FRANK LLYOD WRIGHT'S IDEOLOGY TOWARDS THE FORMATION OF NATIONAL ARCHITECTURAL IDENTITY IN MALAYSIA

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ABSTRACT: *The formation of a national identity is the core for the social, politic and economic development of a multiracial country like Malaysia. However, very little is known regarding the characteristics of architecture with a national identity since very few studies have been done. This paper is written in order to analyze the problem regarding the identity of national architecture in Malaysia and to present the results of architectural principles, which characterize the national spirit. The above problems may be solved by referring to the great master builder Frank Lloyd Wright whose philosophy is relevant with the aspiration of the masses, concerned with human values and emphasizes social culture in each of his design. Wright's ideology and principle mentioned in this literature study consists of the understanding of ornamental elements, the usage of materials, local expression and style compositions and the designing of space articulation and form with regional appearance. All of the above may be reckoned as a guideline in order to create architecture with a national identity.*

Keywords: *architectural identity, Malaysia, national identity, Frank Lloyd Wright, architectural design*

Introduction

The formation of national identity is an important aspect for a newly independent state as it is the essence of a multiracial country not only for unifying the masses but also to secure the ruling body's political legitimacy as well as preserving the continuity of historical heritage from different background and ethnics (Vale 1992; 1999). Even though there have been studies that describe on the development of national identity in Malaysia during the post colonial era (see Abdul Bahri 1997), there are no in depth studies made by past scholars that systematically describes, compile and elucidate all of the relevant characteristics of architecture with a national identity or proposed a formal guide notes to assist practicing architects on producing buildings that portrays the elements of national identity in Malaysia (see Abdul Rahim 1987; AMCY 1979; Arbi 1997; KKBSM 1957, 1971, 1987 & 1995; PTRS 1983; Rasdi 1999; Yoong 1987; Yeang 1987; Mursib 2005; Kosman 2005).

As a result, it can be said that the physical appearance of built form in Malaysia until the present context reflects an architectural form and appearance that does not clearly portray the representation of the country's national identity, since much of the local designer preferred to emphasis on two main aspects. First merely treating building as decorative objects which subjected to ornamental values. Secondly designing building for the purpose of fulfilling personal preferences as well as giving preferential treatment to the architectural design traditions of the most influential group in society (see Rasdi 2008).

The need to probe into this matter therefore is vital, and clear understanding among designers and architectural scholars on the formation of architecture with national identity need to be well developed. This is important in order to produce buildings that symbolizes human culture which suggest social and political interpretation of societies condition in its internal organization and portrays the idea of the nation self. As mentioned by Vale (1992; 73) 'works of architecture are a meaningful symbol as it is a cultural object. It not only able to consolidate the society's self identification or loyalty to a particular state but also evokes the nationalistic sentiment among the populace'.

The significance of this paper thus can be appreciated in three distinct aspects. Firstly, this paper will analyze the problem regarding the identity of national architecture in Malaysia's post independence period and secondly posits Frank Lloyd Wright architectural ideology as a solution to be referred to by local designers as well as those who are in the field of built environment. This is because his architectural philosophy and principles can be adopted across different cultural setting and context as it concerns on the idea of national spirit that is relevant with the aspiration of the masses and human values. His principles may be reckoned as a guideline in order to create future Malaysian architecture imbued with the characteristics of national identity. In addition, this paper also offers a different approach to understand Wright's ideology from primary and secondary text. This is done by referring to interpretive paradigm as way of inquiring into the study as well as hermeneutical theory for its research methods as outlined by Scheleimacher, which involves two ways of interpreting documents based on psychological and linguistic interpretations in order to gain insights into Wright's cultural and ideological experiences.

