



The Declaration of the Institute of Javanologi LPPM
Sebelas Maret University



EXPLORING NOBLE VALUES OF
LOCAL WISDOM AND
PRIME **JAVANESE** CULTURE
TO STRENGTHEN
THE NATION IDENTITY

Surakarta, Indonesia
March, 6-7, 2011

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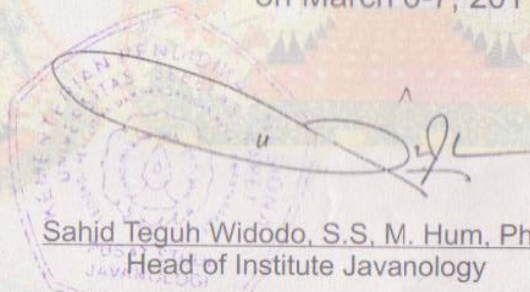
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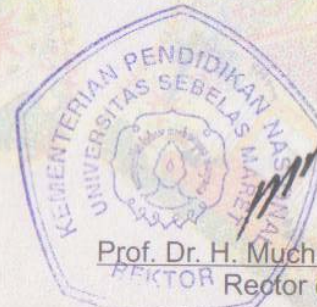
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THE SULUK ARCHITECTURE OF SURAKARTA PALACE

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Abstract

The real work of physical palace is formed through inner manner of *kasutapan* that is relies on the sharpness of a sense of inner feelings. *Suluk* contained in Surakarta palace architecture means *sangkan paraning dumadi* (the beginning and the destiny of human), which implemented into spatial patterns and architectural expression that can be read through a layout sequence of buildings surrounding palace of Surakarta from North to South and vice versa.

Keywords: mysticism, architecture, the Palace of Surakarta.

A. Introduction

The Surakarta Palace Architecture is not merely a form of works of Architecture engineering, but is the result of the combination and the meeting point between outward and inward of human being, between logic and illogic, rough and smooth, and physic and metaphysic (*nyipati wewangun toto lahir, sinartan dhamang dumateng pagedhong pikajeng, manunggaling lan kang agal Alus*) because its existence created through the inner manner of *kasutapan*, that is the inner manner relies on the sharpness of a sense of inner feelings are usually done by way of meditation or meditate.

This emerged from the real work of physical palace that formed through a complicated process of calculations and a careful process of

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material selection in order get the result that has a high magical power which has the aura of authority protected and sustainable as a center of culture. Thus, the scope of the Javanese cultural life of Surakarta Palace is often regarded by Javanese people as a center of Javanese spiritual culture.

As a work of architecture, the Palace of Surakarta has two main functions, such as residence and the central government. Firstly, the Palace of Surakarta is as a place of the king and his family. Residential buildings or homes for the Javanese is not just meant as building lived, but also the buildings which consist of other elements that make the building more meaningful or "more than useful". In fact the house is considered as a material of living space as well as a symbol of reflection and self-oriented attitudes. As Mangunwijaya (1992:6) said, the Javanese house usually created with high contemplation and dynamic embodiment.

Although created with a dynamic embodiment, the philosophical core of Javanese house remained in two aspects; *kejawen* and cosmology. Solihin (2007:21-24) explained that the teachings of *kejawen* introduced the unity of existence understanding of harmony between the outer and inner, between the visible and invisible, and more specifically between *Hyang Sukma* (source of life) and humans (as a creature who lived) In this case, Human life is always organized and focused on the cosmic law (certainly = *pinesthi*). This consciousness understood that human actually held and will return to the source of the existence.

Second, the Palace of Surakarta is as the central government. Related with the King duty of the Government, the king has a position and a very important role in public life. Moreover, the Javanese people believe in the existence of a power beyond human power and which has an absolute nature. In this case, the king is considered as a human being who has the power to get close to the absolute power. This belief created the architecture identity and made the palace as a center of government to be very special. Symbolically, the axis of good *site-plan* architecture of Surakarta Palace refers to the history of the palace, in sequence from north to south with a variety of contemplative terminology expression that has a *kejawen* philosophical meaning for instance: (1) *Sangkan paraning dumadi*; (2) *Manunggaling Kawula Gusti*; and (3) *Keblat papat Kalima pancer* (Pitana, 2001:120-121).

