

The Living House Concept in the Vernacular Houses in Indonesia: The Case of Pendung Hiang, Kerinci-Jambi, Indonesia

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Abstract

Vernacular houses in Indonesia have changed over time, in response to users' needs. However, some of the causes of the extinction of vernacular houses are the natural disasters and fires. When damaged, many people rebuild their traditional houses to their original forms. Still, many also do not use their original form anymore and change, not following the standards of the traditional houses. One of the reasons for this transformation is the influence of western and Dutch culture.

Rumah Larik is a traditional house in Sungai Penuh City, Kerinci - Jambi. However, in 1800, the Dutch influenced the styles and shapes of its traditional houses. A new form emerged and this new form is most common in the pendung village of the Sungai Penuh City, Jambi. The houses are not like the houses in a row attached and a connecting door, but they are also different, totally, from the size, roof shape, and the overall shape. These houses have now become the vernacular, built with local conditions. *This research aims to show new richness and distinction of the vernacular architecture in Kerinci Jambi.*

To do so, this paper examines the Living house concept of the vernacular houses in the traditional house area of Pendung Hiang Kerinci village, Sungai Penuh City Jambi, Indonesia. The research employed observations, field surveys, and witnesses' stories and other sources in the field. After all the documentation, the new vernacular and the original form of Rumah Larik were compared to see what the transformations are.

The research concludes that even though the new form of this Rumah Larik occurs differently from the original Rumah Larik, the space division of the new form of the vernacular house is still similar to the original houses. The core of the Living house being the body seen in the division vertically and the relationship with ancestors also still occurs by placing their heirloom in the upper level of these new vernacular houses.

Keywords: Vernacular houses, Living House concept, Kerinci, Indonesia

Introduction

Traditional Architecture has many standards for building a house and living in it. From the existing kinship, the relationship between kinship is bound by customs, rules, and

cosmology with Nature. Their relationships with their ancestors is clearly illustrated in the shapes of the buildings. Vernacular architecture is less standardized. Many say that vernacular Architecture is the other. They are influenced by the building technologies, and is also adapted to the climate. Some analysts have explained that vernacular styles are a result of practical considerations, as they represent adaptations to the local climate, geography and the environment, or in terms of property and limitations of the particular materials used in their construction (Waterston, 1997)

The living house concept is defined by Roxana Waterson as a spirit. It is explained as the indigenous religious concept of the archipelago: a widely shared concept of a vital force which suffuses and animates the universe. This force has been variously labelled in the literature as “spirit”, “soul-stuff”. “essence”, “vital force”, “cosmic-energy” and so on (Waterson, 1997). The living house concept also appears in the Kerinci traditional house of Rumah Larik. They establish the relationships with the ancestors, by keeping their heirloom in the top space: the upper level of the house. However, there is also another form that occurs from Rumah Larik that has less the living concept inside the house. The new form is the form of vernacular houses in Pendung hiang village in Indonesia. This paper examines what is continued or discontinued of the living house concept in these vernacular houses.

History of the Traditional House Rumah Larik

In Indonesia, traditional architecture is founded in various forms with different standards. In the Sungai Penuh Jambi City, which is a city included in the Heritage City of Indonesia as a historic city, many districts still have many traditional houses. One of these types is in the Pendung Hiang district, Sungai Penuh City, Kerinci-Jambi. This traditional house is called the Rumah Larik (Larik house). It looks like the Figure below (left), but over time, has adapted to the contemporary functions and lifestyles. Hence, this traditional Larik house is no longer in the form of the original form. This new form can be seen in the Figure below (right). The original Rumah Larik (Larik house) still has Pendung hiang.



Fig. 1: The Origin Traditional Rumah larik in Pendung hiang

Source: Author

The inheritance of the Larik house (Rumah Larik) in the form of an ancient stage is still visible in its original condition in the Pendung Hiang Village, Tanah Kampung Sub-district, Sungai Penuh City Kerinci, Jambi. The Larik House was then called the Umoh laheik, from the name for the houses of Uhang Kincai (Kerinci people).

Laheik bajajo means having a lined array. This house is built on stilts lined array (Larik) up extending from the East to the West. In fact, Rumah Larik was built in conjunction with each other to resemble lines or alleys along the village. It is built on the two sides along the road. The arrangement is lined up to form an elongated array that connects one house to the other.

This house applies the concept of the vertical axis. The division of space according to the vertical axis contains the divine value. The vertical axis is seen from the division of space into three parts,

- The lower level as a livestock and animal cage. The lower room is a cage for storing agricultural products and livestock.
- The middle level as a people's living place. The living room is a space for the inhabitants
- The upper level as an ancestral room for storing heirlooms. There is a vertical image on the roof or attic that becomes a sleeping space for parents and stores the heirlooms of their ancestors.

In the past, the Larik house existed until a great fire broke out in the Pendung Hiang and consumed the existing Larik settlement. Since then, this array house of Rumah Larik has been transformed into a shape similar to the image below. Rumah Larik is no longer a house in the form of stilts but has acquired a mixture of materials with cement and concrete. This technology was brought by the Dutch who entered Kerinci in 1901.