The Concept of Architectural Identity

The idea and role of architectural identity in society had been widely discussed by prominent architectural scholars at the local and global scene. Examples of this, can be seen in work by Correa (1983; 28) where he defines architectural identity as, 'a process and not a found object. Being a process, identity cannot be prefabricated. We develop our identity by tackling what we perceived to be our problems. Identity is not a self conscious thing .We find our identity by understanding ourselves and our environment'. Lye (1983; 32) also adds that,' identity is resolving the contradiction between our history and culture. It is a dynamic thing. Sometimes has to do with beliefs, politics and social conditions.' In this sense, the identity of the built form is much dependent on the existing cultural setting and human intentions as conceived in a particular context.

During the 1983 Aga Khan Regional Seminar - Lye (1983), Bawa (1983), El Wakil (1983) Hassan Fathi (1983) and Serageldin (1983) outlined that the formation of architectural identity is influenced by two main factors. First involving the spirit of time which includes variables such as country's economic development, politics and social conditions, historical typology, material culture and traditions, society's belief system, aesthetics trend and architectural movement, designer's perception as well as technology and material advancement. Second, depends on the spirit of place that involves existing geological setting, landscape, climate and regionalism elements. However, these factors were not well elaborated and explained to an extent that can be adopted by designers in order to produce built form that rationally presents the idea of national identity. Furthermore, the adaptation of national identity element in Malaysia's built environment was also not significantly evident and not well portrayed particularly in the late 21st century (Rasdi 1998). To name a few, such cases can be seen in local public building design such as the EPF building in Petaling Jaya, Dayabumi Complex, Malaysia's National Library, the Budaya Kraf Complex in Kuala Lumpur, UMNO Office tower in Georgetown (see Ismail 2003).

For this reason, this paper will briefly elucidate the architectural development in the Malaysian scene during the post independence period involving four main phases- the first decade (1957-1970), second decade (1970-1980), third decade and fourth decade (1980- present) to identify and verify how and why this arising problem occurs. This is important as it builds an argument through the historical description of Malaysian architectural setting for the discussion in the following sections.

Malaysia's Architectural Development (1957-present)

The First Decade (1957-1970)

After achieving independence from the British on the 31st of August 1957, the new government under Tunku Abdul Rahman wasted no time in planning to develop and promote Malaysia as a newly independent country. To achieve this, local architects were asked to design public building that portrays national identity which can characterize the local culture. Although there were congresses and seminars held by architect associations and government body such as Cultural Foundation Congress (1957), seminar on 'What Is Malayan Architecture' (1963) including architects own interest in tackling the country's architectural identity issue, the effort however was unsuccessful.

Mursib (2005:3) argues that "this scenario was due to limited access of architectural resources and there are no proper framework to guide practicing architects and building professionals in the country to produce buildings that answer the needs of national identity". The propagation of Western architectural education and the modernist architectural movement which occurred in Europe which influenced the ideology of the local designers also played an important role in contributing to this matter (Rasdi 2003). These new generation of architects hence, brought with them contemporary architectural ideas that revealed a strong sense of rationality and functionalism into the local architectural scene (Yeang 1992).This issue is also added by the demands of a growing commercial sector and building boom for large scale urban development which urged the architects to fulfill the development programs to serve the new country. As a result, most of buildings during this time did not properly acknowledge the idea of national identity as buildings were mass produced within a short period and presented in modernistic style which emphasis on the abstraction of forms and expressive structural elements as an aesthetical impression.

The Second Decade (1970-1980)

The second decade of the post-independence era promised rapid development through national stability and strong economic growth. This was due to the success of the Second Malaysia Plan (1971-1975) and the incentive program known as the New Economic Policy (NEP) created by the second prime minister of Malaysia, Tun Razak, in the early 1970s followed by the accomplishment of the Third Malaysia Plan (1976 to 1980) propagated by Malaysia's third prime minister, Tun Hussein Onn. Significant increase of building development was seen in the country due to this continuous

economic growth. This situation benefited many professional groups in the building sector such as engineers and architects. Within a short period, large numbers of local professional were trained, given educational skills and external exposure in order for them to help raise the country's standard in the development sector.