B. *Suluk* in Spatial Plan of the Surakarta Palace

In the context of the Surakarta palace architecture, teaching or guidance of a common life in *Suluk* contained *sangkan paraning dumadi* (the origin and destination of human being) translated in the order of the spatial plan of buildings in the Surakarta palace from north to south and vice versa. The order of this spatial plan is the description of *paraning dumadi* (human destination or purpose). Meanwhile the opposite direction, from South to North is the description of *sangkaning dumadi* (the origin of human). In more detailed description can be described below.

First, the North Square area, which is part of the palace complex that physically describe the description of human life in the context of *sangkan paraning dumadi*. Starting from the birth or beginning stages of human life in the world is realized with the *Gladag* portal. The portal is considered a symbol of "womb" of a mother to bring a child into the world. Therefore, the existence of this portal in order remind us always serve the mother-father-spirit. Furthermore, before finally reaching the coveted perfection of life, the growth and development of a child into the adult life is not without challenges, but so many trials, tribulations, or temptation. Such a situation is illustrated in the embodiment of North Square. The choice of life lies, in which religious or spiritual side of life represented by the existence of the Great Mosque. While for the Material side of life that is full of desires represented by the existence of the market and, the test of the hard life that is always facing reflected in the broad expanse of flat land (have sand) in the North Square. Then, the sun during the day and the rain which flushed must inevitably be felt by anyone who is on top of it. Thus the description of ordeal, trials, and temptations that must be solved by man who is dedicated to achieve perfection in life is symbolized by the North Square. Second, the center area of the palace which is a symbol of life in the world as well be a turning point toward life hereafter. It means a stage in which man has reached the highest level of life of the world which also became a stage where humans have been ready to leave the luxury world toward the perfection of life here and hereafter. This condition is described in terms of Java as a sense of *manunggaling rasa kawula gusti* (united sense of me and God). The center area of Palace is the most important and sacred place in Surakarta complex because, this is the king's residence and the center of the government. Thus, this area has become a symbol of authority, maturity, greatness, and wisdom that must be possessed

humans after arriving at the level of perfection in the world to reach life perfection in the eternity (life after death).

Third, the South Square area; the complex of Surakarta palace describes life after death of man in the world. The Solitude and far from the crowded life is a symbol or message to be conveyed. The existence of this silence is the description of human life after death. No more desire to be fulfilled. In Javanese term, this situation is expressed by the world *awang awung* (empty). In such circumstances, human beings have no hope of life that was lived so that no longer works that can be tied. That is, humans do not perform for self because there is no more personal interest, but do just for acting. Thus, all his actions are merely pulse by those actions, not because they want to do to achieve personal goals.

C. The *Suluk* Architectural Expression of Surakarta Palace

Visually, the physical embodiment of the overall sequence of spatial plan buildings in the complex of Surakarta palace create an impression that is facing north. Meanwhile, in the concept of a Javanese traditional house usually determined the direction of Mecca by the main building of the whole building constructed. When we look further by tracing the concept of building orientation, it should be the orientation of the Surakarta palace overlooking to the South, because of the house of Ageng Prabasuyasa as the center of the whole palace buildings overlooking the South. In this case, Sajid (1984:13-14) argues, "*Kiai Tumenggung Wiraguna dumugi Alun-alun pengkeran lajeng nyengkal masjid ageng, beteng dalah sadaya griyanipun Kumpeni...*" which means "Kiai Tumenggung Wiraguna after arriving in the back town square, then measure the large mosques, fortresses and houses of the *Kompeni* (the term for Dutch in Indonesia) ...".

The description of quotation above clearly shows that what is meant by backyard palace is Square North because of all the buildings (the Great Mosque, Fort of Vastenburg Dutch-owned, and houses of *Kompeni*) are in the North side. Thus, in other word, it can be said that conceptually the orientation of Surakarta palace building is facing south.

