

Colonial Heritage: History, Architecture, and Interpretation

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Abstract

Heritage is history, memory, image and identity depicting the a piece of past of a cultural community through time. By their mind people interpret what they called heritage for diverse present and future purposes.. Therefore interpretation is very complex and changes over time with the changing social context, values, and set of people in interpreting proses.. In the case of conservation, the values influence how people interpret and care for heritages, in particular Colonial heritage that generate more discourse about responsibility and ownership issues. Thus, understanding the values of a community, Chinese and Acehnese and other involved ethnic groups, is utilized to discuss the history and architecture of shophouses in Peunayong, the Chinatown of Banda Aceh. Besides value discourses among users (inheritors), shophouses, private owned colonial heritage, also generate other discourses, ownership and responsibility issues among government, landlords, and Tenants. The discourses are discussed in various eras that represent the rise, the fall, and contemporary era of Peunayong,.

Keywords: Colonial Heritage, History, Architecture, and interpretation.

I. Introduction

This paper will discuss the history and interpretation issues of colonial heritage conservation from the users' perspective, particularly users of private Colonial heritage in Peunayong, Banda Aceh. This kind of heritage generates many debates of interpretation, ownership, and responsibilities arise between the private and public realm. In addition, private heritages usually function as residential homes that are less conserved than public institutional buildings. In actuality, the existence of private heritage is also crucial in shaping urban character, image, landscape, identity, and other urban attributes. Thus, conservation has to consider these buildings as conservation objects as well. However, buildings are conserved to live in and not to look at. Therefore, conservation efforts not only maintain the facade, but also give greater attention to creating livable places. The subject of the conservation, namely, the user in particular, is also part of conservation effort and plays an important role in conserving particular private-owned buildings in the case of limited public resources for conservation and limited enforcement of conservation law. Decision making for conservation usually - although not always, is in the hand of the user. Users determine

whether to be involved in conservation or not. Even, in the case of a strong legal framework of conservation such as in developed countries, users play an important role. Their role in financing and maintaining is significant in managing the urban heritage landscape.

To explore the privately owned heritage conservation issues, old shophouses in Peunayong, Chinatown of Banda Aceh is used as a case study since they are organized in a group of buildings that have strong character of space instead of single building. Moreover, the old shops have a long history of development and cross-cultural assimilation amongst Dutch Colonial, Chinese immigrants, and Acehnese, the indigenous people. This cultural interaction enriches the styles of the old shophouses that are mixture of Chinese-European architecture. Since 1992 these 19th century shophouses are designated as protected architectural heritage¹. Moreover, besides the old shophouses, Peunayong, has a wide range of shops from 19th until 21st era. Currently, shophouses are functioned as shops, offices, and private housing. They are owned by private users including Acehnese and Chinese and are rented by former ethnics, Java, Batak, and other Indonesian ethnic groups

II. Interpretation: Change and Social Process

Heritage depicts history of the past event of a civilization through time, then constructs identity, at least heritage one of important aspects of identity construction (Graham et al, 2000). However, before the interpretation process, heritage consists of just neutral things without meanings. In their mind the observers or participants ascribe the meaning of heritage (Nuryanti, 2000, p.153) and categorizes what is historical, beautiful, importance, etc for their purposes. The interpretation process involves preserving meaning of past events, cross-cultural sensitivity, professionalization, and education or training (Sayers 1989, Uzzell 1989 in Nuryanti, 2000), conservation planning, architectural design and reconstruction techniques (Nuryanti, 2000, p.252). Nuryanti also argued the influence of spiritual truth, emotional response, deeper meaning, and understanding in the interpretation process (Nuryanti, 2000, p.253).

Therefore interpretation is complex in that change over time by the changing agreed values among man (McCall and Simmons, 1996). These values are also not simply understood and defined as the same for all, since they are influenced by a personal experience through educational process. The same educational processes that could be formal such as formal school and informal such as daily life experience do not give the same value and interpretation to everyone (Halim, 2005 and Rumble, 1985 in Nuryanti, 2000, p.253) especially in pluralistic societies such as in Indonesia. In developing countries, including Indonesia, there is limitation of interpretation influenced by limitation of availability of information, infrastructure, education and training (Nuryanti, p.253).