Building development in the country during the leadership of Razak and Hussein featured architectural design that emphasized aesthetical values and utilitarian needs. Ginzburg (1982:23) terms this stage as "the maturity stage, as most of building design during this phase presents substantial use of decorative elements, not only for aesthetic reasons but also for functional purposes". However, efforts to fully implement the elements of national identity in local built forms were not successful as they were still large number of architects who were externally educated and were absorbed into existing firms and the government's Public Works Department. In early 1970s there were a total number of 130 registered firms throughout the country run by local architects (Yeang 1992).For that reason, the design of the time still asserts modern architectural language and portray less reinterpretation of national identity elements in its appearance.

The Third and Fourth Decade (1980-present)

The building boom in the 1970s continued on to the 1990s until the present context. Although there had been sudden recession in the country in the middle of 1980s, the economy recouped due to the success of the government's economic policy under the Sixth (1991-1995) and Seventh Malaysia Plan (1995-2000). In 1991, 'Vision 2020' was launched by Malaysia's fourth prime minister, which was a program to propel Malaysia into the ranks of developed industrialised nations by 2020. As a result, a large number of new architect firms started back their operations and by the 1990s, there were 330 registered architectural firms throughout the country. Most of this young generation of Malaysian architects who were locally educated and trained, introduced architectural design with a greater sense of style which placed great emphasis on innovative approaches to structure and material usage due to the availability of new technology in the construction scene. In addition, the post modernist movement in the global scene also indirectly influenced the local designers to produce a heterogeneous architectural style instead of merely focusing on the modernist approach. Large development of high technology and heavy industries along with the construction of mega scale projects such as housing estates, commercial and trade precincts with various design styles and appearances were also visible.

This period also saw the rise of an 'Islamisation' agenda blown throughout the country under the leadership of Mahathir, as he tried to project Malaysia

as the centre of Islamic civilization in the world as a successful, modernised and progressive Muslim state. In this case, the Islamic agenda propagated by the government does not end in reforming the society but also helped to reshape the nation's building construction agenda. Local architects were urged to respond to the government's call in promoting Islam as the main agenda for the nation's development policy in order to comprehend Islam as the state official religion. These local designers particularly those who are in the Public Works Department were encouraged to design buildings that have Islamic elements and values. As a result, most of the public buildings signify the influence of Islamic designs from the Middle East such as geometric patterns, pointed semicircular arches and others instead of emphasizing on self national identity.

From the above discussion of the architectural development in Malaysia, it can be seen that Malaysian architecture still undergoes process of experimentation to determine its self identity. This is because the role of national identity in the Malaysian architectural scene was not clearly highlighted even though it was the central focus in the Malaysia's building agenda and development programs for the past 51 years. Therefore, in order to outline a structured theoretical framework for answering the problem of national identity in the Malaysian context, it is worthwhile to refer to Wright's principles and ideology because his work not only propose various approaches in defining the meaning of architecture but also suggests new approaches in tackling the issue on how to produce a built form with national identity characteristics in the contemporary scene.

Before discussing on Wright's philosophies in detail, research procedure and strategies employed during the course of the study in relation to the studies of Wright's text and documents will be describe next. The research paradigm and methodology as well as the type of data gathered, from where it is collected and how it was analysed are outlined.

Methods

Since this paper involves the investigation of interpreting on Wright's ideology to build a specific theoretical framework for producing architecture with national identity, interpretivism is seen as an appropriate way for inquiring this study as the aim of the paper is to interpret the meaningful nature and concepts that are embodied in the documented text. This is vital in order to understand the creator of the text including the described built environment which is bound to a specific context and setting. This is because interpretivism accepts that the investigator and the investigated object are interactively dynamically linked (Guba & Lincoln 1998). In addition, "interpretivism also allows the researcher to make explicit her theoretical

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position by participating in the social world to understand more effectively the emergent properties and features"(Denzin 2001 : 25).

