

Space of Worship in High-Density Informal Settlements: Case Study of Kampong Cikini Kramat, Jakarta

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Abstract

Not all worshippers live in similar qualities and quantities of space. This paper discusses specifically the space of worship in informal, densely populated settlements in Jakarta known as kampongs, in which citizens occupy the space below standard (Indonesian national standard of living space = 9m²/person). Such circumstances mean that almost every daily activity undertaken by kampong inhabitants overlaps, and worship activity is no exception. To understand the site, space, and place of worship usage in kampong areas, this research aims to understand how the inhabitants create and embed sacredness, or 'spiritual' indicators, into their worship activities. In addition to deep observation by actively participating in the kampong's worship activity, this research completed by a questionnaire survey and in-depth interviews with various people living in the kampong, both directly and indirectly related to worship activity. The research found that the limitation of space does not hinder the kampong inhabitants in carrying out their worship activities. Even though mostly always overlapping with other activities, worshippers always find a way to negotiate their worship activities in such limitations.

Keywords: Informal settlement; Kampong; Negotiation; Religion; Sacred; Worship space.



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1. Introduction

Kampong housing comprises dense, informally planned cluster of habitations in urban areas. Living spaces in kampongs are packed together in contiguous areas and are usually created by large numbers of migrants settling in close proximity (Ellisa, 2016). An informal settlement is an un-planned urban settlement for marginal citizens which is characterized by poor infrastructure, facilities and space per inhabitant (Tunas, 2008). Because of the density of their habitations, inhabitants have to deal with issues relating to lack of space, while the informal nature of their environment is reflected in the way occupants view the context of their lives. Lack of space limits many alternatives and possibilities for the physical activities of kampong occupants.

The space limitation in kampong areas affects inhabitants' daily activities, and such limited conditions put them into overlapping situations with others in every activity taking place in the kampong. In this sense, everyone gets to know everyone else. The inhabitants understand how each activity occurs in relation to others, and are aware of variation in the qualities of the activities of their neighbours. Such variations can be identified in terms of clean or dirty, private or public, and sacred or profane. In confronting these circumstances, the inhabitants have to be skilled in balancing the importance of their activities against the drawbacks of their living conditions.

The purpose of this research is to investigate worship space in the high-density, informal settlements in Indonesia known as kampongs. Space limitation is becoming an attractive issue for discussion, specifically in terms of how worship space overlaps with other needs and preferences. This research will be developed in relation to how varying formats of informal living area relate to the configuration and form of worship space as a means of meeting inhabitant's spiritual needs. The novelty of this research is its investigation and mapping of the religious yet productive and inclusive value of the secular space in kampongs. By identifying that the kampong is the place where not only inhabitants' basic needs (the need for shelter) are met, but also their spiritual needs, this research provides a way of understanding the strategies of kampong inhabitants in negotiating the overcrowding and limitations that dominate their living space.

2. Religion, Worship Activity & Kampong

One of daily activities held in kampong is worship. Worship activity itself has a very strong relationship to religion. According to the Cambridge Dictionary, religion (known in the local Bahasa language as *agama*) is belief in and worship of god or gods, or any such system of beliefs and worship. It is the basis of the rules of worship activity (Doniger, 2006). In the following studies, it is proposed that religion has a strong connection to everyday life. Religion is not only meaningful for formal teachings and theological discussions; religion also talks about daily acts and identity relating to how people live (Lichterman, 2007). McGuire (2007) suggests that if we want to understand how ordinary people practice and experience religion in their everyday lives, we have to be aware of how their spiritual expression relates to the body and its surroundings. In other work, Ammerman (2014) discusses

religion's place in everyday activity, and states that finding religion in everyday life means looking for whenever, wherever and however sacredness appears in one's actions.

