

# The Power that Influence Cirebon's Urban Form and Urban Process

## Case Study: Cirebon, West Java, Indonesia

Ira Irawati<sup>1</sup>

### Abstract

Urban process through the time indicates the influence of process of city-making by some power through legal and economic history (Kostof, 1991). Cirebon as a coastal area in North Java had unique historical phase that shaped by the power of the legitimate authority for 532 years. Begin from a small vilage, Lemahwungkuk, that built based on Moslem culture, Cirebon became a traditional moslem-based monarchy or *Kesultanan*. Furthermore, the power breakdown of tradional monarchy changed by Colonial government, had reshaped Cirebon as a unique city feature that can be seen in the mix of urban character between traditional (monarchy) and colonial city artefacts.

This paper would explore physical evolution of the city that could be reflected by the history of spatial urban shape and structure from Kasultanan or pra-colonial and early-colonial era, colonial era, and pasca-colonial era. Moreover, using urban physical element clasification from Kevin Lynch (1982) and diachronic historical method (Kuntowijoyo, 2003), identification of the shape and structure of the city was constructed. Through identification of Lynch (1982) elements which are paths, edges, districts, nodes, and landmarks through the three eras, urban process had been formed Cirebon as fan shaped cities, expanded from the grid pattern of the urban path in the pra-colonial and early colonial era to radial pattern in the colonial era. At last, in the pasca-colonial era, the mix of grid and radial pattern has been a combination archetype due to the changing of city transportation infrastructure from river and sea orientation to road and railway orientation.

The Cirebon's urban structure alteration itself has been change from concentric in the pra-colonial era, where Keraton as the palace of monarchy building was the center of the city, to multiple-nuclei in the colonial era that last until today, where Keraton is not the main orientation of the city; but city hall, main mosque, and some retail area also as city's point of references. Although this monarchy city could shape the cosmic city in the beginning, due to existence social hierarchy which refer to Kostof (1991) as a model cosmic city, Cirebon with moslem's culture and economic orientation had shaped the practical city. The reason for this is the monarchy that shape the city only has cosmic city model in limited Kesultanan area; and, the rest of the city had functional construct of interrelated parts to support economic activities.

**Key words:** *Urban shape, urban structure, planning history.*

---

<sup>1</sup> Institut Teknologi Nasional, Bandung, West Java, Indonesia

## 1. Introduction

City is manifest of human activities that change by the time. Some factors that support that development are human itself, activities of human, and network and movement among some centre of activities (Sujarto, 1990). The motive of the people and the authority that lead the city will give a power to shape the city. Political power will always exist through the time. However, people power as part of participation of stakeholder in urban development will justify the political power in the precise portion. This mixture of power will be sharpened the city shape in different way for various places.

Cirebon as one important city in the West Java Province has been passing the transformation of city pattern and city authority. Begin with small village, to Islamic monarchy; and then, the colonial city, all changes had brought significantt footstep in Cirebon's pattern and culture. Finally, how the post-modern city nowadays adapt to those changes with different motive, power, and obstacles will be part of Cirebon's history.

Trough identification of physical elements of the city (Lynch, 1991), urban structure and shape that formed could be traced. Moreover, who and how this transformation done is very important to identify as lesson learn for city planner and other stakeholder to plan and fill the city with activities.



Figure 1. Cirebon Orientation in West Java and Banten Province

## 2. Analysis and Result

### 2.1 Urban Growth Periods

Diachronic approach used on this paper has an objective to capture social structure and function of society and activities in the time-frame or time stages (Kuntowijoyo, 2003). Thus, Cirebon's development phases could be analyzed by the time when the power or even political power had formed the city.

Kostof (1991) simply categorized the cities by three kinds which two of them are classified to time periods. Furthermore, these consideration could identify the land use, activities, and social structure that belong on it which are *pre-industrial* city and *industrial* city. First, *Pre-industrial* city as a city with relative-small size and also small population, whose only two groups of inhabitants which are an elite and a lower class. In the centre of the city is for government, religion facilities, and residences of the elite; with no specific land use classification. Second, on the other hand, industrial city has more segregation uses of land, based on rent of the land property.