Although the term 'text' can be defined in many ways, for this study the term specifically refers to the documentation on Wright's ideology, his work and life. For this reason, an interpretation of a text not only will reveal the meaning of the words of the text, but includes the cultural and intellectual contexts in which it was formed. This provides a better understanding of the original experiences and ideas of the author of the text. There are four forms of hermeneutics to help refine understanding of the interpretative approach as introduced by previous scholars and philosophers (Fischer & Arnold 1994). These are hermeneutical theory, hermeneutical philosophy (the work of Heidegger and Gadamer), critical hermeneutics (the work of Habermas) and phenomological hermeneutics (the work of Ricouer) (Fischer & Arnold 1994).

However, for the purpose of this paper, hermeneutical theory influenced by Friedrich Schleiermacher is adopted. His theories of interpretation and translation rest on two main principles: the hermeneutic circle followed by two sides of interpretation, one linguistic, the other psychological (Schleiermacher 1998). According to Schleiermacher, hermeneutics cannot be approached using a pre-determined set of criteria because of its interpretive nature. Therefore, an approach known as the 'hermeneutic circle' is introduced. The hermeneutic circle involves a logical contradiction; for we must grasp the whole before we can understand the parts. Yet the part derives its meaning from the whole (Schleiermacher 1998; Bernofsky 2004). In this case, the analysis process occurs in a circular way until the entire text is interpreted. In this sense, the interpretation does not only involve making sense of the wordings or sentences in the text, but also the need to interweave all passages and integrate a comprehensive account of specific elements in the text into a coherent interpretation - to form an understanding which is free from any contradictions (Schleiermacher 1998).

The next step is to complement the linguistic interpretation with psychological interpretation. Schleiermacher implies that linguistic interpretation is mainly concerned with what is common or shared in a language, whereas, psychological interpretation mainly deals with what is distinctive to a particular author (Schleiermacher 1998; Bernofsky 2004). In other words, the linguistic interpretation refers to interpretation of evidence, by looking at particular actual uses of words to the rules that are governing them, in examples of their usages and thus to their meanings (Schleiermacher 1998; Bernofsky 2004). Psychological interpretation, on the other hand, focuses on the author's psychology which is the conceptual-intellectual distinctiveness of individuals and the context that he or she is situated in (Schleiermacher 1998; Bernofsky 2004).

Schleiermacher's concepts are useful in two main ways as technique of analysis. First, referring to his concept of linguistic interpretation and hermeneutic circle, will guide the reading and interpreting of the text and documents on Wright. Second, his concept on psychological interpretation is useful during the process of interpreting Wright's architectural ideology. This is because Schleiermacher's hermeneutical theory took the position that understanding is the objective recognition of the author's intended meaning - in which there is a need to see the world from the author's perspective *(verstehen)* and recognise what the author originally felt or thought. In order to conduct the study, data collection methods referring to documentations and text on Wright from primary and secondary source are important for gaining information of his ideology on architectural identity in detail.

To analyse data of the identified records and documents, there are four important steps used for this study which involve the combination of open, axial and selective coding technique (Strauss & Corbin 1998). The first step of analysis relates to the open coding technique which involves the open reading of the documents. This is important to understand and identify the general ideas, thoughts and meanings contained within the documents.

The second step involves the axial coding process, where detailed line-by-line analysis for each paragraph of the document is conducted. Through this process, questions are asked about the phenomena as reflected in the data. This process is vital because it will help to generate a variety of concepts and sub-concepts in terms of their properties (characteristics or attributes of a concept) and dimensions (location of a property along a continuum or range). This process is done by breaking down the data into separate parts, examining and comparing for similarities and differences.

The fourth step involves deciding on the core concept which emerges from the grouping of similar concepts and sub-concepts. This step, which is known as selective coding, involved the process of refining the concepts and sub-concepts. There is an important criterion to note during this stage, which is to select the core concept where the name or phrase used to describe the concept and sub-concept frequently appears or is mentioned in the data. The identification of core concepts in this final step is important because it will systematically specify what was found from the documents and situate the core concepts within the study of architectural identity from the perspective of Wright's ideology.

Discussion on Wright's Architectural Philosophy and Approaches

The interest to produce architecture with national identity is perceived as an important aspect namely for the Malaysian society, because it may be seen

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as one of the contributors in tackling the built environment issues that occurs within its contemporary culture.

