the area in the year 1912 was the place of birth of the Muhammadiyah Islam movement founded by KH. Ahmad Dahlan, a Kauman villager as well as an *abdi dalem* of the palace (Darban, 2010)

Kauman nowadays is an urban village settlement situated at the heart of the business and tourism center of Yogyakarta, located in Ngupasan village, Gondomanan district, Yogyakarta and is divided into 4 RW and 17 RT, with an area of approximately 192.000 m<sup>2</sup>. Its settlers are a majority of Javanese ethnicity, the biggest ethnicity in Indonesia with its own language and subcultures. After the independence, Kraton Yogyakarta became part of the republic and Kauman no longer became part of the palace bureaucracy. In its subsequent development, Yogyakarta grew up to be a place for both tourists and students. Kauman, situated at the heart of Yogyakarta, is influenced by the development of Yogyakarta. The settlement becomes a supporting area for educational and tourism activities around it.

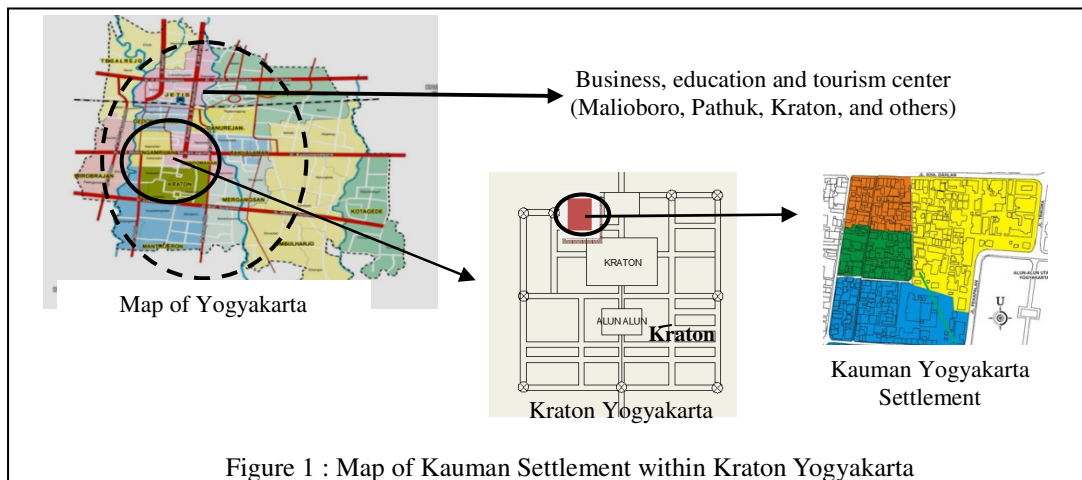


Figure 1 : Map of Kauman Settlement within Kraton Yogyakarta

Source : *Bapeda Prop. DIY, 1994 and Field Data 2011*

Throughout temporal development and socio-cultural transformation, Kauman maintains Javanese traditional life, village-like settlement, mutual cooperation, friendliness, strong kinship and deep awareness of religious life. The settlers are a santri community devoted to Islamic teachings in their daily lives. The great mosque (*Masjid Gedhe*) of Kauman Yogyakarta is the center of their activities for congregational praying, Quran reciting and other religious activities. The Muhammadiyah reform influenced and impacted upon changes happening in Yogyakarta in general and in Kauman in particular, especially in social and religious life. Even though the people of Kauman and the palace clash at times, it does not escalate into a bigger conflict that may trigger separation, since the palace accommodates the Kauman people's Islamic way of life imbued with Javanese cultural values, and the fact that the area is the basis of Muhammadiyah organization until today.

