
Opening Remarks

Parid Wardi Sudin

Yang Berhormat Minister of Culture, Youth and Sports, Encik Anwar Bin Ibrahim, Vice Chancellor Tan Sri Ainuddin bin Abdul Wahid, Deputy Vice Chancellor Dato Abdul Aziz bin Din, Dr. Suha Özkan, Deputy Assistant Secretary General, The Aga Khan Award for Architecture, distinguished delegates.

On behalf of the seminar organisation committee, I would like to extend my gratitude and good wishes to you all, in particular to those from overseas. I would like to extend also our gratitude to you all for making yourself free to attend the ceremony and eventually participate in the seminar. In particular I would like to thank the Minister for Youth and Culture Encik Ibrahim for his keenness and enthusiasm, and for having agreed to come and declare the seminar open. He was among the first to agree to be a participant, but that was before he became a Minister. As the Minister of Culture, Youth and Sports, what was once a matter of personal interest is now a matter of national responsibility. I hope this seminar can contribute to the efforts of his Ministry.

This three day seminar on the theme of 'The Search for Identity in Architecture' is a regional seminar which brings together 40 participants from 9 countries in the region. I have taken the liberty to extend the definition of this region to include Egypt, and Dr. Suha Özkan is from Turkey.

The first day of the seminar will focus on the experiences outside the immediate understood region of South East Asia and we will have three papers.

On the second day, we will focus on our experiences within the region. In conjunction with the seminar, we are arranging a visit to see a number of buildings. This will give the participants a view of the changing sky line of Kuala Lumpur.

On the final day we will have a discussion arising from ideas which will have been generated by the papers.

I will not say anything more about the seminar except

that I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Award for giving the Universiti and myself the opportunity to host this seminar. In the course of my work in this direction I have been helped by many individuals and organisations both in Malaysia and outside. I would like to express my sincere gratitude for the generous help, and for the time they have given for making this seminar a possibility. And with that I would just like to say, welcome to Kuala Lumpur and may this be a successful seminar.

Suha Özkan

Yang Berhormat Minister of Culture, Youth and Sports Encik Anwar Ibrahim, Tan Sri Ainuddin bin Abdul Wahid, Dato Dato and distinguished participants. On behalf of The Aga Khan Award for Architecture, I would like to take the opportunity to extend greetings and good wishes from His Highness The Aga Khan, members of the Steering Committee of The Aga Khan Award for Architecture, and the Secretary General of the Award Dr. Said Zulficar. Apart from myself, the Award will be represented by two distinguished members of the Steering Committee, Mr. Charles Correa and Mr. Hasan-Uddin Khan who, I believe, are not new to the Malaysian architectural profession.

Your Excellency, with your permission I would like to say a few words about the Award:

His Highness The Aga Khan established The Aga Khan Award to encourage exceptional achievements in the Arts and Sciences. Priority was given in 1976 to the fields of Architecture and Planning with the establishment of the AKAAs (Aga Khan Award for Architecture), whose aims are to nurture within the architectural profession and related disciplines a heightened awareness of Islamic culture, and to encourage architecture appropriate to the 20th century. Through the Awards themselves, presented every three years, and through activities such as seminars and publications, the AKAAs are committed

to a search for architectural excellence. The Awards are international in scope and may be given for any building or completed scheme, not only in the Muslim country, but throughout the world wherever there is a significant Muslim population or where the building is used substantially by Muslims themselves.

The Award in 1980 recognised the efforts of many individuals from Europe, Asia, Africa and the Middle East in the search for an architecture appropriate to the culture and ecology of Muslim countries. The continuing aim of the Award is not to create a school of architecture, or an ideology, but to heighten awareness within the Islamic world of its own architectural heritage and potential for development. In 1980, fifteen projects were selected to receive the first AKA. The presentation was made in the Shalimar Gardens of Lahore in the presence of His Excellency President Zia-ul-Haq of Pakistan in October.

In January 1983, a nine member international jury met for several days in Geneva to assess and shortlist nominated projects. I am happy to say that Prof. Parid Wardi Sudin, who is the coordinator of the present seminar was a member of the jury. The shortlisted projects were then reviewed on site by a technical review team. The reports were submitted to the jury which then proceeded to assess the projects. (NB. The recipients of the Award were announced in September 1983 in Istanbul, with a state ceremony at the Topkapi Palace. The Award was presented by His Excellency the President of the Republic of Turkey General Evran, and His Highness The Aga Khan.)

