

The application of sacredness in temple architecture – Buddhist museum

Case study: Tsz Shan Monastery – Li Ka Shing museum)

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| ARTICLE INFO | ABSTRACT |
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| <p><i>Article history:</i> Received April 20, 2021 Received in revised form June 26, 2021 Accepted July 29, 2021 Available online April 01, 2022</p> <p><i>Keywords:</i> Contextuality Sacredness Temple-museum</p> <p>*Corresponding author: Rahadhian Prajudi Herwindo Department of Architecture, Faculty of Engineering, Universitas Katolik Parahyangan, Bandung, Indonesia Email: dodo@unpar.ac.id ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3756-3707</p> | <p>Buddhism is one of the oldest religions in the world, and the development has led to a great change in the typology of Buddhist architecture, and caused a complex scope of the concept. This complexity is due to the absence of architectural literature that regulates the addition of supporting functions, such as profane and sacred value, in improving Buddhists' education. However, the addition of a profane function reduces sacred value and act of worship, opposes architectural design, and defiles ritual activities. Furthermore, one of the functions that provide education as well as a personal approach to Buddhism is the museum. This research aims to examine the contextual relationship between main and supporting functions, namely the sacred (worship building) and the profane (museum), respectively. And also, to display the sacred value through architectural characteristics. The analytical method used the theory of sacredness and contextuality. This was further elaborated in various architectural scopes to produce a relationship between temples and museums, that apply sacred values according to Buddhist philosophy. The research leads to differences in principles application, such as orientation, hierarchy, boundary scope, geometric shapes, symmetry, repetition, material appearance, shape synergy, zoning, processions, atmospheric ambiguity, symbolic objects, boundary guards, and gathering areas.</p> |

Introduction

Buddhism is one of the oldest religions in the world (around 532 BC), introduced by Siddhartha Gautama after acquiring full enlightenment and becoming the *Sammāsambuddha*, and also, taught *Dhamma* for 45 years until *parinibbāna* at *Kusinārā* (Varley 2011). In order to maintain the continuity of Buddhism, the members of the *Sangha* held four major conciliations to record the Buddha's teachings in the form of the *Tipiṭaka*. In the process, there were differences in perspectives that became the forerunner, which leads to the creation of three main schools. These include 1)

Theravada (Hinayana), which teaches the basic principles of Buddha. 2) Mahayana, which believes in the existence of *Bodhisatta*, and 3) Vajrayana (Tantrayana) which combines Mahayana teachings with Tantric (Hinduism). These three schools were developed outside India, namely Theravada in Southeast Asia, Mahayana in Central and East Asia, and Vajrayana in Tibet (Acri 2016).



Figure 1. Distribution map of the Buddhist schools

In Buddhism, due to the unknown architectural literature such as *vastusastra*, there is a change in the typology of Buddhists. Starting from the need for the shelter of *Sangha* members when performing missionaries, to the development of Buddhist and other religions, the previous temporary architectural shapes are now permanent to accommodate the needs of worship ritual and *Dhamma* teaching. The development of diverse community needs, also demands the addition of supporting facilities, such as libraries, canteens, etc. The addition of profane functions weakens the value of sacredness that needs to be displayed, therefore, interfering ritual activities and reducing the dignity of the temple (Durkheim 2001; Jayawardana 2001).

Sacredness is closely related to the philosophy believed (Durkheim 2001), in which Buddhism is based on personal extrasensory experience (Karim and Idris 2013). Museum is a medium for introducing Buddhist sacredness, similar to worship buildings in the past (Goldberger 2003). Visitors could experience the personal encounter and sublime feeling from religious objects (Wecker 2014; Plate 2017).

Based on the description above, this research aims to examine the application of sacredness in worship buildings and museums in temple complex. It is also conducted for the benefits of understanding the architectural characteristics that form sacredness in temples, and its design applications relationship in profane museums.

Method

This research was conducted using qualitative methods to obtain an overview of the relationship between sacredness values on temple and museum functions. The overview was then described through a descriptive approach.

Qualitative assessment of the temple and museum functions was based on the elaboration of characteristics that form sacredness. The results were used to study the extent to which sacredness was applied to the temple and museum functions, and then concluded descriptively.