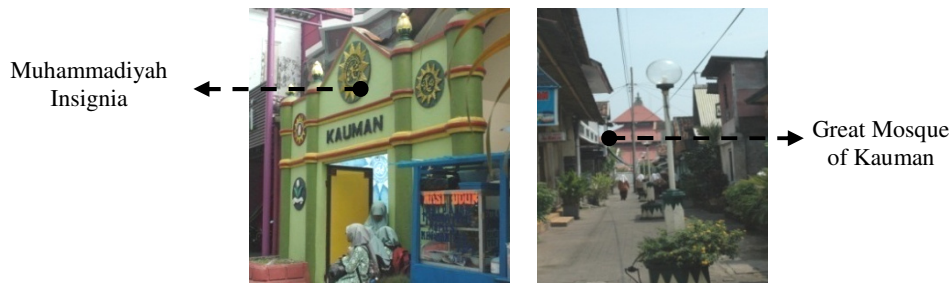


Figure 2 : One of the entrances and main course of Kauman settlement Yogyakarta

Source : *field data, 2010*

Having undergone various cultural, political and religious changes for almost three centuries, Kauman Yogyakarta endures as a harmonic Javanese Muslim settlement and becomes a unique and distinct settlement due to its santri majority, giving Kauman its own character that is different from other settlements in Java.

### I.1. Identification of Problems

The issues concerned in this study include the identity of Javanese values that serves as a way of life that becomes a basis for the people of Kauman in maintaining the ingenuity of their settlement as well as preservings living harmonies with their surroundings, particularly the palace. In general, the settlement has gone through growth and development influenced by:

- Kraton Yogyakarta, since it was the Sultan HB I who ordered that the settlement be built for the abdi dalem of religious affairs,
- The birth of Muhammadiyah, an Islamic organization aiming at purifying Islamic teachings based on Quran and Assunah (the Hadith) that strongly influences the social transformation of the people of Kauman and

- The post-independence up to the present time, which influences the settlement situated at the the heart of the city with physical and non-physical development in efforts to develop Yogyakarta into a modern city of tourism and education.

The effort of Muhammadiyah to purify Islamic teachings in Yogyakarta in general and in Kauman in particular, impacted upon the sosial and religious changes in the settlement. Even though in the process some differences arose among the settler, they did not escalate into conflicts resulting in separation, even the sultan himself acted as a mediator to solve the differences. Throughout cultural, political and religious changes, the settlement has complexities in representing their identity as a muslim community with strong ties to the Javanese cultural values, which serves as the basis of the formation of the settlement.

## **I.2. Methodology**

Historically speaking, the existence of Kauman is inseparable from its ties to and influences from Kraton Yogyakarta, Mesjid Gedhe Kauman, and Muhammadiyah organization, as well as the integration of the Kraton Yogyakarta with the Republic of Indonesia. This historical study concerns the growth and development of the settlement over a certain period of time, from after the Giyanti Treaty was signed (1755) up to the present globalization era (2014). In order to describe the shapes of the neighborhood and its buildings, it is important to conduct an analysis pertaining to cultural history, relations of power which in turn result in work that brought about impact on social transformation. The methodology of ethnography is employed to understand the manners by which the people of Kauman shape their neighborhood, which is practiced through field observation, in-depth interviews with reliable sources and study of literature. The methodology is necessary in probing how the people of Kauman comprehend the role and influence of the sultans and the position of the kraton as initiator of the settlement, the role and influence of Muhammadiyah organization in religious life and the role and influence of the Republic of Indonesia as bringer of modern culture and globalization, all in accordance with the meanings of the Javanese cultural values that they practice in daily life.

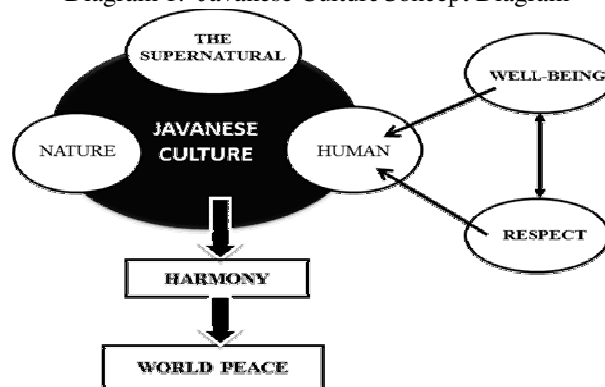
Data is collected through study of literature on Javanese cultures and communities, Kraton Yogyakarta, Javanese house, history of Kauman settlement, Muhammadiyah and previous theories that may support the analysis. The next steps include exploring social phenomena and conducting analyses of the obtained data, to further instill the interpretation of the meanings and functions of human behavior. These are later continued with interviews with reliable sources, such as the Kauman settlers who have lived in the area for at least 10 years, descendants or successors of the original Kauman settlers, descendants of KHA. Dahlan, founder of Muhammadiyah and insider sources from Kraton. Descriptive qualitative analysis is also employed, yet not meant to test the resulting hypotheses but to help describe the social reality in form field observation results and documentation.