It has a roof already shaped with horses on the top. Those Rumah Larik not hit by fire, still stand firmly there. It is found that there are two pieces in Pendung Hiang that can still be used for its residents. The traditional house in Pendung Hiang is different from the original traditional house, Rumah Larik, and it can be called the Vernacular house of Pendung Hiang, which is still being made today.



Fig. 2: The Vernacular house in Pendung hiang

Source: Author

Waterson (1997) also explains that the house is a body. The use of anthropomorphic imagery often reinforces the idea of the house as a living thing. We have already considered the possibility that this is nothing more than a convenient means of classifying and ordering space, and yet, so many examples of body imagery are coupled with definite statements about the house's vitality that the link between the two can hardly be overlooked. The division of spaces in vertical

sections in the original Rumah Larik also occurs in the new form of Rumah Larik (vernacular) in Pendung Hiang village. This paper aims to see what transformation change occurs inside the vernacular houses. The houses have already been adapted to the new roof technology and the shapes brought by the Dutch.

Literature review

Priyomarsono, Naniek, widayati (2021) point out that a spatial pattern has a historical value. This can be seen in the spatial pattern layout of the new form of Rumah Larik, as we call the vernacular house in pendung Hiang. The new form differs from the original one. Especially in the post and beam constructions and the gable roof that is new in vernacular house. Schefold, Nas, and Domenig (2004) mention that the variations in the design of roofs and floors and the existence of different house types within one region are not merely incidental but represent meaningful features of the building tradition. Now, the posts of the house and the construction method with binding beams mortised through the posts are both very characteristic of the traditional house. According to them, this new form of the vernacular house of Rumah Larik has a new roof, post, and beam because of the Dutch influence. Colonial and other architectural styles used pillars because of their number and spacing (Schefold, Nas, and Domenig). The argument is that the engineers in the Indies wanted to implement their technologies and modernize the colony (Lukito & Nurliani, 2017). The other excuse is that after the fires in their village, they left the original form of Rumah larik and shifted into the new form. Thus, the original roof of Rumah Larik, which used ropes to fix the roof so that it could be detached quickly in case of fire, is no longer used and has been changed into new styles of roofs and roof constructions to avoid fire anymore.

Research Methods

This research employs qualitative research methods. They include conducting a physical survey of the historic area of Pondok Tinggi, Kota Sungai Penuh. The Author visited Pendung hiang four times in 2017 to collect data from 3 houses of the Vernacular house and the Original Rumah Larik house by recording images and videos, then transferring them into digital drawings to compare. It also involved interviews with the owners, occupants, archaeologists and anthropologists. The historical data were collected from books and other sources.

Findings and Analysis

The architectural value of the traditional house of Rumah Larik is that it has a meaning full of local values that reflect the perspective and philosophy of life of the Kerinci people. Indeed, traditional Rumah Larik seems to provide an interpretation for anyone who wants to know the philosophy of the Kerinci people's life. In fact, the cultural landscape is also closely related to the values adopted by the Kerinci community. They include how the social relations are, and how the vertical relationships with the creators and ancestors are.

In 1901 AD, the Dutch began to enter Kerinci until a war broke out with several Dutch troops. However, the Dutch troops failed to enter the Kerinci Nature. In 1903 AD, the people of Kerinci fought back, resulting in the 'Depati Parbo war'.

During the Dutch colonial rule, Kerinci did not mix with the indigenous people of Kerinci. However, there are still many remains in the form of buildings in Sungai Penuh, Kayu Aro, and Temiai. The Dutch succeeded in persuading Sultan Rusli, the Tuanku Regent, and the Sultan of Indrapura to bring the Dutch troops to Alam Kerinci to avoid resistance from the Kerinci people. However, it turned out that the opposite happened. The resistance of the people of Kerinci was so great that there was a three-month war on the Central Island.

The Central Island war, under the command of Depati Parbo took the lives of many women and children after the Dutch burned down the village. In 1904 AD, Kerinci fell under

the Dutch rule after losing the war, and Depati Parbo was exiled to Ternate. In 1909, the Netherlands issued a Decree of the Government of the Kingdom of the Netherlands (Government Besluit) Number 13 dated 3 November 1909, stating that Sungai Penuh was designated as the capital of Kerinci.

At that time, many villages were burned by the Dutch, including Pulau Tengah and Debai Hamlet. This area was subsequently rebuilt independently by the community with a new pattern where people who used to live in Rumah Larik remained clustered in the burnt locations. These kampong fires gave birth to vernacular architecture that was very different from the original traditional architecture of Pendung Hiang.

In the location, there are still many buildings from the Dutch colonial period, such as the colonial-style houses with wooden roofs (site observation). This shows that there were limited building materials at that time, and there were adjustments to the local materials. The Dutch East Indies government built a Government Center between the two hamlets, namely Dusun Sungai Penuh (Sungge Pnoh) and Dusun Pondok Tinggi (Linggai), in a rice field area belonging to the residents for generations, as part of the Sungai Penuh community and partly belonging to the Pondok Tinggi community (now Jalan Jend Corridor. Sudirman).



