

The Perception of Interior to the *Osing* Society in Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

The perception of 'interior' in terms of dwelling, is the relationship between humans, activities and their containment. The three aspects are a unified whole that cannot be separated from one another. Without humans and activities, a containment cannot be regarded as interior (Pile, 2003). It is identical to a container. In the contemporary world, the boundaries of this container are generally known to us as floors, walls and ceilings. This is because this container possesses a function as a protector of human activity within it. The society of the Indonesian archipelago, however, has a different perception of the concept of container, hence, interior. To them, a container can be physical and non-physical. These two types of containers have a strong function and role in the formation of the 'interior' to the archipelagic society. This is what differentiates the perception of 'interior' between the general society and the archipelagic society. In this research, the dwellings of the Osing Society in Banyuwangi, East Java, has been taken as a case study.

The research adopts the ethnographic approach, in which the research reside with the research subjects for several weeks. The results of the observation were then analyzed using the triangulation technique that is through comparing data, theory, and experts' views in order to produce accurate results.

The Osing society in East Java as the research subject has a unique way in understanding the interior, specifically in understanding the concept of containment. The perception of containment to the Osing society is truly determined by their religious and cultural values. These values indicate the formation of the interior space and are expressed in the design of their dwellings.

Keywords: *Archipelago, Interior, Osing, Dwelling.*

INTRODUCTION

The culture of the Indonesian archipelago truly differs from that of the West (countries with four seasons). Each country with its own distinct culture has different climatic conditions. The climatic conditions of countries with four seasons is extremely season from one season to the other. On the other hand, there is not much difference between the climatic conditions of the Indonesian archipelago during the Wet season from the Dry season. Just as the climatic conditions of countries with four seasons are staggeringly different from that of the Indonesian archipelago, there is also a staggering difference in terms of cultural life. This is also the case in relation to daily habits, cultural representations and life values.

The transformation of the Interior Design discipline in Indonesia, generally speaking, originated from the West. This discipline, according to Pile (2002), was one that was founded on the basis of the four seasons, in which 90% of human activity is performed inside a building. The differences in climatic conditions, results in differences in culture as well. The society of countries with four seasons have a different perception of the concept and expression of a containment and its container. To them, a container is a physical form that functions as a protector of human beings and their activities from extreme climatic conditions (Pile, 2003). Hence, the concept of interior is not merely a container that accommodates humans and their activities, but also a protector against extreme weather. As a result, a container or a physical boundary, is something that is truly important and ought to be capable to meeting these basic needs of human life. The society of the Indonesian archipelago, who live their lives through the weather conditions of two seasons, regard the boundaries of the interior not as a protector from weather, but as a place of shelter only during the heat and rain. The container acts only as a shade with human activities performed beneath it. Facts show that the people of the Indonesian archipelago perform majority of their daily activities outdoors. Meanwhile the area indoors is only used during the night time for sleeping and resting.

There has not been much research performed in the discipline of interior design of the dwellings in the Indonesian archipelago, compared to the variety of research works done in the field of architecture. Consequently, the perception of interior, according to the society of the Indonesia archipelago, needs much research development in terms of theory and agreements according to the context of the Indonesian archipelagic society. The definitions on the interior design of the Indonesian archipelago are not yet reciprocal. The comprehension of the interior discipline today is only a result of development from Western theories based on four-seasoned regions, having extreme weather conditions. The objective of this research is to produce a new source of reference in understanding interior design, particularly based on the Indonesian archipelago. This cannot be separated from cultural values of the archipelagic people, as they are part of their everyday lives. These cultural values are expressed in their religious customs, traditions and other daily life habits.

This research is a development from previous studies performed on Indonesian archipelagic interior design with case studies in Madura Island. Hence, it is hoped that this research would be able to enrich previous research findings. The topic that will be discussed in this research is the understanding of interior, in the context of the Osing society, as one of the communities of the Indonesian archipelago.