The AKA has organised continuous activity in the form of international seminars where it aims to develop ideas and criteria for the Award and also endeavours to establish links with various countries. The subjects chosen for the seminars form appropriate intellectual platforms between the country and the Award. In Paris, for example, we discussed 'transformation of architecture in Islamic countries'. In Istanbul 'conservation and cultural survival', in Jakarta 'housing', in Fez 'symbolism in architecture'. In Beijing 'the changing rural habitat', in Dakar 'the African city', and finally two months ago in Sana'a 'modernity and tradition'. As all the proceedings have been published in the past six years, the Award has made available a vast collection of ideas and surveys in architecture and urbanism in the Islamic world. This is for the benefit of all concerned, world wide.

It has always been on the Award's agenda to organise certain activities at a regional level, so that architects who contribute to, and think of similar problems can be brought together to get to know each other, and to display their ideas and concerns. I am glad to see that this intention has been realised in the collaboration of

the Award, the Universiti Teknologi Malaysia and the Malaysian Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports. This seminar in Kuala Lumpur marks a departure from our previous seminars which were more global in nature. It attempts, as its issue, a subject which constitutes an important aspect of the architectural thinking of South East Asia. In this respect, the Award hopes that this seminar will benefit all concerned individuals, architects, institutions and governments, and that the knowledge gained may be shared by others.

This is my first visit to Malaysia, and from the little I have seen, and the lot I have heard, I am happy and grateful to be here. In conclusion I would like to take the opportunity to thank the Malaysian government, the Universiti Teknologi Malaysia and the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports for their acceptance and willingness to host this seminar. In particular I would like to thank His Excellency the Minister for taking the time to be with us at this opening ceremony. I look forward to interesting discussions and fruitful deliberations.

Ainuddin bin Abdul Wahid

Your Excellency Encik Anwar Ibrahim, Dr. Suha Özkan, ladies and gentlemen. First of all I would like to say thank you very much to the Minister for kindly attending the seminar and agreeing to declare it open. I am sure the subject of the seminar is very dear to his heart, and I sincerely hope that he will support us in our search for an identity in architecture in this country. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank The Aga Khan Award for Architecture for agreeing to work with us, and I would like to say welcome to all the delegates from overseas and also my friends from this country who have been kind enough to come today to this campus. I sincerely hope that all of you will find the provisions of this seminar sufficient. The Universiti feels privileged to have the honour of hosting this seminar in conjunction with such a distinguished organisation as the AKA, and hopes that the seminar can provide the platform for dialogue which can promote national and international experiences on the important subject of the search for identity in architecture. We hope the wisdom of the seminar can lead to new ideas and ways to see a problem which particularly we in Malaysia are facing and trying to solve. We are trying to evolve a national cultural identity. A national cultural convention in 1971 has resolved that the national culture shall be based on the indigenous culture, that is, the Malay culture. The Universiti is only trying to play its role in this matter.

In many developing countries tremendous changes are taking place, not only in the fields of economics,

but also in the built environment of the country and the people's way of life. Many capital cities are experiencing changes in their environment and structure. In short, it seems that the development of the city tends to make it look and feel very much like others the world over. In many cases it is difficult to make cultural references. The question is whether this should be so. One recognises and accepts that each nation and each culture is unique, and possess its own mode of expression. Should their buildings be so similar as to be practically identical? This is one of the questions that I hope the seminar will address itself to. In Malaysia no traditional architecture is particularly implemented, hence it is not particularly known. Because of that, many of us in this country feel that the national identity in architecture is not all that important. I hope this seminar will help us to identify our need in establishing the identity in architecture for Malaysia. The Universiti has undertaken the systematic documentation of buildings that in our opinion have architectural significance in this country, and we have so far completed the documentation of about 100 buildings, such as traditional houses, mosques, temples, palaces, places for public assembly, etc.

In conclusion, I would like to thank you all, once again, for your participation, and wish you all successful deliberations. Assalamalaikum.

Anwar Bin Ibrahim
Minister of Culture, Youth and Sports
Malaysia

Bismillah ir Rahman Nir Rahim. Assalamalaikum. Tan Sri Dato Ainuddin bin Abdul Wahid, Dr. Suha Özkan, Professor Parid Wardi Sudin, and respected colleagues. I wish you all well.