The differences of physical function, expression, and symbolism between the two square of Surakarta seems more intended to provide the difference between the life today and hereafter, as in the concept of *sangkan paraning dumadi*. This concept teaches Javanese that life

before and after in the world is something magical, which is from nothing into being and nothing. Therefore, it becomes no important to question which one the first is being, because the important thing is the essence of human life itself. It means that humans are created perfectly and then had to return to as well as possible perfectly.

It gives a description that man is born of purity or in a pure state; it should do the lives with chastity to achieve purity. Such a view gives the understanding that human beings should not be affected by the colorful life that is present in a variety of visual situations and conditions. Of course, in it filled with various colors that are not sacred, although sometimes it is with passion and taste. Even, in phenomena of life, the colors of purity appear very sublime, so it is not easy to recognize. On the contrary, the things that are less or not actually appear more convincing sacred so often deceive the senses and the whole system of human perception. As a result, people often forget the essence of him self, as taught in the concept of *manunggaling kawula gusti*.

Manunggaling kawula gusti, in the context of architectural symbols of Surakarta Palace means more about human relationships with God, not the relationship between people or citizen (*Kawula*) and the king (*gusti*). Thus, *manunggaling kawula gusti* here can be understood as a state as well as possible (perfect) that being the goals of Javanese people in order to able to return to God who became the "early" and "purpose" of life which is in a Javanese phrase commonly expressed by *sampurna bali myang mula mulaniro lan sampurna bali myang suwung kang ngandut hana* which means 'perfectly return to the origin and the end eventually perfect unite one with God in nature of *Taya* (*suwung* = empty)'.

Physically, symbolizing the achievement of *manunggaling kawula-Gusti* translated into a sequence of spatial plan of buildings in the palace complex. It is characterized by stages of purity or sanctity of the level of each space, it means more concentrated in one place (centered) it is more sacred. This can be observed from the sequence that starts from the level of purity in the *Gladag portal* into the center of the palace which is then repeated almost the same from the south; from the Ivory Gate (*Gapura Gading*) into the center of palace.

The area of North Square that starts from the Gladag gate up to the border of the center palace is a description of human life that full of struggle in the face of all ordeals, trials, and the worldly temptations.

The Gladag gate embodiment is a symbol of the first step teaching for person to achieve the goals toward *Manunggaling Kawula gusti*. The Gladag gate area overall have a symbolic meaning that someone who would do the inner or outer virtue should be able to control the inner passions of personality that similarly as animal desire to reach a higher degree of human and deserve to do the stage of life perfection in the world (Miksic, 2004:104-107).

The Surakarta Palace wants to convey a spiritual message to mankind that life is full of struggle. To achieve the purpose of life, humans must struggle to overcome all obstacles that can impede the life. The man must struggle against the desires in this life that can keep him away from the destination toward the Creator, who has a power control of this life (*Multak*). Therefore, human strive to implement the inner and outer virtue by scrape out the animal desire and bestiality. In this case, the man should give more priority to nature as divine beings and human moral dimension, so the values of life perfection can be cultivated in all aspects of life.

The life Perfection, in the world, is a stage in an effort of achievement *Manunggaling kawula gusti* embodied by the presence of the palace center with *Dalem Prabasuyasa* palace at its center. However, the pleasure and the perfection of worldly life is not the end of a journey of life. Humans should not be complacent and stopped at this stage because the worldly summit pleasures are temporary. Therefore, the perfection of worldly life should be immediately abandoned and continued with the struggle toward perfection stages of life hereafter; that is *Manunggaling Kawula Gusti*.

The Symbols of human spirituality is realized with the presence of South Square which is as a symbol of the death nature or *awang-uwung*. Such description is almost identical to what was intended by Senosastroamidjojo (1958:74-75) in his description about *Dewa Ruci's* advices to Bima when looking for the One as follows.