Ethnography as the Research Approach

This research adopts the approach of Ethnography (Wang, 2002). Ethnographic methods emphasize on in-depth interviews that are done by living together for a significant duration of time with the research subjects and experience being part of their society. The purpose of the interview is to discover issues that has not been or difficult to be exposed to the general society. The observations methods conducted during this period are performed in order to obtain richer data compared to those that are acquired through formal interviews. The researchers observed and follow the subjects' daily life activities to establish a closer relationship and provide more opportunities for conversations. The observations performed towards the male subjects include going to work in the fields with the elder males and socializing with the male adults and adolescents in the pasture fields, roads, coffee stalls, and other places. On the other hand, the observations performed on the

female subjects were mainly done by following their activities in the kitchen and sometimes, in the fields.

In-depth interviews were performed openly with traditional leaders or figures. This is fairly easy to perform because they are generally amiable and are quite fond of social gatherings. With the leader of their custom, interviews were done to obtain formal information about any knowledge that the general society do not master.

Findings from the field data and interviews were then analyzed with the technique of Triangulation: analysis based on comparison between the field data, theory and expert's opinion in order to obtain accurate conclusions about the understanding of interior according to the Osing society.

Indonesian archipelagic culture as the bases of understanding interior

The Indonesian archipelagic culture is one that has developed and lived through time within the geographical locations and conditions of their archipelago. Primordially, the Indonesian archipelagic society, like the general traditional society in the world, believes in the concept of Dualism (Tuan, 2003). Koentjaraningrat (2005) stated that the primordial society was divided into four groups. Sumarjo (2002) detailed them as: *Peramu*, *Peladang*, *Maritim* and *Sawah*. The way of life and cosmology of these four groups are expressed in their dwellings and spaces that are distinct from one another. The target group of this research adopts the *Sawah* (field) system with four divisions as characteristics of its cosmology.

On this subject, the Eastern society has a different way of thought from the West. Tulistyantoro (2016) discovered that the eastern way of thought is truly dependent on cultural values. These cultural values truly dominate the daily life of the archipelagic society. Hence, the understanding of interior is also very different from the Western society in general. This is a result of the difference in seasons or climate between the two different regions (Pile, 2003). As an example, the perception of interior according to the society of Madura is not limited to physical boundaries. Interior can also be formed by non-physical boundaries that cannot be visually seen or touched. The Maduranese people regard norms as strong boundaries despite the non-physical form of these norms. These non-physical and

norm-determined boundaries have a profound effect, termed as *Carok*. *Carok* is the process of defending one's family pride in which the worst consequence of failure is death. It is not regarded as an act of crime in the general society. The main reason behind this ritual is because it is a form of defense towards the family's safety or pride (Wiyata, 2002).

From this understanding, it can be concluded that the perception of interior space is not only determined by physical boundaries. Interior space can be a result of non-physical boundaries such as norms. In the case of the Maduranese society, these non-physical boundaries has more regard than physical ones.

Furthermore, the perception of furniture according to the Maduranese society are not always identical to chairs, tables and others. Other facilities for human activities can be in the form of *lencak* (*lencak* is a place to sit a lot of people and can be used for sleeping), *tikar* (floor mat), *dengklek* (a form of traditional stool-like household equipment), and others. Generally, these objects have truly complex functions (Tulistyantoro, 2017). For example, the *lencak* has other functions besides for sitting; it is also used for sleeping, food preparation, bathing area for dead bodies and so on. This *lencak* when occupied by a human and his activities becomes an interior space to its occupant, because it has psychological boundaries similar to walls and ceilings.

Research shows that the primordial society of Indonesia, like the general primordial society, adopts the system or concept of Dualism. The principles of Dualism is a very universal one in the life of the primordial society as a whole, but also a very specific one in the Indonesian archipelago. The principles of Dualism is the one that beliefs in two opposite elements of life that are in harmony with one another. The achievement of this harmony, to the primordial society, renders them happiness and prosperity (Sumardjo, 2002). The structure of this Dualism can be vertical as well as horizontal.

