

# Modernization and vernacularity in the tradition of Minangkabau architecture of the West Sumatra in Indonesia

Indah Widiastuti and Feni Kurniati

Institut Teknologi Bandung,  
Indonesia

## Abstract

“Vernacularity” is brought forward in this paper to conceptualize a fundamental condition to justify an architecture to be called vernacular. This conceptual proposition is reflexive insight gained from field research, about the influence of modernization on gender construction on the vernacular architecture of the Minangkabau. Matrilineal kinship, paddy culture, and its ecological characters are the fundamental practices that shape vernacularity of the Minangkabau culture. Specific value and cultural practice centered toward mother or maternal value, maintained by matrilineal kinship, at a certain reign of time produce contextual practices and articulations, as well as the vernacular architecture of the time. Vernacularity is therefore historic. The loss and gains of values and practices at a certain time potentially transform the vernacularity. This research has concluded three milestones, elaborating different characters of vernacular architecture that emerged, roughly noted as the period of Colonial to after-Independence 1972, post-independence up to 2013, and the present global world. Each milestone represents a dynamic context of vernacularity, therefore bore vernacular architecture of various expressions and characters.

**Keywords:** *rumah gadang, rumah ketek,* vernacularity, modernization, musyawarah, matrilineal culture, matrilineal kinship.

## Introduction: Minangkabau Vernacular Architecture and Modernization

An architectural tradition continuously undergoes a never-ending process through time, producing an accumulative new idea, transforming the earlier ideas, functions, and forms. Elaborating further Vellinga, Bronner, Oliver (in Vellinga, 2006) and Alsayyad (1995) about the dynamic nature of vernacular architecture, inherent in the term “tradition”, are the dynamic traces of social practices, value, and mentality of architectural production. This paper is written based on the result of field research done in three cases of the Minangkabau indigenous settlements (*nagari*) in Tanah Datar District West Sumatra Provinces, Indonesia. The research aimed at exploring the influence of modernization on gender construction of the matrilineal society and the ways it affects the vernacular architecture and the settlement. The vernacular architecture of Minangkabau ethnic specifically represents the architecture of society practicing matrilineal kinship. Tanah Datar District is locally known as *Darek nan Tuo* (the ancient original land). It is one among the three ancient original lands of the Minangkabau ethnic (*darek*) where matrilineal kinship is strong, and the authentic traditional buildings are plenty. Its close proximity to Pagaruyung Palace assures its affinity to preserve their heritage. The spatial arrangements of the the Minangkabau vernacular architecture refer to the lifecycle of the women of the house (Ng, 2006). Men normatively have no space at home, and traditionally

dwells in *surau*. *Surau* is residential dorm of the matri-kin (*kaum*) of a matri-clan (*suku*). It also functions as an educational facility. Architecturally, bagonjong or horn-shape roof with inclined gable bargeboard, wooden structure, and construction without nails are the main characters that shape their architectural image, represented by *rumah gadang* (ancestral house), and *rangkiang* (granary) (Widiastuti, Vedamuthu, 2009).

Modernization is a comprehensive process of economic development, social mobilization and cultural extension, generally indicated by urbanization, industrialization, and secularization. The field research identified some transformation themes, indicating modernization that implicates gender construction in Minangkabau, which are specified as (Widiastuti, Sudradjat, 2017): 1) the increasing patriarchy and individualism that shifted the communal integrity into more factional characters; 2) Islam ideology, that promoted the importance of male gender role in more daily aspects of life; 3) industrialization, and commodification that introduced new consumer lifestyles; and 4) openness to global participation, that brought in the world-wide exposure into the local, and vice-versa. These transformations inevitably disrupted the earliest dwelling traditions, marked by 1) the diminishing values and functions of the traditional building, vis-à-vis: granary (*rangkiang*); the functional shift of *surau* from residential dorms into currently stated use as a religious facility; and 2) the shift of dwelling activities from *rumah gadang* as traditional extended-family house into *rumah ketek* or small houses of the nuclear family built around the *rumah gadang* belonging to children of the matrikin, especially the married female kin.

