
CULTURE AND BUILT ENVIRONMENT

A THEORITICAL PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract

Culture is affected by the environmental demands, and culture influences what people do toward the environment. What remarkable is that culture and environment influenced each other. They are frequently responsive to the demands of the environment. Furthermore, culture influences people in shaping built environment such as, cities, villages, houses, and farms. Culture influences environment through travelling, commerce, mass media, and missionaries of religion. Contact among other people, ideas and traditions effected cultural change. As a result; people are able to do contextualization that is reject, adopt, and accept the previous culture and it affected the built environment arrangement.

Key words: *culture, people, contextualization, environment*

Abstrak

Budaya dipengaruhi oleh tuntutan lingkungan, dan budaya mempengaruhi apa yang dilakukan manusia terhadap lingkungan. Budaya dan lingkungan saling mempengaruhi satu dengan yang lain. Mereka sering bereaksi pada tuntutan-tuntutan dari lingkungan tersebut. Selanjutnya, budaya mempengaruhi manusia dalam pembentukan lingkungan terbangun seperti, perkotaan, perkampungan, pemukiman, dan pertanian. Budaya mempengaruhi lingkungan melalui perjalanan manusia dari satu tempat ketempat lain, melalui perdagangan, mas media, dan penyebaran agama. Persentuhan atau hubungan antara manusia, ide-ide, dan tradisi, menyebabkan perubahan budaya. Sebagai akibat, manusia dapat melakukan kontekstualisasi yaitu menolak, menyesuaikan, dan menerima budaya terdahulu dan hal itu mempengaruhi perencanaan lingkungan terbangun.

Kata kunci: *budaya, manusia, kontekstualisasi, lingkungan*

1. Introduction

Culture is a complex system that comprises of religion, belief, knowledge, values, customs, behaviours, artefacts, morals, and habits obtained by man as a member of society. Culture is the man-made part of the human environment, affected by the environmental demands, influencing what people do toward the environment and in shaping built environment.

Built environments such as space, cities, villages, houses and farms based on their own religion and belief, affect the psychological processes which consists of mental and behavioural activities. Culture causes concern on what people do and how they act in relation to the environment. Cultural contact produces cultural change and contact between the local and other cultures resulting in contextualization with connotations and meanings

of adaptation, accommodation, actualisation, indigenisation, enculturation, incarnation and intercultural communication.

The aim of this theoretical study is to examine people's needs in order to suit their built environment in relation with housing. Various groups of peoples have come into contact with one another and ideas and traditions have been exchanged verbally. In this case, people are able to reject, adopt or accept, and adapt to the previous culture. When individuals or groups undergo cultural change, adaptation to the environment and non-environment elements may be needed. From this context, it has been learned that the level of social understanding in the village and housing process undertaken by the user is parallel to their utilitarian and cultural needs.

2. Culture and Environment

Culture

Definition of culture varies and it has developed over time and from generation to generation through learning (Cooper, 2001). Edward Tylor in 1871 in his theses of early Anthropology as the first formal definition of culture stated that culture is complex things that comprises of belief, knowledge, custom, morals, law, art and any other capabilities and habits obtained by man as a member of society (Rapoport, 2005: 77). Herskovits (1941), an Anthropologist as well, offered a simple definition of culture. He stated that "culture is the man-made part of the human environment" (Altman and Chemers, 1984: 3, quoted from Herskovits, 1952, see also Tanner, 1997). Another definition, which is also widely accepted, is "the complete range of objects, values, symbolic meanings and repetitive ways of behaving that guide the conduct of individual members of a society" (Titiev, 1959). However, Kluckohn (1951) who noted a consensus of anthropological definition gives a more comprehensive definition:

"Culture consists in patterned ways of thinking, feeling and reacting, acquired and transmitted mainly by symbols, constituting the distinctive achievements of human groups, including their embodiments in artefacts; and essential core of culture consists of traditional (i.e. historically derived and selected) ideas and especially their attached value" (Kluckohn, 1951:85-6).