This structure can be articulated as consisting of three separate zones: down, middle, up. Each zone is related to the character of its user.

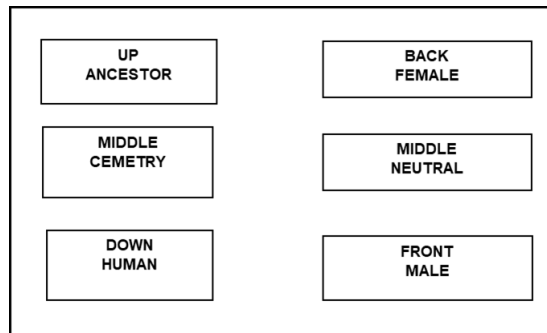


Figure 1. The Structure of the Dualism concept as applied in space that is divided between two opposing elements, consisting of three zones.

The Osing Society and their Perception of Interior

To understand the Osing society's perception of interior space means to consider the cultural factor, consisting of their system of beliefs, building construction, space and others. The traditional beliefs of the Osing society, particularly concerning their past, present and future truly determine the structural and spatial system of their interior space.

Ritual System of the Osing Society

The ritual system of the Osing society like the archipelagic society as a whole is divided into two groups, one that is individualistic in character and the other communal. Individualistic rituals are those that are oriented towards one self and are performed singularly. For instance, the life cycle ritual beginning from birth, teenager, adult, marriage till death. Meanwhile, the communal rituals are those that are oriented towards common interests. There are a variety of these rituals consisting of customary rituals and religious rituals. Examples of customary rituals include *ider bumi*, *tumpeng sewu*, *kopi sewu* and others. Whereas, religious rituals include the *qurban*, *Eid Al-Fitr*, and others.

Individual rituals are performed for the interests of oneself or of one's family. These rituals have consider one's interests as the interest of the whole family. Hence, although many people would be involved in these rituals, they have the same main purpose. These revolve around the life-cycle of a single human being, from birth, adult, marriage, having children, death.

The birth ritual begins with the third-month ceremony, followed by the seven-month ceremony, birth, burying of placenta, *puput pusat*, *turun tanah* and so on. These ceremonies emphasize on the safety of a way. This birth is not truly special and not considered a big celebration. It is normally commemorated by the activity of *jenang abang putih* (red-white porridge). However, a very special ritual is *menanam ari-ari* (burying of placenta). To the Osing society, an individual's life does not belong to his own self. They believe in the concept of *sedulur papat lima pancer* (a life consists of four other entities and the fifth being one's material self) and this also influences how space is formed. *Pancer* is one's real self that is visually present, whereas the other four are spiritual companions (Soemodijoyo, 1980). Hence, the placenta, considered one of the four spiritual entities of one's self is respectfully treated. It is usually buried inside the house in accordance with the family's hope that the child to whom the placenta belongs to would be content in his own home even when he grows up. After a certain time, the placenta will then be relocated and reburied just outside the house with the hope that though he will grow to have his own life, he will still stay nearby and not wander beyond their region. This is evident through the fact that even till today, the Kemiren society generally do not move far away from their homeland.

The Maturing ritual is usually performed on behalf of the male subjects in the form of circumcision. This is a big ceremony as it is considered similar in importance to marriage. Besides commemorating maturity, circumcision is also performed on the basis of religious Islamic values.

One particularly interesting belief of the Osing society is called the *sedekahan putu*, *buyut atau canggah*. This ritual is performed as a form of gratitude from junior family members to their seniors. It is usually performed by 'meeting the past with the present to look to the future' which means bringing all generations of family together. The people believe that at a certain time in life, the next generation would have to pay respects to their elders while taking the responsibility over their children, and that this stage is a part of the circle of life. Parents have the responsibility over the next generation. This connection reflects the honor of the Osing people towards parents who have an important role to play in the lives of the next generation. One ritual of this honoring activity include an activity of

showering their parents with flowered water above a traditional *mori* cloth covered over their heads.

