CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSIONS

This research compares settlement-architecture of society practicing matrilineal descent rules of tara-Nayar in Kerala in South India and nagari in Minangkabau in West Sumatera Indonesia. This research assumed that there are common principles with regard to shared social organization based on matrilineal descent rule, tropical environment and paddy-farming agriculture which should be reflected in their architecture and settlement.

7.1. REFLECTION ON METHODOLOGY

(i) “Anthropo-Arch Method” (Nold Egenter, 1992), supplemented by analysis method of “Territorial Control Of Habitation” (Habraken 1995), is utilized to examine the correlation between architectural and ethnographic findings and its reflection on spatial organization and configuration of settlement, its integrity and transformation. From the comparative assessment on results of Anthropo-Arch Method of both regions the agreements and differences are justified.

(ii) The combination of Anthropo-Arch and principle of Territorial Control Of Habitation and Comparative research is the methodological contribution. Research that applies territorial control as outlined by NJ Habraken have been so far mainly practiced to observe limited case of neighborhood and, and has not incorporated rigorous ethnographic inquiry. The discourse of controlled territory as outlined by Nold Egenter design has been
mainly used to explore pre-Modern architecture. The outcome of this research shows that these methods are relevant and are to be developed further as instrumental tools to explore the state of integrity of a social assemblage at any scale, for architectural and planning purpose, particularly for the case of habitation where boundary making is not the issue, and where the spatial integrity is more defined by the dynamic and the organization of society.

(iii) The notion of controlled territory in this method plays an important role to alter common perspective that tends to identify settlement and architecture by means of physical identification, spatial proximity and object. This notion compensates the difficulty as expressed by scholars, who have generally underlined the unintelligibility of settlement unit in Kerala due to the dispersed nature of houses. The intelligibility of such social spatial configuration should be understood by reflecting the operation of clan-organization on geography.

7.2 RESEARCH CONCLUSION

7.2.1 General Framework about Matrilineal Descent Rule

The following are common character of social-spatial organization society practicing matrilineal descent rule found in Kerala and Minangkabau:

(i) The result of research shows that matrilineal descent rule has wider and deeper scope that transcends gender mater. It does not associate with female’s power and accessibility nor does it imply superiority of female in space. It also does not mean that the position of male in clan and house is inferior to female.

(ii) Matrilineal descent rule is only part of the larger social organization which is developed from organization of the clan. There are three
agents of control that overlap one another in this social organization, which are rules of ownership and inheritance being passed on through female line, management in the hand of maternal uncle side and divine importance of female in the house to sanction decisions with regards to the interest of matrilineal joint family. Higher importance on female relates more to the preservation of divinity, purity of descent and sustainability of property ownership

(iii) Female represent spatial sphere whereas male aspects represent spatial management. A new extension of house compound or new branch of a matrilineal clan unit starts when new female lineages are placed in new localities away from the main house compound along with their husbands and the supporting communities. By the course of time the new extension could become an independent matrilineal clan unit and therefore a new matrilineal joint family compound.

(iv) Matrilineal kinship conceptually manifests the anchoring of matrilineal clan in a place, that is followed by gradual emergence of self-sufficient joint-family unit and their habitation and which further establishes social network with other houses or matrilineal clan-units. The high role of ladies or female in the matrilineal clan-unit or joint family tends to be found in an independent self-sufficient unit and its matrilineal clan or taravad or kaum habitation. When the matrilineal clan-unit was found in situations that compel collective management with other matrilineal clans to handle any external affairs (trades, agriculture expansions, politic and security), the male-leader of the matrilineal clan gained more power as it was their duty to manage external affairs and estate management of the matrilineal clan property. Consequently:
higher importance on female relates more to preserving divinity and purity of descent and sustainability of property ownership;

the conceptual understanding of settlement-architecture unit of both regions means understanding the geographical distribution and operation of clan organization related to their ancestor references;

the movement and migration of female is in fact more controlled because it associates with spatial expansion and contraction of clan; and

The depth of clan, extending from lineage to clan of traceable ancestor and to clan of mythical ancestor connect a house in orderly manner with wider scope of habitations and cultural geography in hierarchical levels of habitation, starting from sanctified structure within house (such as main post, main beam) to ancestral chambers, ancestral house, residential compound, settlement, unit confederation settlements and later cultural geography.

(v) Houses or a clan-unit conceptually become the elementary spatial ingredient of the network establishment of clan-organization, dwelling place of member of family; shelter for rice, ancestor and relic of clan as well as landmark of clan properties. Socially, definition of individuals and its affiliation to a community, social organization and origin is also determined by their position in clan organization. Each family constitutes a clan with its own story and legend which associates with the establishment of the settlement. It explains why ancestral houses, taravad and kampung with their kaum are relatively preserved. It also reflects that matrilineal clan
unit and house compound is basically an independent unit within the settlement.