Categorization of the city in Indonesia itself, stated by Sujarto (1990) on four genetic time stratification for urban development in Indonesia, which are:

1. Pre-colonial era (before colonial),

In the early of this era, cities were influenced by Hindu religion; and later on, Islam unified them until 1400. The identity of this era from both cultures was the mixture of monarchy urban structure with mosque's orientation. Furthermore, while early-colonial government had strengthened the commercial area in the harbour and its nearby area; China's trading company had influence especially in the exclusive settlement and commercial centre architect which also commonly placed in the harbour area.

2. Early-colonial era

In this era, cities had grown in the VOC (Netherland's Commercial Company) who had built wall not only for a fortress in the city as a prevention tool from other colonial countries and Islam's influence; but also to expand the trading area and occupation of the land.

3. Colonial era

This era begin in the early 19 century when VOC governed Indonesia as "Bataafschen Republiek". As well as industrial revolution was happened in Europe, colonial government applied "Cultuurstelsel" which had shaped Indonesian cities as centre of plantation production such as rubber and tea and centre of collection and distribution for that products.

4. After-industrial revolution era

Indonesian cities in the late 19 century were called as Indonesian Modern Cities. These cities had grown and developed based on modern cities planning concept which had been fully fledged in West-European countries; and also as reaction of degradation that resulted by industrial revolution.

Cirebon growth age itself in this research divide in three stages that first and second era in the periods above is combined in one stage which are:

1. Pre-colonial until early-colonial era (1479 – 1906)

In this era traditional city was grown; and in 1479 Cirebon Monarchy (Kesultanan Cirebon) was established. Later on, in 1677, VOC that was existed in Cirebon acted as guardian for this Kesultanan.

2. Colonial modern era (1906-1945)

In 1906 Kesultanan Cirebon had no *de jure* power to the region due Dutch Government as Colonial had taken over the authority; and change Cirebon name to *Gementee Cheirebon*

### 3. After-colonial era (1945-now)

This era begin with Indonesia's independence as well as new development of Indonesian modern cities.

## 2.2 Urban Shape and Urban Structure Elements

Physical elements of the city are the city shaping component, like social and economic, which could be seen as clear as can seen. These constituents had explained by Lynch (1982) as part of city image, Branch (1995) and Shirvani (1985) as aspects that develop the city. In this paper, Lynch's elements are used for identify Cirebon's pattern and shape, due to availability of historical data. However, although Lynch's used as primary aspect; but, others elements from Shirvani and Branch also support the detail as can seen at Table 1.

Urban shape and urban structure itself generally called urban pattern or just urban form. According to Kostof (1991), there are three urban form that modelled by Kevin Lynch in the *Good City Form* book (1981) called as "normative models". First is *cosmic model*, or holy city, as construal of the universe and gods as expression of power. Monumental axis, gates to protect, major landmark, regular grid, and spatial structure by hierarchy are the characteristics. Second, *the practical model*, or the city as machine, where space are divided on differentiated functional cluster which are small, autonomous; although, every parts are undifferentiated; but there are linked up as a one huge machine. The last, *the organic model*, or the biological city, city is similar to living thing which has a specific border and an optimum size, a unified, indivisible internal structure.

Furthermore, in this paper, the basic urban forms divided in the two type urban forms which are *urban shape* and *urban structure*. *Urban shape* is physical pattern of built environment that take place based on transport network especially street, land carrying capacity, a spread of natural resources, and government policy. Additionally, urban shape has several types which are the square cities, rectangular cities, fan shaped cities, rounded cities, ribbon shaped cities, star shaped cities, and grid cities (Yunus, 2000). Moreover, Kostof (1991) defined some shape for the political diagram in linear system where axis alignment exist as urban diagram that link the authority buildings. Next is centralized systems, concentric (relative-circle) and radial organization (combination of concentric and street arrangement connect the centre).

*Urban structure* is a pattern of activities and land use which are created by like the urban shape; but with one additional aspect which is functional relation between activities and land use. Moreover, types of urban structure (Yunus, 2005) imply by Burgess in 1924 is *concentric model* where CBD in the central, continued in the next-larger circle by commercial and light-manufacturing area, then by low-class

settlement, then by middle-class settlement, and finally in the outer ring is for high-class settlement. Another type is *sectoral model* designed by Hoyt in 1939 where CBD still in the centre, however other functions spread outward the centre in certain axis. The last type is multiple-nuclei model designed by Ulman-Harris in 1945 which could accomodate high growth urban activities, population, and size where several city centre and some groups of other functional areas. Later on, this two urban form will be identified by Lynch's elements on the three Cirebon's time phase as follow.