"... *Sejatine Kene ora ono opo-opo, amung panggonan sunyoruri, tegese suwung quiet, ora gno lan Sarwo catering clothing. Dadi Siro may anuhokake bebaratan said, prasasat mengeran repercussion. Marang anuduh packaging Umpamane wong Jugul cornerstone ing pagunungan, Dene brass den akenaken kancono Mulyo. Panganggepe Jugul want, inganggep real gold. Wekasane kasamaran, amargo palson.*"

"... This place is not really on anything, just an empty place, quiet with no jewelry, joy, and or delicious food which is too perfect. Apparently you're only loyal to the mere utterance, like serving on the reverberation and echo. Like a jeweler tells a farmer from the mountains area, that metal is pure gold. The farmer assumed that the metal is completely pure gold. But eventually he hesitates on the information. All of that is the result of a falsehood."

Philosophically, the repetition of the order of space sanctity from the Gladag gate of Palace to the center of palace remind us to the content of the book *Serat Bima Suci* written by the Yasadipura I. In this book is told that the Bima get the advice of perfection from the teacher *Dewa Ruci* in the sense of *donya sungsang balik* (world upside down). The sample sentences are as follows.

"*Iki dalan talingan nggon kang kereng; Wrekudoro sigro manjing karno, wus prapteng ing jro garbane, andulu samodro gung, tanpo tepi nglangut lumaris, ngliyek adoh katingal. Dewo Ruci nguwh, heh opo katon ing siro. Dyan umatur Seno, pan inggih atebih, tan wonten katingalan. Awang-awang kang kulo lampahi, uwung-uwung tebih tan kantenan, ulun saparan parane, tan mulat ing lor kidul, wetan kulon mboten udani, ngandap nginggil myang ngarso kalawan ing pungkur, kawulo mboten uningo, langkung bingung. Sang Dewa Ruci Lingaris, ajwo maras tyassiro. Byar katingal ngadep Sang Dewa Ruci. Wrekudoro sang Wiku kawangwang, umancur katon cahyane, nulyo wruh ing lor kidul wetan kulon sampun udani, nginggil miwah ing ngandap pan sampun kadulu, lawan umiyat baskoro, eco tyase miwah sang wiku kaeksi, aneng jagad walikan.*"

"This way of the left ear hole; Wrekudoro (Bima) immediately enters the ear, got in his own heart, convincing ocean without limit, as far as the eye could see. Dewa Ruci asks, what appears to your selves. The Seno (Bima) answered, as far as the eye could see anything invisible. Where the eye sees only feel the emptiness, not to know where north or south, where the east or west, not knowing where the bottom, where the top, where the front, where the back. Did not know anything, it felt confusion. The

Dewa Ruci said softly; do not make dim the eyes of your heart. Then immediately is visible light emanating from the Dewa Ruci in front Wrekudoro (Bima), then clearly visible north-south, east-west, up and down, and very enjoyable experience and felt the bright light such as sunlight, in the universe (nature) inverted (nature of spirit). "

Furthermore, *keblat papat kalmia pancer* meant in the context of the Surakarta palace architecture is a building orientation that is based on the belief of Javanese people toward the forces beyond the human self, the strength that comes from God and the supernatural forces that exist in the universe. In this context, the palace is considered as *pancer* (cosmic energy centers) that are not moving (steady), but moving (dynamic power), which is surrounded by *keblat papat* (other forces that are in the four corners of the compass).

The concept of *papat keblat Kalima pancer* that in Javanese culture commonly called by the *pajupat* concept is a cognitive construction (symbolic universe) which became the basis of the cosmogony palace creation; from the smallest scope (building) to the largest scope (the division of the country). This concept is aimed at unification with the universe that contains magical powers are great and not measurable. In the end, this power can make the palace as a mirror of instructions set that guide life towards the goal of perfection in life and it is as united worldly place (worldly) with smooth natural (supernatural). Such symbolization by Triguna (1997:6) indicates a link between the structures and the cosmological conception of the world composed around the four cardinal points. The central point is considered superior to their surroundings and serves to balance the power of the four subordinate.