Marriage is based on the perception to unite two beings from two different families in order to achieve a single harmony. This ritual is usually commenced with a proposal, although it does not always happen as the Osing society recognizes an uncommon form of marriage system, termed as *colongan*. Normal marriage occurs because the two families agree on the marriage of their children in a transparent and compliant way. However, a *colongan* (translated as 'stealing') marriage happens when there are still some disagreements from any side of the two families regarding the union, such that the bride must be stolen away while a messenger is sent to propose to her. In terms of marriage, the Osing people have the tradition of marrying their children to their own distant relatives. Sometimes there is a mutual agreement, sometimes there are also objections. These objections result in *colongan* marriage, and this usually occurs on the side of the females.

One of the interesting rituals in marriage is the procession of entering the house, termed as *jrummyah* (translated as main room), which is performed inside the house. If this ritual is done outside the house with a temporary overhead shelter as in many traditions, they need to install wooden gates for the bride and groom to pass through as a symbolism of entering a holy place: a sacred marriage. All the ceremonial equipment are kept inside this *jrummyah*.

When commencing all these ceremonies, the Osing people usually hold the ritual of giving alms to ancestors. The concept behind this ritual is to harmonize the past with the present and the future. The ritual involves inviting/requesting permission/approval from ancestors so that the ceremony will progress in a well and smooth manner. Presenting the ancestors render the meaning of harmonizing the past with the present. Usually a symbol known as the *lingga-yoni* is made present in which *lingga* is represented by a glass jug with a plate-light structure as companion. The symbol of fertility is represented by the jug or *lingga* that rests on the plate or *yoni*. The presence of ancestors is symbolized by the presence of a chair covered with a batik cloth with *Jenonan* (leave-like) motif. The symbolized representation of the presence of ancestors provides a perception of the cultural space in life.

Besides the above activity, the next ritual is termed *penetepan*. In this ritual, the presence of ancestors is also represented by rice grains. The grains are usually placed inside a clay pot covered with a white cloth that has been passed under a specific chanting of prayers. The purpose of this ritual is to represent the family's hope that the couple will always be in prosperity and void of any need. According to the perception of the Agarics 'society, rice as their staple food has an important role in their lives. Hence, the presence of rice grains is also an expression of the people's dependence on nature as well as honour to Dewi Padi (the goddess Padi).

The ritual of holding the presence of ancestors has a profound influence on spatial arrangement of the place as shown in figure 2.

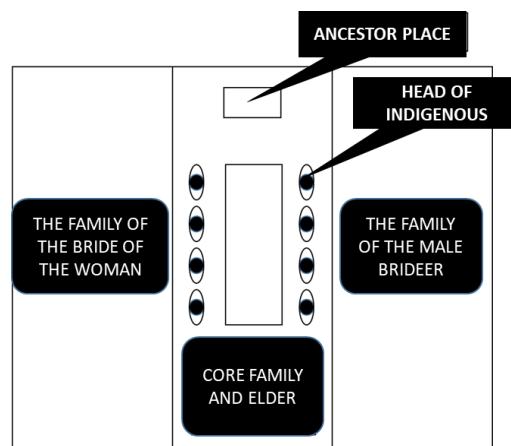


Figure 2. Space is formed between the sacred and the profane area. This is formed during the ceremony of holding the presence of the family's ancestors before the *temu juru* ceremony (an act of joining thumbs between the bride and groom with a chanting of a specified prayer over it).

Meanwhile, communal rituals are performed in a group altogether such as the *ider bumi* (a traditional form of a group-operated mascot similar to a Chinese barongsai that dances around the village) and *tumpeng sewu* (eating a mountain of rice together with a thousand of people). *Ider bumi* is a ceremony that symbolizes the cleansing of village, in which all residents will prepare their own ceremonial equipment for their own spiritual ritual. In this ceremony, the presence of ancestors is also rendered. Remembering them, commemorating their presence and harmonizing with their presence are important activities. Without their existence, there would be no food for today. The Osing Kemiren

society understand their ancestors in a culture known as *buyut Cili*, as the source and earlier ancestor of the Osing society. This ritual is performed on the second day of the Shawwal month. Meanwhile the tumpeng sewu ritual is performed on every Sunday or Thursday of the first week. The tumpeng is made of white rice and chicken bred.