Sacredness is inevitably addressed in the discussion of religion. As something that is regulated by religion, worship activity also has requirements about sacredness. Sacredness cannot always easily be achieved, even when architects intend to create it, as mosques, churches, temples and others buildings are sacred because of what happens inside them (Vosko, 2004). These places are rendered sacred through the inputs, engagements, participation and efforts of the worshippers who use them (Sinha, 2016). Therefore, in talking about sacredness, the activity of worshippers is being addressed.

According to Simon (1980) the essential point of worship activity is presence. Consciousness becomes the nucleus of spiritual activity. In her study, she stated that there is no doubt that we need structures for worship activity, for the accommodation of rituals and manners (Simon, 1980). This structural aspect is analogous with Vosko (2004) views on the elements of sacred space. He proposes that there are four elements of sacred space that have to be considered in creating worship space: pathways, thresholds, plazas and doors. Pathways indicate the movement of human beings from the outside world to the inside. Pathways suggest hopes of whatever exists at their end. A threshold refers to gateways to change, and is indicated by the shift of materials, form, ornamentation, scent, colours and others aspects. A plaza is an open space for people to gather together, and doors represents a form of commitment to whatever happens after we go through them. However, the worship activity itself is not something that can be divided into several parts like sacredness or the presence and structure of the spatial accommodation. It is something integrated as part of one's daily activities. It is a situation where sacred and secular sometimes adjoin one another (Ammerman, 2014; Chalana and Rish, 2016). In relation to the matter of daily activities, and as one of the activities taking place in the kampong, worship also has to cope with the overlapping situations of worshippers.

Even though not all of kampongs are untidy and dirty, urban kampongs are characterized by irregular patterns of buildings and density, dominated by low-income inhabitants, and they have poor infrastructure. Such conditions cause urban kampongs to be identified with environmental degradation. However, despite these less-than-ideal physical conditions, worship activities that represent the social and religious sides of the kampong still strongly influence inhabitant's daily lives. To achieve the divine, kampong people have to neutralize the profane and to improve their areas to support the sacred quality of their worship activity. The need for worship activity in kampongs to achieve sacredness is the focal point of its interesting comparison with othersurrounding living environments.

3. Methodology

This research was completed by actively participating in the kampong's worship activity. In addition, a questionnaire survey and in-depth interviews were carried out with a number of kampong inhabitants who were either directly or indirectly involved in worship activity. There were 57 respondents to the questionnaire: 26 males and 31 females. The age of respondents varied from 12–16 years (9 persons), 17–25 years (5 persons), 26–35 years (12 persons), 36–45 years (11 persons), 46–55 years (8 persons), 56–65 years (5 persons), and 65+ years (7 persons). The respondents came from varying backgrounds and occupations. To address the possibilities of misunderstandings during the survey, neighbourhood chiefs were recruited to assist the respondents in completing the questionnaires.

4. Case Study: Worship Space in Kampong Cikini Kramat, Jakarta

Kampong CikiniKramat, known previously as Kampong Ampium, is a densely populated informal settlement in central Jakarta. It is integrated as one community group or RW,(standing for *RukunWarga*) known as RW 01, and is divided into 13 neighbourhood (RT, standing for *RukunTetangga*). This kampong is surrounded by several strategic points, such as the train station, RSCM (CiptoMangungkusumo Hospital), ministry offices, apartments, the gold centre and universities, making the kampong a strategic location for opportunities available in all these areas and facilities.

Kampong Cikini has always had a very strong connection with its surrounding. In the Dutch colonial era, a building in it was used for opium storage (now used as one of the buildings of the medical faculty of Universitas Indonesia). From the word 'opium', the former name 'Ampium' emerged. This kampong area was also closely linked to tram lines that once crossed the Ciliwung River. After the line was dismantled, vacant areas were still owned by the National Train Company. Nowadays, this area has become a traditional market of linear shape called *PasarCikini* that splits the kampong into two large parts.