As mentioned earlier, the architectural embodiment of Surakarta Palace stretching from Glodag Gate to Gading Gate full of mysticism (*suluk*) which contains about Javanese philosophy. In general, this philosophy contains the clues to inner perfection in unification of goals themselves with the power of God which is divided into three levels; *Kanoman* (young science), *Kasepuhan* (old science), and *kasukman* (soul science).

First, the level of *Kanoman* or behavior is the level of learning and practicing science of worldliness. The culmination of this stage is the science of magic *kanuragan* (worldliness). To arrive at the top level of this, human should be through several stages that are symbolically

represented in the *Gladag* area and North square of Surakarta Palace. This area can be defined as the first step of teaching to achieve the *Manunggaling Kawula Gusti*. The interpretation of the symbolic stages can be described as follows.

- (1) Gladag gate, a twin gate, is a form of creativity from the temple of *bentar* that is in the past was known as a characteristic of the gateway into the sacred area of inner cultural centers that are often found in mountainous areas, complimented with two statues Yaksa Pandita. The Gladag derived from the word *hanggladag* meaning of the word led by force the wild animals hunting to be slaughtered and the meat distributed (*murak*) to the people. Overall Gladag gate and two statues Pandita Yaksa contains the message that "anyone who intends to carry out behavior (*laku*) toward *manunggaling kawula Gusti* must face many obstacles." Therefore, the people must be completely aware, ready, and has strong embroidery, and should be able to control his personal desire like animal desire.
- (2) North Square, in the form of public space and the vast expanse of flat land, where people gathered to listen to the king's announcement, and communal space to conduct activities involving many people. Thus, this public space can be interpreted as a symbol of popular democracy. Furthermore, the message is "after able to control the personal desire, animal desire, then control the anger to be more patient and wise facing the life in the world."
- (3) Great Mosque, as a place of worship that always sounds the call to prayer five times a day for Muslims. The existence of these buildings give the messages on a human "to always remember his obligations to the Creator in a state no matter how busy worldly affairs."
- (4) *Pagelaran Sasanasumewa*, where the place of meeting *pepatih* and the regents at the time of big day celebrations. This building is a symbol of people's obedience to the leader and symbol of the wisdom of leaders. That is, the symbol is contained the message that "people should be able to distinguish right from wrong in order to harmonize between the life of the macrocosm (big universe) and microcosm (little universe)."

(5) North *Sitihinggil*, in the form of elevated stretch of land that resembles a small mountain or back of a turtle (*hanggeger bulus*). This place is a symbol of the culmination stage of *kanuman* for the way of *kasatrian* (stages of life are commonly conducted by a knight). That is, the stage is at once an early stage of commencement world *Kasepuhan*. The message symbols that can be captured is the existence of a warning to not fall asleep with worldly advantages (magic) which has been obtained, because the spiritual experience toward *manunggaling kawula gusti* is still far a way. This situation is described as a stage full of risk because people often forget themselves and get stuck in the ego self that stands out or forget ourselves because of its power. If it happens, people will stop at the level or even bounce back at the beginning level. That is, will not be until the final goal; *manunggaling kawula gusti*. Therefore, after arriving at this level, the people should immediately went into the spiritual experience of *Kasepuhan* stage that must be lived with concern that manifested by the presence of *Kori Renteng* (*renteng*= concerned); without hesitation manifested by the presence of *Kori Mangu* (*Mangu* = doubt); by relying on deepest feelings are realized by north *Kori Barajanala*.

(6) *Sapit Urang*, that is, the ring road that circles the *Pagelaran Sasanasumewa* and north *Sitihinggil* to north *Kori Brajanala*. The message is that to achieve a sense *manunggaling kawula gusti*, there is another way called *Margi kapanditan* (the road which would normally be a pastor), that is the road that can be achieved when people get the privilege of the creator, so it does not have to go through the road that passed through the human generally (through the *Pagelaran Sasanasumewa* and North *Sitihinggil* commonly known as *kanoman way* or *kasatrian*).