Structural System of Osing Dwellings in Kemiren

According to the views of Osing custom leader (Suhaimi, 2017), the building structure of Osing dwellings is an expression of daily household life. All its elements represent symbols in life. *Saka papat* symbolizes the support for marriage, which is initially constructed by the parents of the bride and groom. Both the families are, like the structures, woven together with *balok jahit* (a woven beam) that forms a unity. After they are united by the *balok jahit*, the structure is then re-strengthened by *balok lampiang* (another beam) with the hope that the marriage will not be unstable. The structures are then added with other parts known as *dur* and *reng*. *Dur* symbolizes the hope that the household would no longer be doubtful while *reng* means planning, that is truly needed in a successful marriage life. This whole unity of structure is then covered by a roof as the final building element. The philosophy corresponding to the structural system of the dwelling is that a household, according to the Osing society, is not something that can be built individually. Instead, the construction of this household needs a clear relation between the beginning, the present and the future. This is the reason why the society of Osing all perform rituals that commemorate the past, in the present and the future. The present means the time present life is undergoing, the past means the processes that have taken place in the past such as rituals for elders, commemorating the presence of ancestors and intergenerational meetings. The future means holding ceremonies for congratulating or requesting for blessings for future occasions.

Hence, in the philosophical sense, the spatial structure of the Osing dwelling represents the relation between the past, the present and the future.

Spatial Structure of Osing Dwelling

The spatial structure of Osing dwellings has a basic structure consisting of three parts: *balik*, *jrummyah*, and *pawon*, and most of the area has an overhang. The spatial structure of the dwelling can be seen in figure 3.

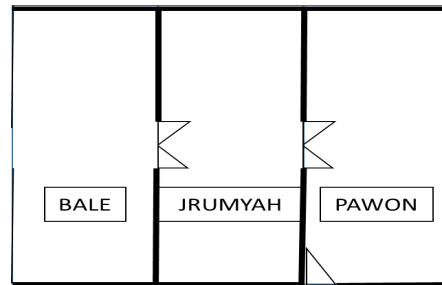


Figure 3. Basic spatial structure of Osing dwelling, consisting of *bale*, *jrummyah*, and *pawon*.

This structure is fixed in scale and simply accommodated in a single building. However, the structure can develop into a more complex one by simple steps. For example *Bale* can be developed by the addition of space from the first main structure into three spatial structure. The *jrummyah* can also be developed into one whole building whereas the kitchen undergoes a shift from one room structure into three room structure. The area can be added according to the needs of the family. Meanwhile, the *bale* or in local Osing language is known as *bale* is an area that has dual functions: for receiving small family visitors but in times of need may be expanded into a larger area. The knock-down system of the house renders high flexibility for the family in changing the space according to their needs. In order to open up rooms, a ritual to open the *gedeg* needs to be performed specially during marriage or circumcision ceremonies. The ritual of expanding the rooms is done usually at the beginning of these ceremonies.

The alteration of space only happens in the main room or *pawon*, which takes place when there is a basic need. One of the areas that cannot be changed is the *jrummyah*. It is a sacred space and the essential area of the whole spatial structure. It is fixed and this provides an understanding that the development of a building is caused by one need that centered on the main room.

From the observation above, it can be seen that the most sacred area in the Osing dwelling is the *jrummyah*. The term of it, according to experts, derives from the words *jero umyah* (translates to 'inside the house'), which is shortened to *jrummyah*. This main room is

the controlling area, having a fixed position and does not physically change, but its presence and influence become the essence of the dwelling itself. However, the position of it is not always the same in every dwelling as in the figure. But it is always present in the Osing dwelling, yet it still maintains at the same place with no temporary changes. Change in number occurs only when family members grow in number, but this is still rare, as every child that gets married will be given his own home by his parents. Only the parents and children live in one *jrummyah*.