Historically, post-independence situation in 1945 is significant. In this period, all traditional sovereignty under the Netherland-Indische government, were in transitional condition, learning to cohabit with new modern social administration under the Indonesian State Republic. Adjustments and transformations to synchronize with the state's administration and new political situations were inescapable. The research marked five transformative milestones, experienced by the matrilineal society of Minangkabau which is reflected in their vernacular architectures (Widiastuti, Sudradjat, 2017). They are: 1) during Netherland Indie up to 1950, where the traditional landscape and society was at earliest exposed to the idea of western modernization; 2) during transition from a traditional sovereign into an administrative unit under a state between 1950-1972; 3) the concept of *nagari* during the "New Order of the Suharto regime in 1972 – 1998, that was severely marked by the abandonment of *Nagari* concept in 1979, which was then restored in 1992. Fourth, after 1992 up to 2013 during which the main issues were urbanization and cultural sustainability; and fifth is globalization after 2013.

### **Vernacularity - a Critical Proposition against the discourse of "the Authentic"**

Vernacularity is a term known in literary study, which means the quality or state of being vernacular (Collins Dictionary), and the adherence to the vernacular (Merriam-Webster). Vernacularity is a social-linguistic term, highlighting what remains in a language that keeps it vernacular, despite interventions that influence its practical expression. The articulation may be in an alienated, mutated, and dilapidated form of the representational language, but the meaning is comprehensible due to collective awareness shared by the society who practices it. In architecture, David Wang (2016) uses the term vernacularity to a condition where the traditional ingenuity of the local Chinese culture, are still perceivable even in the expression of modern contemporary architecture in China. Wang conceptually defined Vernacularity as an ingrained philosophical predisposition to downplay the details of the construction dimension of life (David Wang, 2016). Therefore, in doing so the concept, Wang firstly detached the discourse of representations from the concept of vernacular architecture, including the idea of "authentic forms". The contemporary architectural articulation can be alien from the known Chinese architectural form, but the localness is comprehensible by their own people, collectively. The

existence of certain common fundamental value shared by the people, are what make it comprehensible and acceptable by the people.

Ideologically, Wang's concept of vernacularity criticizes the standpoint of the "authentic". He considered representation second to the more primary metaphysic of existence in vernacular architecture, which is the spontaneity. Here, the term vernacularity is a conceptualization of tradition cultural medium upon which local consciousness, value, and reflex grows and keeps undergoing dynamic process through time from one achieved cultural equilibrium to the next. Similarly, the Minangkabau vernacular architecture may appear far from the ideal representation of the authentic Minangkabau architecture but it remains vernacular. On the contrary some authentic representation of Minangkabau architecture may not be vernacular.

We argued that the rooted practices of matrilineal kinship is an important factor that builds the Minangkabau's Vernacularity. Along with the traditional paddy farming, matrilineal kinship shape the designation of Minangkabau's human-made environment and mentalities. Socially, the operation of matrilineal kinship distributes power according to gender roles - female, as collective propriety holder, and male, the managers. Consequentially, there is no concept of absolute power or centre. The absence of conceptual centres allows collective consciousness to shape communal dwelling culture. The female role is secured in the traditional institution of *bundo kanduang* (godmother of the matrikin), and the importance of *saparuiik* (female kin as the smallest unit of the matrikin) as the foundation of Minangkabau's kinship. Collective awareness is maintained in the trait of communal assembly and counsel (*musyawarah* and *mufakat*) housed in *balai adat* (assembly house) and *surau* (male dorm and religion training place). This assembly is the core life of the *nagari*, chaired by *penghulu* or the male clan leader and *ninik mamak* (council of elders). The Minangkabau's *historian* Taufik Abdullah (1972) suggested *musyawarah* and *mufakat* instituted collective ideas for common good. As well, it is a prominent agent of modernization. The non-governing position of the male in tradition shaped them as the agent of changes, new values, and information. Traditionally, paddy farming means more than resources, but a fundamental inspiration for collective social value and philosophy manifested in the trait of *gotong-royong* (value of collectiveness and sharing).