Second, the level of *Kasepuhan* or also commonly called the first *kasukman*. The culmination of this stage is a sense of *manunggaling kawula gusti* in the world. To reach this *Kasepuhan* level humans have to go through several stages which are symbolically described in the area of North *Sitihinggil* until the center of palace. The translation details of the symbol stages can be described as follows.

(1) *Kamandungan*, a spacious terrace with two entrances is large enough to go into the palace. This stage is an advance *laku*

Kasepuhan after humans are capable of reaching the culmination of *laku Kanoman* that begins with strengthening willingness, eliminating doubt, and the sharpness of the sense of feeling for the next life. The messages that contained in the architectural embodiment of this *Kamandungan* area are "a man should be able to look inward and be honest to consciously know himself completely."

- (2) North *Srimanganti*, where the king used waiting to welcome guests or place waiting for the guests before ushered into *kedhaton*. Based on its function, where it contains a message that in the *laku kasepuhan* in order to achieve *manunggaling kawula gusti* should be conducted with patience and continue to look inward and be honest with yourself. This is symbolized by the presence of a large mirror laid in this area.
- (3) The center of Palace, a place that is considered as the most important and sacred place in the Surakarta palace complex. This place is a description of the triumph of *laku batin* (inner attitude), which is when people get a sense of tranquility in the nature of *kasampurnan* or the nature of *Swarga loka* where people can be united with his Lord in the sense of this world.

Third, the level of *kasukman*, which is represents the spiritual experience (human spirit) after death. The culmination of this level is *Manunggaling kawula gusti*, that is completely back to the nature of *suwung* (empty) that can be expressed by *mulih menyang mula mulanira, sampurna jati, jatining sampurna* (back to the origin of man, true perfection, a perfectly true). The journey of the soul process is symbolically depicted in the palace center area to *Gading Gate*. The detailed description of the process symbol can be described as follows.

- (1) South *Srimanganti*, unlike North *Srimanganti*, in this area there are no a large mirror. It is clear that this place is a description of the human spirit journey that has no physical form that can be seen in the mirror and are waiting to be summoned to continue the journey facing the Almighty.
- (2) *Magangan*, outwardly has a meaning as a candidate place for soldiers who are prepared to become a formidable warrior. Spiritually, is defined as a place to resolve totally unified in purpose in entering the world of *Sufi* or *Jalan sujud* (worship way). Furthermore, this area is a description of a gathering place

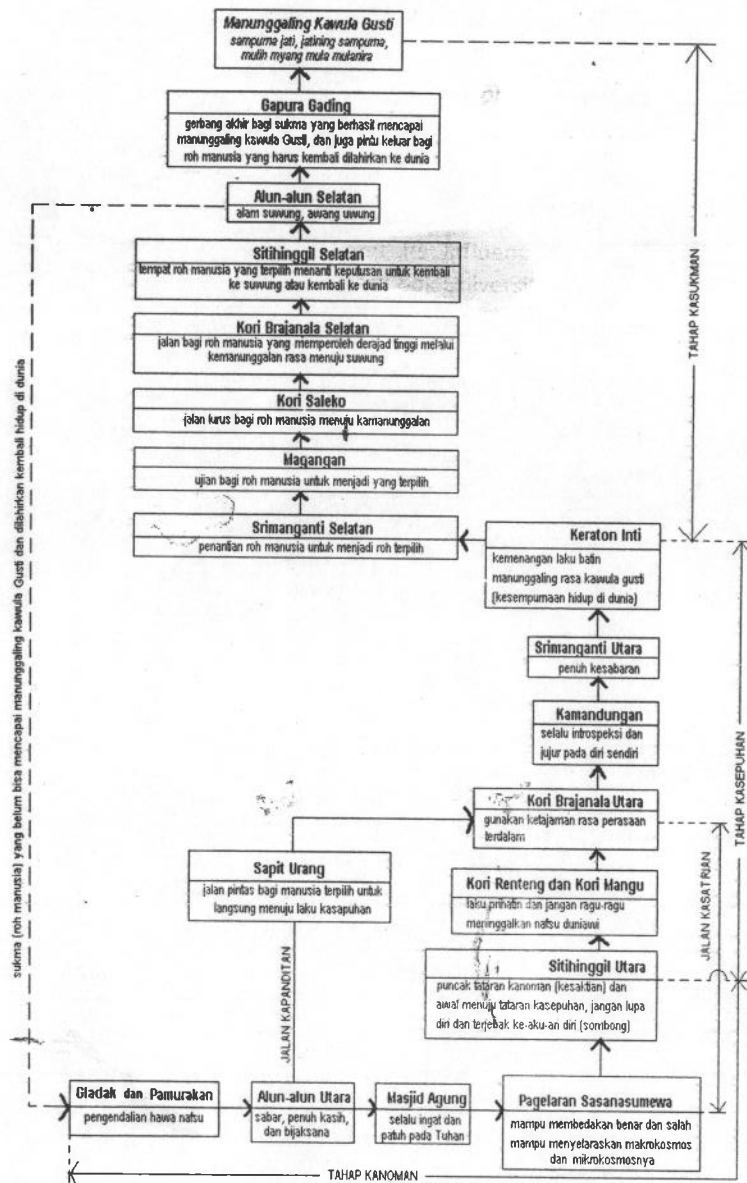
for the human spirit as it prepares to continue its journey to nature *suwung*.