Rapoport (1987: 10, 1989: xiii) explains culture in two ways. Firstly, culture is a way of life typical of a group; a system of schemata transmitted symbolically, and a way of coping with the ecological setting. Secondly, culture acts as a blueprint for assembling components, gives meaning to particulars and defines group identity or property. The term culture is too broad and abstract. It should be dismantled in order to clarify its relationship to the built environment. Referring to the culture definition it should be recognised that culture and built environment are not equal and on the same scale or level. Culture is a vast domain while the built environment is a small part of it (Rapoport, 1990: 10). In addition, culture needs to be cut down to size to clarify the concrete and specific variables that are applicable to link them to the built environment.

Liddle (1990) argued that culture is the entire value, beliefs and basic conventional ways upheld by the community. In this sense, the culture of an ethnic group can be studied by observing and analyzing their cultural elements, norms, values, ideas, tradition, custom, and goods including physical environmental, which usually consist of patterns of traditional villages and houses (Sastrowardoyo, 1987). Culture is the system of shared beliefs, values, customs, behaviours, and artefacts that the members of society use to cope with their world and with one another. There are three key components of culture as mentioned by Kuntjaraningrat, (1985: 20) as follows:

- 1) Concepts and ideas (traditional ideas and especially their attached values, symbolic, meanings): refers to beliefs, values and norms of a group of society;
- 2) Behaviour (ways of thinking, feeling, reacting and behaving): refers to the perceptions and cognitions, customs and behaviour (how to behave or to do things) of a group or society. "Culture could be defined as the interactive aggregate of common characteristics that influence a human group's response to its environment" (Hofstede, 1980: 21).
- 3) Physical objects (achievements and their embodiments in artefacts): culture appears in objects and in the physical environment including architecture.

From the three key components of culture, it can be seen that the concept of culture reflects many

sets of things from abstract principles such as ways of behaving and relating to the physical environment.

Environment

Definitions of environment can be found in many books. In the Oxford Dictionary and Thesaurus (2001), the word 'environment' means the surrounding and circumstances affecting the person's life. In this case, surrounding and circumstances are very important things in relating to the life of a person. Perception of environment varies and a number of definitions of environment have been proposed by scholars. Lowton (1970) defines the environment as an ecological system, which consists of five components. First is the individual. Second is the physical environment, the spaces and distances between man and objects, and the resources of the environment. Third is personal environment, consisting of individuals who are important sources of behaviour control, family, friends, and authority figures. Four is the supra personal environment, this refers to the environmental characteristics resulting from the inhabitants' modal personal characteristics for example, ethnic group, old people, and other specific sub cultures. Last is social environment, which includes social norms and institutions.

In addition Ittelson (1974) defines the environment in seven categories i.e., general ecological interrelationship of all categories; perceptual area; expressive area; domain of aesthetic values of a culture; adaptive area (the extent to which the environment helps or hinders activities); the integrative area (the kinds of social groupings which are facilitated or inhibited by surroundings); and instrumental area, that is, the tools and facilities provided by the environment.

Both definitions include the notion of the environment as behaviour setting, which may be neutral, inhibiting or supportive. On the other hand, physical environment is a term with many dimensions. According to Altman (1984) physical environment can be subdivided into three dimensions. First, natural environment places and geographical features, (for example, mountains, oceans, rivers, and valley) and the environment condition (such as rainfall, weather, flora and fauna). Second, built environment the results of man's alteration of environment (for example farms,

dwellings, villages, and cities). The last dimension is scale of environment, which consists of different levels of scale i.e., very small built environment such as: living rooms, bedrooms, kitchens and homes, and rather larger built environments, for example, communities, and cities. These dimensions of environment are very important. It includes many things such as the natural environment, flora, fauna, home, spaces and communities.

In addition, Altman (1984) emphasizes that physical environments and cultures are linked with people and various psychological processes, which consists of mental and behavioural activities. Mental activities are things, which happen in people minds such as what they hear, see, smell, and interpret about the physical environment, plus beliefs and attitudes, positive and negative, concerning the environment. Physical environment affects the psychological processes. In this case, as a result of the cultural views about the functions of the environment in the lives of people, they possibly will learn to build different structures or alter the physical environment. Behaviour activities concern what people do and how they act in relation to the environment. For instance, among a host of others, they attempt to achieve privacy and to establish and control territories, uses of land.