In general, the analysis carried out consists of four steps as follows:

1. The sacredness theories from the experts were elaborated to obtain an overview of the architectural characteristics that form sacredness. The results were then compared with the philosophy adopted and believed in the temple and museum typologies, to obtain an overview of sacredness.
2. With typological differences, contextuality theories were elaborated to reconcile two contrasting concepts, namely the temple and museum as a sacred and profane function, respectively (Schumacher 1996). Contextuality theory was needed to study the relationship between the application of sacredness in the temple and museum typologies by deduction and induction.
3. The elaboration of sacredness and contextuality theories obtained was then used to analyze the case studies, namely the Tsz Shan Monastery and the Li Ka Shing Buddhist Art Museum. This process collects an overview of the similarities and differences in the application of architectural characteristics to the shapes of the case studies. Aspects of sacredness were read in various scopes, such as the surrounding environment, figure, mass, and spatial planning, and ornamentation to obtain a comprehensive overview in the application of sacredness to architectural shapes (Herwindo and Kedmon 2009).

Case study

Development is found in the complex of Tsz Shan Monastery and the Li Ka Shing Buddhist Art Museum. This monastery is located in Tung Tsz, Tai Po District, Hong Kong, built on a site in a mountainous area separated from the city, and consists of some buildings. It also displays unique

architectural characteristics, therefore, selected as the study object.



Figure 2. Location of Tsz Shan Monastery

Result and discussion

Characteristics that form sacredness

Sacred is coined from the word *sacer*, which means holy, separate, and related to Hierophany. The opposite of *sacer* is *profanus*, which is defined as not holy, not sacred, and general (Paramitha 2019). Sacredness in architecture is a condition where the style and shape of worship, provide an atmosphere of Hierophany majesty (Paramitha 2019). Furthermore, sacred architecture is based on the signs and their relationships displayed on the architectural shape, until interpreted by observers (Nöth 1990; Cahyawan; Yuswadi Saliya 2017; Salura, Fauzy, and Trisno 2015). Several architectural characteristics have been defined, and are indications to form and present sacredness values (Durkheim 2001; Jones 1993; Barrie 2013; Hoffman and Crosbie 2010).

Table 1. Architectural characteristics that form sacredness

| | Sacredness value | The Term of Sacredness (Theoretical Sources) |
|-----------|---|---|
| UNIVERSAL | Orientation The building is designed based on the object/direction used as a reference | Axial orientation (Eliade 1987) Location orientation (Eliade 1987) |
| | Hierarchy The building is shown to be more dominant than others | Sacredness hierarchy (Durkheim 2001) Architecture as orientation (Jones 1993) Architecture as commemoration (Jones 1993) Architecture as ritual context (Jones 1993) |
| | Boundary The building has a boundary element to separate it from the surrounding environment | Boundary element (Barrie 2013) |
| | Geometric shapes The building describes basic geometric shapes or combinations thereof | Shape orientation (Eliade 1987) Proportion and geometry (Barrie 2013) |
| EVOCATIVE | Architectural cosmogram The building depicts a perfect object as a picture of heaven | Architectural cosmogram (Barrie 2013) |
| | Procession To get to the building, visitors are directed through a special circulation path | Spatial sequence (Barrie 2013) |
| | Atmospheric ambiguity There is a difference in the quality of space between the building and its surroundings | Atmospheric ambiguity (Hoffman and Crosbie 2010) |
| SYMBOLIC | Symbolic element The building has objects related to religion/hierophany | Symbolic object (Durkheim 2001) Symbolic architecture (Hoffman and Crosbie 2010) Symbolic archetype (Hoffman and Crosbie 2010) Symbolic object (Barrie 2013) |

Sacredness philosophy of temple and museum

Sacredness arises due to the same perspective of people towards certain symbols, where the sacred and profane spaces are generally separated (Durkheim 2001; Eliade 1987). However, in reality, the profane space could display sacred qualities, in this case museum (Smith 1992; Cianca 2018).