In the case of heritage conservation value systems influence attitudes towards the old buildings. For example, the one who thinks heritage is valuable, with environmental value, treats the heritage as antique things to be conserved. In contrast, the one that prioritises economic values sees the heritage as an economic good. They conserve the heritage building given the opportunity for income gaining and demolish it

¹ See list of protected building by Badan Pengembangan Kebudayaan dan Pariwisata, proposed Land Use Qanun of Banda Aceh and the Conservation Law of Indonesia (Undang-undang No.5, 1992)

when heritage conservation is a barrier to economic goals. However, the value can change gradually and become revolutionary overtime (Halim, 2005). The value is fluid depending on social and cultural context (Nuryanti, 2000, p.257), so does interpreted heritage and identity that is constructed by heritage (see Graham et al, 2000 and Halim, 2005). Therefore, the remaining heritage that is recently performed is the product of negotiating value in changing context. Thus, understanding the agreed values of the ways in which the Chinese communities, Acehnese business people and those from other parts of Indonesia all interact and, hence, change the nature of urban Banda Aceh, is needed to understand the remaining heritage buildings in Peunayong, the Chinatown of Banda Aceh.

III. Colonial Heritage: Responsibility Discourse and Cross-Cultural

Discussion about 19th century era of old shophouses in Peunayong is correlated with colonial heritage issues since the buildings, Chinese-European architecture, were allowed to establish by Dutch Colonial policy in Acehnese community.² This current emerging issue of colonial heritage interpretation that has been ignored for decades is one of the important aspects in creating a new identity in line with emerging political power issues in colonized countries. In Indonesia, the aspect of Dutch colonialism was significant in shaping contemporary Indonesia, particularly establishing the influence on Indonesian modern borders, national identity, internal security issues (Group Captain Ted Prencel, Australia – Air Force, 2003), town planning and architecture. However, this influence is diverse to each part of Indonesia³. In the contemporary situation of the early 21st century, those remnants of post-colonial architecture, one of Dutch influence, have been assigned as heritage, based on the Indonesian Heritage Conservation Act No.5 1992. However, the designation of colonial buildings as conserved heritage, consequently, generates contestation concerning whose heritages then whose responsibility it is to maintain those urban relics (Kusno, 2000; Paulene van Roosmalen,- ,Rath, -).

The question as to whose heritage is being preserved generates ambivalence with regard to some issues of heritage (Arshish, 2006). Dissonance of heritage is another term that is used (Graham et al, 2000). To save the colonial products means to save the memory of imperialism power and influences for the future generation. The existence of heritage in an ex-colonized country is related to the exercise of power of the former colonizer that marginalized indigenous culture (Graham et al, 2000, p.34). In addition, for colonized countries, colonial heritages are considered as Eurocentric (Pauline van Roosmalen)- the European, non-indigenous people who at the time ruled the country. European Colonialism (Paternalism) dominated and subordinated cultural minorities - or even majorities, in the most classic colonial relationship (Graham et al,

² Chinese second after European and have privilege in Dutch Policy and Bureaucracy (see Silver, 2008; Hadinoto, 2009). The products of Architecture built during Colonial era are regards as Colonial Architecture including the building built by Chinese (see Badan Pengembangan Pariwisata dan Kebudayaan list of Colonial Buildings in Banda Aceh and Aceh Besar in 2002)

³ In the case of Banda Aceh, the Dutch only occupied for 70 years, 1873-1942 (Basry and Alfian, 1990), that are very different from Java. Therefore, Dutch influence is greater in Java than in Banda Aceh, even though, there are some Dutch town designs and planning remains in current situation that dense Banda Aceh. Some had been demolished, mainly for current economic purposes (See Leumik, Harun Keuchik, 2008, many old and antique buildings were displaced by modern shops and other economic purpose buildings)

2000, p.123). Consequently, the indigenous people do not consider the heritages to be theirs⁴ then the responsibility issues in conserving the buildings arise (Pauline van Roosmalen).