Each of the neighbourhoods consists of 50–60 families living in varying room sizes. According to a previous survey, 22.4% of houses in the kampong had room sizes in the range of 11–20m², 23.4% in the range of 21–30m², 7.5% in the range of 31–40m², 14.0% in the range of 41–50m², with the rest between 50 to 100m². The median floor area was 23.5m². By the comparison of the median floor area with the average numbers of individuals it was determined that the room area per person was 5.98m². Based on these findings, it is clear that the inhabitants of Kampong Cikini have inadequate living space when compared with the Indonesian national standard of 9m² per person (Ellisa, 2016).

It is also stated by Ellisa's study(survey of Megacity Team 2011)that 97% of the inhabitants are Muslim. Islamic social-religious customs control how the inhabitants act in their daily lives and the ways in which the community is bound together. As something embodied in daily life, the Islamic religion also imposes varying worship activities on the kampong's living space. Based on these circumstances, the ways in which worship activities (specifically Islamic ones) occupy particular areas within the confines of the kampong's living space are investigated. The results will be divided into two parts: private worship space and communal worship space.

4.1. Private Worship Space

As previously stated, most inhabitants in the kampong have inadequate living space. Despite this, they have to fulfil their spiritual needs according to their beliefs. Muslims, as almost all the inhabitants in Kampong Cikini, are required to perform *shalat* (prayer) five times a day. This kind of worship activity can be done individually or communally, where it is known as *jama'ah*. Not all worshippers choose to pray in the mosque for a variety of reasons; often, or even mostly, they pray inside their homes (see Figure 1).

According to the questionnaire, while praying at home, 19.1% of respondents choose to pray in their bedrooms, while 80.9% choose to pray anywhere, as long as it is clean. From this result, it can be concluded that cleanliness is one of the determining points for sacredness in worship activity, while the sense of exclusivity of praying in the bedroom is probably a result of space limitation. In terms of such limitation, inhabitants usually do their praying in the 'flexible zone' inside their living space. Two of the responses to the questionnaire are regarding the homes of Pak Rizal and Ibu Rahma.

Figure-1. Someone performing *shalat* inside a house directly contiguous to a busy alley in Kampong Cikini (left – panoramic photo)



Figure-2. Left: flexible zone in Ibu Rahma's house when it is being used for *shalat*. Right: panoramic photo: flexible zone in Pak Rizal's house when vacant



Pak Rizal and Ibu Rahma, their spouses, children and other family members do their praying in the flexible zone. As can be seen in Figure 2, the flexible zone is a loose area which the inhabitants use for various activities. When it is time for prayer, boundaries are marked by prayer rugs (Pak Rizal puts his on the side of the bed while Ibu Rahma puts his rug on the side of the couch) facing *qibla* (Muslims face *qibla*, where the *ka'ba* is located, during prayer). Using a prayer rug as the base for prayer is one of the ways to ensure that the place where the worshipper is standing is clean.

4.2. Communal Worship Space

The communal worship spaces in Kampong Cikini are its five mosques. According to Vosko (2004) religious buildings are symbols of the powerful place of religion in society, so this large number of mosques indicates the significance of religion to kampong's communal life. Various kinds of worship activity take place in mosques. In the questionnaire, these activities are divided into two main categories: *shalat* and *non-shalat* worship activity. Additionally, the questionnaire divides the results into male and female worshippers, because the *hadith* (the sayings of Prophet Muhammad, PBUH) states that it is much better for females to perform their daily prayer at home.

The questionnaire revealed that male respondents go to the mosque 'very often' to take part in *shalat* and 'often' to take part in *non-shalat* worship activity, while the female respondents go to the mosque 'often' to take part in *shalat* and 'sometimes' for *non-shalat* worship activity. From the results, it can be concluded that the most frequently attended worship activity in mosque is *shalat*, while other worship activities are less frequently attended. The results indicate that the inhabitants of Kampong Cikini have a very intense connection to the mosque as the focus of Islamic worship activity, as demonstrated by how often they attend. In relation to worship activities in the mosque, the responses of several inhabitants of Kampong Cikini will be discussed.