The sacredness in temple is based on the Buddha's teachings, which include four noble truths (Cattari Ariya Saccani), namely 1) the reality in regards to the existence of suffering, 2) the truth in regards to the cause of suffering, 3) the truth in respect to the cessation of suffering, and 4) the truth based on the noble eightfold path that leading to the end of suffering. Buddhism recommends people to train and develop their minds, therefore, setting them free from the cycle of rebirth in the 31 realms of existence and attain *nibbana*. Furthermore, several beliefs are applied based on the interpretation of the Buddha's teachings, and the customs of the Sangha members, such as rituals, symbolic objects, and the shapes that are considered sacred.

In contrast to the temple which emphasizes symbolism, the museum expresses more on functionality, even though both have the same affiliation regarding sacredness. Therefore, religion and museum are correlated with the temple of honesty and knowledge, respectively (Maranda 2018). The musealization process is closely related to sacralization through the provision of distance, between the exhibition object and the observer (Paine 2013). Exhibition objects related to religious symbols are worshiped more in terms of beauty than function. This seems to reduce the sacredness of religious symbolism, but in the other side it could bridge visitors with Hierophany (Minucciani 2013). The atmosphere of sacredness in a museum is weaker than in a church or temple (Wenli 2018). In the church, one needs to obey religious ceremonies, while in the museum visitors decide either to follow them or not (Carrier 2006).

Table 2. Sacredness philosophy of temple and museum

| Sacredness value | Temple | Museum |
|------------------|-------------|---|
| UNIVERSAL | Orientation | <i>Axis mundi</i> and 4 cardinal directions |
| | | |

| Sacredness value | Temple | Museum | |
|-------------------------|--|--|--------------------------------|
| Hierarchy | The worship object as the highest hierarchy | The exhibition object as the highest hierarchy | |
| Boundary | The sacred object is protected by the boundary element | The exhibition object is protected by the boundary element | |
| Geometric shapes | Showing simple geometric shapes | | |
| Architectural cosmogram | Showing balance, repetition, and simplicity | | |
| EVOCATIVE | Procession | Linear and circular procession | Circular circulation (looping) |
| | Atmospheric ambiguity | Showing serenity | Showing serenity |
| SYMBOLIC | Symbolic element | Related to Buddhism | Related to religion |

Contextuality

Contextuality is a concept used in creating harmony between two different concepts, in this case, the sacred – profane space in building complex (Schumacher 1996). Buildings could be designed to contrast, harmonize, or mix with others (Brolin 1980), or empathetic (similar), sympathetic (adaptive), and independent (contrast) (Çizgen 2012). Other design approaches include intentional opposition, literal replication, new style discovery, and abstract reference (William Penn Foundation 2007). Therefore, it is concluded that the approaches applied include replication, similar, opposite, and unrelated types.

Contextuality of sacredness values between temple and museum

In the site shape and building configuration, the Tsz Shan Monastery complex follows a mountain – sea orientation (Northwest – Southeast). This concept is used as a reference in constructing worship buildings, while museum and residences for monks follow the secondary axis. The worship building displays a horizontal expression, while the museum shows a vertical

expression, therefore, forming a balance. In the scope of spatial planning, both have an inward orientation as well as focus on the object of worship and exhibition in the middle of worship building and museum, respectively.

hierarchy, in contrast to the museum at the secondary axis. However, the placement of the main space is both observed in the center of the buildings, through the presence of the main statue altar and the exhibition object.