As put forth by Wright (1966; 13), 'the identity and the construction of building was the greatest of all arts; the shell of a turtle, building becomes part of man and that the building in which we live can change the quality of our living.' Moreover, 'a building that has own character and identity also stands good chance of growing more valuable as it grows older while a building in prevailing mode, whatever mode they may be is soon out of fashion and unprofitable (Wright 1908; 54).

For this reason, in order to answer the problem of Malaysian architectural identity, Wright suggested that built form should portrays elemental features that relates to the values of democracy, poetry, romantism, idealism, beauty, truth, integrity, character , style and principle in order for a building to express the soul or life of anything organic (Wright 1939). In this sense, he emphasis on three main design aspects involving the adaptation of proportional ornamental elements, the usage of native materials, and the formation of local building expression and style compositions. These characteristics are not only for producing a more lasting and dignified building but also to satisfy the utilitarian needs of its owner as well as ensuring better living conditions for the community as a whole – 'as good architectural design is the spirit of man, the spirit of our times and the spirit of our nation' (Meehan 1987 ; 134).

The Adaptation of Proportional Ornamental Elements

The sense of ornamentation as highlighted by Wright not only functioned as a matter of prettifying building externals or add expression to the form but it has the tendency to occupies and shapes the physical social context as well as influencing the perceptual nature of human behavior (Meehan 1987). This is possible as architecture's aesthetic manifestation satisfies and motivates the human emotion. Therefore, it is crucially vital for designers to define the use of ornamentation in proper manner as, 'the matter of ornament is the real expression of ourselves' (Meehan 1987; 71). In other words, the use of ornament not only capable of expressing the quality of the soul's owner but may symbolizes the culture of a society involving their spiritual belief, customs, dogma, morality and value system. Due to this reasons, Wright posits that the adaptation of ornamentation should be well understood and appreciated in two main ways.

First, the conventional representation of modern ornamentation should be in organic with the fundamental and additional structure it adorns. In other words, the ornaments need to be treated as a functional entity and to be well integrated with the whole structural form. In this case, building details and

features should expresses the idea of unity in which worked out in harmony with the nature of the materials used and in proportion with the urban scale, scale of the form itself as well as the scale of building form elements.

In detail, the sense of ornament usage ought to have a moderate expression in corresponding to five aspects of concern – color composition, materials, façade background, motifs and pattern formations. Example of such design by Wright is the Marine County Civic Centre Tower in San Rafael, which portrays the integration between structural elements and detailing, in which the ornaments not only functioned for beautifying the external facades but also serves as ventilation and lighting slits (see figure 1).

Figure 1: Marine County Civic Centre Tower
(Meehan 1987; 366)

Second, the matter of ornament should also be rationally constructed, as every detail needs to be symbolically interpreted and designed referring to the spirit of place and the notion of time. As to where the context and time are concerned, the work of ornamenting built form should also clearly articulate the values of human culture involving their beliefs system and ideological stance.

As put forth by Wright, 'imitate, possession without understanding and appreciation means either waste or corruption. Decoration is dangerous unless you understand thoroughly and are satisfied that it mean as something good in the scheme as a whole…. We will never be civilized to any extent until we know what ornament means and use it sparingly and significantly (Meehan 1987; 65, 71)' By referring to the conceptions of ornamentation developed by Wright will not only contributes in the formation of architecture with values of national identity but may also translates the building function into a non verbal coding system which makes communication with the user possible. This is because the use of ornaments is capable of conveying social and intellectual meaning as well as expressing

the religious belief and political practice of society through its physical and visual form.

The Usage of Native Materials

In discussing on the aspect of building materials, Wright believes that the quality and the shaping of built form identity are greatly determined by the adaptation of native materials. This is possible as natural materials have distinct properties of elasticity, domesticate features, rational dimensions, proportions, hardness and durability in which it can be easily mould and shaped into desired form. In addition, color of the material as well as its texture also played an important role in portraying a perfect practicability of built form as it produces tonal value, saturation, hue and gradation that can decrease or increase the visual quality of the form surface. The natural characteristic of the material not only will affect individual perception towards the built form but also allows possible communication to occur with the user when the user decodes the building's physical attributes.