According to Ibu Elly, one of *majlistaklim* (Islamic Study Community) leaders interviewed, there is a great deal of worship activity (*shalat* and *non-shalat*) in Kampong Cikini's mosques. She herself is actively involved with the Al-Masykur mosque. This mosque is located in RT 13, next door to her house. On certain occasions, such as Maulid Nabi and Isra' Mi'raj, Al-Masykur and its surrounding area can accommodate more than 300 persons for meetings. The participants do not all fit inside the building, so some of them have to take part in the alley outside. An interview with Pak Idris, the leader of the prosperity council in At-Taubah Mosque, which is located in RT 07, revealed that similar circumstances also occur during Friday prayers (which are obligatory for males). Some of the worshippers also have to pray in the alley due to lack of space inside.

Figure-3. Friday prayer in At-Taubah Mosque. (1) At-Taubah mosque (2) The alley in front of At-Taubah mosque during Friday prayers (3) The alley during clearance for Friday prayers by the mosque's committee (4) The alley after Friday prayers and returned to its usual condition as a passageway

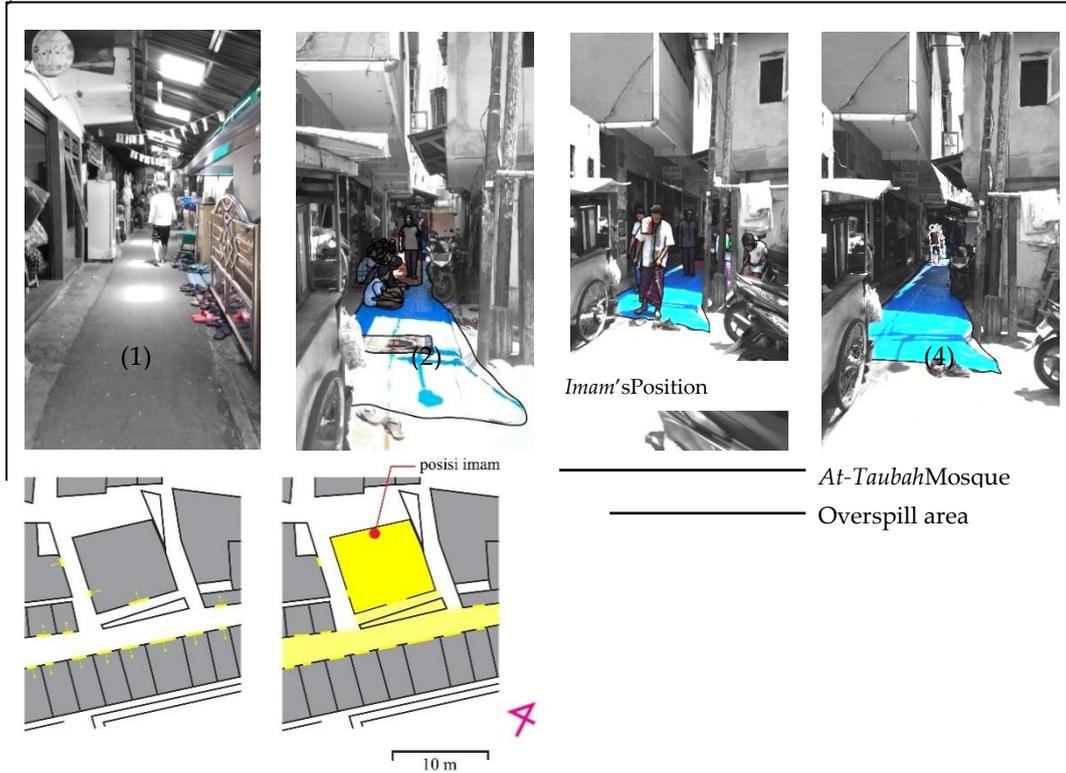


Figure-4. Friday prayer in Al-Masykur Mosque. (1) Al-Masykur mosque (2) The north alley on the side of mosque during Friday prayers (3) The north alley (4) The north alley after Friday prayer clearance by the committee. (5) The usual condition of the north alley