## **II. Theoretical Framework**

### **II.1. Javanese Culture and Kraton Yogyakarta Culture**

In Javanese culture, human daily life is based on four scopes of belief that affect his or her pattern of thought, behavior and work: religion, social relation, personal expression and meanings. The Javanese culture is not homogenous since each Javanese region develops its own culture, which is based on varied blends of pre-Hindu, Hindu, Buddhism and Islam influences that vastly manifest in the lives of the Javanese. Javanese people believe that God is the center of the universe and the center of the aspects of human life. Javanese view of life sees that human life is already written by the Almighty and each Javanese needs only to run his or her fates. However, they are also inseparable from the myths of their lives that occupy the thoughts on how they interpret life. According to Magnis Suseno (2001:38-60), the two basic principles of Javanese life are harmony and respect. The principle of harmony means preventing open conflicts that may result in separation and enmity. Harmony means being in a well-becoming, calm and at ease state, where everyone is at peace with each other. The Javanese cultural values are reflected in the tolerant Javanese characteristic, always acting based on peace and the assumption that everyone possesses a similar world view, where differences are never questioned. The Javanese realizes that he is part of the cosmos, that he must follow the ways nature and be one with his God. The Javanese thoughts are always based on the relationship of the supernatural (God) – human nature, maintained through a process of harmonizing that is flexible, sociable, unrigid, selfless and widely accepted.

Diagram 1: Javanese Culture Concept Diagram

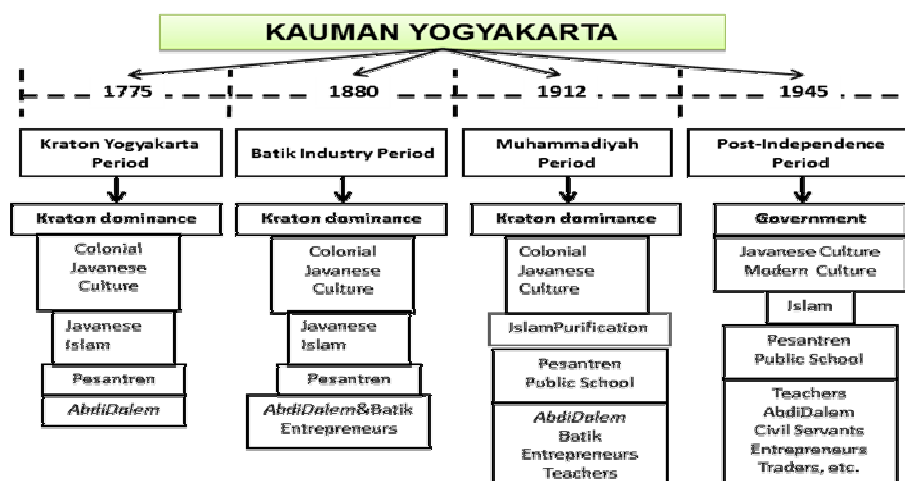


In Javanese philosophy, Sultan (Javanese king) is seen as a person bestowed by the kingdom absolute political, military and religious power, in a sense that the Sultan, with his magical-political power, has a very strong position on top of the social structure. The people of Yogyakarta maintain a strong obedience to the Sultan up to now, since he is a figure of strong leadership. He is a Muslim and abides by his monotheistic belief through practices of Islamic teachings. However, on the other hand, as a (traditional) king he has to practice mystical aspects of religion. People generally call the religion Javanese Islam. Islam in Sultan's view recognizes plurality of cultures and suggests the need for studies of and dialogues with other cultures, as well as promulgating universal love for each other. Sultan always maintains religious tolerance and strong reliance to the Republic of Indonesia as a manifestation of love for his people, implementation of his religion in a broader sense (Sri Sultan HB IX in Cut Mita, 2004).