Vernacularity is unique for each different phase of time. Modernization, at the turn of the 20th century, has caused major transformations in the vernacular architecture of Minangkabau. From interviews and observations, the following have been general phenomena that took place following modernization since the end of 19<sup>th</sup> century, notably: 1) the desacralized traditional value and the rise of patriarchy under Islam, 2) the rise of industrial paradigm, shaping modern production and consumption including agriculture, and 3) modern transportations and communications that reshaped the way people interact. Though the vernacular architecture of Minangkabau is claimed to be sustained, the fact is that changes are inevitable. The concept of *bundo kanduang* (traditional council of married women) as the charismatic 'mother of the village' sustains, but shifts relatively more into domestic affairs. It marked a transformation of the corporate-descent nature of the kinship unit into more a domestic group with father (ladies' husband) gaining increasing role. The increasing importance given to male relatively transformed the egalitarian nature of communal, into feudal living. Industrial paradigm disrupted the value of old traditions agriculture and altered them from a self-sustaining living source gradually into the food industry. Modernization introduced new mentalities, such as pragmatism, formal overcoming informal disposition, patriarchy, and top-down command, functionalism, and being representational.

However, the field data confirmed that nevertheless the transformations inevitably took place, the majority of people boldly stated that matrilineal practice would not wane, at least not in Tanah Datar Districts. Despite rapid changes, 100% of the people admitted confidently that land purchasing shall never take place; matrilineal kinship never is altered; *musyawarah* and *gotong-royong* trait, and communal life to keep existing. Nevertheless, the quality would vary in consistencies, so also with the vernacularity. Indeed, despite the changes, Minangkabau is one among a few ethnic units in Indonesia that retain its indigenous concept of settlement

(*nagari*) and incorporates it into modern administration. It calls for a critical look at the status of vernacularity of the Minangkabau landscape and its architectural traditions, concerning cultural sustainability through the recurring process of cultural production.

The people of Minangkabau acknowledge an old maxim - *Alam takambang jadi Guru* - 'nature as the teacher'. Architecturally speaking, a human-made environment should be a result of harmonious and careful intervention into nature. On this traditional ground, vernacularity is shaped, by the recurring natural habits of the people, the tectonic spontaneity, and the spatial reflex associated with the ecological setting. Altogether they form fundamental condition upon which common traditions and creativity emerge. Modernization endorses new modified nature and continuously challenges the way human get connected to the artificial-natural environment. Modernization around the turn of 21st century principally modified their trait of communal solidarity (gotong royong), into patronized solidarity in feudal systems. Decision making which a collective assembly earlier maintains turned into common-sense pragmatism, generally authored by a few people of community representatives. Progressivity shifted from natural holism into practical mechanisms, and natural holism, into practical mechanisms.

Putting vernacular architecture of Minangkabau in historical context, the research identified five historical milestones of Minangkabau vernacular architectures. They can be reframed into three milestones signifying distinct common situations of vernacularities at different reign of time: 1) the growing patriarchy due to Western modernization, Islam and nationalism ideology (early 20th century up to 1972), 2); functionalism and regionalism during National Development Era, (1972-2013), and 3) global value and resurrection of traditional forms after 2009. Through these three milestones, some traditions and considerations sustain, vis a vis: 1) *rumah gadang* is the kin's valuable heritage and essence of the community, 2) the sustainability of matrilineal clan organization secure land use, and sustain the concept of *kampung*, *nagari*, and *suku*; and 3) land and paddy-farming estates maintain communal solidarity.

