

The Limitations of Structuralism, and Autochthonous Principles for Urban Planning and Design in Indonesia: The Case of Nias

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Up to now, Indonesia, with its untold natural resources and great potential wealth, has not placed urban design and urban planning very high on the list of priorities in its overall schemes for development, and this will be true in the very new future in light of the "oil glut" and the drop in oil prices. Except for certain areas of Jakarta such as the "downtown," Bandung, and a few other places, whatever urban planning has taken place has been of a low-keyed nature. This statement is also true of most of the larger urban areas throughout the vast archipelago. However, this is not to say that urban and town planning one day will not become a major concern of Indonesia's administrators and policy makers, whether they be in Sumatra, Java, Celebes, or West Irian. It is in anticipation of this particular time and "mind set" of development that this paper is offered.

Thanks also to its rich diversity of peoples, cultures, and languages, a myriad of styles in accordance with the local genius¹ can be "templates" for individuated designs suitable to this insular group or that, thereby obviating a rigid standardization and conformity which might otherwise ensue.²

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As for house styles, architecture, and urban design, not a few social scientists - primarily anthropologists - have analyzed Indonesian houses.³ In general, these studies have been structural analyses in which the houses in question have been analyzed to indicate the relationship between the social and ideological order of the group and the architecture of its houses. That Indonesia has been especially a favorite ethnological field of study for this kind of investigation (see de Josselin de Jong 1935) should come as no surprise. One need only review briefly the history of Dutch ethnology to understand the force of contemporary research strategies so popular among so many Indonesianists to appreciate why this is the case. Basically, this structural approach was first delineated (some would say founded) by members of the French school of anthropology and sociology, Emile Durkheim, Marcel Mauss, *et al.*, and has been vigorously carried on by Claude Lévi-Strauss. Until the 1960s, England and Holland (especially the so-called Leiden School of Anthropology in the latter country) had been the nations outside of France where the Durkheimian tradition was being carried on. In The Netherlands, the names of van Ossenbruggen, Rassers, Bosch, *et al.* - in addition to J. P. B. de Josselin de Jong's students - come to mind⁴ because they were developing the structuralist strategy, especially with reference to the cultures of the prewar Dutch East Indies.

wei, even to hair length and style, the recent documentary on the Sakuldei in the *Odyssey* television series is most revealing.

³ For recent examples, see Feldman 1977 and 1979, Barraud 1979. These are the more recent ones in a spate of such studies. The bibliography in Barraud's book is also helpful.

⁴ For a competent introduction to the issues and works, see van der Kroef 1954. A more recent comprehensive and excellent study is the one by Stöhr 1976.

¹ This term simply refers to the autochthonous capacity to adapt and adjust. On a criticism of this concept as developed in another context for Indonesia, see Bosch 1952.

² On a case of an attempted imposition of uniformity by the Indonesian Government onto the Sakuldei of Menta-