

# EAST ↔ WEST

## Rethinking Cultural Hegemony Connecting East and West through Medicinal Packaging Aesthetics

Written Response  
U2 B1 Positions through  
Iterating

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In Indonesia, we pride ourselves with a glass of Jamu, a traditional herbal elixir tailor made by mainly women to suit each person's bodily needs. The elixir rejuvenates the body and heals various ailments. This traditional drink existed since the 9th century, as seen on reliefs of our kingdom's walls of old. It is still practiced today. A modern version manifested in mass produced sachets to heal Masuk Angin, a folk belief illness of wind entering the body. With the presence of western medicine dominating the medicinal world, Jamu seems to lose credibility. This domination by western standard medicine could be seen as a form of cultural hegemony, according to Gramsci. This implies the constant power struggle between eastern and western medicine in my country, that there can be no peace and coexistence between them. This violates our national ideology and principles, Pancasila, of harmony and pluralism. Combining adhocism and conditional design method, I attempted to create a system that could bridge a connection or communication, at least formally, between east and west, representing Indonesia's principle of unity in diversity. The end result is all iterations together as one output, a gradation of one style to another, symbolizing the connection between east and west, and vice versa.

\ REFERENCE(S)  
SPECIFICALLY RELATED  
TO PROJECT IN ITS  
TOPIC AND WILDCARD  
REFERENCES

**Gramsci, A. (1971) *Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci*. London: Lawrence & Wishart.**

Starting with what "cultural hegemony" actually means. According to Gramsci, cultural hegemony is a socio-cultural tool to subdue the minority within society through the domination of one culture. "The ruling class controls culture, education, religion, media, and common sense, so that their worldview becomes seen as "natural" or "normal" — even by the oppressed. (Paraphrased, Prison Notebooks 1935)". After the first week reiterating a piece of the Unit 1's Methods of Translating project, questions arose concerning the cultural influence traditional herbal medicines had against the dominant western medicines. Cultural Hegemony was then termed, setting the narrative of the constant power struggle between the minority against the ruling class, in this case, eastern traditional medicine against western more scientific medicine. Even though the east is seen as less reliable or scientific, we created elixirs with real health benefits and healing powers to a certain extent, giving it some merit. Is it then wise, within the narrative suggested by the marxists, that in order for eastern medicine to gain recognition through power and revolution, while dragging western medicine down from the seat of power? Can there be no connections or communication formed between them so both systems benefit from each other? Indonesia rejects this and offers a different narrative.

(ChatGPT was used to search for references and help guide the forming of logical arguments against neo-marxism through Indonesian Ideology. Accessed 28 April 2025 <https://chatgpt.com/share/68146d76-03e0-800b-9325-c0583ed1ba8b>)

**Tantular, M. (2006) *Kakawin Sutasoma. Disunting dan diterjemahkan oleh I Gusti Bagus Sugriwa*. Jakarta: Departemen Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan.**

"Bhinneka tunggal ika" translates to different parts, yet one in essence. This is Indonesia's national slogan, championing pluralism and unity in diversity across the large island nation. With over 300 different ethnic groups, this slogan played a key role in uniting them under common principles. This slogan then implies that connection is possible despite differences assuming the common essence cultures have. This also implies the continuous addition of different cultures is possible in the future as long as it shares the values from this slogan. This means western medicine can be incorporated into the eastern, and vice versa. Both sides can complete each other by communicating, and finding connections through shared essence.

Referring MAGCD's course description, perhaps it can be seen as East ↔ West. This means East is the same as West, or East if and only if West. The symbol is used to indicate that differentiated aspects of cultures are, in fact, not only cumulative but co-defining.

**Agus, A.A. (2016). *Relevansi Pancasila Sebagai Ideologi Terbuka di Era Reformasi*. Makassar: Universitas Negeri Makassar.**

"Maka ideologi Pancasila yang bersifat terbuka pada hakikatnya, nilai-nilai dasar (hakikat sila-sila Pancasila) yang bersifat universal dan tetap, adapun penjabaran dan realisasinya senantiasa dieksplisitkan secara dinamis reformatif yang senantiasa mampu melakukan perubahan sesuai dengan dinamika aspirasi masyarakat."

"Therefore, the Pancasila ideology, open in its character and essence, contains foundational values (the essence of the principles) that is universal and unchanging, yet also contains its interpretations and realization continuously manifested dynamically and reformative that perpetually adapts to the changes of the people's aspirations." (Freely Translated)

Pancasila is Indonesia's national principle of five, which are: Belief in God, Humanitarian, Unity in Nationalism, Democracy, and Social Justice. These principles guided the formation of our country ever since our independence in 1945. The journal "Relevance of Pancasila as an open ideology in the reformation era" shows the continuous relevance of Pancasila in response to the turbulent era of the country in 1998. The journal shows how Pancasila with its unchanging values is dynamic and can be reformed to suit the changing times and context the country is in, uniting a people with universal values, yet adaptive to the times. In the context of medicine, Pancasila's values can be the foundational belief that connection is possible between eastern and western traditions.

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**\ READING LIST  
REFERENCES**

**Jencks C and Silver N (2013) *Adhocism : The Case for Improvisation*. Massachusetts: The MIT Press Series.**

Adhocism explores the idea of improvisation starting from available materials to create something new. This idea views any object is never a final perfect iteration and assumes it will always be subject to change depending on how we interact with the object by reassembling, recontextualizing, etc. It assumes the idea that any object that exists in the world is derived out of previous systems. But what if connections between objects are not only between different time-frames (previous, after), but also possible within the same categories? In the case of medicinal packaging design, the modernist, minimalist aesthetic of the west shares commonalities with the eastern more traditional feel of design. In other words, the east could be treated as adhoc to the west, and vice versa.

**Maurer, L. (2013) *Conditional Design Workbook Valiz*. Amsterdam: Valiz.**

Zhiango City is a fictional case study of how it would be like if the conditional design manifesto were to be applied in the context of city/urban planning. Without traditional blue prints, multiple simple conditions were laid out to be imposed in the city's design, where the process itself becomes the final output. This constant change through conditions set by a clear source of authority has a certain motion, progressing the city from one point to another. The mechanics of set conditions creating this motion peaked my interest. What if instead for the goal of improving, it could be used to simply change one state to another? Through this mechanics it can bridge between any two points, creating a conversation of two unlikely objects.

\ REFERENCES THAT  
IS SPECIFICALLY RELATED  
TO THE PROJECT IN ITS  
MEDIUM OR METHOD

**Maurer, L. (2013) *Conditional Design Workbook Valiz*. Amsterdam: Valiz.**

My process for attempting to connect the eastern and western medical aesthetics is built on combining adhocism and the conditional design method. Assuming these packagings share a common essence, we can lay out adhoc elements in which every condition later laid out must follow. By comparing the characteristic differences and similarities between eastern (Tolak Angin) and western (Panadol) packagings, we could lay out a list that we can modify into a set of conditions. Each condition need to have room for creative freedom.

First there is the unchanging similarities that every condition/step needs to adhere to: Clear hierarchy, Readability, Contrast, true to each brand's essence, and always start from materials of previous iteration step.

Then, by analyzing the differences, we can structure a set of conditions the packagings will go into. Using this method, we don't approach the reinterpretation of one packaging design in the traditional way of jumping right into sketching the final product, but instead letting the gradation of gradual output evolution of each condition be the statement.

By inserting Tolak Angin design into the chain of conditions, rearranging and adding/substracting elements slowly changes it into a western style, and vice versa. Though imperfect, this experiment forms a conversation between cultural traditions.