

Forms and Spatial Characteristics of Proto Malay Houses: Lessons learnt from Tribal Houses in the Coastal East Sumatra, Indonesia.

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Abstract

The Proto Malay Family group is the first wave of human migration to inhabit the Southeast Asian region, especially in the Malay Peninsula and Sumatra. The Akit, Lom, Duano, and Laut tribes who inhabit the Eastern Sumatra are among them. This paper aims to determine the Proto Malay family residence's form and spatial characteristics. It uses the documentary study method and field studies. Research results of previously done research are analyzed to generate data to add to the findings from the field study.

The study notes that form and space characteristics in the Proto Malay tribal residences emphasize efficiency and flexibility. Spaces in residential homes are always divided into three parts, with the middle part being the core because that is where most of the time and household activities are carried out. The front room has always been a semi-public space that functions to socialize and perform traditional rituals. At the same time, the back is still part of the kitchen and household appliance storage. Like the spatial aspect, the form aspect of the Proto Melayu tribe house also puts forward functionality, which can be seen from selecting a square base shape and a simple prism as a form of roof covering. Furthermore, the sea and boats are also the inspiration for the form of building houses. The wooden pile foundation represents the floating of the boat on the water, and the orientation of the building facing the primary water source, namely the river or the beach, strengthens the ties of the Proto Melayu tribe with water.

Keywords: Characteristics, Coastal Settlement, Form and Spatial, Proto-Malay House, Tribe House.

Introduction

The Proto Malay group is the first wave of human migration to inhabit the Southeast Asian region, particularly in the Malay Peninsula and Sumatra. The Duano, Akit, Lom, and Laut tribes who inhabited the Eastern Sumatra were among them. The Duano, Akit, Lom, and Laut tribes also have almost the same character, and it can be seen how they occupy coastal areas and settle and make a living in these coastal areas. The Duano and Laut tribes can be said to be a group of Sea tribes whose initial settlement was in the Kajang canoe (boat) and who migrated and then lived in the coastal area. The Akit tribe can also live in a raft or Rakit house, a raft of water transportation. While the Lom tribe is seen from the existing research records, it is also a tribe that occupies a coastal ocean area, where their home is interpreted from the ship's shape that brought them to migrate before.

This paper aims to determine the Malay proto group's form and spatial characteristics using documentation and field study methods. The literature used is the result of research done previously by the researchers themselves and other research. Fox (2006) says that there are similarities and differences in the cultural traditions of Austronesian houses. Spatial, physical, and figural configuration and style are the linkage levels on architectural characteristics comparison (Kahmdevi, 2020). Khamdevi (2020) also says that generally, the tribes in the coastal areas of Sumatra interpret the house as a place to live without dividing space based on certain activities. Therefore, Khamdevi (2020) explains that the space in the houses of tribes on the coast of Sumatra is often similar to the division of activity zones.

Otherwise, indigenous houses or vernacular houses along the East coast of Sumatra consist of 3 (three) rooms, which have almost the same function but are different in terms (Faisal and Wihardyanto, 2020). Moreover, the Duano, Akit, Lom, and Laut tribes are part of the tribes on the coast of Sumatra, so it is possible to describe the statements above.

Research Methodology

The research uses a qualitative approach to review and describe the literature and field studies data. To get clarifications, the data is generated from sites in East Sumatra. In addition, the literature review will support field studies in finding primary data.



Fig. 1: Location of ethnic study in this research.

Source: Author

The research collected data through observation, documentation, and interview approaches. The research locations in this discussion are; Tanah Merah village in Indragiri Hilir, Titi Akar village in Rupert island; Sesap village in Meranti island; Pejam village in Bangka island; and Air Bingkai village in Lingga island (Fig. 1). Data analysis will describe three categories: space, shape/form, and style. The study results are preliminary descriptions of the literature findings and the field study, comparison, and discussion of the analysis of linkages, similarities, and differences in architectural characteristics at the end of these publications (Table 1).