## II.2.Social and Cultural Transformation

Social and cultural transformation may be caused by a number of reasons, such as succession of power, population increase and invention of new technology. According to Selo Soemardjan (1981) based on a theory by Thorsten Veblen, transformation can easily evoke the powers that bring about social changes, which in turn cause changes in thinking and acting habits. The concept of social transformation encompasses changes in the religious system and social institutions that influence the social system, including the values, attitudes and patterns of behavior of the people in Kauman, Yogyakarta. The main source of the social transformation in Kauman lies in the scope of the social ideology that came from the changing orientation of the religion from the syncretic old religion (traditional Islam) to the new religion (Muhammadiyah Islam) that harnesses the spirit of purification. Not only did the religious orientation change, but the changing concept of nation from the feudal kingdom to the republic also brought about a great change of orientation. According to Triatmodjo. (2010: 90-107) it can be generally concluded that, from the time of its founding (1775),the settlement has gone through four periods: *Abdi Dalem* period, batik industry period (batik Handle), Muhammadiyah period and post-independence period (education and tourism).

Diagram 2: Periods of Social and Cultural Transformation in Kauman Yogyakarta



The people of Kauman Yogyakarta is part of the Java ethnicity, the biggest ethnicity in Indonesia, with its own language and subcultures. In the beginning, as abdi dalem of the palace, the people of Kauman practiced Islam traditionally. Prior to the emergence of Muhammadiyah, the education of Kauman people followed a pesantren educational style that studies only Islamic knowledge, with the final purpose of preparing the new generation of abdi dalem of religious affairs. The batik industry period (known as the Batik *Handle*) in Kauman took place between 1880 and 1930 and reached its apex in 1910. During that time, a house also served as a batik-producing factory, thus changing the functions of the houses due to addition of batik production and drying facilities. Muhammadiyah (1912) was founded by Kyai Haji Achmad Dahlan, an abdi dalem of Kraton Yogyakarta. The emergence of Muhammadiyah strongly influenced the social, cultural and educational transformation in Kauman Yogyakarta. Muhammadiyah develops and is spread throughout Indonesia, with Kauman Yogyakarta as the basis of its movement. After the independence of Indonesia, Yogyakarta developed immensely in both physical and non-physical development. Kauman, which is situated at the heart of Yogyakarta, was influenced by the development, particularly in tourism and education. The growth of schools and educational institutions in Yogyakarta and more specifically around Kauman, makes the settlement an ideal and strategic boarding place for students from outside Yogyakarta. Boarding houses emerged within the settlement, followed by supporting facilities, such as food stall, small shops and catering.

### **II.3. Representation of Javanese Traditional Architecture in Kauman Yogyakarta**

Engineered environment or living homes are part of cultural life, a cultural expression to convey certain messages that may be interpreted as representation of a culture of a nation during a certain period of time (Ronald dalam Wardani, 2007:35). Mark R. Woodward stated that Yogyakarta was built according to a the kraton concept that imitates cosmos; the kraton is a cosmic model and the represented cosmos is an Islamic one. Every complexity and in-and-out of a kraton is a projection of a sufistic spiritual way (Burhani, 2004). Even though Hindu and Buddha elements are maintained, they appear in new manifestation and meanings. The structure of Kraton Yogyakarta represents the relation between Allah and human, a model of a perfect man. The Javanese traditional architecture is visually characterized in the shape of the building (facade, roof, layout and covering element), ornament, building material and direction or orientation of the building. The manifested visual forms are based on the religious and kinship factors within the society (social stratification).

The religious factor in the Javanese society influenced greatly their creative work, particularly in building homes according to concept and functions. The concept of Javanese buildings reflects the relation between human and nature as microcosmos and macrocosmos, respectively. The Javanese home is part of nature, part of the cosmological system, that Javanese people tend to live harmoniously with nature and with other people in order to maintain the balance of nature. The religious concept is translated into concepts of orientation that consider certain direction as having magical properties, both good and bad. The Javanese home basically faces one of four directions: east, west, north and south. The east is usually the direction of the palace and place of worship, while living homes commonly face north or south. To the north, in Yogyakarta, lies mount Merapi, the sacred elevated place (*siti hinggil*) believed to host sacred spirits living in the supernatural realm. To the south lies a vast, wavy place (the sea) that represents the movement of the people. The religious concept is also found in the layout. In a Javanese building, certain rooms hold certain values.