For this reasons, Wright suggests for critical interpretation and literal representation of materials - to speak its own language rather than emphasizing on the idea of imitation or falsifying the life in the material itself. In this regard, the built form is portrayed in their natural character and style designed according to appropriate composition of proportion, order, hierarchy and scale not only for producing an organic architectural representation but also has democratic qualities that corresponds to human affairs.

As stressed by Wright, 'the structure of democracy must know is the living kind, and that kind of structure is of life at its best for the best of life itself. In itself, organic character is the sound of social foundation. Integral or organic structure grown up from the ground into the light by way of the nature of man's life on earth, the method of building is to show man to himself as nobly himself. The true architecture of democracy will be the externalizing of this inner seeing of the man as Jesus saw him, from within - not an animal or a robot, but a living soul' (Meehan 1987; 76). Based on this understanding, Wright implies on three aspects of concern.

First, he describes the material usage as an entity rather than a manifold, in which it should be simply treated without the sense of extravagance and naturally adopted from the existing setting. In this case, the need to harmonize the adapted materials with its surrounding is not only for producing a built form that make something of itself in that time and context but also is

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worthy of the people and the nation. In other words, when buildings expresses honest use of materials, it will not only present a significant appearance that contributes to its greatness as an edifice that becomes permanent acquisition to the state but also satisfies the needs of the community as a whole. As highlighted by Sullivan (1934; 294-305), '....our buildings as a whole are an image of our people as a whole, although specifically they are the individual images of those to whom, as a class the public has delegated and entrusted its power to build.' For instance, the Tokyo Imperial Hotel built in 1923 that was made largely of volcanic stone and ferro-concrete extracted from the Nikko mine .This particular building which appears to grow naturally from the site enjoyed its 45-year reign as Tokyo's premiere hotel (see figure 2).

Figure 2: Imperial Hotel, Tokyo
(Hitchcock 1978; 221)

Second, the integration of structural elements with building materials also has a profound implication for the formation of architecture with values of national identity. In this sense, the nature of the material is interwoven into the building design scheme to produce a functional yet valuable structure that represents true organic architectural spirit. As stated by Wright, 'organic architecture seeks entity, it seeks that completeness in idea in execution which is absolutely true to method, true to purpose, true to character and as much the man who lives in it as himself, so that he boasts the fact that his built form is the only built form ever built (Meehan 1987; 51).'

Third, the significance of material usage is also not apparent just by the process of integration but by recognizing the sense of individuality that is portrayed by each adapted material. Regardless of acknowledging its basic purpose, architects too must be knowledgeable in understanding the

capacities of the material itself in relation to methods, and processes to transform the material to new beauty that fulfill the needs of society.

The Formation of Local Building Expression and Style Compositions

Every work of architecture has to have its own local style and character as part and parcel of displaying itself as a dignified and distinct entity. However, the representation of the sense of individuality and identity should be in relation with three basic principles. First, portray design characteristics that reflect the idea of 'totalitarianism' which advocates an analogy that holds architecture should be perceived as a holistic experience capable of fulfilling the comfort needs of local society at all levels- the state or nation, community and individuals consisting of anything they feel or think (Meehan 1987).

Second, insisting upon building expression that emphasis on integrative methods and processes which not only limited to the assimilation of ornamentation compositions with structural detailing but also stresses on the unity of interior with exterior spatial organization to form an organic whole, which stand in a specific volumetric relationship to one another to create a wholeness quality impression (Meehan 1987).