Entering 20th centuries, Patriarchy and individualism inevitably introduced individual living. *Rumah gadang* (house of the matrikin) has been rarely built but *rumah ketek* (small houses of female kin and her nuclear family built around *rumah gadang*) is continuously built until now, in various styles and fashions. It transformed traditions of living in *bilik* (inner room for female kin within *rumah gadang*) into a separated building. *Rumah ketek* is an architectural proof of a homeostatic balance achieved after serial events of transformation in negotiating the matrilineal space in modern condition. Initially male stays in *Surau* (male dorms), now they acquire individual personal space, even within the female compound (*kampung*). Should there be an alarming major transformation is the vanishing *rangkiang* (granary). It marks critical situations where paddy farming as the source of cultural and social value reproduction has changed in nature, gradually into industrial. Paddy is rather produced and sold, rather than groomed "returned home" to the house of the matrikin's compound (*kampung*) in *rangkiang*.

### **Vernacular Architecture of Minangkabau through Recurring Shifts**

*"Thus a Minangkabau house in West Sumatera (Indonesia) that is built of concrete and provided with a modern bathroom and garage as well as traditional spirred roof is no example of the contamination and decline of vernacular traditions. It represents a new phase in the living Minangkabau building tradition and such it desires as much attention and admiration as its older one (Vellingga, 2006, pp.90)*

#### **1.The Growing Patriarchy and Western Rationalism up to 1972**

The growing patriarchy, brought by western rationalism through colonization, Islamic ideology and nationalism marked the idea of modernity at the turns of the 20th century up to 1972. At the turn of the 20th century, new male roles like Islamic religious leader (imam), scholars, nationalist renewed and promoted the position male leader (*penghulu*). Male decision-makers started to gain more prominence and thus beufal characters into the communal-egalitarian characters of the society. On this stance, Islam as ideology permeated through the

masculine peer centered in *surau* (male dorms and religious school). The Dutch introduced *cassava* and coffee as a new agricultural produces an alternative to paddy-farming as well as introducing an industrial paradigm to traditional agriculture. On the other hand, the enterprising role of a woman was slowly decreasing into domestic. The whole set triggered the fashion of dwelling separately from the ancestral house (*rumah gadang*), or in *rumah ketek* (small-pavillions) around her ancestral house (*rumah gadang*). *Rumah ketek* was then an architectural yield of the shift on matrilineal kinship due to the increasing male roles in the house-compound (*kampung*) or *matrikin* (*kaum*) of his wife. *Rumah ketek* is then a modern reinterpretation of *bilik* (traditional room for individual female kin inside *rumah gadang*) into individual dwelling structure outside but around *rumah gadang*, where she stays with husbands and children as a nuclear family.

The 1920s-1950s was a specific milestone when local and traditional architecture started incorporating modern technology and western style. It allowed various experimental combination of traditional space and construction with Art Deco and Neo-Classic Style. *Surau* (male dorm cum religious training space), *masjid raya* (grand mosque), and *rumah ketek* were built, incorporating styles applied in Dutch bungalows. Since then while *rumah gadang* was rarely built, *rumah keteks* have been built plenty during the time. People keep building it until now. Fig.1 Shows *rumah ketek* in Dutch Bungalow Style of the 1950s (Fig 1.a), in Jenki Style of 1960s-70s, and in Minimalist Style of the 2015s. The building material industry then introduced material, such as wall paint, metal sheets, and wood lumbers. In some *kampung* (extended family residential compound), the *penghulu* (male-leader) decided to flip the orientation of *rumah gadang* against the *alaman* (common yard) for some functional and scientific reason, such as to provide easy maneuver for the automobile or to adjust with east-facing orientation, allowing in healthy sunrays of the sunrise. New spatial awareness of modern transportation shifted the traditional gathering space of the maternal-joint-family-house *alaman* (common yard) for public gathering and drying grain, into paths and parking yards. Despite the changes, the traditional living matrilineal sustains. The *kampung* was still the house of matrilineal kin and clan, with additional modern functions, and the female kin stays within the compound.