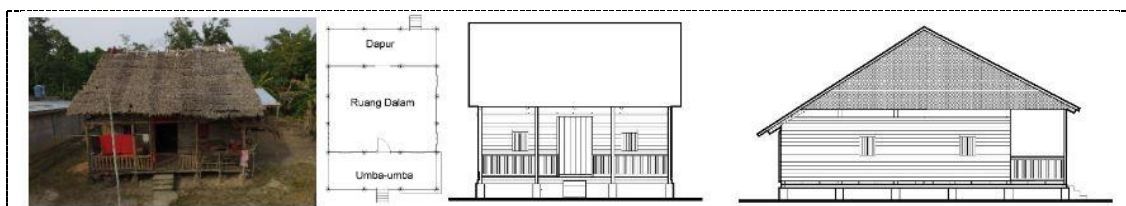
Table 1. Architectural Characteristics Consistencies of the Traditional House (Khamdevi, 2019)

	Habraken (1988)	Hiller (1993)	Gero & Ding (2001)	Hanson (In Bafna, 2012)
Space	human behavior (space hierarchy)	theoretical intent	common genes	cultural imprint related/strong/consistent
Shape & Form	cultural artifacts / social construction	embryonic form	genetic engineering	can be consistent and change
Style			new style	the trend to change and vary

Source: Author

Findings

Based on the field study results and the literature obtained, the following is explained by the space division in Akit, Lom, Duano, and Laut houses. First, Akit's house in Rupert island is built on piles. The house's interior can be found in three main parts; *umba* as front space, the main hall, and a kitchen (Firzal et al., 2017; Limbeng, 2011). Second, the Akit house in Meranti island is square by dividing space into three parts, *Selaso*, *Luang Tengah*, and *Luang Dapu* (Faisal and Amanati, 2018). Furthermore, Lom house is made in one space without an internal wall. This space is divided using *bendul*, a beam on the floor, into three parts; *Jabo* or *Luer*, *Tengah*, and *Dapur* (Faisal et al., 2016; Deqy, 2014). Next, *Rumah Duano* is also called *Rumah Redi*, and the house has a *Pelantar* or front hall; the main room is in the middle as a communal space, a place to repair nets, sleep and eat, in the back. Then, a court serves as a kitchen and a bath, and another function as a tethering canoe (Faisal, 2018; Bestari et al., 2019). Finally, *Suku Laut* house consists of a front porch which is joined by the *Pelantaran*, then there is a living room that functions as a bed, a dining room, and other primary activities, and then at the back, there is a kitchen with a platform for mooring the canoe (Bestari et al., 2019; Dermawan et al., 2019).