Fig. 3: The Vernacular house in Pendung hiang and Dutch Houses
Source: Digitalization by Yanita Mila Ardiani (Author)



The Fig 3. above shows that what is most commonly built in the area is no longer a traditional larik house. In fact, they built their own houses and used the same model roof as a Dutch colonial house. The customary system of the community is reflected in the arrangement of their residential areas, namely the traditional house of Rumah Larik. The traditional house of the Kerinci Tribe is called the Larik house because of its array, lined up, and attached shape. Unlike traditional Indonesian houses in general and in other areas, most houses are independent and separated by large houses.

From the above figure, we see that the Original Rumah Larik are lined up and attached to each other. This is because of the customary relationship built in each of the main houses, which is given a connecting door. In this type, the traditional Rumah larik, the Dutch haven't influenced, and therefore, it attaches to one relationship between the daughter and another from the mother's descendants. The mother has the main house, and when she has a female child, the mother must make a house attached to the main house.

Thus, this house grows, sticking to the sides and so on. Some of the rules of the Rumah Larik traditional house are still applied in this Pendung Hiang vernacular house.

In this study, three vernacular houses were taken to be compared. The three of them are located in the village or settlement area of Pendung Hiang village.

Table 1: 3 Vernacular Houses in Pendung Hiang
Source: Author

Vernacular House Pendung hiang 1	Vernacular House Pendung hiang 2	Vernacular House Pendung hiang 3
		
		
		
		

In all vernacular houses, when viewed from the shape of the plan, it can be seen that the arrangement in the first floor is still the same as the traditional Rumah Larik used for livestock. Now it functions as a children's bedroom or service section.

This vernacular house in Pendung hiang still applies the division of spaces like the traditional house as follows.

1. The family room becomes one with the dining room on the 2nd floor and the back on the 2nd floor is used as a bedroom. The dining room can be placed between the bedroom one and the bedroom 2. Because the habit of eating in this pendung hiang village is "lesehan" (eating on the floor), the dining room can be put together or together with the dining room for more details in the image on the table. This is where the living house in this vernacular space exists. The space in the house becomes alive, and family members come together in this common dining room and family room which is one.

2. In the vernacular houses numbered from 1 to 3, the bedrooms are laid with different door positions with different forms of bedrooms. However, all of them are in one zone, namely on the 2nd floor at the back. This bedroom is not the main focus in the house, but all get the windows to face out and get natural clean air into the room. This vernacular house has many windows above that are around the house, especially on the second floor. This is because the houses are spaced apart from one another. This house is built on a large area of land, which is different from the original traditional Rumah Larik in Kerinci which the original Rumah Larik is attached to each row lines with one with kinship customs that are still upheld today.
3. The stairs are placed on the outside, different from the traditional Rumah Larik in Kerinci, where they are placed inside. Considering the fire incident in this village, the stairs are now located outside the house.
4. Bathrooms and service rooms are also located in the first-floor zone, which is different from the main room upstairs. Even in the traditional Rumah Larik, the bathroom is still placed in the 1st floor. This is because the bathroom requires water, and there is no pump that pumps water upwards. Another reason is the habit of bathing in the old traditional house which is still in the 1st floor of the house.
5. At the top, in the ceiling, as in the original Larik Pendung hiang traditional house, heirlooms from the ancestors are still placed. In this vernacular house, it is also the same. Heirlooms are placed on top of the attic in the ceiling. No special space is made, but just like a traditional Rumah Larik, heirlooms can be hung believed to protect residents from the evil intentions of others against those in the house.
6. The roof has completely changed from the original Rumah Larik roof shape of the house's gable. In this vernacular house, the roof has been influenced by the Dutch roofs. This technique is also applied in this Hiang pendung vernacular house. The shape of the roof has been modified in accordance with the plan of the house.
7. The wide open land space in front of the vernacular house with a comprehensive road is much different from the arrangement of the original Rumah Larik. Rumah Larik in the front area is close to the road attached to each other's houses. There is no remaining distance for the inner garden, the side, and the front of the house. This has been done to create a natural balance as is also seen in the orientation of this settlement or village, which is visible in the mountain in front of it.

The vernacular house in Pendung Hiang still applies the standards that existed in the original traditional house array in Pendung hiang. Nevertheless, many are new, such as the large land and independent houses as well as in the roofing techniques and technologies. Existing beliefs are also still maintained in saving existing ancestral relics.

This is where the Pendung Hiang Vernacular house continues, even though it is old. Thus it can be said that the living house is very well preserved.

Conclusion

When many villages were burned by the Dutch, including Dusun Tengah and Dusun Debai, this area was rebuilt independently by the community with a new pattern where people who used to live in Rumah Larik (traditional house) built each house and remained clustered in the burnt locations. The traumatic condition of the traditional Rumah larik that are lined up and attached side by side to each other gave birth to a vernacular architecture that is different in shape from the original Larik traditional house in Pendung Hiang.

However, the Living House still remains the same as the original of the Rumah Larik in the Living room and dining room area even though it is different in facade form. This gives a new richness and distinction to the vernacular architecture in Kerinci Jambi.

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