Certainly, colonial heritages are neither brilliant innovation of Western culture nor inferior architecture of European thought, they are an improvement of found knowledge and technology of indigenous adapted to newly European architecture in colonial landscape (Edwards, 2001, p.86). The Dutch colonial architecture in Indonesia is an example of west –if we could call early modern of European, at least at that time– and east – tropical traditional architecture of Indonesian- assimilation⁵ (Edwards, 2001; Sumalyo, 2002; Prijotomo). Hence, it urgently needs to acknowledge the specific qualities and characteristics of colonial heritage otherwise it will easily to consider colonial architecture merely a regional copy of Western culture (Pauline van Roosmalen). Moreover, the colonial heritages are found in former colonized countries and dense cities, indeed create urban pattern (Ashworth, 2002, p.40). The new development cannot ignore that these types of heritage are a casebook example of previous practice which is important for current development issue (Ashworth, 2002, p.40).

For former colonized country, the colonial heritages are part of urban fact and history that should provide information where the city was and what happen in the past for future generation (Ford, 1978 as cited by Ashworth, 1991:11). With regard to past history, colonial heritage is not just the inheritance and belonging of colonized country, but also the colonizer. The sense of belonging of colonial heritages depended too much on the sense of forgetting and remembering (Gillis, 1994 in Graham et al, 2000), particularly for colonies. They would remember colonial heritages as the proof of their long struggle for lands and rights (Davies, 1996, p.815 in Graham et al, 2000, p.60) or as the proof of imperialism. Thus to conserve colonial heritage is not merely to conserve imperialism. The colonial heritages are a shared responsibility between colonizers and colonized. If properly preserved, the colonial heritages would be a perfect counter-monument that performs solemn witness to the cultural assimilation of both the colonizers and colonized countries. Therefore, colonial heritage is – or rather, should be – part of the architectural history of both former colonized and colonizer and of indisputable significant to construction of contemporary architectural identity of the now independent former colonies (Pauline van Roosmalen).

IV. The Peunayong Case: A History Overview

The relationship between Chinese and Acehnese had been developed since fifth century then in the 13th century improved to become a bureaucratic relationship⁶ (Usman, 2009, p). The Era between 15th and 18th century Aceh and China developed trading activities that led to the establishment of a Chinese neighborhood in

⁴ However, this is not always happen in all case of Colonial Heitage. Baiturrahman Mosque is one of image of Banda Aceh and Acehnese regards that mosque as their, even though was built by Dutch (see Arif, A, Kamal, 2006)

⁵ The Dutch colonial architecture provides a very good example of ventilation and natural day lighting (Sumalyo, 2002, p.53).

⁶ During this era Cheng Ho came to South Asia including Aceh (Wijaya Kusuma, 2000).

Peunayong⁷. The existence of Peunayong⁸, the Chinatown of Banda Aceh, is also an integral part of the existence of Chinese Straits' settlement⁹ and trading in South East Asia concentrated in Singapore, Malacca, and Penang as capital of the straits¹⁰. Besides attracted by trading, during the Dutch colonial era, Chinese came to Aceh because they were hired to fill the demand for labour in developing colonial facilities and infrastructures¹¹.

The Chinese immigrants that moved to the Indonesian archipelago including Aceh are from the lower classes - such as farmers, fisherman, and other labourers (Hadinoto, 2009, p.72). They came to Aceh from South China, Penang, Batavia, Malacca, Singapore¹² and Medan¹³. Therefore, the architecture they brought was civic architecture that depicted value and effort to pursue the dreams. The architecture was far from the glorious architecture of Chinese Empire (Hadinoto, 2009, p.72). However, even though the Chinese that came to Aceh were from the lower class they got privileges from the Dutch colonial rulers. By their trading skills, Chinese contributed numerous incomes for the colonial government through their taxes.

Thus, the Chinese were able to attract assenting attention from the Dutch and gain a significant place in the colonial policies¹⁴. For that reason, Chinese together with

⁷ Bustanussalatin designated heritage said the Chinese was occupied Peunayong since 17th, See also maps about the existence of Peunayong in Pierre-Yves Manguin, 1999, *Demografi dan Tata Perkotaan di Aceh Pada Abad 16 Data Baru Menurut Sebuah Buku Pedoman Portugis Tahun 1584 in Pangung Sejarah : Persembahan kepada Prof. Dr. Denys Lombard*, edited by Henri Chambert-Loir and Hasan Muarif Ambariy, Ecole Francaise d'Extreme-Orient, Pusat Penelitian Arkeologi Nasional, Yayasan Obor Indonesia, Jakarta. The maps are Fernao Vas Dourado, Acem map 1564 (Fol 4) in Atlas 1568 (Ducs d'Alba di Archiva y Biblioteca del Palacio de Liria, Madrid), Manuel Godinho de Eredia. Map of Achem 1600 (Fol 18) in region and its map collection 1610 (National Library Rio de Jeniro), Mapping based on Dom Joao Ribeiro Gaio 1584 text. The correlation with Acehnese not only happen in Banda Aceh, but also other parts of Aceh that were very fluid in terms of area (See Aceh Sepanjang Abad)