As what we can see from Figures 3 and 4, the participants in certain religious occasions have to sit in the alley near the mosques due to lack of space inside the buildings. The range of this overspill can extend from 10 to 15 metres along the alleys, but this is restricted by the *imam*'s (the leader in communal prayer) position because the worshippers are not allowed to be outside the spatial reach of the *imam*. This distance still allows the participants to hear sounds from the mosques' loudspeakers. For the rest of the day, the alleys return to being common passageways used by the inhabitants and others to pass by or carry out other daily activities (we can see from Figure 4 that the inhabitants' birdcages were removed during prayers; keeping birds is one of the inhabitant's daily activities). To neutralize the dirty condition (which is considered profane) of the alley for worship, the committee simply place carpets and tarpaulins to demarcate the clean (sacred) area for prayer activity.

Communal worship space in Kampong Cikini is not limited to the mosques and their extensions. Many more worship activities are spread across the kampong as parts of daily life. Among these are the Islamic Study Community weekly meeting, and commemorations of bereavement. One of the Islamic Study Community weekly meetings is held in RT 05. According to IbuRahma, the leader of this community, only 15 people attend the weekly meeting regularly. The meeting usually takes place in her home, because it has more space than other homes. Inside her home, the community uses the flexible zone to gather, while at other times this zone is used for prayer or *shalat* (see Figure 5). During the meeting, members read the Quran together and listen to talks from the teacher.

Figure- 1. (1) A member entering from the alley (2) The members leave their footwear in the alley (3) View from the alley into IbuRahma's house during the meeting



Commemoration of bereavement is divided into several days, based on tradition, and can be 3, 7, 40, 100 or 1000 days of mourning after someone has died. One of the interviewee's commemorations was held in IbuAgus's house (see Figure 6-7). Her husband had died 7 days before the research commenced. That afternoon, her son went to the neighbourhood chief's house to borrow tarpaulins and a loudspeaker for the commemoration event. Seeing this opportunity, parts of the event were documented while one of the neighbours of IbuAgus's house was interviewed.

IbuAgus's house is located in a very narrow alley. Her door faces others at just 90 centimetres apart. When her husband died, the equipment used to collect and transport the corpse could not fit through the alley, so the neighbours brought the corpse barehanded to the nearest open space and took care of it there (bathing and shrouding). Another requirement for Muslims is that they should perform prayers before the person who has died is buried. To complete this, the neighbours brought the corpse, also barehanded, to the mosque for *shalat mayit* (the prayer performed by relatives and others before burial). After the prayer was finished, the neighbours again brought the corpse to the ambulance waiting in a wider street, and which transported it to the funeral. The funeral itself can be in the nearest cemetery, subject to certain requirements, but IbuAgus chose to take her husband to Central Java, to be buried in his hometown.

This seventh day commemoration fell on a Saturday. IbuAgus could not use the nearest open space because it is the neighbourhood' sparking area at the weekend, so she used some space available around her house. She used the 90-centimetre-wide alley as the gathering area. Her son simply covered the alley with the borrowed tarpaulins and used the loudspeaker for the Quran recitation and other requirements, so that everyone around the house could take part in the event.

Figure-6. The alley where IbuAgus lives is located near the MCK (bathing, washing and toilet facilities) in RT 07. The Alley is shown on the right (panoramic photo)



Figure-2. (1) The door of IbuAgus’s house. This image shows the alley during preparation for the commemoration event (2) The alley before the event with tarpaulins set up (3) The alley after the event occurred. There was congestion, and people were queuing to come out



From the pictures, it can be seen how the surrounding neighbours were involved in the event. Surrounding doors were opened to help. The inhabitants who live near to IbuAgus’s house also had to prepare themselves not to access the alley for a couple of hours. From this perspective, understanding and caring for each other can be seen as being part of the solution for ensuring convenient life in Kampong Cikini.