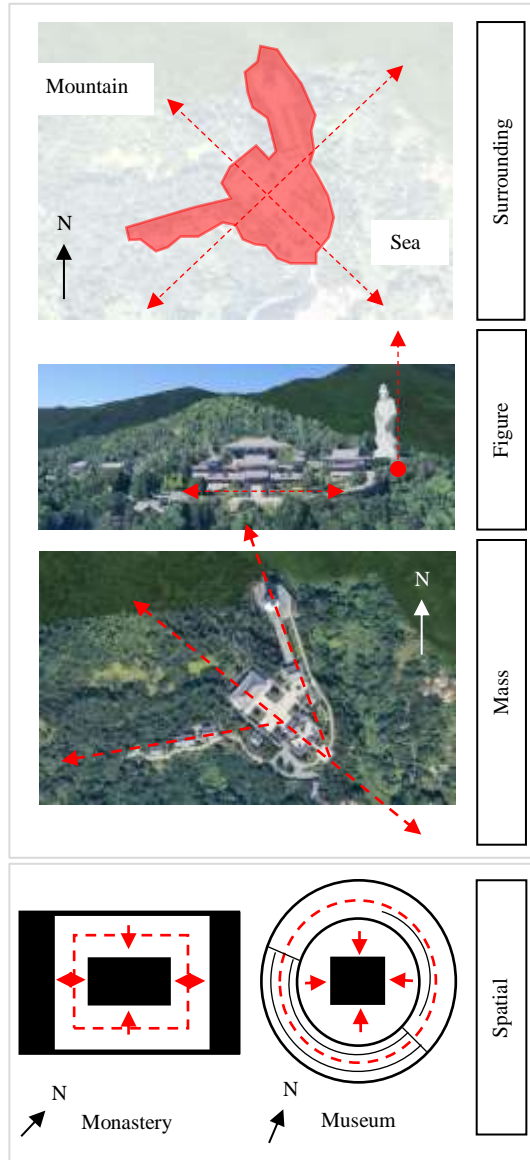


Figure 3. Orientation of monastery – museum

Hierarchy is shown from site selection that are large, and located in mountains with a higher elevation than urban areas at the base. In the monastery complex, the Grand Buddha Hall (as the main building) is displayed as the largest and placed at the highest elevation. Furthermore, the placement of the Grand Buddha Hall, which is frontal to the entrance also emphasizes the



Figure 4. Hierarchy of monastery – museum

There is a boundary element that delimits the site area from the surrounding environment, even though it is located in a mountainous area with surrounding forest. The worship building and museum both appear to be similar. The worship building has more layered boundary elements than the museum (on arriving at the Grand Buddha Hall building, visitors need to go through three boundary elements, while to the museum they only need to pass through one element). The

existence of layered boundary elements is an indication that the worship building is prioritized over the museum. This is in contrast to the interior scope, where in the worship building there is no boundary element that protect the object of worship, while in the museum, it is present to divide the exhibition spaces into certain themes or separate private areas from the public.



Figure 5. Boundary of monastery – museum

Different simple geometric shapes are displayed from the typology of the worship building and museum. At the Tsz Shan Monastery, worship building is displayed rectangular, while the museum displays a circular shape. This approach shows the different functions of the two buildings. Similar shapes

with its mass expression are applied in the interior, in the form of furniture and space division. While in the museum, the interior geometric shapes displayed are not intact according to the space requirements and the necessary circulation.

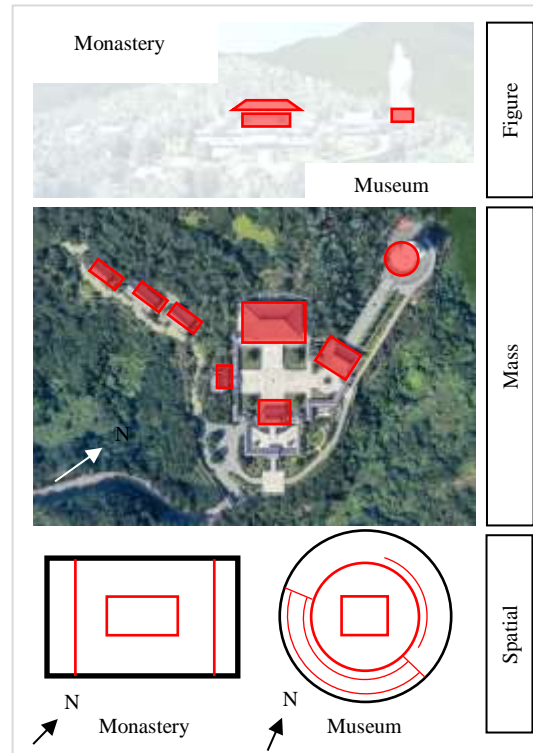


Figure 6. Geometric shapes of the monastery – museum

In terms of figure and mass planning, they both display the symmetrical principle through the placement of the worship building in the site center. Therefore, the three low-rise monk's residences, and the museum with tall Guan Yin statues become a balancer on the left and right sides of the site. This principle is also seen in the spatial arrangement of the worship building, however, in the museum, it is not strictly applied (adjusted in terms of functionality and the atmosphere to be achieved).