Environment Behaviour

According to Rapoport, (1973a) the interaction of people and physical environment is studied in the environment-behaviour or man-environment. Both of them are natural and man-made and represent the prime subject. Hillier and Hanson (1984) tried to find a relation between abstract immaterial 'subject' that is social, cultural and ritual systems, and a material world of 'objects' i.e., spatial systems. They argued that "a building, is an object whose spatial form is a form of social ordering with the implication that social ordering already has itself a certain spatial logic to it" (Hillier and Hanson, 1984: 9). This statement is stated at the beginning of an investigation into the environment-behaviour paradigm. Rapoport, one of the founders of environment-behaviour studies who have developed these paradigms stated that these studies as a systematic field of study are recent in origin and there is no data relating to the past (Rapoport, 1973a). It is a historical approach, where alteration can be observed for a long time.

Observation is very important in abstracting the underlying structure, system and rules behind visible manifestation.

“Without becoming involved in the more general argument about constancy and change, the point can be made that in our concern with the rapid change in current environments we have neglected the element of constancy both in human characteristics-physiological reactions, rhythms, psychological needs and also the evidence of physical solutions of the past as valid experience. The gradual refinement of environments, particularly vernacular environment, would seem to provide an essential base for any theory” (Rapoport, 1973a: 138).

This argument confirms the value of using historical material, that is, house plans and village layouts in the analysis of spatial arrangements of the vernacular environments of the villages and houses.

3. Culture, Environment and People

The relationship between culture, environment and people has been studied from time to time. It involves several disciplines in the social and behavioural sciences. Human ecologists for example, study migration and settlement patterns, and Anthropologists and Archaeologists are concerned with how people have shaped their homes, communities, and cities in different cultures and periods. Some anthropological and psychological analyses that bear on relations between culture and environment have been done as well and emphasize cultural ecology such as customs, life-style and behaviour in different culture.

According to Altman (1984) there is a close relationship between culture and environment. As seen in Figure 1, there are five important classes of factors.

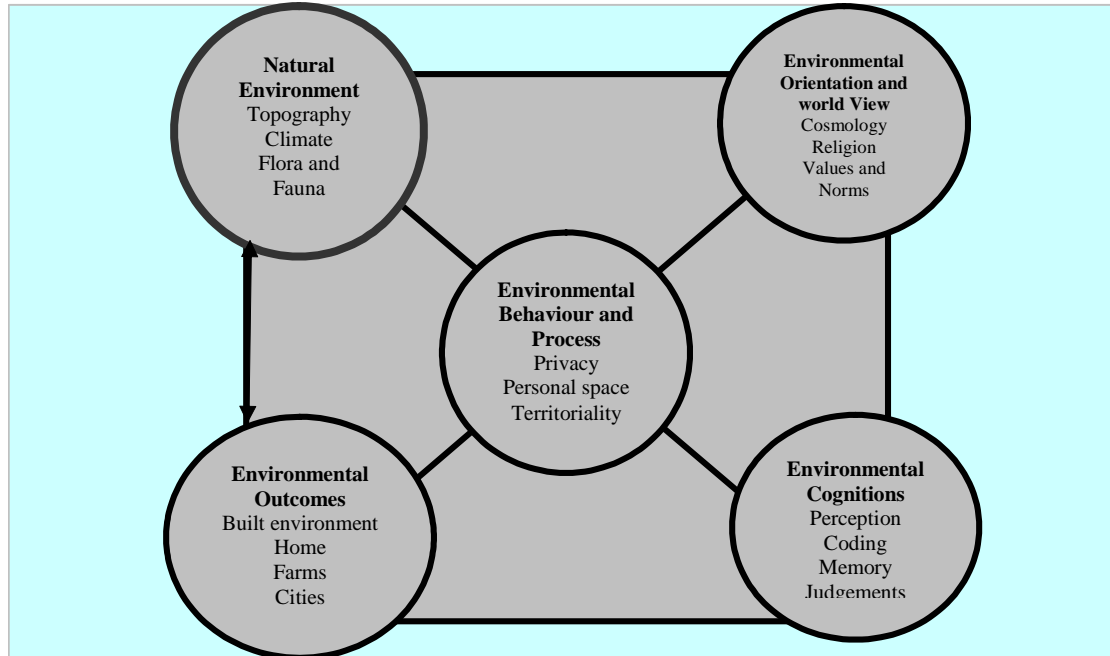
- 1) The natural environment includes temperature, rainfall, terrain and geographic features and flora and fauna.
- 2) The environmental orientation and worldview are global views of the environment that relate to religions, values, and dominant modes of thought.