I'd like to open by thanking the sponsor, The Aga Khan Award for Architecture; the Universiti Teknologi Malaysia, Prof. Parid Wardi Sudin and finally the committee which contributed towards making this seminar a success. I look upon this seminar as significant and meaningful for a young country like Malaysia. This is because we know that not only the Ministry for Culture, Youth and Sports, but also the scholars, architects and the public at large want to see an environment more meaningful from the point of view of culture in this country, including the development of architecture.

The historical development of regional Malay and Islamic architecture is not a recent phenomena. It has developed in line with the progress of cultural and intellectual development. Architecture is also the result of the geographical and environmental make up of this region. It is present not only in the

structural form, but also in respect of utilisation of local resources, but more important in assimilating concepts, ideas and philosophies pertaining to this region. If you look at the regional architecture in the Philippines, in Indonesia and Malaysia, and other areas of the Malay world, integration of the local traditions and Islam is very pronounced.

In developing countries, architecture is considered to be symbol of progress. As such, the aesthetic value of architecture is not the prerogative of the architects alone, but of the people as well. Unless of course, the architects represent, and they hopefully should represent, the conscience and aspirations of the people. Therefore it is our belief that architects need to appreciate and understand the problems and aspirations of the people and create architectural forms that would fulfil this need. Following the great strides in developmental efforts in our societies and as a result of fast economic development and the change in lifestyle, new buildings and complexes, concrete jungles, as they are called, have been built. Unfortunately, the results of the building development for the past two decades in our society have been rather disappointing, and do not necessarily reflect the aspirations of the people. Buildings did not take into account the weather, the environmental requirements, and the needs of the consumers, not necessarily in every way, but in some ways at least. I am sorry to have to say this in front of the architects and experts, because I know they have done their jobs. I know that in many cases they are also conscious of the changes that are taking place. Conscientiousness is more widespread now. But this is an honest observation from a member of the general public, who is a consumer himself.

At one time, the city of Kuala Lumpur, although it consisted of colonial architecture, without a Malaysian character, had its own particular features. In its present urban form it is somewhat a replica of the cities in the West. Not that we have any hysterical reaction against the West, but certainly our cities should represent our thinking and our needs. And they should represent the wishes and aspirations of our own people. Traditional buildings in this region, like the architectural form of the mosque in Java, Kalimantan, the Philippines and Malaysia, or like the ones found in Malacca are examples of regional architecture, but manifest themselves as houses of worship in Islam, and their forms remain conducive to the regions and the environment. The same goes for the traditional houses and palaces. Although palaces do not represent the common needs or desires or aspirations of the general public, but at least they represent the unique architectural forms that came into existence and that could be observed in our various societies. The Sri Menanti Palace in Negeri Sembilan, the Balai Besar in Alor Star, not to forget

the Minangkabau architecture. For a time there were efforts to plan the Minangkabau architecture so as to represent the national culture form. We have to correct that. I think the indigenous character is rich enough, and should not be confined to a limited experience in our society.

These were some of the regional cultural architectural characteristics closely linked with our socio-cultural background. But the architects and the experts will tell you that they are more expensive, and in this period of recession, we should be thinking in terms of better designs and better forms. I am sure some colleagues of mine including Tan Sri Ainuddin and probably William Lim of Singapore would disagree with that. They will support us and our contention that they need not necessarily be more expensive.

It is our hope that the deliberations of this seminar will further impress the policy makers and architects of the need to relate themselves to their own philosophy and environment. It is inadequate to merely introduce superficial designs imposed on Western type concrete structures which they claim represents the indigenous architecture. Indigenous architecture has a philosophy of its own, it has its own intellectual traditions, and is related to local needs. It is not our intention to ignore the progress made in technology from the West, but the ultimate direction of our developmental efforts should be in adopting modern technology and adapting it to our local environment, while retaining our own philosophies and values to ensure that it is relevant to our needs and environment.

I must take this opportunity again to express our appreciation to The Aga Khan Award for Architecture, to the Universiti Teknologi Malaysia, overseas and local participants and the experts that have gathered today to contribute to this search for identity in architecture. I can assure you that the Ministry of Culture will listen seriously, and is committed to recommend and support the search for identity in architecture.

So, with this hope, and the utterance of Bismillah ir Rahman Nir Rahim, I formally and with pleasure declare this seminar open.