⁸ Peunayong is one of two oldest markets in Banda Aceh. Based on Davis 1625, there was three markets in Banda Aceh which is one of them is Peunayong. However, during Graaf visit, 1704, in Banda Aceh, He noted there was two markets which is one of them Peunayong (see Lombard, 1991).

⁹ There was possibility of migration of Chinese during the golden age of pepper production in Aceh, 1820s (Khoo Joo Ee, 1998) to find new economic resources, especially less prosperous Chinese ethnic, Khek/Hakka that occupied 73% of Chinese in Banda Aceh (Ahok, 1988, p.148).

¹⁰ See Khoo Joo Ee, 1998 and interview with 75 years old Tionghoa, in Peunayong, 20 Maret 2009, 1,5 hours, that said his ancestor came from to Banda Aceh after 100 years lived in Malacca. Other interview with Acehnese shop owner, Pak Jamil, Government pensioner, 3 June 2009, 1,5 hours, in his house Kampung Laksana. He said the former owner of his shop was Singaporean Chinese then shop was bought by his father.

¹¹ Baiturrahman construction done by Chinese contractor and contract a group of Chinese to do the construction since their labour is very cheap, in addition, contract enough for a group (Horde,-). Besides Chinese, there were also the Javanese brought to fill demand of labour, Ambonese to fill demand of administrator (see Munawiah, 2007, and Basry, 1990). Baiturrahman construction done by Chinese contractor and contract a group of Chinese to do the construction since their labour is very cheap, in addition, contract enough for a group (Horde,-).

¹² Denys Lombard, Alfian, 2004; interview with 75 years old Chinese, wacth seller, 24 March 2009; interview with Pak Jamil, Acehnese owner, Official Government Pensioner, 3 Juni 2009; interview with young Chinese generation, bread seller, 29 Mei 2009

¹³ Interview with Chinese baker, Peunayong, 29 Mei 2009, 30 minutes.

¹⁴ Therefore, 19th century shophouses is regarded as Colonial heritage. Besides Chinese regarded as Dutch ally, their technology and architecture style used in shophouses are the same with majority Dutch developed buildings what so called Colonial heritage.

Christian Indonesian, *ulee balang*¹⁵, and other non-native, non-European communities consisting of Arabs, Bengalis, and Moors got higher class in the Dutch race-based hierarchical society than local people (Silver, 2008 and Munawiah, 2007). Prior to colonial rule in Aceh, Chinese and Acehnese lived harmoniously and during Colonial era the condition was reversed. There was dominancy of Chinese upon Acehnese.

V. The Rise of Peunayong

By its colonial policy the Dutch established a specific area for Chinese, Peunayong, the place used as frontier during the Acehnese war. That location along the Krueng Aceh was the preferred place occupied in the early period of Chinese coming to Banda Aceh because it is close to port to accommodate trading activities. In Colonial era, 1873-1942, the glorious era of Chinese culture in Banda Aceh continued to develop then predominantly commercially-based Chinese area expanded to become a space accommodating Chinese institutional bases such as their own school in Jl. Kartini and religion building, Tao Pe kong in Jl. Panglima Polem¹⁶. At that time, Acehnese were busy with the war and guerilla to fight for their lands and rights seized by Dutch Colonial government. Furthermore, Dutch policy located them in the periphery of the city and got lower class. The Acehnese were positioned in the agricultural sector to support Colonial resources¹⁷. While Chinese enjoyed economic prosperity and got more access to power and politics, Acehnese did not. Acehnese also were separated from other non-European immigrants to diminish the struggle of Acehnese cooperation with other stronger immigrants and powers¹⁸.