The area of men and women is very flexible and can develop following the space needs of their owners. This can occur because the structural system that is owned is a knock down system so as to allow the expansion of space to become large.

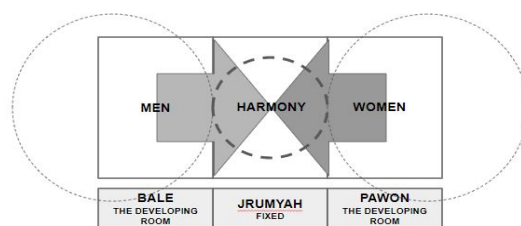


Figure 4. Formation of A Neutral Space due to the Dualism of opposing elements and development of space influenced by rituals or needs for more public areas.

Relation of the naming of dwelling according to its structure and function.

The naming system of the dwelling has a strong connection to the function and structure of the building. The simplest main house consists of a *tikelan*. It is a building with a roof with four divided foldings. The first folding is used for the *balik* area, the second and third foldings are for the *jrummyah* area, whereas the fourth folding is used for the *pawon*. The next development is the main house, added with the kitchen that can be equipped with *crocogan* (a two-folding roof structure), or even a *baresan* (three-folding roof structure). Meanwhile, the development from *balik* generally consists of a *crocogan* or a complete *tikelan*. In order to obtain a larger area for the kitchen, a *tikelan* can be added. Hence, the spatial structure of the dwelling may consist of three *tikelan* structures, or a *two tikelan* and a *crocogan*. It may also consist of only a *baresan*, *crocogan* and *tikelan*. The spatial

arrangement of the dwelling is truly determined by the economic conditions of the people. Throughout the research, the author could not find a single barn.

However, there is a cowshed that is generally close to the fields of the owner. The structure of the cowshed is a closed building, used for shelter as well as to keep cattle. These cattle are not permitted to be released freely in the fields. They are maintained at the cowshed and fed every day. Sometimes the cowshed can also be used as a resting place for the owner because its distance is relatively far and so it would not be effective for him to travel back and forth to care for his cattle.

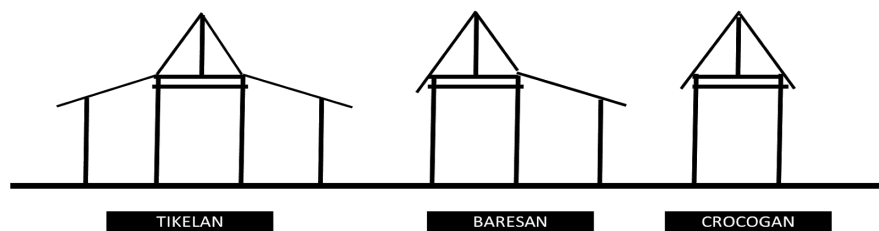


Figure 5. Types of building based on the roof structure, consisting of *Tikelan*, *Baresan* and *Crorogan*.

The type of dwellings in Kemiren truly varies from *tikelan*, *baresan*, *crocogan* (figure 5). These naming are based on the roof structure. The simplest structure is the *crocogan*, having 2 foldings, which in architectural terms is known as gabled roof. This structure is very simple with four columns. This structure is usually used for the *pawon*. However, low-income families still use this form of structure as *welit* as its roof covering made from palm leaf. The second form is called *baresan*, which has an extra folding on one of its sides. This structure is usually used for development of the *balik* or *pawon*. It is not commonly used for living spaces. Meanwhile, the *tikelan* is considered a perfect structure as it has four foldings, with overhangs on either sides. This structure is a singular unit of an Osing dwelling, also used for the *balik*, and the *pawon*.

