

NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF SINGAPORE

AR2221 – HISTORY & THEORY OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN ARCHITECTURE

(SEMESTER I: 2013-2014)

Name of Examiner: Dr Imran Bin Tajudeen

TIME ALLOWED – 2 HOURS

INSTRUCTIONS TO CANDIDATES

1. Please write your student number only. **Do not write your name.**
2. Candidates must **ANSWER FOUR (4)** questions out of the five questions in this examination paper. The examination paper comprises **FOUR (4)** pages
3. Provide **freehand sketches with annotations** where required or necessary. The use of diagrams is encouraged.
4. This is an **OPEN BOOK EXAMINATION.**

QUESTION 1 (25 marks)

The traditions of architecture in Southeast Asia that are regarded to be ‘indigenous’ are often loosely given the term ‘vernacular’. This categorisation is also used for ‘indigenous’ architecture from other parts of the world.

- 1a. Define the term ‘**vernacular architecture**’. In your definition, explain the assumed distinction between the ‘vernacular’ and the ‘professional/academic’ in architecture. Explain how and where these assumptions have proven to be problematic. (9 marks)
- 1b. Name and discuss TWO examples of **types** in Southeast Asia’s traditions of vernacular architecture and also provide their respective regional or temporal **model** variations. Sketch simple diagrams and annotate them. (8 marks)
- 1c. Describe and compare (i) **adaptation and hybridity** in vernacular architecture in Southeast Asia with (ii) **accentuation and ‘hyper-traditional’** display of the vernacular as seen in ONE example each from Southeast Asia. Explain the distinction between adaptation and accentuation in terms of how these examples relate to their contexts. (8 marks)

QUESTION 2 (25 marks)

Between roughly the 8th and the 14th century, Southeast Asian societies and polities constructed various architectural complexes for Hindu or Buddhist rituals, or syncretic combinations of these religions along with local cults, based on reinterpretations of the religious architecture of India. This period is widely regarded as forming a “classical” phase of Southeast Asia’s monumental Indic (or ‘Hindu-Buddhist’) architecture.

- 2a. Define the **typological forms** called (i) the relic mound (*stupa*), (ii) the cella (*garbha-grha*), (iii) the hall (*mandapa*), and (iv) the terraces (*pundhen/phnom*). Refer to their forms and their use or symbolic meaning in ritual and prayer. Sketch simple diagrams and annotate them. (8 marks)
- 2b. Describe TWO **Southeast Asian Indic monuments** that demonstrate innovations upon any two or more of the typological forms discussed in part (a) of this question. (8 marks)
- 2c. Explain how “**Late Classical**” or “**post-classical**” Indic architecture in the early modern period onwards shows further innovations and modifications upon the above “classical” Southeast Asian Indic forms. You may refer to Javanese Islamic, Thai Theravada Buddhist, Burmese (Bamar), Balinese, or any other relevant forms from the early modern period and after. Sketch simple diagrams and annotate them. (9 marks)

QUESTION 3 (25 marks)

Southeast Asian identities may be seen through the city, in terms of urban morphology and cultural diversity in the port cities of the early modern period, the colonised and colonial city, and through contemporary urban heritage narratives.

- 3a. Describe the Southeast Asian urban culture in the early modern period by referring to TWO **pre-colonial early modern cities** of Southeast Asia in terms of these characteristics: (i) morphology and layout and (ii) socio-cultural diversity. Sketch simple diagrams and annotate them. (8 marks)
- 3b. How did the characteristics (i) and (ii) as seen in the pre-colonial Southeast Asian cities discussed in part (a) of this question transform in the colonized and/or colonial situations? Refer to ONE example of a **colonised or colonial city** in Southeast in your answer, and discuss the origins of the new ideas on urban morphology that was applied to the specific colonial city you have chosen. Sketch simple diagrams and annotate them. (8 marks)
- 3c. Discuss the contrast in the **urban heritage perspectives** of (i) the state with its emphasis on the framing of tradition to represent the nation, and (ii) on-the-ground communities with their everyday or adapted vernacular. Refer to ONE example from a Southeast Asian city. (9 marks)

QUESTION 4 (25 marks)

Imaginings of the characteristics that define the Southeast Asian ‘region’ and the appropriate architectural response to these constructs of regional ‘context’ constitute one of the factors shaping how Southeast Asian architecture should be conceived during both the colonial and postcolonial periods. The ‘region’ has been constructed in both climatic cultural and terms.

- 4a. In “The Concept of Regionalism”, Alan Colquhoun refers to a contradiction in the two meanings in the term ‘**critical regionalism**’ as proposed by Alexander Tzonis and Liane Lefaivre. What is this contradiction? (5 marks)
- 4b. Response to **climate or “tropical architecture”** is one strain of regionalism. What are the arguments and the physical devices as seen in the practices of architects in Southeast Asia (whether in the colonial or postcolonial periods), and what are the criticisms against its assumptions and outcomes? Support your discussion with examples. (10 marks)
- 4c. Discuss the **contemporary approach to regionalist or context-relevant architecture** by referring to TWO architects and their built works in your answer. Your examples may cover any one or more of the following strategies: the use of materials like bamboo or hardwoods, and/or partnerships with traditional or community builders, and/or the creation of new programs for architectural intervention. (10 marks)

QUESTION 5 (25 marks)

Modern architecture is the outcome of new materials and technologies. Modern architectural design has also sought to develop new forms as outcomes of the exploration of these new materials and new construction methods, as well as the relationship of form with larger questions of context.

- 5a. Define the term '**modern**' in architecture by referring to the relationship between materials and formal expression. Support your answer with examples. (5 marks)
- 5b. Discuss TWO examples of buildings from Southeast Asia to explain the distinction between "**assimilation**" and "**association**" as contrasting approaches in the modern architecture of the colonial period. (10 marks)
- 5c. Discuss TWO examples of buildings from Southeast Asia to show how modernism, with its abstract-rational ideology and its break with historicist styles in the European context, was used **to express national identity** in Southeast Asia. Discuss whether there was a break or continuities with tradition and the colonial past in the architectural design of the two Southeast Asian examples you have chosen. (10 marks)

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