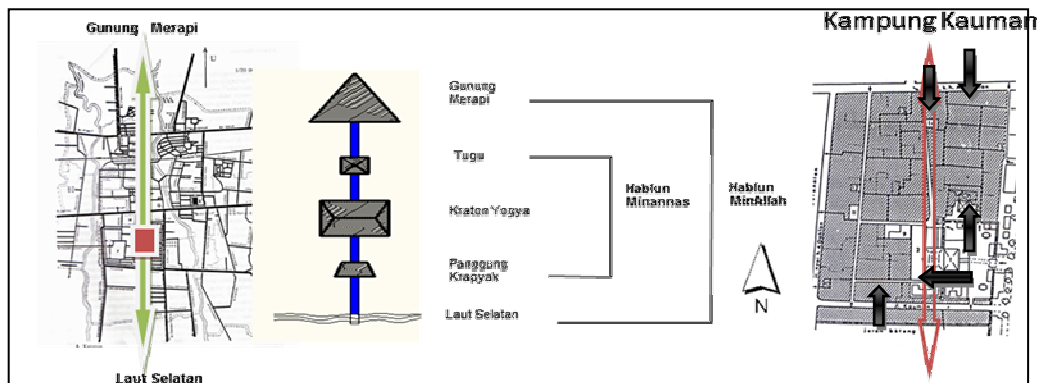


Figure 3 : Concept of north-south orientation of Yogyakarta and Kauman Yogyakarta settlement  
 (Source: Kemala Atmojo, 2004 and field documentation, 2013)

The main access to the settlement lies from north to south from Ahmad Dahlan street to the south towards the great mosque, while other gates are either from north to south or east to west. The orientation of the entrance to Kauman Yogyakarta imitates that of the city layout in the form of the imaginary line that begins from the South Sea (*Segara Kidul*) and ends in Mount Merapi in the north, passing through Kraton Yogyakarta. From the religious philosophy perspective, the North-South setting symbolizes the harmonies between a human being and his or her God (*Hablun MinAllah*) and other humans (*Hablun Minnannas*).



Figure 4 : The neighborhood of Kauman and the narrow corridors or alleys between buildings  
 Source: field documentation, 2013

The roads along the settlement formed corridors or alleys in a grid pattern, made of paving blocks, discarded temple stones, concrete and other similar materials. The roads are in good and neat condition. Four-wheeled vehicles cannot enter the settlement, while motorcycles have to be manually carried with engines turned off. This is meant to maintain the serenity of the settlement, so as not to disturb the santris in studying and other activities. This is also a manifestation of the philosophy of equality and togetherness in Kauman: whoever comes in must take off his or her social status, in this case the ownership of vehicles, and start walking and socializing with people. These alleys, besides providing accessibility, are the places where the people socialize through meeting, trading, chatting and other activities. They do so in the alleys due to the lack of open space as public facility. Even though the houses in Kauman lack actual porches due to minimum open spaces, the front of a house still functions as a miniature porch filled with live plants. The existence of these plants is the natural manifestation of the actual form of nature, embodying honesty and respect towards nature, in order to create harmonic well-being with the surroundings. The miniature porch functions also as filter of wind, dust and heat of the sun.

Java in the past was a kingdom developed, thus a home must be built according to the rules written by the palace, called the *pranata* that serves as guidelines on the usage and functions of a house. The Javanese culture is characterized by stratification. Like its language, the parts of a Javanese house are also stratified. (Sunarmi, Guntur, Prasetyo, 2007). A Javanese home is commonly divided into three parts. The *pendhapa* is the front where

guests are accepted, *pringgitanis* the middle part that connects the *pendhapa* to the living room, the *griya ageng* that is further divided into three parts: the left or *sentongkiwa*, the middle or *sentong tengah* and the right or *sentong tengen*. The parts of a Javanese home are strongly influenced by customs, religious belief and cultures, as is shown in the separation between the house parts for men and women.