Third, produced an architectural composition and style that is perceptive to existing regional elements involving- existing topographical setting and abstract elements such as lighting and climatic conditions; sensitive to the society's social context which includes human events, cultural values, political ideologies, belief system, territoriality and hierarchies; cognizant towards technological advancement and development embracing the adaptation of local innovations and production consist of the use of regional structures, material and skills as well as responsive to variables such as the structure of economic life in particular country, area and period (Meehan 1987). Such understanding is imperative to produce a building that will nobly stand belonging to site as proclaimed by Wright, 'every building is of quality of some man's soul….., buildings like people must be sincere, must be true and then withal as gracious as lovable as may be. (Meehan 1987 ; 164).'

For example is the Richard David house in Marion, Indiana which portrays a tepee architectural roof form that based on the existing traditions of the Red American Indian dwellings. Although its design reflects the regional cultural context, its structural form instantiate the use of modern materials and technology where its external and internal façade are made of combination of brick layers and exposed concrete plaster. This produces built form that not only harmonizes with the existing site topography and climatic conditions but also presents strong relationship between society and its architecture where the building is viewed as tropes of American Indian ideological icons, carries

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native cultural values and as psychological symbols that may affect the behavior pattern of its user.

Conclusion

Having discussed Wright's architectural characteristics, it is vital to refer to his approaches as a solution to overcome identity problems faced by Malaysian designers in the post independence context. This is because, it may contributes in forming a Malaysian built environment that are imbued with true understanding of national identity, not only for promoting social harmony or to evoke nationalistic sentiment particularly among the Malaysian populace but also as the basic criteria of nation building that best demonstrates humanitarian aspiration and values. This is important as built form is an object of communication and agent of social culture, which embodies the social conventions and conceptual codes of the society that capable of fulfilling the eternal needs of individuals and community at all social units and levels (Rappoport 1990). As also stated by Wright (1975; 63), 'architecture is that great living creative spirit which from generation to generation, from age to age, proceeds, persists, creates, according to the nature of man, and his circumstances as they change.'
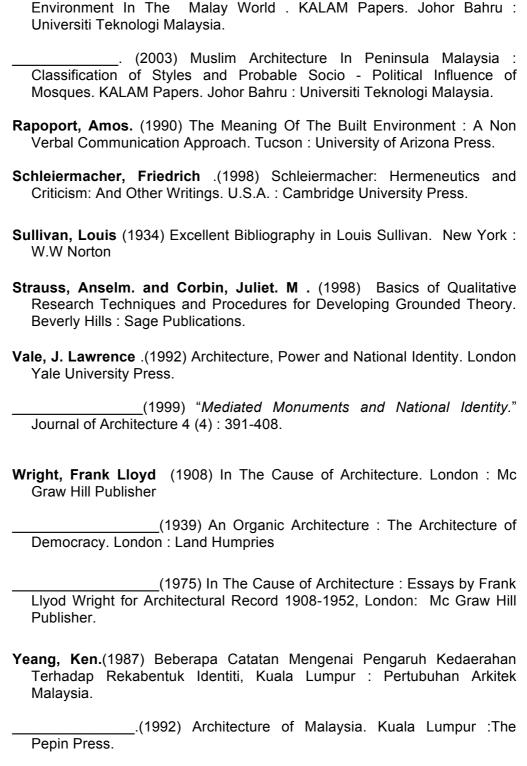
For that reasons, future and present designers should viewed on the different dimensions of understanding and reading the meaning of the built environment not only from the perspective of the perceiver–interpreter's position but to also show some consideration of what was meant by the creator of the building such as past master builders as key reference. This is because meanings of a building are open, multitude and not disclosed to the interpreter's situation or may depend on his or her ideology and views of the world.

In addition, they must also make a concerted effort to study the politics and the cultural context in which the built form is to be placed onsite before proceeding to the design stage. This includes the need to probe into the dynamics of the relationship between built form and its society. This act is important as it will help to identify any biases brought to any new project by virtue of personal preferences. As implied by Ruskin (1885; 16), ' the architecture of the nation, is the exponent of its social and political virtues.' Such appropriation will hopefully result in an architectural identity representation that responds to the traditions of the society and their culture rather than stress the presence of some dominant group.

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