**Fig. 1:** Rumah Ketek in various styles and its Rumah Gadang.  
(1a). Dutch Bungalow Style, (1b). Jenki Style, (1.c.)Modern Minimalist Style.  
Source: author

The milestone of 1950-1972 was significant for the entire existence of *nagari* of the immediate past after independence. According to a West Sumatera historian Gusti Asnan (2007), the 1950s were the critical moments for the Minangkabau people to redefine its regional standpoint within the frame of a national state. Traditionally a *nagari* was a sovereign. After independence, the people have to learn to perceive their home country and ecology as a national asset and interest in a form of administrative unit. Modern functions were built rapidly under the government's control, mainly education, health facilities, and government office in modern styles. Mechanization and functionalism became the paradigm. The role of trade and commerce increased. Food industry became a new paradigm of the traditional agriculturist life of the

people. Traditional governance was at stake. Patriarchy and nationalism permeated into the traditional vernacularity at works.

## 2. Functionalism and Regionalism during National Development Era up to 2013

On 1979, during the “New Order” politic (Orde Baru), a new policy on administration units of the Indonesian State was executed. The Nagari system was reframed by a new administration system – *Desa* administrative village system. A *nagari* was chunked into several *desa*. It essentially disrupted *nagari* and caused severe impacts on the cultural integrity and sustainability of the Minangkabau ethnic. Aversion took place, leading to cultural dissent and severe out-migration, including builders and artisans, and caused population void in the homeland. *Rantau* or migrant sphere became more appealing than the homeland. The policy also disrupted the corporate-descent nature of *kampung* (extended family or matriclan) and *suku* (matriclan) concept and weakened *rumah gadang* as house of a corporate unit into a mere domestic-unit. Figure 2a shows the case of partitioned *rumah gadang* as the female kin started to stay individually, outside *rumah gadang*, or outside of *nagari*. The significance of *rumah ketek* therefore increased. *Kampung* was then crowded by *rumah keteks*

The installation of modern infrastructure altered the functions of traditional riverfront (*tapihan bamandi*). *Rumah gadang* or house of matrikin was becoming functional residences. *Bilik* or bedroom, traditionally occupied by the woman of the clan, became ordinary bedrooms. The use of metal sheet altered thatched roof and produced new skill of metal-sheet roof craftsmanship (Fig.3a) which continued to 2000s and was then refined by the use of the light-metal structure for the *bagongjong* (horn-shape) roof (Fig. 3b). Thatch-roof artisans became rare and metal was easier to obtain. For building materials, shops were the new resources. In 1992, the state government reinstalled the concept of *nagari* in West Sumatera. However, the psycho-cultural framework was irreversibly different. Around this period, functionalism/ utilitarian, and industrial paradigm formed a vernacularity that begin to be a cultural challenge for the integrity of the old traditional *nagari*.



**Fig. 1:** Two Fashions of disrupted Rumah Gadang's  
(2a). Partitioned Rumah gadang, (2b) Alien Rumah Gadang of non-residential matriclan.  
Source: author

However, the democratic matrilineal culture persisted. The fact was that the gotong-royong trait, *musyawarah* institution and matrilineal kinship did not fade. *Balai desa* (communal assembly provided by *nagari* office) alternatively administered the function of communal assembly. Fortunately, the traditional trait that separated ancestral from personal agricultural land secured some amount of traditional agriculture from modern agricultural intensification program. Although female stayed in *rumah ketek* (small house) or extensions spaces of *rumah gadang*, and *rumah ketek*, the matrilineal organization remained practiced. The major changes were that the high intensity of out-migration altered the barometer of power irreversibly from inland (*darek*) to migrant land (*rantau*). The matrilineal world of *darek* (inner

land) remain significant. But the migrant-kin can participate more actively in decision making and asset management. They introduced contemporary and progressive architectural approaches. Nevertheless, *nagari* as a social institution indeed politically weakened and was rendered too weak to respond to the reigning top-down national policies.