- 3) The environmental cognitions include perception, beliefs, and judgments that people make about environments.
- 4) Environment behaviour and processes such as personal space, territorial behaviour, and privacy are the ways that people use the environment in the course of social relation.
- 5) Environmental outcomes or end product of behaviour include the results of people's action that is built environment for example homes, communities, and cities and modification of natural environment such as farms, dams, and climate changes.

The feature of each factor is that of simple connections, and every variable can theoretically serve as either a cause or an effect. For instance, the strong environmental determinist view frequently states that the physical environment affects culture in a one way relationship. All environmental factors play an important role, for example religious conversion (from Hindu to Christianity) can result in drastic alterations of the environment. Therefore, culture can affect environment, and environment can affect culture. Variables in Figure 1 are able to become cause and effect to each other. A change in one part of that network of variables can have impact throughout the system. Rapoport (1990) argued that components of culture are related to components of environment. Some aspects of culture such as lifestyle, behaviours, activity systems, social institutions, social structures, status, power relationship, meanings and so on are translated into some aspect of built form. Of course, if one or more aspects of cultural experience change it will affect changes in built form.

In terms of the above framework, it is clear that the issue of religion takes place in the system of environmental orientation and world views. The religious convert causes the 'cause and effect' in the system especially the environmental behaviours process i.e., privacy, and personal space, also the environmental outcome such as built environment, villages, houses, and so forth (Altman and Chemers, 1984). The religious conversion results in 'cultural change' to the converters.

Figure 1. A Framework of culture and environment relation



Source: Altman and Chemers, 1984:10

Culture Change and Environment

Herskovits (1941) stated that ‘cultural-contact produces cultural change’ see Figure 2. Contact between the local culture and another culture has occurred until recently. Religion for example, Hindu, Buddha, Moslem and Christianity as a part of culture is introduced to another culture in various ways. In terms of the Christianity the spread of Gospel by missionaries to nations in all over the world is based on the Bible verse of

Genesis 12: 1-3:

The lord had said to Abraham, “Leave your country, your people and your father’s household and go to the land I will show you. I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on the earth will be blessed through you.” (Genesis, 12: 1-3).

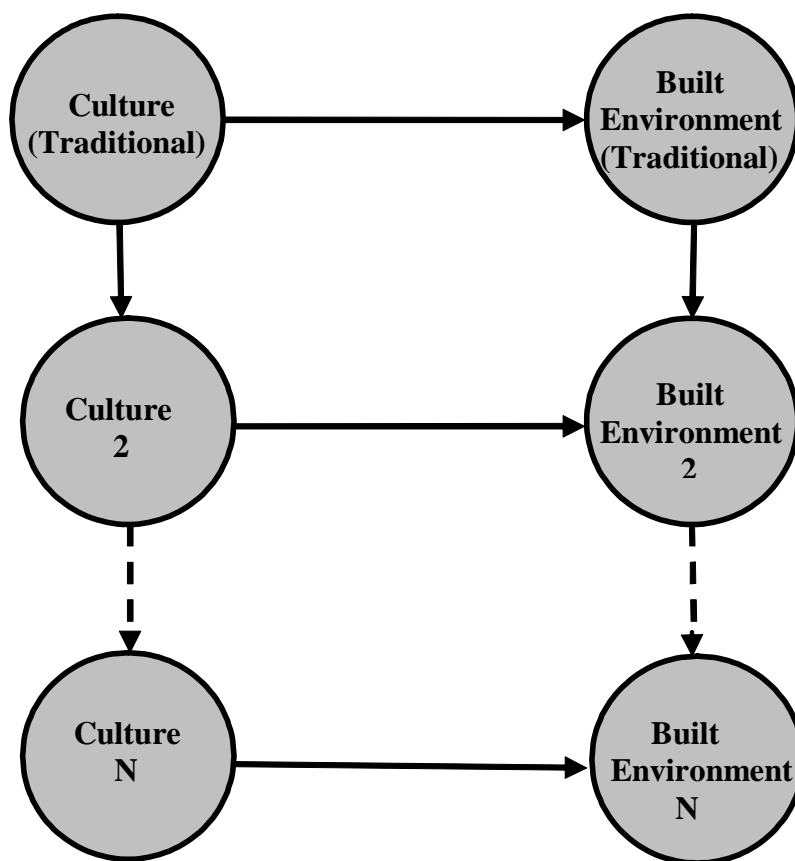
From these verses it is clear that Abraham is blessed so that through him and his descendants, all the “peoples” of the world would be blessed. Furthermore, to the wish of God, usually expressed