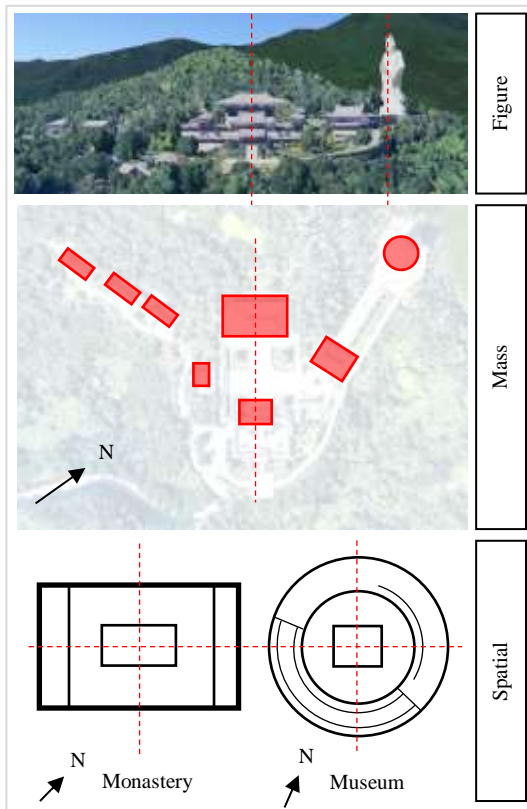


Figure 7. Balance of monastery – museum

A consistent repetitive pattern is found in the worship building and museum. However, there are differences in the application of repetition to the figure scope, where in the worship building, the pattern is more assertive through the reoccurrence of architectural elements, such as columns, doors, and windows. Meanwhile, in the museum, it is subtler through the repetition of material modules. The repetitive principle is also found in the scope of building and landscape arrangement in the form of vegetation placement, which functions as boundary elements and directions. The repetitive pattern is displayed in a linear and formal arrangement (the repetition of the displayed shapes is similar in size to each other). Meanwhile, the arrangement of exhibition objects in the museum is more adapted to the circulation to be displayed (the arrangement of furniture is not symbolic like the worship building).

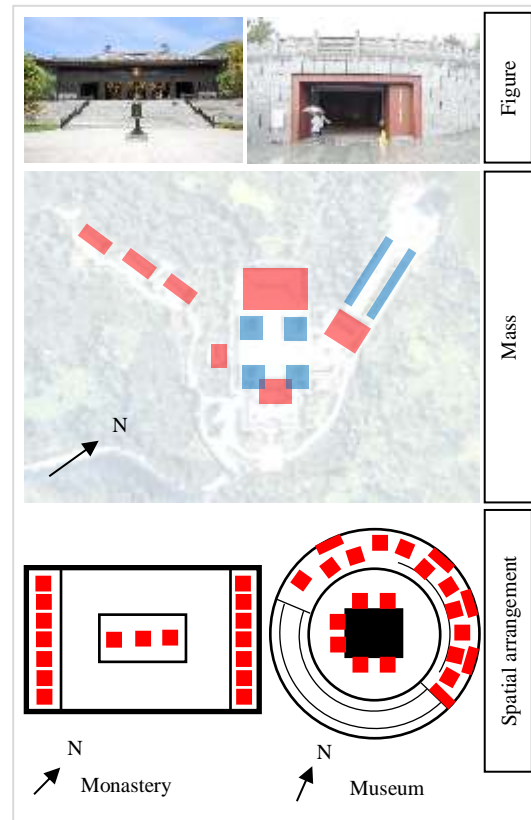


Figure 8. Repetition of monastery – museum

The Tsz Shan Monastery and Li Ka Shing Buddhist Art Museum show the use of exposed stone and wood materials. The application of natural and simple materials is displayed on the exterior and interior of the building. However, materials application is carried out with different installation techniques as needed in each building.



Figure 9. Material expression of monastery – museum

Both buildings display the principle of synergistic form between the outer figure and the inner space. This shows honesty from the architectural shape and the harmony between the two different programs located in one monastery complex.



Figure 10. Synergistic form of monastery – museum

The zoning division is clearly found in the scope of the figure and mass arrangement. The *Buddhava* area (worship building) is placed in the middle, while the monk's residence and museum are stationed to offset each other on the left and right sides of the site. The zoning separation is intended to facilitate visitors to distinguish areas and create efficient circulation.