- (3) *Kori Saleko*, meant as a straight away self unification with Almighty, or can also be interpreted as a straight path toward "a perfection of life." Therefore, the exit of *Magangan* to the South *Kamandungan* describes a door for the human spirit toward the straight way to the unity (*saleko*).
- (4) South *Kori Brajanala*, the exit of the South *Kamandungan* towards South *Sitihinggil*, describes a door for the human spirit toward a high degree of soul that has been achieved through a sense of unity toward *suwung* (*rasa tunggal, mlebet mring suwung*). This description is more emphasis on the meaning of warning to not only sharpen the sense as a weapon, but it must reach the level of living in the deepest sense of feeling because basically the God can only be reached by the deepest sense.
- (5) South *Sitihinggil*, described the gathering place of the chosen human spirit which is waiting to reach the *manunggaling kawula gusti* or lowered back into the world. Therefore, from the simple physical form, this area provides a symbolic description that for the worship way toward the Almighty is unnecessary to carry out the whole worldly thing (material and or desire) because everything has to be focused and directed to Him alone.
- (6) South Square, the imagery of nature of *barzah*, nature of *suwung, awang-uwung*, where the spirits gather to accept the decision of re-birth to the world or a perfect *manunggaling kawula gusti* expressed by *sampurna jati jatining sampurna mulih myang mula mulanira* (true perfection, perfectly true, back into the origin).
- (7) *Gading Gate*, the exit of the palace complex is located on the South side. The word *Gading* derived from *hanggading* which means being on the side of God. The name of this gate reinforces the symbolism of *Gading Gate*, which is the final door for the soul who reached *manunggaling kawula gusti*.

D. Conclusion

Overall levels and stages of human life that was manifested in the form of architectural Surakarta Palace is a transformation of Javanese

teachings commonly contained in literary works of Javanese poets called "literary *suluk* or literary mysticism." It means that the teaching or messages contained in the expression of the Surakarta palace architecture can be considered same or equivalent to the doctrine contained in the "literary *suluk*." Therefore, it is no exaggeration when the term *suluk* is ultimately also attached to the Surakarta palace architecture; "the *suluk* architecture of Surakarta Palace." In other word, if the Javanese literary works of palace poets with its *suluk*, it should obtained the same treatment with other works as a *adiluhung* work of Javanese culture. Furthermore, the whole *suluk* (teachings) are attached to the Surakarta palace architecture can be described in diagrammatic in Figure 1 below.



Gambar 1 The Suluk Sketsa of Surakarta palace architecture.

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