It can also be seen that the participants were congested along the alley after the event was finished. They queued for about 5–10 minutes until they were able to leave. This queue occurred because the participants had to take off their footwear to keep the area clean during the event (the area that was layered with tarpaulins). The participants put their footwear at the end of the alley and it took time to recover it when the event was over. These circumstances are examples of ways in which the inhabitants effectively utilize their capabilities to the fullest, despite the limitations of their living conditions.

4.3. Worship Space: Overall Perspective

It is necessary to understand the worship activity in the kampong from an overall perspective. To reveal the bigger picture of worship activity in Kampong Cikini, a questionnaire was carried out to identify its major traits. The categories investigated are divided into several Islamic events that often occur in Indonesia.

Figure-8. A bar chart of the major space used for worship activity in Kampong Cikini

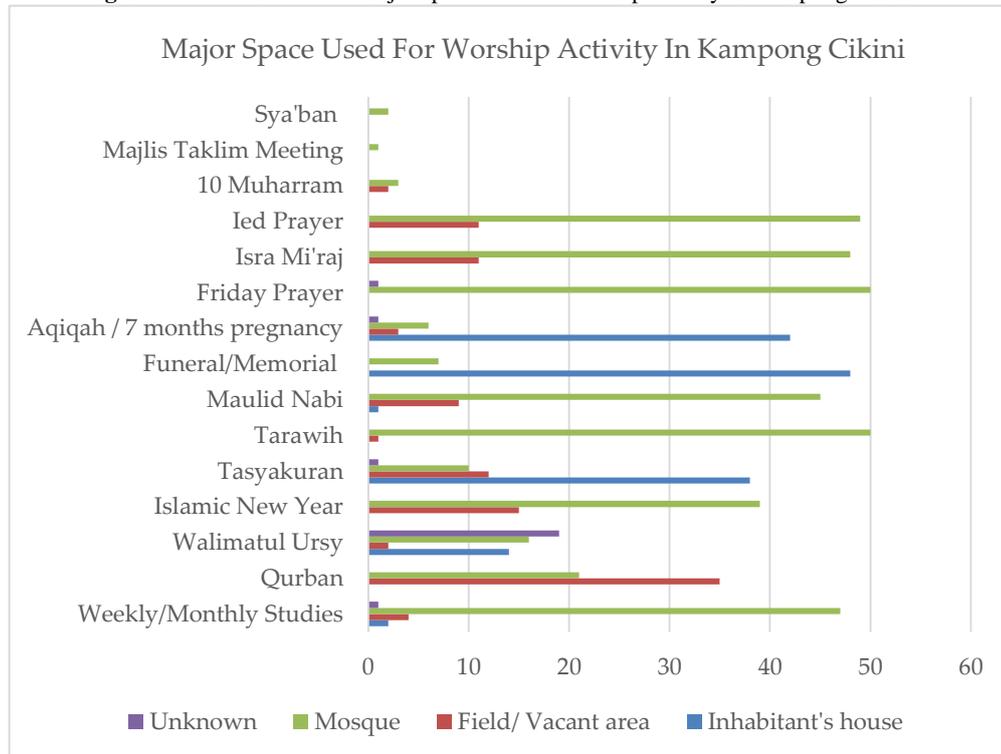
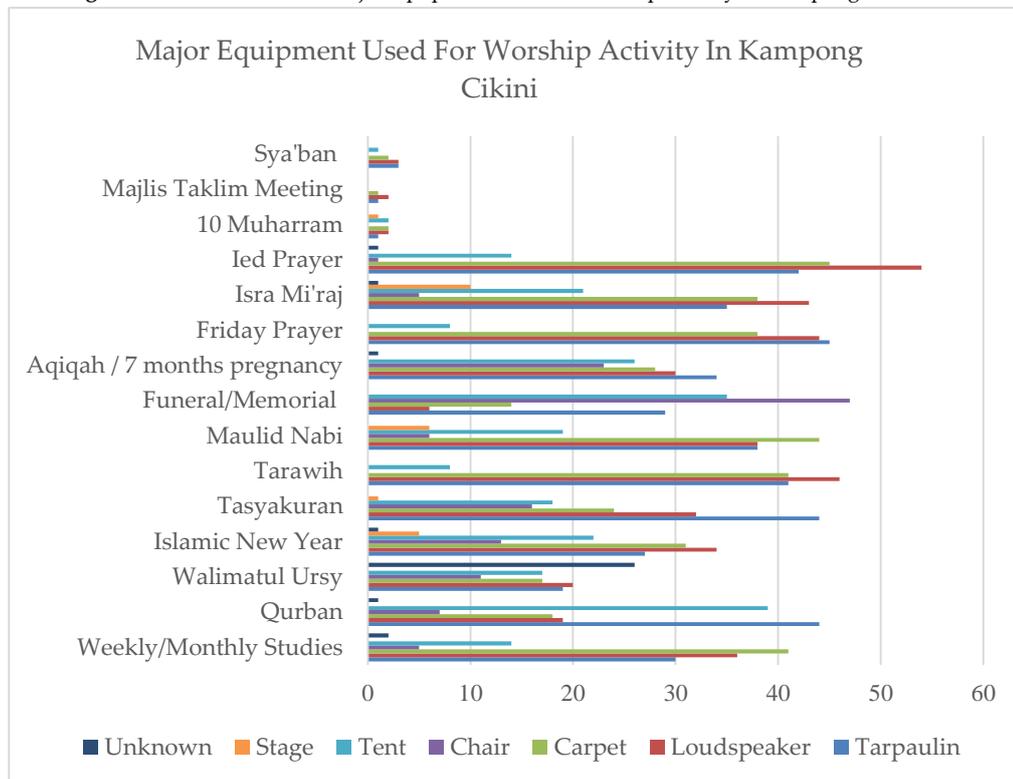