Despite the declining old traditions, paradoxically, the Suharto reign of power (1969-1998) observed the global discourse of Regionalism and Postmodernism, and on its turn declare political Identity for the entire nation. Consequently, *rumah gadang* with its bagonjong roof regain its attention as the architectural expression of the Minangkabau culture. *Rumah gadang*'s building skill which was earlier local specific then became general under the professional expertise or builder of a particular nagari. Nagari Kumago and Nagari Pande Sikek have been known for their carpentry. They cater new *rumah gadang* construction for various other nagaris in. Industrial professionalism became part of the new vernacularity then.

Commoners of the *nagari* also develop this regionalism awareness, as new ways in perceiving their own culture and house - as an identity. In some cases, though a house could be authentic, the owner was not part of the original matrilineal clan. New incoming families built it on leased land from original owners who domiciled in migrant land (Fig. 2a). Instead of taking the home-style architecture, some people took the stereotypical reference from another place, or from the royal house, the Pagaruyuang Palace. They could build them in various scale by carpenters hired from other *nagari*.



**Fig. 3:** Roof Metal Sheet Artistry of the 1980s and 2017  
(3a ) The Use of Metal Sheet as New Craftsmanship, (3b) The Alien Authentic Rumah Bagonjong Style  
Source: author

### 3. Global Value and Resurrection of Traditional Forms after 2013

Since 1998 or Reformation Era, the more democratic political atmosphere, has made Minangkabau culture discerned new challenge of global accessibility and participation, enabled by especially by information technology. Since then, the cultural stakeholder of Minangkabau has been no longer limited to Minangkabau society. Family kin in *rantau* or migrant land could involve more actively with *darek* by the use of social media and telecommunication facility. Family overseas contributed and introduced innovations like fabricated roof structure (fig.3a) and synthetic colors for redecorating their *rumah gadang*, allowing new affinity of coloring *rumah gadang* by the inhabitants (see Fig.4b).

Concerns over heritage voiced by academicians, architect-activists, and non-governmental organizations, promoting documentation, preservation, and conservation met many schemes that allow conservations of the local culture by several parties of the Nagaris. The late Eko Alvarez and academicians from Universitas Bung Hatta (UBH) and the NGO like Rumah Asuh actively promoted reconstructions of *rumah gadang* in Nagari Sumpur. Year 2013 is taken as milestones marked by wide contribution of 'Rumah Asuh' NGO and Tirta Foundation in sponsoring renovations of many traditional houses in many places in Indonesia. Nevertheless, global participation has taken place much earlier marked by renovations of Grand Mosque Rao-Rao, funded by an NGO from Netherland, facilitated by Eko Alvares. Later, the

creative industry and cultural economy were also brought up as political means to facilitate tourism village program (*desa wisata*). While Regionalism of the 1970s-80s was associated with the agenda of political identity, cultural preservation of 2000s combined external participation for revoking cultural sustainability, the indigenous work, and ecological balance. Despite the benefit, the side effect is that the more there are parties involved within the dwelling process of the people, the more complex the issues are undertaken by local administration and parties. The traditional vernacularity faced new challenges of more real-time and complex administration that characterize the globally interconnected world, as well as global image branding. The necessity for pragmatic administration for complex administration, involving many parties, challenge the communal integrity for a simpler society that was traditionally maintained by maternal spirit, including matters of housing and heritage preservation.



**Fig. 4. Rumah Gadang**

4a) Rumah Gadang as vernacular architecture, 4b) Rumah Gadang as heritage building

Source: author

In this stance, the discourse of *rumah gadang* as heritage buildings and vernacular architecture is nevertheless different by ideas and ideology, but their look may be interchangeable and commonly they are called 'traditional building'. They can stand side by side in a village neighborhood. The *rumah gadang* as a vernacular architecture naturally develop with the people, and *rumah ketek* is part of its existence. The *rumah gadang* as a heritage building retains the notion of Minangkabau's authentic, that refer to the available documentation, and academic verification by architectural expert and historian (see Fig.4b).