Table 1. Physical Elements For Indentify Cirebon's Form and Shape

Primary Elements (Lynch)	Supporting Elements		Urban Shape	Urban Structure
	Branch	Sirvani		
District	Open space, vegetation, density	Landuse, open space, activities		●**
Path	Topography, park, pedestrian, and street furniture	Circulation and parks, pedestrian	●*	●**
Landmark	Building	Building shape and mass	●	
Edges	Edges		●*	●
Nodes	Density			●

Notes: Path\* = primary transport network that generate urban built environment  
 Edges\* = linear or curve-linear shape as border between built environment and non-built environment  
 Path\*\* = streets or primary transport network that connected city main activities  
 District\*\* = domination function or activities of land use

### 2.3 Cirebon Structure and Shape Evolution

#### A. Pre-Colonial and Early-Colonial Era (1979-1906)

In the early-city development, the city ancestor would adjusted their settlement to condition of topography such as riverine settlement, natural port, linear rim, hilltop town, and sloped landscape (Kostof, 1991). This condition also came about in

Cirebon, with sloped land on the bay, early dweller started built small village on the harbour area called Muara Jati and subsequently grown as small city called Nagari Singapura (Kusuma, 2010). In this time there were two power that created activities and settlement, first was *religion power*, Hindu and Budha and then Islam as guidance for social and religious activities, and second was *economic power* which had extended the harbor function as a gate for trading to other Nusantara region (Indonesia name before independence). However, due to limited data, this small city had no specific urban settlement structure and shape precisely.

Afterwards, as well as the growth of Islam in this area, the enlargement of population had moved settlement to Lemahwungkuk, 5 km to the south; and then Kesultanan Cirebon, Keraton Kasepuhan, as local monarchy established at 1479 based on Islam philosophy. The combination of traditional and religion culture, as happened in other Javanese monarchies or keraton has resulted specific civic centre design that still last until this post-modern era. In addition, this civic centre has some components park or alun-alun in the middle encircle by keraton building on the south heading the alun-alun, mosque in the west, social or commercial or building on the east and the north (Sunardjo, 1983). Moreover, this arrangement show the hollines concept of Islam or cosmic model that expressed the universe and gods as expression of power (Kostof, 1991). This pattern expressed multiple function of city centre especially civic centre for administrative and civic, economic, social, cultural, and even defence (Poerbo on Kunto, 1986).

Dutch colonial company VOC, in the beginning, in 1677, acted like guardian for the kesultanan due an advance war equipment, later acted as colonial government and attained full power for economic with built *De Bescherming* castle as military defence for Cirebon and also as the centre of the authority (Sunardjo, 1983), kesultanan Cirebon itself acted as symbol for local authority and local community. Along with the growth of trading activities, Chinesse trader came and built settlement, and made successful acculturation which proven by ceramic ornament on the kesultanan dan mosque buildings (Irawati, 1996). In this time, VOC was not change the inner-structure of the city. However, the existence of the VOC bastion in Cirebon was a part of trading stations along north-sea Java in Tegal, Semarang, Jepara, and Surabaya (Margana, 2010).

The urban shape of Cirebon in this era characterized by elements that formed *fan-shape type* (modified from Kusuma (2010)):

- a. Landmarks: Keraton Kasepuhan as the centre of the city
- b. Paths:
  - Internal: river pathway around the keraton area, street in grid pattern that arranged the city centre (keraton, commercial area, port, and settlements)
  - External: linear street along the sea bay on the east that connect Jakarta (Batavia) and the north part of Cirebon with East Java, curve-linear street from the west to east Java that join in the linear street mention before, and linear street from the city centre to the Bandung on the West of Java
- c. Edges: Java Sea on the east, some river on the west, south, and north.



Figure 2. Cirebon's Fan-Shape Model in the Pre-Colonial and Early-Colonial Era

However, the urban structure in this phase created a *concentric type*, although the centre not in the middle of the city but in the right-part near to the sea which characterized by (modified from Kusuma (2010)):

- a. Paths and edges: same as above
- b. Nodes: Muarajati Port, *De Bescherming* castle, industrial cluster for pottery products, markets in Kanoman and Jagasatru.
- c. District: city centre consist of keraton, commercial centre, warehouse and port, outer ring was settlement district for Chinese, Arabic, and European, the outest ring was settlement for local community.