Figure-9. A bar chart of the major equipment used for worship activity in Kampong Cikini

The questionnaire survey results shown in Figure 8 reveal that 58.3% of worship activities are held in the mosque, 21.9% in inhabitants' houses, 15.8% in fields or vacant areas (open spaces), and 3.5% are unknown. This shows that more than half of worship activities in Kampong Cikini take place in mosques, while the remainder are spread across the kampong's living space. Hence, we can conclude that the worship activities taking place in Kampong Cikini are not confined to mosques, but are spread over the kampong area, even though sacredness is compromised as a result.

Results shown in Figure 9 reveal that 49% of worship activities were carried out sitting on the floor (indicated by tarpaulin plus carpet), 41.2% were performed in outdoor spaces and sitting on the floor (indicated by tarpaulin plus tent), 25.3% performed with at least 20 participants or gathered in slightly separated places (indicated by loudspeaker plus stage) and 23.3% were performed in outdoor spaces (indicated by tent plus chair). Hence, we can conclude that most of worship activities in Kampong Cikini are carried out sitting at floor level, even if they are held in outdoor spaces. In relation to these results, we can conclude that these kinds of communal worship activities are performed in similar ways to private ones. Organisers put down something as a base to cover up the alley or floor so that the place can be considered clean. This kind of solution helps the inhabitants to fulfil their spiritual needs and, at the same time, to deal with the lack of space in their living areas.

5. Conclusion

Based on this case study of Kampong Cikini, the research found that limitation of space does not hinder kampong inhabitants in their performance of worship activity. Even though it almost always overlaps with other activities, worshippers always find ways to negotiate the problems this causes. These solutions are in fact very simple. They layer the unclean floor level with waterproof and comfortable materials such as tarpaulins and carpets, so the space can be 'sacred' enough to be used for worship activity. Additionally, the inhabitants are skilled in understanding each other in particular circumstances, and this is reflected by the ways in which neighbours help each other during certain events. Although the inhabitants of the kampong might not have planned to live in such limited conditions, they can plan to make their lives proceed effectively.

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