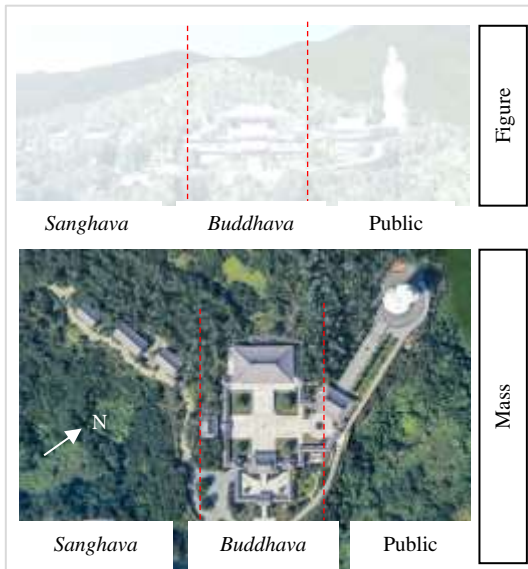


Figure 11. Zoning division of monastery – museum

In order to arrive at the worship building and museum, visitors are directed through different circulation routes, therefore, showing the effectiveness of their movement within the site. However, these two areas remain connected where visitors are required to reverse their direction of motion. In terms of spatial arrangement, both buildings display a circular

procession as a representation of the Padakkhina ritual. There are differences in the circulation pattern, wherein the worship building visitors are taken to the main altar first, while in the museum, they passed through the secondary exhibition site before heading to the main area.

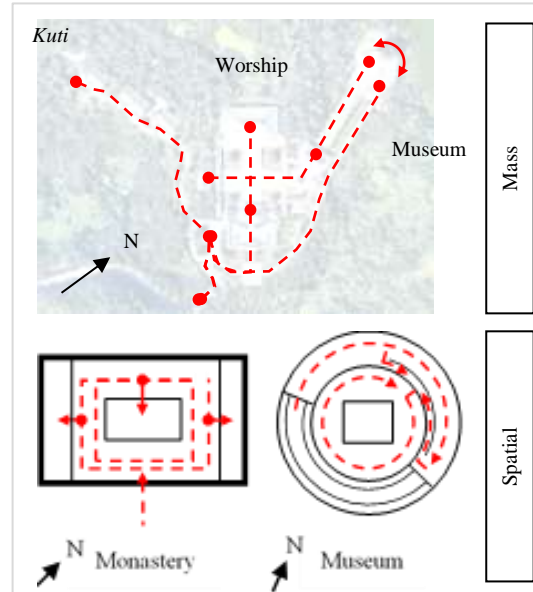


Figure 12. Procession of monastery – museum

The atmospheric ambiguity between sacred and profane spaces is important in the Tsz Shan Monastery in displaying nonsecular qualities. This is shown in the surrounding environment, where the choice of site in a quiet mountainous area, presents a different atmosphere compared to dense and crowded cities. A similar limited and dark atmosphere is displayed in the religious building and museum in the scope of mass arrangement, in contrast to the open and bright feel at outside areas. In the worship building, the main sacred object is placed in the middle of the building with a higher ceiling. Meanwhile, in the museum, the main exhibition object is placed in a separate room with more limited space quality compared to others.