in the Bible, that all peoples of the earth would worship Him. Consequently, Christian missions go to the whole parts of the world, in order to bring worship to God. According to McGonigle (1988), St. Paul was the first missionary who contextualized the Gospel for the Greek and Roman cultures, allowing them to abandon their Hebrew and Jewish context. In addition McGonigle asserted that the Jewish thinker Pilo (20 B.C.-50 C.E.) sought harmony between Platonic philosophy and Hebrew thought as a bridge of both Jewish and Hellenistic culture. In this sense, Jews attempt to find meaning within the Hellenistic culture so that the Gospel would be understood easily by the Greeks. From Greek the Gospel was planted to Western culture. In the West “the Jewish life and culture remain an integral part of the Western experience since the central religious truths and moral values of the west are the inheritance from the Jewish people” (McGonigle (1988: 44). Later on the Western spread the Gospel to other parts of the world such as African and Asia. In terms of contextualization, the aim is to grasp the essential seed of the Gospel, and embed it in the soil of the foreign culture.

Mastra (1978) asserted that the Gospel is universal and it does not belong to a certain nation or culture, so that Christianity allows many kinds of Christian expression. It will change the culture, language, and behaviour of people into something new. The new expression or the change of a certain culture it will lead to a development of culture. This development is seen as equivalent to 'culture change' (Rapoport, 1991). More specifically, Rapoport described that "one is dealing with a form of acculturation since the changes clearly seem to be due, in major part, to intercultural process (contact, interaction or conflict) between the local traditional culture and the modern Western culture" (Rapoport

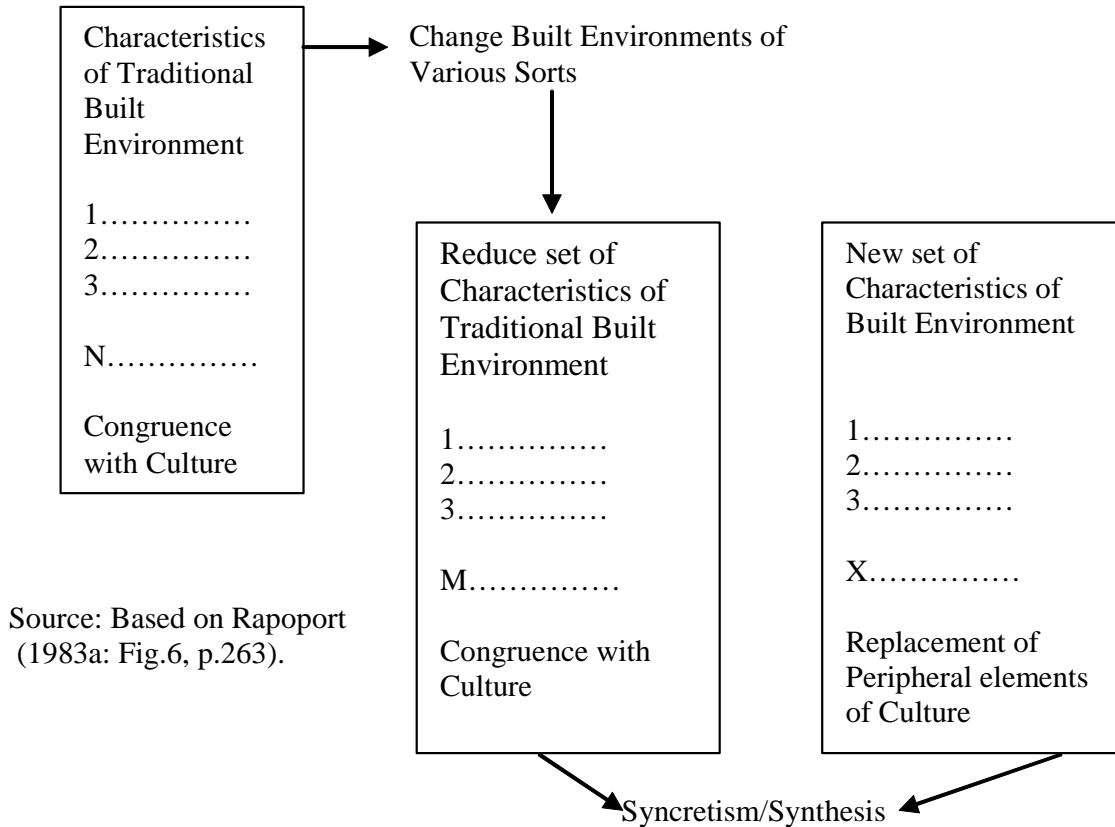
1991: 36). People in the developing countries usually equalize modernisation with westernization. The modern Western culture in this sense is the change of culture from traditional to a modern one, of course it includes the spread the Gospel by the Western missionaries (Covarrubias, 1976). Furthermore, Rapoport asserted that the 'rejection' of either traditional or the new components and characteristics of either cultural or built environments attributes are seen as equally unlikely and undesirable. The result of culture change on built environment in many cases will be 'syncretism' or 'synthesis', between traditional culture and environment as seen in Figure 3.