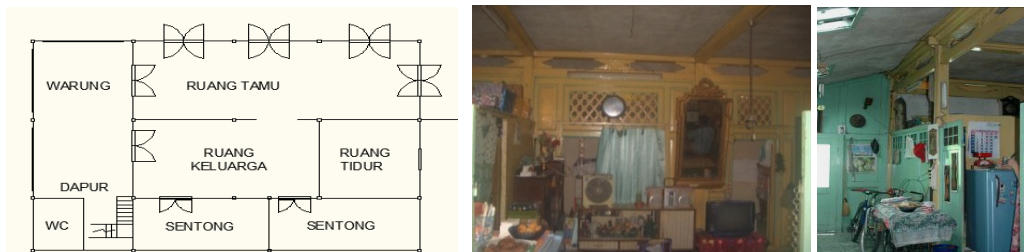


Figure 5 : Layout and Interior of Home in Kauman Yogyakarta  
 Source: field documentation, 2013

The Javanese traditional house is typologically rectangular or square. The shape symbolizes clarity and rationality. The order and visual clarity as well as the stability could be rather monotonous, and the monotony is usually reduced by variations in color, placement and measurement (Wardani, 2007:37). The symmetrical layout of the Javanese house symbolizes balance, mediated by the door in the middle and the symmetrical windows on either side, the *sentongs* left and right and the verandah in the front and back or to the left and right of the house. The placement of carved ornaments is always symmetrical, including placement of mirrors and other aesthetic elements as well as the placement of household equipment.



Figure 6 : Home and its wood construction in Kauman Yogyakarta  
 Source: Field documentation, 2013

The traditional Javanese house is constructed of wood, which makes up the main construction or the foundation, the pillars, the roof and its frame, the floors, the walls and the ceilings. Like many other traditional houses in Indonesia, the whole structure is visible and uncovered since it is already aesthetically sound. The visibility also lends to the functional value which displays both strength and beauty. The roof always uses *tritisan* (awning) that functions to protect the verandah under it from heat and rain.

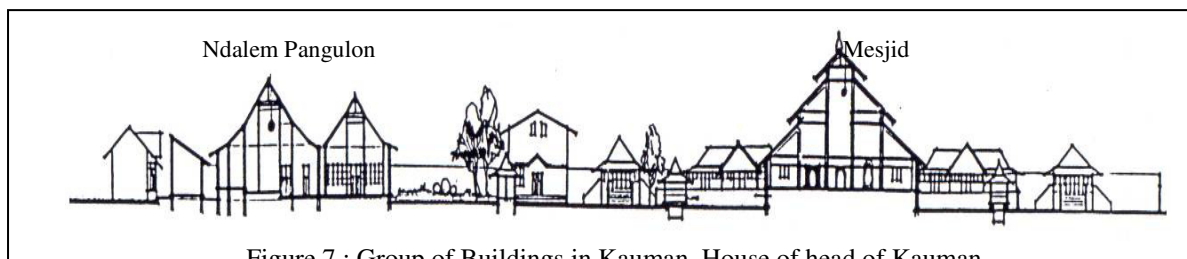


Figure 7 : Group of Buildings in Kauman, House of head of Kauman,  
 and around the Great mosque of Kauman  
 Source: Ahda Mulyati, 1995

Mesjid Gedhe Kauman (the great mosque of Kauman) is the center of orientation is the highest sacred building

in the hierarchy of sacred buildings reflected in the shape, location and environmental structure of the building. The buildings belonging to common people may not stand taller than buildings considered having spiritual values or belonging to the elders, since the Javanese people believe in the coming of bad luck if they do not respect the elders. The traditional Javanese architecture is manifested in such a way to bring welfare in the world and hereafter, connecting itself to the natural, socio-cultural, religious and family environments. The process of making a Javanese home is based on rites, religion and belief manifested in the functional and aesthetic reasoning of physical form of the building. The process is influenced by a certain number of factors. The process of making a home is not only based on necessity, but also based on the cultural activities based on the Javanese mind that possesses accurate calculations in order to achieve well-being or being in a harmony with the environment, in hopes of attaining welfare and salvation in the world and in the afterlife.