Figure 3. Cirebon's Concentric Structure Model in the Pre-Colonial and Early-Colonial Era

Both Cirebon's shape and structure built up firstly by the power of politics, colonial for the external connection and Kesultanan Cirebon for the internal network, secondly by the power of economic especially for colonial trading activities.

## B. Colonial Era (1906-1945)

This colonial era also called modern-colonial era, modern-colonial era in world-war II era, and independence war era which has function and motive or power to develop (Sujarto, 1990). Cirebon, like other colonial area in Nusantara, has function as centre of government authority, centre of military activities, centre of plantation and mining administration, and centre of port and commercial facilities. Obviously, the motive or power of Cirebon spreading out was politic and economic similar to previous era.

After a kesultanan authority's break up on three kesultanans which are Kasepuhan and Kanoman (1677), and Kacirebonan (1803) that had made powerless traditional monarchy, Dutch Colonial Government got more strong dominance on Cirebon. Furthermore, the legal authority of Kesultanan Cirebon was removed with *Gemantee Cheirebon* statement (Cirebon City) which covered 1.100 hectare area and 2,000 populations (Stlb. 1906 No. 122 dan Stlb. 1926 no. 370) (Sunarjo, 1983).

In addition, colonial government constructed several facilities and infrastructure to support the colonial function for centre of mining, plantation, and trading such as warehouse, tobacco processing company, central bank, post office, and church. For the accessibility of the plantation product distribution from its hinterland (Cirebon, Kuningan, and Indramayu) they developed railway (Kusuma, 2010).

The urban shape of Cirebon in this era still formed *fan-shape type* with more large area and especially to the north and east (port extension); and *a change of grid pattern of internal city centre to radial* (modified from Kusuma (2010)) which characterized by:

- a. Landmarks: Keraton Kasepuhan as the centre of the city, and city hall for colonial government administration.
- b. Paths:
  - Internal: river pathway around the keraton area, street in grid pattern that arranged the city centre (keraton, commercial area, port, and settlements)
  - External: extended linear street along the sea bay on the east that connect Anyer and Panarukan via Cirebon as part of Daendels post network transportation, linear street from the city centre to the Bandung on the West of Java, and linear street from the city centre to Kuningan.
- c. Edges: Java Sea on the east, two rivers on the south and north, and flood canal on the west.

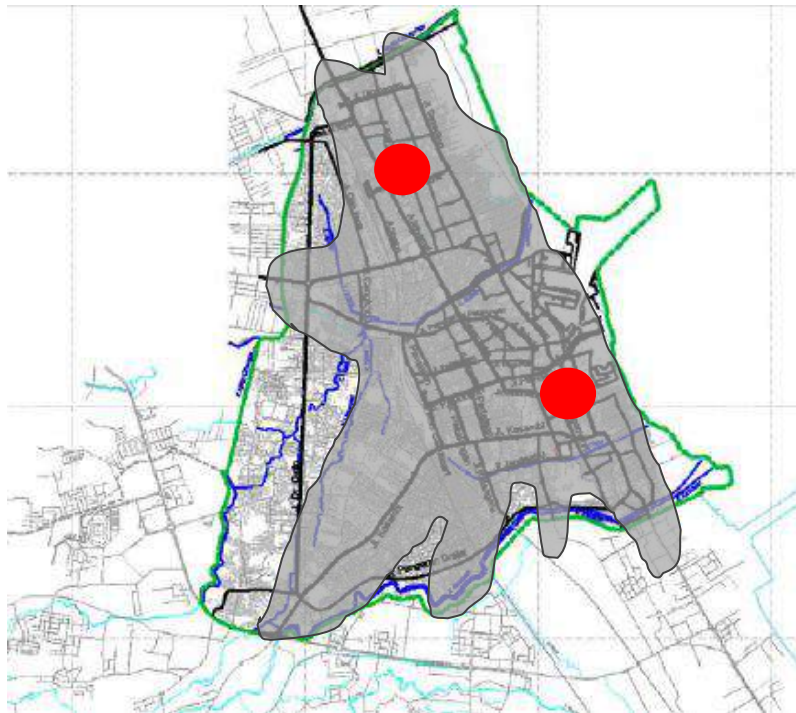


Figure 4. Cirebon's Fan-Shape Model in the Colonial Era

Cirebon's urban structure in this stage was a *multiple-nuclei type*, which characterized by (modified from Kusuma (2010)):