The dwelling of the Osing society in Kemiren as well as in other areas has a very clear structure of thought. The dwelling is principally divided into three parts: *Balik* (bale), *Jrumyah* (jero umyah/omah), *pawon*. *Balik* is the place to receive guests, particularly the male. During big events, this *balik* space can be expanded into a larger area. The female area

is usually in the *pawon*, and they must use the side door to gain access to it. Inside the *balik* there is a set of table and chair, with the addition of a *ploco* (translate to 'divan') used for many functions such as sleeping and conducting a gratitude ceremony, known as *sedekahan*. *Balik* can be enlarged into a larger area with the *tikelan* structure.

The interior consists of the male zone, private zone, and female zone. The male zone is for male activities. The private zone is the zone for family activities. Other people apart from family members are prohibited to enter this area. Orang luar tidak pantas memasuki ruangan ini. The female zone is for female activities such as cooking.

The public zone includes the male zone that also functions as the place to receive guests. This zone is in the *balik* area. There is a set of guest table with a *plonco* on its side. This *plonco* is not only used for sitting, it is also used as a sleeping facility for male adults. It is located in the *balik*. *Balik* has two areas: a small one in front of *jrummyah*, and another one having a single building structure without a wall on the front side.

The private zone is a place for sleeping for other family members like parents and children. Inside it is a *plonco pegawangan* (bed with four pillars) that is equipped with a mosquito net. There are usually two areas of *plonco* which are used by parents and female children. This zone is bounded by *gebyok* (carved walls made of wood) with a pair of doors. Meanwhile inside it is a door that connects the *pawon* and the *jrummyah*. The *jrummyah* also has a sacred character and this is the place where the rituals of *penetep* and marriage take place. The *penetep* ritual is the ritual of providing food materials yang will be used for celebrations, particularly rice grains placed inside a pot, which is then covered with a white cloth with prayers chanted over it by the leader of the ritual. After that, the process of collecting food material is taken at this place. Equipment for the marriage ceremonies and wines will enter this area such as *pitik angrem* (chicken incubates), household items, , *punjen* and others, and when they are being brought in, the bride will be hidden in the *jrummyah*.

The service zone is identical to the female zone. This zone is used as a preparation zones for ceremonies. Usually, ceremonial equipment such as *plonco*, *paga*, *pawon* are kept here and are used daily as well as during rituals. There are several types of *pawon*: one with one burrow, and another with two burrows. The *pawon* has a direct access to the outside and to

the *jrummyah*. The access outside is used by the males from the outside. Whereas the access inside is used for family members and the females. The females do not need to enter the private area or the *jrummyah* in order to reach the *pawon*.

Hence, the interior of the Osing dwelling essentially starts from the *Jrummyah*, as the main area, which is sacred and closed in nature and where specific activities are performed particularly for the husband and wife. It is also the place for marriage. It is also the place to keep the equipment for rituals such as the marriage ritual and *penetepan* ritual to supply rice grains in big ceremonies. This can only be done by custom leaders who can chant the specific prayers.

Conclusion

The Osing community understands that its dwelling is not merely physical, but it is a sacred place where two different elements (positive and negative) are brought together to achieve harmony or balance. it is a place of harmony, comfort, peace and prosperity.

it has a spatial structure that can be divided into public, sacred and service area which corresponds to the male, neutral and female zones respectively. Each of these zones have a clear boundary from one are to the other. The boundaries are massive and distinct through *gebyok* with doors. The division of areas is differentiated also between male or female, family or non-family members. The *jrummyah* functions as the main area that does cannot be altered whereas the service/public and semi-public areas can develop into larger areas of spaces according to the inhabitant's needs. The spatial structure is also an expression of the Osing society's daily life that attempts to harmonize the past with the present and the future. This harmony happens because of the relations with the past that are regarded as the support to enter the future. Hence, to the Osing society, the interior or dwelling is the center of spiritual and family life. They have a truly strong attachment to their home. A dwelling is not a temporary place and a place where life goes on.

Acknowledgments

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