### III. Conclusion

In the post-independence era, joined the Republic of Indonesia and was recognized as *Daerah istimewa* Yogyakarta, as a province in Java. Yogyakarta is rich in cultural heritage from the old days of the kingdom, both in the form of physical artifacts and cultural processions (for example, dances and ritual). One of the well-preserved artifacts in the Kauman Yogyakarta settlement, a traditional Javanese settlement with its own well-preserved traditional buildings. The settlement is also known as Muslim settlement or *kampung santri*, since it has its own distinct topology. It is located behind the palace mosque and historically linked to the typical profession of its people: the *abdi dalem* of religious affairs. The everyday lives of these people abide by the Islamic law (*syariat*). Inside the settlement are six *mushollas*, with the Gedhe Kauman mosque as the center of Islamic activities. The Muhammadiyah organization was founded in the settlement in 1912, quickly turning the settlement into the center of the organization, strengthening the identity of the Kauman people as a Muslim society until today. Even though the settlement is no longer part of the *Kraton* bureaucracy, it still maintains a strong relationship with the Sultan and the palace. The settlement does not conflict with the *Kraton*, which practices Javanese religious rituals, due to the conviction that the Islam-integrating traditional rituals is, in part, manifestation of a culture that needs to be preserved and not religious rituals. The Sultan as king has a pride in the identity of the ethnic Javanese, the reason why he needs to maintain the way of life and culture influenced by the old *kejawen* (Javanese Islam) belief. The Sultan needs to maintain the combination of the elements found in Islam and traditional Javanese culture in order to maintain peace and order in the lives of the people Yogyakarta, whose majority still believe in mystic and magical matters. The Sultan is a democratic and tolerant figure who has to maintain peace and order in Yogyakarta, by having views and attitudes that do not discriminate the differences in ethnicities, religions and social groups.

For approximately three centuries, Kauman Yogyakarta has been going through periods of change that have brought about changes in its social and cultural systems. These changes were caused by power succession, government system, political climate, technological development and globalization. The changes, particularly in religion, cause opposition and conflict among the settlers concerning religious norms. However, there is no significant conflict in the transformation of Javanese values and socio cultural lives. The conflicts eventually wore out because the settlers accommodated a more Islamic lifestyle that embraces Javanese cultural values in their everyday lives. The settlers assume that every person has basically similar world views. Differences are not to be disputed. The Javanese tradition has been patterned in their lifestyle, represented in their tolerant character aimed at universal peace. The Javanese cultural values are a traditional heritage practiced in everyday life, besides their piety in practicing their religion. The resulting social transformation impacts upon the physical structure of the Kauman settlement, triggered by the changes and development of necessity in life and living, caused the shapes and functions of the buildings to diversify. Even though the heterogeneity of the buildings has emerged for the past 250 years, the adjustments originating from the traditional thinking process maintains Javanese cultural values as the basics of thinking in constructing the settlement area, a traditional Javanese settlement with buildings that accentuate the combination between Javanese home architecture with its pyramidal roof and Indies building architecture. Harmonization occurs between the man and the work, in this case the buildings -particularly homes- and creates an enduring pleasant feeling (*krasan*). In creating this work, meeting individual needs is not its sole purpose. Instead, it aims at achieving the harmonic perfection of unity with the nature. The Javanese cultural values still practiced by the Kauman people today are visually represented in the structure of the Kauman Yogyakarta settlement, which maintains its state as a settlement with the atmosphere of a traditional Javanese village, along with its warm atmosphere of kinship and Javanese traditional environmental pattern and well-maintained buildings (building shapes, ornaments, room patterns, colors,



building materials and other aspects). The Kauman Yogyakarta settlement exists as a settlement that keeps in its heart a long history that connects the past with the present to maintain a unique and distinct character of a religious, *santri* society amidst the business and tourism center of modern Yogyakarta, a character that separates it from other settlements.

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