- a. Paths and edges: same as above
- b. Nodes: Muarajati Port, *De Bescherming* castle, Kanoman and Pasar Pagi market place, two main railway stations.
- c. District: i) inner city district where there are several important building such as city hall of colonial government administration, social meeting building, hotel, main park, pendopo for local officer administration, ii) sport and recreation centre, iii) central bussiness district (consist of tobacco processing company, central bank, post office, and church) and port, iv) settlement districts, v) retail distict, vi) port and warehouse district.

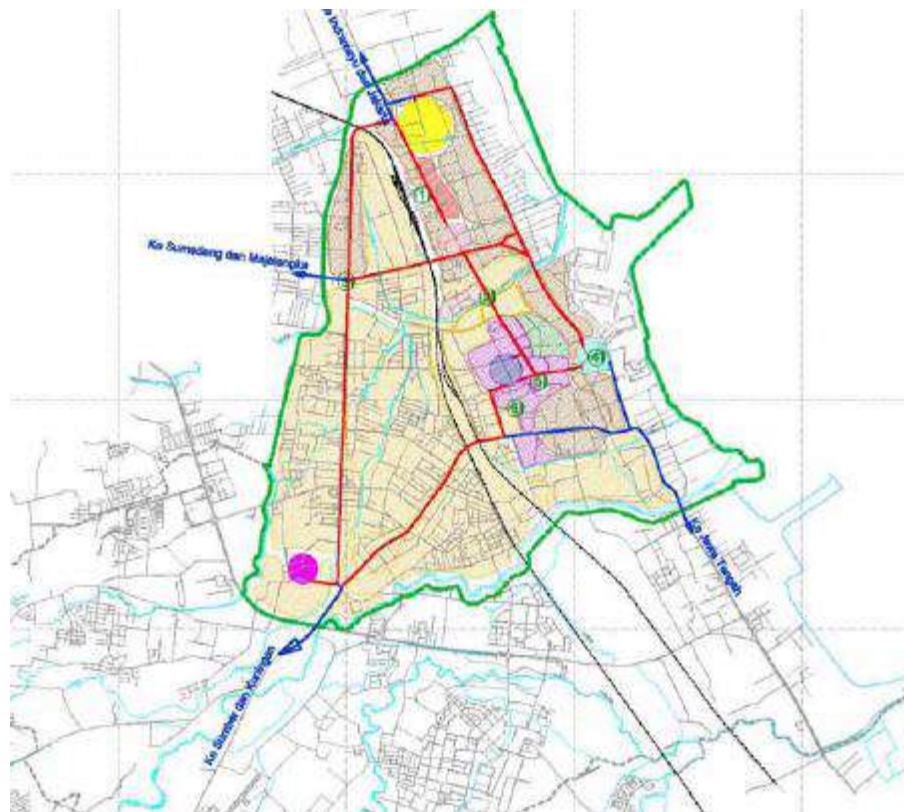


Figure 5. Cirebon's Multiple-Nuclei Structure Model in the Colonial Era

In this era the politic power for economic reason of colonial government had strong influence in both Cirebon's shape and structure, tradional monarchy and religion power has been removed. A change of colonial government to Japan was not change the urban pattern.

### C. After-colonial era (1945-now)

Cirebon enter modern and post-modern era which start from independence of Indonesia from colonial government (from Japan). From independence until 1960's Indonesian government faced instability of social, economic, and political condition; and, in the same time urbanisation which is growing population moved in from rural area to the cities (Sujarto, 1990). In addition, cities confronted with a lack of city management, resources, appropriate law and policy, effective city planning, and segregation of urban growth. This also happened to Cirebon. In 1957 Cirebon declared as municipal with 3,300 hectare and more extended to 3,600 hectare.