(vi) Marriage becomes a significant factor in establishing solidity of familial ties, integrity of a property and establishment of clan assemblage. Uxirilocal tradition marriage conceptually disperses males while the female as custodian of property never leaves the maternal property. Movement of males does not bring territorial consequence. Consequently:

- following modernization the shift to nuclear family is getting more intense. The role of mother has been diminishing.

- the trend of partitioning tendency coincides with the fact that marriage is freer.

(vii) The concept of communalism here refers more to a dynamic clan interest and should not be confused with democratic situation and free-will individual interest.

- The notion of public space does not refer to notion of space accessible to everyone. It refers more to a dynamic spatiotemporal defined by activities of the clan member.

- Communal assembly should not be confused by public interest but a social defining apex of the management of settlement unit which is attended only by representative of clans.

7.2.2 Physical Character

The concept of centre is not rigid and does not appear as a singular apex. It demonstrates fluidity of network of houses in various level of
habitation which is governed by kinship and spiritual bond. The matrilineal characters are reflected in low sense of border and center and more dispersed and centrifugal distributions of houses belonging to a common clan-units. The stronger the matrilineal character the more permeable, nebulous and wider the spatial sphere, and less the centre. The weaker the matrilineal character, the more solid, specified and confined the spatial sphere and the more obvious centre. Currently matrilineal character in Kerala is less visible than in Minangkabau.

The physical establishment of settlement habitation correlates with the increase of need to build fraternal interest, with other clans or external parties. Fraternal interest is reflected spatially on physical appearance of cluster of houses that constitute a settlement with its degree of compactness, sense of boundary and high defined centre.

7.2.3 Difference and Context

The following are factors that make the social-spatial organization in Kerala and Minangkabau demonstrate contextual differences:

(i) Contextual environment in Minangkabau where environmental hazard is more prominent require that the building is earthquake resistant,

(ii) Nature of blood relation in establishing kinship, where,

- In Minangkabau trait of ‘adoption’ of new comer or migrant by a clan group in a nagari enables a maternal joint family compound (kampung) to house the non-blood related kin as serf-community within the compound.

- In Kerala descent purity is strictly maintained as each community unit generally signified certain professions or
caste and therefore a tara or a settlement represent a cluster of professional communities other than clan group.

(iii) local social and political history which determine intensity of urbanization,

(iv) absence of caste system in Minangkabau and its prominence in Kerala.

Urbanization with regards to matrilineal kinship is conclusively understood as the solidification of the fluid-flowing and flexible trait of matrilineal social organization into a more rigid and autocratic character. Kerala has more urbanized characters and more complex historical upheavals that led to more rapid transformations and relocations that include transformations from clan organization into caste category. In Minangkabau Nagari relatively demonstrates more communal characters and higher importance given to female role in a matrilineal clan-unit than in Kerala.

7.3 SUGGESTION FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The studies of Southeast Asian architecture have been mostly referring to cultural legacy of the Austronesia world but this experience of research reveal that the architectural shape, form, social setting and practical terminologies used in Southeast Asia and South Indian or Tamil culture, intersect in many parts. Therefore, the widening scope of architectural research and studies that embraces both South India and Southeast Asia could contribute a more holistic understanding for Southeast Asian architecture studies. So far this potential is unseen because the studies of architecture in both South India and Southeast Asia have been so far confined in its own territory. For example research works done by Praveena Kodoth (2003) and G Arunima (1996) in Kerala and Christina Dobbin (1997) and Tsuyoshi Kato (1978), for Minangkabau, have remained confined within the respective territory. David Ludden (2002) discovered close connectivity of Sri Lanka
and Kerala and concluded them as a unit of ‘agrarian territory’ which means due to agriculture enterprise and its economic inter-exchange both places had been bound to common organization. However this research does not explore spatial and architectural reflection and its manifestation in habitation organization.

Traditional society is not the only scope for the research. Apart from the discussion on nagari and tara or other traditional society running matrilineal kinship the discourse of self-emergence, fluid flowing and communal character of habitation is also important in the contemporary world, especially in the current situation where national boundary has been losing its significance in the more globalized society.

Research that applies territorial control as outlined by NJ Habrakken have been so far mainly practiced to observe limited case of neighborhood and, and has not incorporated ethnographic inquiry. The discourse of controlled territory as outlined by Nold Egenter design has been mainly used to explore pre-Modern architecture. The outcome of this research shows that these methods are relevant and are to be developed further as instrumental tools to explore the state of integrity of a social assemblage at any scale, for architectural and planning purpose, particularly for the case of habitation where boundary making is not the issue, and where the spatial integrity is more defined by the dynamic of society.