From 1835 to 1910, the Dutch policy, *Wijkenstelsel*¹⁹, restricted the Chinese area in one particular part of the Colonial cities. Shophouses, narrow street frontage shop, was the way to adapt with the policy. The buildings are association of ground-floor shop – commercial function - and house over – residential service. In the early era of Chinese coming to Banda Aceh, shophouses were one storey building made of wooden wall and structure²⁰. Then the structure of the buildings changed to two stories made of bricks wall of the first floor and wooden structure and wall of the second floor. In 19th century, there was improvement of shophouses materials with bricks wall of first and second floor, timber at upper floor structure. This building type is similar with early shophouse Style 1800 – 1850's in Penang and Malacca (Koh-Lim Wen Gim, 1989, p.105)²¹.

¹⁵ Ulee Balang has dual meaning in different era. In the Acehnese Sultanate era Ulee Balang was Sultanate staff with higher strata. While, during Colonial era, Ulee Balang was Colonial ally from Acehnese.

¹⁶ (Interview, Observation and Map of Kutaraja during colonial era).

¹⁷ A few Acehnese, *ulee balang*, got access to power, thus, only a few Acehnese involved in trading activities

¹⁸ Since Dutch suspected the hidden power behind Acehnese long struggle supported by non-Acehnese power such as America (Alfian, 2004).

¹⁹ A policy to separate Non-European non-indigenous people (*Vreemde Oosterlingen*) in one concentrated area (Hadinoto, 2009)

²⁰ See Leumik, 2008

²¹ The two storeys of bricks shophouses predicted were built during this era.



Figure 1: Shophouse in Penang (left) and in Banda Aceh (right)

Source :

Department of National Heritage in <http://buildingconservation.blogspot.com> and author collection

The western orientation is adopted to make Chinese akin with European in social hierarchical system. In the late colonial era, 1931, the Dutch government enacted a policy, Monument Ordinance (*Monumentenordonantie*) to maintain colonial buildings. Yet this policy disposed of after Independence Day. There was the rise indigenous and national spirit. Thus, the next development of shophouses, modern variations through the 1960s to 1980s were devoid of ornamental decorations and are more often designed for utilitarian purposes. Some old shophouses, in Jl.A.Yani and Jl.Kartini are changed into 60s architecture, Jengki Style²². 1960s onwards is the dark period of Chinese culture and architecture in Indonesia. Thus, now, the majority of Peunayong is occupied by 80s and 2000s era of shophouses.

VI. The Darkness Era of Peunayong

This isolation occurred because of the spreading of communist thought raised from Chinese motherland through mandarin speaking school and Chinese community association. Then, after independence, 1960s, most Chinese suspected as communists were arrested. To reduce the spreading of communist ideas, the schools were closed and shifted from Chinese ownership to Indonesian Government ownership²³. The closing of Chinese schools obstructed the development of Chinese culture (Usman, 2009 and Hadinoto, 2009). Many Chinese, from South China and Straits Settlement, who were

²² The emerging of Jengki style as part of “Urbanistic project” of Soekarno (see Abidin Kusno, 2000 Josef Prijotomo)

²³ The Policy of Soekarno to revoke land that previously owned by Chinese give positive feedback for Acehnese culture. There is no Chinese domination such as in Malaysia caused displacing of indigenous architecture and heritage. This policy also gave the chance for Acehnese to involve in trading activities. Yet, this policy reduced the development of Chinese culture, so that the shophouses in Peunayong are not rich in terms of architecture as Penang, Malacca, dan Singapura.

not born in Aceh were pushed to live Banda Aceh²⁴. Some of them went to Medan, Jakarta, other South East Asia countries, and back to China²⁵. The old generation sold, rented, and bestowed the shop to Acehnese and their relative and family²⁶.

In addition, during new order, Indonesia Government treats Chinese differently. They got lower class, even isolated and limited access in politics, but not in economic²⁷. The situation put Chinese much far from local people causing more local people refused Chinese²⁸.

The rejection of the Chinese continued during the long conflict between separatist Acehnese and Indonesian centre government, Jakarta²⁹. In addition, since Chinese in Banda Aceh live with approximately 100% of Moslem community, the assimilation of culture that conflict with Islamic thought is hard to reach (Usman, 2009). Even though Acehnese are accustomed to the interaction and very open to change but they reject the idea and thought from non-Islamic³⁰. In addition, Exclusiveness of Chinese “*toke*”, the so called Chinese trader by local people. Even if they were rich, they prefer to invest outside Aceh, especially in Medan and Jakarta³¹.