Nowadays, Cirebon is centre for national activity with leading sectors such as industri, fishery, agriculture, and mining. Furtermore, Cirebon also stated as orientation centre for its hinterland: Indramayu, Palimanan, Jatibarang, Sumber, Majalengka, Kuningan, and Ciledug (Kusuma, 2010). In this post-modern city, not like in the colonial era which the goverment had great power to set up the city and

community had formidable power to do their activities, the transpose condition happened with a broader public control on private property and how government should set regulation to compromise the private property right with the process of urban facilities development (Levy, 2009). Consequently, with the lack of city planning vision, Cirebon driven by market such as malls development and retail area that spread all over the city as products of post-modern era. However, some memories of colonial planning survived and emergent in modern forms (Ward, 2002) which appear in Cirebon on the preservation of old central business district and some government building style.

Those transformation create recently *extended fan-shape type*); and a mixture of *grid pattern of internal city centre and radial* (modified from Kusuma (2010)) that characterized by:

- a. Landmarks: city hall as city centre, grand mosque, Keraton Kasepuhan, mall
- b. Paths:
  - Internal: primary street that connect government buildings area, connect city center with sport and recreation centre, and connect city centre with hospital.
  - External: extended linear street along the sea bay on the east that Jakarta with East Java, west outer ring road to connect Bandung and Indramayu, south outer ring road to connect city to central Java, and linear street from the city centre to Kuningan.
- c. Edges: Java Sea on the east, one river on the north, and Cirebon Residence on the south and west.

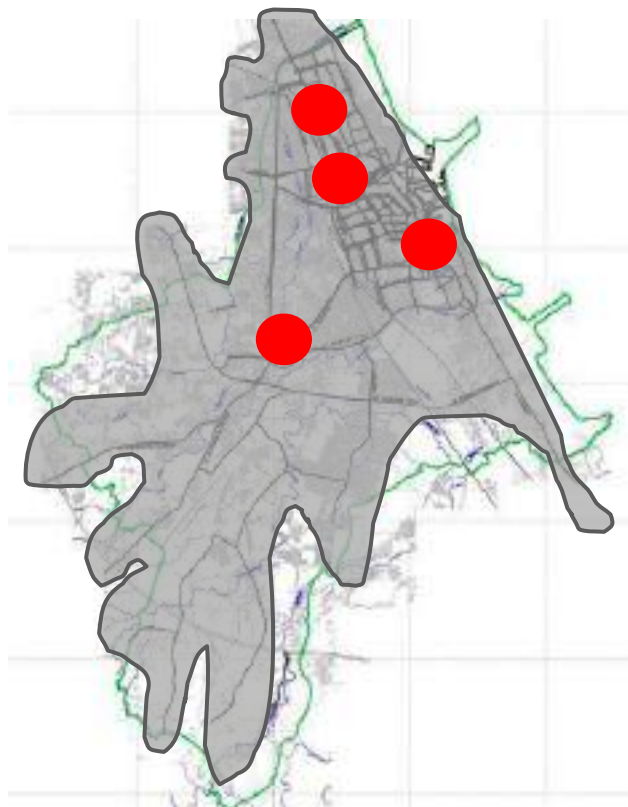


Figure 6. Cirebon's Fan-Shape Model in the After-Colonial Era

Cirebon's urban structure in this stage was a *multiple-nuclei type*, which characterized by (modified from Kusuma (2010)):

- a. Paths and edges: same as above
- b. Nodes: Muarajati Port, some market places, two main railway stations, bus terminal, local transport terminal.
- c. District: government administration district, commercial district, settlement (spread all over the city), centre of education facilities district, industrial district, and health facility district.

However, the port and warehouse in this era are not exist anymore due low of sea level on the bay area.