### Conclusion and Discussion

By observing the case of vernacular architecture of the Minangkabau, we develop further the formulation of vernacularity of David Wang with a specific goal to understand vernacular architectures and dwelling cultures at a certain point of time. The predisposition of the vernacularity works as a medium upon which dwelling culture and the complex of traditions emerge, or perhaps in linguistic term, a code. Vernacularity makes equations of vernacular architecture as a function of a human ecosystem and its complex of traditions. In stable conditions, the equations could allow fundamental values upon which the dwelling and architectonic traditions is established. The implications can be philosophical, sociological, or psychological. Vernacular architecture of Minangkabau of a certain milestone is the result of matrilineal vernacularity equation, on a certain point of time. The contextual practices of matrilineal kinship at a certain moment characterize the distinct dwelling spirit (collectiveness, solidarity, gender balance, and progress), architectonic traditions and interpretation of knowledge system (*Tambo Alam Minangkabau*). The traditional practices produced *Bagonjong* roof style, *nagari* settlement and *rumah gadang* architectural concept. The more modern practices produced metal-craft *Bagonjong* Style and *rumah ketek* as new emergence additional to *rumah gadang*. Among the three cases of vernacular settlements, Nagari Rao-Rao is perhaps



the most stable one. The architecture may not be the most authentic one, nor is the oldest nor the most prominent one. Its gender balance situation is not the ideal one as prescribed in Tambo (the book of Minangkabau culture). However, throughout the three milestones, the social vibrancy, the free moving females, and well-maintained settlement indicate it as the most balanced one, among the three Nagaris observed. The more compact and clustered arrangement of most modern *nagari* settlement allows easy assembly comparing to the more traditional nebulous and organic arrangements. The high migration rates coincide with the modern fact that *rantau* contributed stable and effective economic stronghold than *darek*. Islam as ideology reframed their social solidarity. This set of condition contains a promising future for *nagari* Rao-Rao to encounter any further development.

Historically the three milestones discussed representing three themes of geo-politics, cultural and economic dynamics that yielded different themes of vernacularities, as well as its architectonic traditions and value, both local and global. Through the three milestones, some matrilineal cultural practices remain traditional and some may need reframing to be able to examine the kind of vernacularity of its present dwelling culture. Modernity introduces new vocabularies, new materials, new tectonics, approaches, networks, and adjustments, as well - new comfort. One case example of the transformed architectural dwelling phenomenon at the turn of century is the emergence of *rumah ketek*, and metal roof artisanship. *Rumah ketek* (small house) became new typology, accompanying *rumah gadang* that has started since early of 20th century, and sustained until date. Metal roof artisanship is currently updated by fabricated lightweight steel material (Fig 3b).

Reinterpreting matrilineal culture may be useful to anticipate some inevitable changes and contemporary cultural practices. Instead of female power and their authority in architectural designs, the investigation found that the essential role women importance in matrilineal dwelling culture is its contribution in keeping gender balance, upon which solidarity, collective progressiveness grow. The feminine frame of mind has an important benefit for controlling the factional nature embedded in masculine characters, embedded in the modern and contemporary global capitalist world. The feminine frame of mind may also be ways to reinvent Minangkabau's ecology and further their architecture and to anticipate any form of exploitative modes. Instead of kinship, the matrilineal value is a perhaps better term to verify aspects that build the integrity of dwelling culture in facing the global force that has been effectively penetrating various indigenous vernacular village like *nagari*. Upon the perseverance of vernacularity based on matrilineal value, radical changes or re-contextualization, even architectural preservation, are always possible options to generate a vernacular architectonic tradition.