Figure 2. Culture changes in tandem with built environment



Source: Based on Rapoport (1983a: Fig. 4, p.259).

Figure 3. Identifying the characteristics of traditional, changed and new environment



Source: Based on Rapoport (1983a: Fig.6, p.263).

Culture and Religion

The whole religion in the world such as Hindu, Buddha, Islam, Christian and the like have they own way to spread their belief. Christian’ missionaries for instance, introduced the Gospel into all the nations in most of the world. The Gospel is universal and it does not belong to a certain nation or culture, so that Christianity allows many kinds of Christian expression (Cuang, 2004; Mastra, 1978). The Gospel will transform the culture, language, and behaviour of people into new meaning, new contents and enlists them in the service of Christ. However, it is difficult to decide whether a custom can be accepted, or should be rejected, or adapted (Sookhdeo, 1997).

In Asia, the contextualisation process relates to poverty, pluralism and inter religious dialogues; for the reason that more than three quarters of poor people in the world live in Asia, furthermore most religions such as Hindu, Buddha, Christian, and Islam

emerged and grew in Asia, and only a small number of people in Asia are atheist (Siwu, 1996; Sugden, 1997; Sukanada, 1999).

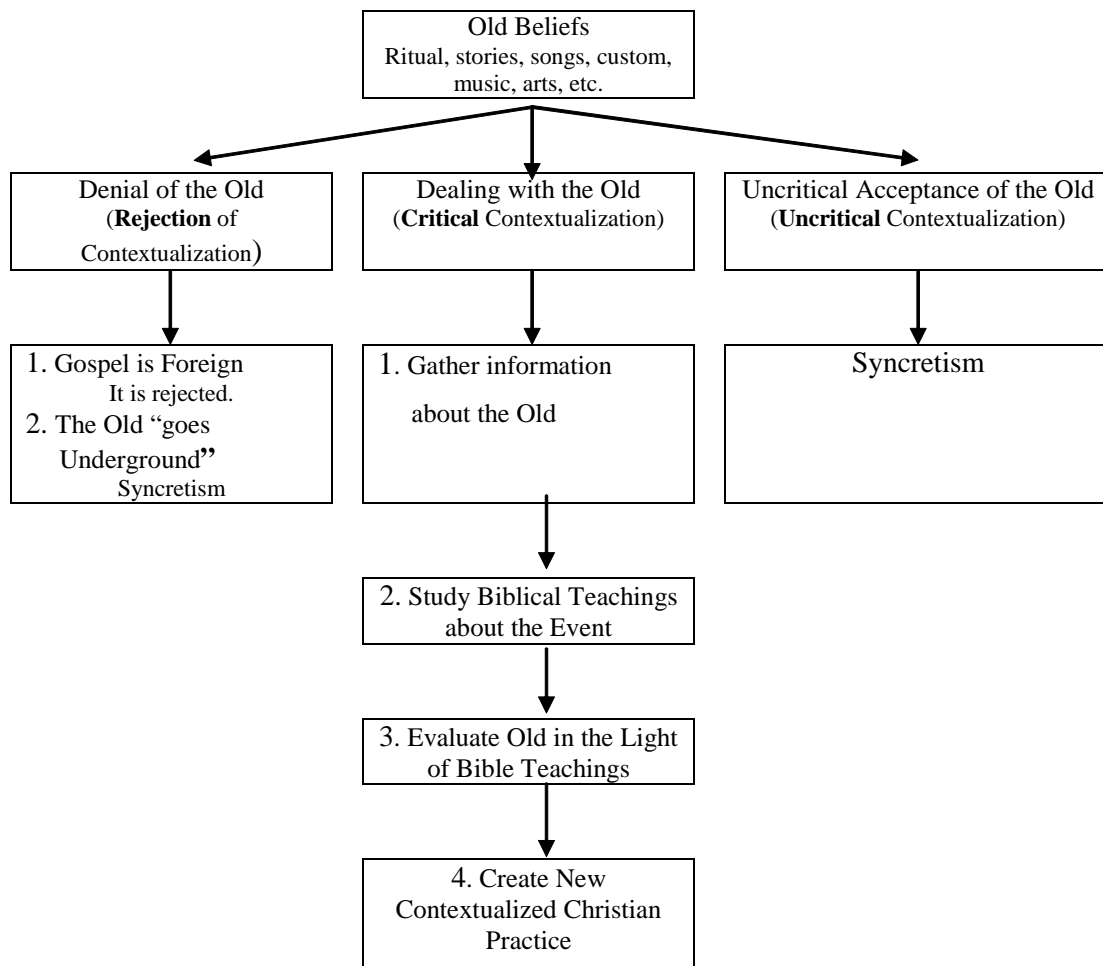
According to Willams (2005), a good contextualisation process takes account of the local culture and the process itself happens gradually. In order to understand the contextualisation process, one needs to analyse the methods of the early missionaries introducing Christianity to the old beliefs. The old belief culture such as ritual, stories, songs, custom, music, arts, etc should be recognized and well understood. This is of course a very difficult task for the missionaries because beside theology they have to study target culture as well. As Oliver (2003) noted in his encyclopaedia, with the expansion the western colonial powers they needed to understand native culture. This task was done by missionaries who notwithstanding their commitment to spread the gospel and convert the