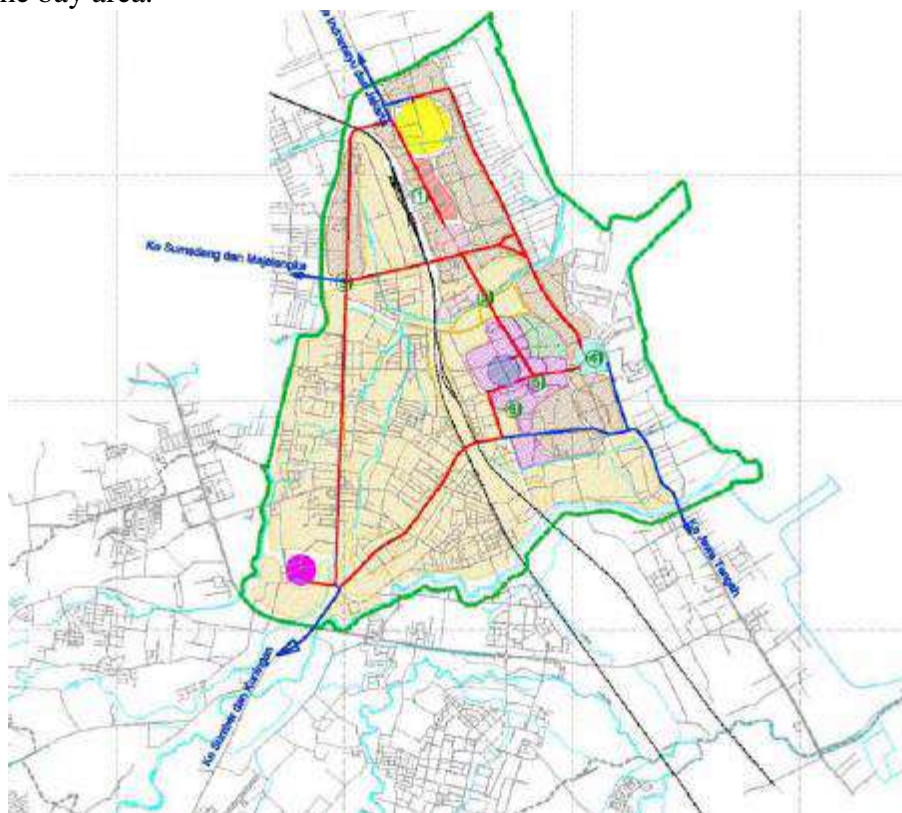


Figure 7. Cirebon's Multiple-Nuclei Structure Model in the After-Colonial Era

Those transformation although still came out from political government power, but market or economic power and community power had been shape Cirebon right now.

### 3. Conclusion

Cirebon urban evaluation has been change in two different city model from the small religion city and traditional local monarchy as cosmic model to practical model which is commercial and other functional land use composed the city. The reason of

this transformation is the changing power that govern and influence the city, first Cirebon's pattern shapping by the power of local authority as religious-monarchy power. Second, with the changing of authority to Dutch colonial government political power as well as economic power change the city pattern. Fininally, in the indepence and postmodern era, again political power of municipal government marks the city shape side by side with market or economic power and community power to private property. Furthermore, nowadays, kesultanan just as symbol of the past without any power to shape the city.

Although the power through three time has been change, however, the limitation, geoposition, and natural landscape and disaster of Cirebon could not be avoided. The natural force that has been made the bay steeper make the port function as the most important hub to collected and distributed Cirebon and its hinterlands products denied. Consequently, some industrial centre and warehouse changes to retail and commercial area. However, learn from the history will always beneficial for Cirebon to step forward as sustainable city in its own power.

## References

- Irawati, Ira. 1996. Konsep Pengelolaan Pelestarian Kawasan Budaya Kanoman Cirebon. Bandung: Urban and Regional Planning Department Institut Teknologi Bandung.
- Levy, John M. 2009. Contemporary Urban Planning. Upper Saddle River: Pearson Prentice Hall.
- Lynch, Kevin. 1982. Image Of The City. Cambridge: The MIT Press.
- Kostof, Spiro. 1991. The City Shaped. London: Thames and Hudson Ltd.
- Kuntowijoyo. 2003. Metodologi Sejarah. Yogyakarta: PT. Tiara Wacana.
- Kunto, Haryoto. 1986. Semerbak Bunga di Bandung Raya. Bandung: Granesia.
- Kusuma, Anandya Praema, 2010. Perkembangan Fisik Kota Cirebon Berdasarkan Tinjauan Historis Kota. Bandung: Urban and Regional Planning Department Institut Teknologi Nasional.
- Margana, Sri. Nursam, M. 2010. Kota-Kota di Jawa. Identitas, Gaya Hidup, dan Permasalahan Sosial. Yogyakarta: Penerbit Ombak.
- Sunardjo, RH Unang. 1983. Meninjau Sepintas Panggung Sejarah Pemerintahan Kerajaan Cirebon 1479-1809. Bandung: Tarsito.
- Yunus, Hadi Sabari. 2000. Struktur Tata Ruang Kota. Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar.



Ward, Stephen V. 2002. Planning the Twentieth-Century City. The Advanced Capitalist World. Chichester: John Wiley & Sons Ltd.