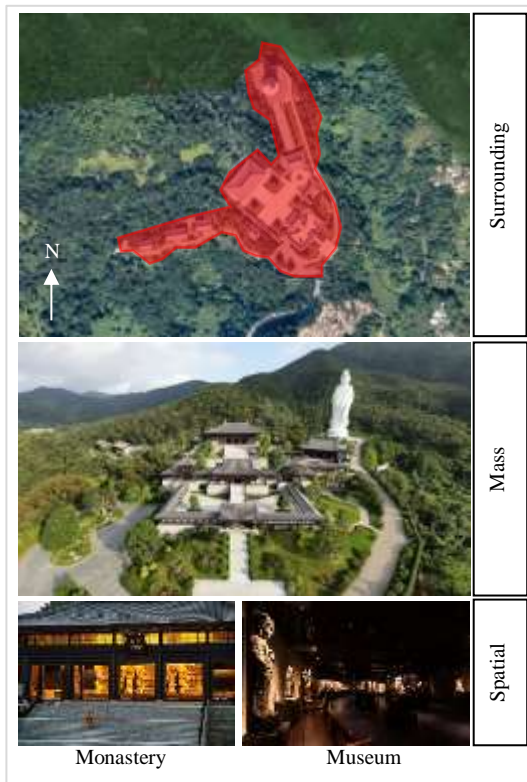


Figure 13. Atmospheric ambiguity of monastery – museum

Worship and museum areas both place symbolic objects related to Buddhism. However, they are more in the worship area than in the museum. The existence of symbolic objects aims to present a more assertive identity and quality of sacredness. Symbolic objects in the worship building and museum display similar features with different meanings (Paine 2013). In the worship building, the symbolic object is associated with the figure of Buddha/Buddhism to be worshiped, while in the museum it is only interpreted as an exhibition element.

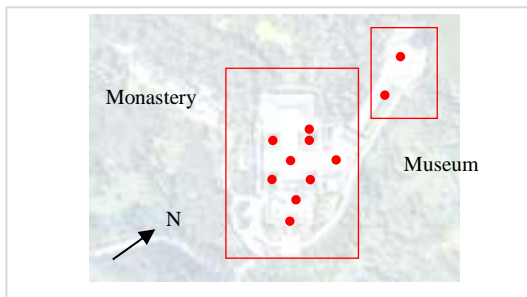


Figure 14. Symbolic object of monastery – museum

A physical boundary figure in the form of a guard post is placed at the entrance to protect the entire site. There is also a Vajrapani statue and a dragon knob at the entrance as a symbol of protecting the worship area from evil spirits. Meanwhile, in the museum, there is a receptionist to maintain the exhibition area and direct visitors. It is concluded that the boundary guard in the worship building is placed outside as a symbolic element, while in the museum it is inside and functional.

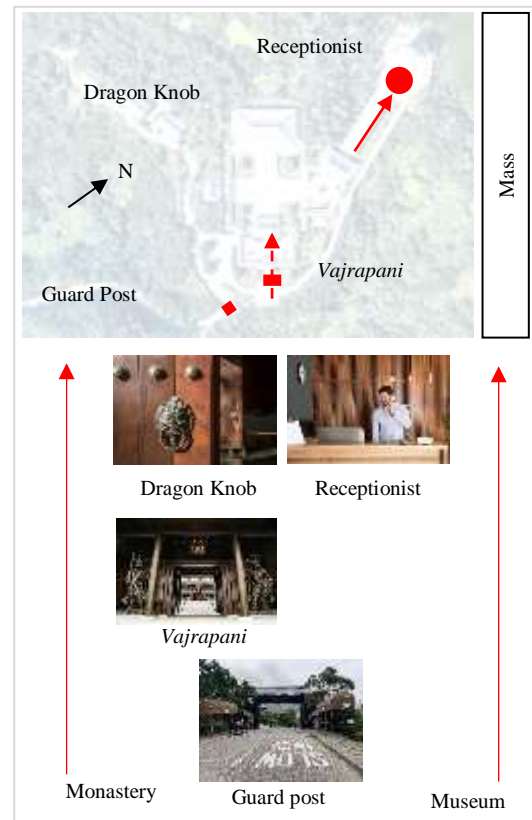


Figure 15. Boundary guard of monastery – museum

In the worship area, there is a quite large courtyard used to support their activities, while the museum only has a circulation area. The placement of this courtyard is also a common element found in Chinese architecture, which becomes a concept in the development of the Tsz Shan Monastery design. This gathering area is not found in the worship building and the museum, where the existing space is not intended to accommodate large gathering activities. However, only to worship and observe exhibition objects, respectively.