The vernacularity's code in a specific time and place can radically change and yield unprecedented architectural emergences. Some important historical events work like code-switching in the corpus of matrilineal culture. Perhaps, a radical transformation of the matrilineal kinship someday would be inevitable. In case by any chance, matrilineal dwelling culture would be disrupted, perhaps it should be realized that, what essentially stand behind might not be always the kinship practice, but the value shared by the people. In traditional world, kinship is a strategy. The controlled factional characters of the masculine peers determine is the core mechanism of the dwelling culture value. In other words, communal life and solidarity of the matrilineal culture have specific characters, which is "feminine communalism". This is what happens when the male is ruling within *rumah ketek* as the father of the house but controlled from *rumah gadang* as male nephews or son-in law by the maternal uncles. This is what established *rumah ketek* and *rumah gadang* as current expression of vernacularity of the Minangkabau culture. Concerning an urge for architectural conservation and preservations, the existence and persistence of matrilineal value and some resilient old architectonic traditions indicate that the vernacularity as a medium of emergence still persist and thence preservation is possible. Without considering vernacularity the vernacular architecture yielded is merely representational.

The contemporary potential peril nowadays has been the ecological balance. One possible model to bracket the local or indigenous vernacularity is ecologic – while taking into

attention that traditional and contemporary ecology can be radically different. Inhered in the heart of indigenous Minangkabau culture is the environmental consciousness stated in their slogan *Alam Takambang jadi Guru* (the wide nature as the teacher). It may lend a standpoint to regard the vernacular architecture of Minangkabau and its dwelling culture as a yield of continuous reinterpretation of Minangkabau's ecology.

### Acknowledgment

I would like to thank ITB-LPPM (Institut Teknologi Bandung- Research Institute) through SAPPK (School of Architecture, Planning and Policy Development) for providing research grant to avail this study. I would like to render gratitude to Late Dr. Eko Alvarez, Prof. Gusti Asnan, as well as research fellows, Prof. Iwan Sudradjat, Ms. Feni Kurniati, Mr. Saiful Anwar, and surveyors Mr. Rudi Elfendes, Mr. Andi Mahfuz Harefa, and Mr. Yadit Hardian.

### References

- Vellingga, M. (2006). 'Engaging the Future Vernacular Architecture.' In N. Alsayyad (Eds.). *Vernacular Architecture of the Twenty-First Century – Theory, Education, & Practice*. New York: Taylor and Francis. 81-94.
- Wang, D. (2016). *A Philosophy of Chinese Architecture, Past, Present, Future*. New York: Routledge.
- Abdullah, Taufik (1972), "Modernisation in the Minangkabau World: West Sumatra in the Early Decades of the Twentieth Century." in Holt C.(ed.), *Culture and Politics in Indonesia*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press
- Alsayyad, N. (1995). 'From Vernacularism to Globalism: The Temporal Reality of Traditional Settlement.' *Journal of TDSR Vol VII. No. 1*. 13-24.
- Asnan, G. (2007). *Memikir Ulang Regionalisme – Sumatera Barat sebelum 1950*, Yogyakarta: Penerbit Obor
- Ng, C. (2006). 'Chapter 5. Raising the House and Feeding the Husband Givers: The Spatial Categories of Social Reproduction among the Minangkabau.' In James Fox (Eds.). *Inside Austronesian Houses: Perspectives on Domestic Designs for Living*. Canberra: ANU E Press, 121-144.
- Oliver, P. (2006). *Built to Meet Needs: Cultural Issues in Vernacular Architecture*. Oxford: Architectural Press.
- Widiastuti, I, Sudradjat, I (2017). *Pengaruh Modernisasi Terhadap Konstruksi Hubungan Gender pada Arsitektur Masyarakat Berkekerabatan Matrilineal di Nusantara*. National – Unpublished Research Monography P3MI-ITB, SAPPK, Bandung, Indonesia
- Widiastuti, I. & Vedamutu, R. (2009). 'Comparative Study of Social-Spatial Organization of Vernacular Settlement of Kerala in India, and Minangkabau in Sumatra, Indonesia ' *Journal of Interdisciplinary Science. Annual Review Vol. 4. No. 2*. Melbourne: 15-30.
- Collin Dictionary Online Dictionary, <https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/vernacularity>, retrieved on 1<sup>st</sup> march 2019
- Miriam-Wesbters, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/vernacularity>, retrieved on 1<sup>st</sup> march 2019