The places where Chinese live in Banda Aceh are the old city centre that was improved during Soekarno Urbanized Policy (Silver, 2008). However, some heritage sites were also demolished in this era. Therefore, the Chinese noodle seller thinks that there are now no old buildings in city centre. There is also a shift of style of Chinese-European architecture (Hadinoto, 2009, p 85) of shophouses to 60s, then 80s style influenced by modern value of current generation. Some roads that exist during Colonial era also change; demolished or resized.

The other era significant of change in Peunayong is after tsunami. During rehabilitation and reconstruction era some buildings in Peunayong got a ‘facelift’, indeed, reconstruct with new architectural style. Thus, in the perspective of Colonial-Chinese architecture development and conservation efforts, there is the fall. Yet, for development perspective of Peunayong itself, there is the rise of Peunayong³².

²⁴ Interview Old Man, Old China Nyonya, Pak Jamil, A.Rani

²⁵ Interview with 75 Years old Chinese Man, Chinese Noodle seller, Chinese Cellular phone seller, and Pak Jamil.

²⁶ Interview 75 Years old Chinese Man, 80 years old Chinese women, and Pak Jamil

²⁷ However in New order Era, some Chinese and other Indonesian became elite economic because of their ability of nepotism

²⁸ Tulisan Inside Indonesia

²⁹ This conflict sponsored by a group of Acehnese group the so called Gerakan Aceh Merdeka (GAM)/Acehnes movements. Acehnese feel that politically, socially and economically they are under pressure of central Javanese because the power of Indonesia is in Java (Defense Threat Reduction Agency, 2005). Thus, people do not trust the government too much (Usman, 2003) because long history of unfair contribution of income and power.

³⁰ There is exception for Hinduism in Islamic culture of Acehnese. The assimilation Islamic culture and Hinduism can be accepted since Hinduism previously developed. The assimilation Islamic culture and Hinduism can be accepted since Hinduism previously developed. Some Hinduism culture still remain in Acehnese culture acculturated with Islamic culture such as *Peusijuk* (Put rice, sticky rice, and wet flour [part of past Hinduism] over the object/ thing together with citation of Al-Quran/ doa [part of recent Acehnese Islamic culture])

³¹ Summary of some interview with Chinese in Peunayong

³² Recently, old city Peunayong functions as one of most attractive place for investment (from the rent rate and land price) because of its proximity to the port, to banks, to the market and to the transport hub of the city.

VII. Contemporary Heritage Conservation Issues of Peunayong

The fall of heritage conservation, in this case Colonial heritage including Chinese architecture and conservation notion versus the rise of economic attractiveness is the current issue in Peunayong. From government and conservationist perspective such as AHC (Aceh Heritage Community) and other scholars, Peunanyong is one of the valuable places to conserve. But not for those who prioritize economic value, conservation is very expensive, indeed they do not know about conservation. They have to be efficient to gain more profits. Thus, they make use of all parts of the shop efficiently - some part for housing, warehouse, and shop. To be attractive for investment, actually, an area has to provide high standard to live. Conservation, heritage management, although not in all case, is the way to manage the change and to improve environment quality (Ashworth, 1991) that attracts investment.

However, in Peunayong to be attractive the users old buildings have been transformed to modern architecture as new preferred architecture trend. Although there is sanction according to Act no2/1992, the implementation and the control are weak. Moreover, there are no guidelines of conservation that is paired with the position of conservation is secondary from economic. There is also an aspiration towards western styles of living in many developing area (Orbasli, 2000, pp27) including in Banda Aceh. An interview with a Chinese owner that is reconstructing his building after collapsing by tsunami said "I preferred to built new style, the old was out of date". In addition there is also interpretation, the old buildings cannot be in the city centre because it is slum and dirty³³. The rejection of being backward (Orbasli, 2000, pp2) and pursue modern style of life including for architecture influences the interpretation of users. This view is paired with lack of conservation knowledge of inheritors. Thus, enabling the degrading quality of heritage in Peunayong. Only few inheritors, conscious or not, save the old shophouses³⁴.