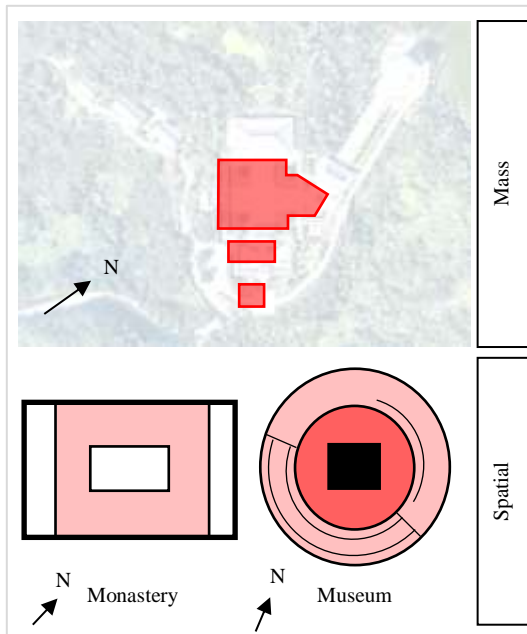


Figure 16. Transitional area of monastery – museum

Based on the description above, the characteristics analysis that form the sacredness displayed at the Tsz Shan Monastery and Li Ka Shing Buddhist Art Museum are shown in the following table:

Table 3. Sacredness relationship at Tsz Shan Monastery and Li Ka Shing Museum

| Sacredness Value | Characteristics that form sacredness |
|------------------|--|
| Orientation | Approach: Contrast The worship building follows the main axis, while the museum is in the secondary position. The figures of the two buildings show different expressions |
| Hierarchy | Approach: Contrast The worship building is placed as the highest hierarchy, compared to the museum in the scope of figure, mass and spatial arrangement, and ornamentation |
| Boundary | Approach: Similar The worship building displays layered boundary elements, compared to the museum. These two buildings displayed similar characteristics |
| Geometric shapes | Approach: Similar |

| Sacredness Value | Characteristics that form sacredness |
|-----------------------|--|
| | The worship building and museum display different geometric shapes |
| Balance | Approach: Similar The worship building displays symmetry, while the museum shows a balance |
| Repetition | Approach: Similar Repetition in the worship building is linear and formal, while the museum is more flexible |
| Material expression | Approach: Similar The two buildings use similar materials |
| Synergistic form | Approach: Replication The two buildings display the synergy between the outer figure and the inner space |
| Zoning division | Approach: Contrast There is a clear zoning division of <i>Buddhava</i> , <i>Sanghava</i> , and public areas |
| Procession | Approach: Contrast Worship building and museum are placed separately with similar procession |
| Atmospheric ambiguity | Approach: Replication Worship buildings and museums have a calm atmosphere that is different from their surroundings |
| Symbolic object | Approach: Similar Worship building displays more symbolic objects than the museum |
| Boundary guard | Approach: Similar There is a symbolic guard in front of the worship building, while the museum has a functional guard |
| Transitional area | Approach: Contrast There is a courtyard in the worship area, while in the museum is only intended as circulation space |

Conclusion

Based on the results obtained from the elaboration of theory and analysis, it is concluded that several aspects of forming a temple are applied to

museums, in order to establish harmony. However, some are unapplicable due to their nature which prioritizes functionality over symbolism, in contrast to worship buildings which are closely related to religion/Hierophany.

The characteristics that form the sacredness that should be displayed equally between the temple and the museum, are the synergistic form and the ambiguity of the atmosphere. The application of these two characteristics suggests that the design of the temple and museum follows the same Buddhist philosophy.

Temples and museums display similar expressions of sacredness towards boundary elements, geometric shapes, balance, repetition, material display, symbolic objects, and boundary guards. However, the placement of the worship buildings as the main function of the entire temple complex, shows that they are always designed with a more assertive expression than museums. Although, the function of the museum still needs to display harmony with the worship building, and adjusts to its functionality.

Besides presenting a similar impression, the museum as a supporting facility, emphasizes worship buildings as the main function of the temple. This is indicated by the application of different sacredness expressions in orientation, hierarchy, zoning division, procession, and transitional area. Therefore, this indirectly confirms the dominance of worship buildings and the museum is existed as a complementary function.

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Author(s) contribution

Singgih Salim contributed to the research concepts preparation, methodologies, investigations, data analysis, visualization, articles drafting and revisions.

Rahadhian Prajudi Herwindo contribute to the research concepts preparation and literature reviews, data analysis, of article drafts preparation and validation.

Yuswadi Saliya contribute to methodology, supervision, and validation.