heathen, they had to understand people culture as well. However, only a few missionaries could do so, for example, Kraemer, Covarrubias, Swellengrebel and so on. “Often churches are encouraged and challenged to use traditional musical instruments, art forms, dance and other forms in worship but there is a strong hesitancy among Evangelical Christians to use these. This caution prevails among local pastor and missionaries” (Ma, 2000: 73).

In terms of contextualization Hiebert (1997) described that there are three possibilities: things happen to the old culture such as denial of the old or

rejection of contextualization; dealing with the old or critical contextualization and acceptance of the old and uncritical of the old culture. The critical contextualization have to follow with some further steps i.e., gathering information about the old, study biblical teachings about the event, evaluate the old in light of bible teachings and in the last is create new contextualized Christian practice and in this way adapt the old belief. In general the elements of old belief can be rejected, accepted and adapted (see Figure 4).

Figure 4. Process of critical contextualization



Source: After Hiebert (quoted in William, 2005:121)

Contextualisation

According to Baasland (1997), the word 'contextualization' was unfamiliar to the apostles but the word today has some connotations and meanings i.e., adaptation, accommodation, actualisation, indigenisation, inculturation, incarnation, intercultural communication. The term contextualisation is used for the first time in 1972 by Shoki Coe in a publication of the World Council of Churches. However, the concept of contextualisation is not the same as the earlier concept of indigenization or accommodation (Johnson, 1997). Sookhdeo (1997) defined that 'contextualization' is recognized as the expression of the Gospel through suitable forms within the culture of its recipients. This is a simple definition, and he later on asserted that contextualisation attempts to differentiate the content of the Gospel and the form that express it. Broader definition stated by Nicholls (1979) said that "Contextualisation is the translation of the unchanging content of the Gospel of the kingdom into verbal form meaningful to the people in their separate culture and within their particular existential situation" (Nicholls, 1979 quoted in Hesselgrave and Rommen, 2000: 33).