Majority of Chinese-owned shophouses in Peunayong, have gradually shifted away. After independence Acehnese take part in some trading activities. There is also shift of ownership from Chinese to Acehnese. According to one senior member of the Chinese community, "In the past all big column shophouses are Chinese, now Chinese rent from Acehnese"³⁵. However, not all old buildings shift to Acehnese, some of which are still owned by Chinese and Acehnese rent from them. The ownership of shops influences the interpretation. Tenants interpret responsibility of maintenance is on the hand of landlords as the owner. With economic consideration and some ownership conflict among inheritors some owners refuse to maintain the shop. Therefore, some shops are still in the same condition after they were destroyed by tsunami³⁶.

There is also a debate about the sturdiness of structure and intangible value of old Chinese shophouses. Some believe the building is incredibly well-built for when the tsunami hit it did not crumble and all inside were safe, so that now they have no fear to

³³ Interview with Chinese tenant, Noodle seller, Peunayong, 20 February 2009, 1 hour.

³⁴ Interview with bestowed Chinese owner, Cellular phone seller, 23 February 2009, he said " He protected the façade of his shop with zinc roof material because the shop was very unique and inheritance of old material and architecture that was very strong"

³⁵ Interview with Old Chinese, 75 years old, Watch seller, 20 March 2009, 1 Hours

³⁶ Observation of author and interview with Acehnese tenant, Coffee seller, Peunayong, 20 February 2009, 3 hours.

live in a sturdy Chinese shophouse. In contrast, some feel lucky that they have already renovated the building and replaced bricks columns with concrete. In fact, only very few shophouses collapsed in the tsunami, even the wooden structures of upper floor buildings. Besides strong value, users also regard old shops have historical and architectural value. They also appreciate the shops as image or landmarks of Peunayong. On the other hand, the building is sometimes regarded as nothing, with the land having the important value, so it is seen as something that can be replaced at any time.

The fall of Chinese culture and architecture, in reform era, the era after the fall of new order under Soeharto, gives indications that it will rise again. Chinese can practice their cultural activities, such as *barongseng*³⁷ in public space. However, since modern thought influenced modern Chinese of Indonesia including Aceh³⁸, they do not practice some tradition (Usman, 2009) and do not develop their traditional architecture. New Chinese generation, indeed, do not recognize the shophouses as old architecture from their community³⁹. Although, there are some examples of shop reconstruction in Peunayong tried to adopt traditional style in a minimum level.

VIII. Conclusion

There are some changes in Peunayong such as road change (size, position, and its name) building change (style, function, and structure), and change of people composition in Peunayong, from Chinese majority to various ethnic groups. Before Colonial Peunayong is the place for Acehnese (*pendayung*) community along the waterway connected port and Sultanate Palace then during Colonial war functioned as frontier of Dutch Colonial troops. Then, during Colonial power era, the new development and change from wooden to two storey shophouses then after Independence, there was demolition and change again⁴⁰ in terms function, ownership, architecture, and structure. However, there are some Colonial heritages; old shophouses remain in the modern style architecture area. What are the users' interpretations of these remaining shophouses? Some users agree to conserve the old shophouses because of their sturdiness, structure, material, history, and architecture. In contrast, some users not agree because they think modern style architecture is favourable, the old shops are slum, dirty, and not strong enough. However, there are also the users in between position. They will agree or not to conserve depend on agreed decision of community and government.

The responsibility to take care of these old shophouses is in the hands of landlords and government. However some conservation problems are also caused by inheritance among family conflict and agreement, lack of fund and knowledge of government and owner. Economic value has more influence in conservation effort of

³⁷ Traditional Chinese dance

³⁸ The modern values influence, as the growing plurality issues, is not only to Chinese, but also other traditional cultures such as Javanese, Acehnese, etc.

³⁹ Interview with young Chinese generation, 30s years old, Peunayong, 29 Mei 2009, 2,5 hours. They are very concern to integration and harmony rather than only preserve of Architecture. Now, they totally feel as Indonesian.

⁴⁰ The shift or ownership was not only in Banda Aceh, but also in other part of Indonesia such as in Medan. There was shift ownership of Chinese owned buildings to military (see Yen-ling Tsai, Inside Indonesia, 2009)

users since the shophouses are functioned and take location in the city centre where development economic force is high. The economic value, generally although not all, has seriously disadvantage in for conservation (Graham et al, 2000), especially if the heritages were impede economic goals. The interpreters of those buildings have the same vision that enables the buildings until now. As argued by Nuryanti, (2000, p.258), “the more adaptable heritage is to change, the longer its existence.”

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