For the Asians, the message must be concrete, visible, tangible, in the built environment. Altman and Chemers (1984) stated that the role of culture i.e., cosmology, religion and family and social structure is most evident in the house form.

In Western society, however, the idea of the home as a religious place may seem strange. Most of religious activities generally use the church rather than homes. But it is not true for all cultures; many societies attach considerable religious meaning to the home. For example Jewish families conduct certain religious services in their home, in the Chinese traditional house, altars for various gods appeared throughout the house, and the main room had ancestral altar for a certain ceremonies; a religious shrine is ever present in the Thai home; and a family temple is available in every Balinese Hindu house (Ngoerah, 1981). In Egypt the Moslem house the doorway is decorated with a verse from the *Qu'ran*, in ornamental character, to protect the house against evil (Tipple, 1994). For Asian people, homes or houses are very responsive to environmental demands and also reflect a variety of cultural values included religion. The conversion of the individual or groups from one religion to another religion affected their environment such as villages and houses (Rapoport, 1967; Altman, 1984).

4. The Concept of Adaptation

In the Oxford Dictionary and Thesaurus (2001), the word adaptation means fit, adjust, alter, make suitable, modify and adapt to adjust means to new conditions. According to Bennett, (1976) the concept of adaptation is originally from biology, which has two meanings: firstly genetic evolutionary, which concerns the feedback from interactions with the environment and secondly behaviour of the organism during its live-span that will permit the organism to cope with environmental factors. In addition, he stated that in the sciences of human behaviour, the concept of adaptation is derived from the biological meaning. Adaptation is also a key concept in two versions of system theory such as biological and behavioural and social. In social contexts, adaptive behaviour can be seen as innovative, change seeking, novelty-producing, and toleration. "The process of innovation is as the basic of cultural change" (Barnett quote in Bennett, 1976: 253). Bennett (1976) emphasised that people as groups or individuals, could adapted by finding new solutions to new or old problems, or by simply learning to live with the existing situation and worrying less about it or by adjusting other behaviours to the prevailing reality.

Environment Adaptation

According to Rapoport (1969), Altman and Chemers (1989), in certain societies there is a strong relationship between religion and environment. The role of religion and belief systems will affect the physical environment arrangement. The building form, shape and design are the result of factors of the cultural core such as religion, belief, life style, clan structure and grouping. Rapoport further indicates that houses, settlements and landscape are products of the same cultural core. When various groups of peoples have come into contact with another, ideas and traditions have been exchanged as conversions. For example, conversion from animist to Hindu, Hindu to Christianity, and to another religion, needs to suit their environment base on their desire (Mastra, 1986). In this case, people are able to 'reject', 'adopt' or 'accept' and 'adapt' the previous culture. When individuals or groups undergo culture change, adaptation in a certain environment and non-environment elements are needed to maintain the ancestors' heritage culture and to establish a new identity.

5. Conclusion

Culture is complex things that comprises of belief, knowledge, values, customs, behaviours, artefacts, morals, and habits obtained by man as a member of society, furthermore it is the man-made part of the human environment. The concept of culture reflects sets of things from abstract principles such as ways of behaving and relating to the physical environment. Culture is affected by the environmental demands, and also culture influences what people do toward the environment. Beside environment, culture also influences people in shaping built environment. The environments and cultures are linked with people and various psychological processes, which consists of mental and behavioural activities. Physical environment affects the psychological processes. Behaviour activities concern what people do and how they act

in relation to the environment. Cultural-contact produces cultural change and contact between the local culture and another culture resulted contextualization with connotations and meanings of adaptation, accommodation, actualisation, indigenisation, inculturation, incarnation, intercultural communication. The role of religion and belief systems affected the physical environment arrangement. The building form, shape and design are the result of factors of the cultural core such as religion, belief, life style, clan structure and grouping. Various groups of peoples have come into contact with another, ideas and traditions have been exchanged as conversions. In this case, people are able to reject, adopt or accept and adapt the previous or new culture. When individuals or groups undergo culture change, adaptation in a certain environment and non-environment elements are needed.

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