**Fig. 2:** Suku Akit House in Rupert Island

Source: Author

**Fig. 3:** Suku Akit House in Meranti Island

Source: Author

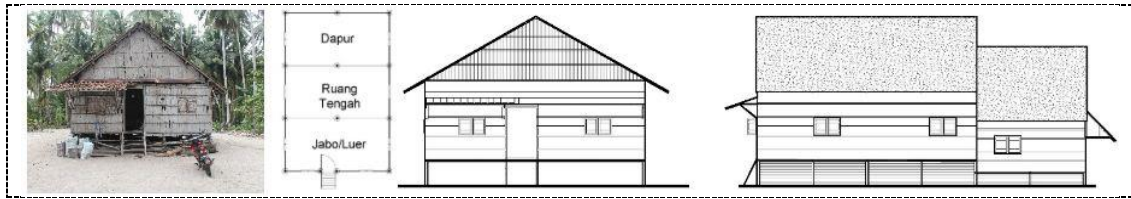


Fig. 4: Suku Lom House in Bangka Island
Source: Author

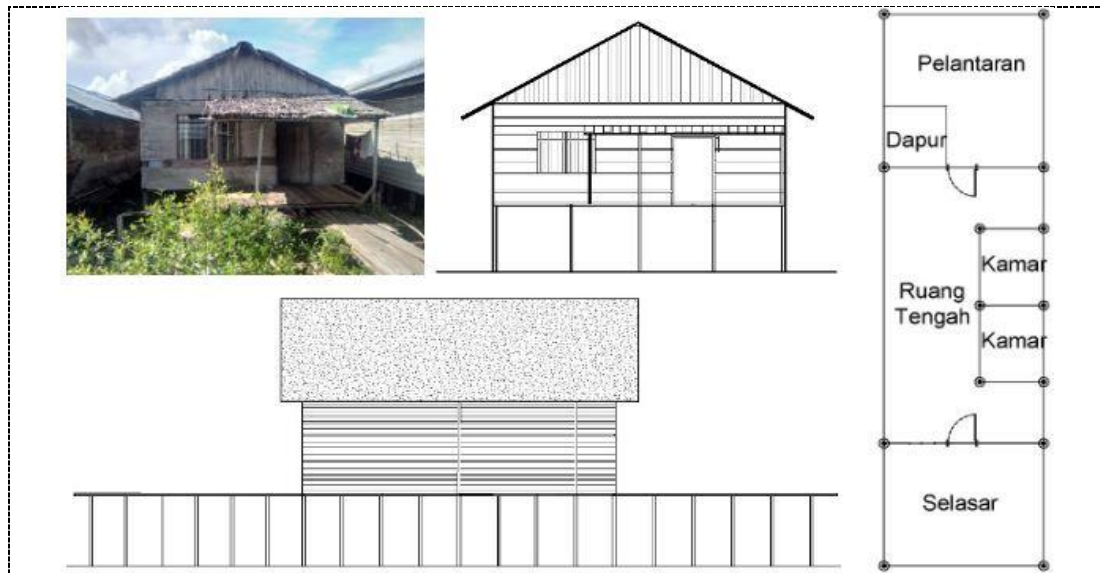


Fig. 5: Suku Duano House in Indragiri Hilir
Source: Author



Fig. 6: Suku Laut House in Lingga Island
Source: Author

Discussion

Rumah Suku Akit in Rupert Island

The Akit house is a stilt house with wooden poles on a pedestal base. The roof of this house is in the form of a saddle, but it leads to the side, with the roof covering Kepau and Rumbia leaves' material form. The house walls are made of wood or wood-processed boards, while the floor is made of wood or bamboo. Rectangular house plans with a division of space consisting of dolphins (*umba-umba*) or terraces, inner room (*ruang dalam*), and a kitchen (*dapur*) (see Fig. 2).

This Akit house is usually located in a coastal area or close to a coastal area. The Akit house division uses *Benul*, which signifies the difference between the outside and the inside of the house from a wooden block. At the same time, the orientation of the building faces the sea. Osawa (2016) mentions the name "Orang Akit," which has been derived from their custom of building a house on a raft and living in it (Hijmans van Anrooij 1885; Loeb 1935), and Max Moszcowski (1909) took a photograph of such a house at the beginning of the twentieth century at the midstream of the Siak River.

Rumah Suku Akit in Meranti Island

The Akit house in Meranti is rectangular, extending to the back, starting with the cello, middle room, and table space (see Fig. 3). Leisure means space that functions differently from one another, but leisure here has no boundaries, only an imaginary space, but they will not violate the space rules of the function. The dividing of space is called *Bendul*, like a beam.

The house's orientation is to the South, called *Angin Tua*—a stage-shaped house with a gable roof and a ridge to the front. Roof coverings are made from Nipah leaves or Sago leaves. The walls and floor are made of sago fronds because sago is a plant often found in the Meranti Islands.

The house of Suku Akit is a transformation of the Akit people's knowledge about a "raft." In the story, it is said that the Akit people followed the river to settle to a place on the orders of the King using a raft; they lived on a raft. The house on this raft was the forerunner and transformation of the Akit tribe settlement.

Rumah Suku Lom in Bangka Island

Umah Panggong is the name of Lom's house; this house has a rectangular-shaped shape. Saddle roof with an orientation toward the front, where the forward position is the sea. House design represents a break with tradition in several respects. Traditionally built houses are stilted and raised from the ground by a meter or so, the walls are made from bark, the roof from palm leaves, and they can easily be enlarged as needs arise (Smedal, 1989).

On the other hand, house walls are made of the skin of the Klukup or Meranti tree. The roof of Lom's house is made from leaves and has changed to a tile roof. This space is divided using *Bendul*, a beam on the floor, into three-part; *Jabo* or *Luer*, *Tengah*, and *Dapur*. *Jabo* or *Luer* is a room in front of the house to receive guests, and this is a semi-public space. In the center of the house, we see *Ruang Tengah*; *Tengah* means the center for the living room. Then, at backspace are kitchen, for cooking and the dining room.

The Lom tribe's house has the form and division of space from the ship's transformation that brought the first people to live in this area. In mythology, people have not said that a ship is stranded on this island and cannot return; this person is the forerunner of the Lom people (Deqy, 2014).

Rumah Suku Duano in Indragiri Hilir

Sampan Kajang is a means of transportation and the Duano community. Above the canoe, the Duano community can live, get married, give birth, and die. In its development, the Duano community has several other dwelling types; this dwelling transforms and changes the community's life ecologically, culturally, and other factors such as colonialism and warfare.

Formerly, the Orang Duano in the waters of the East Coast of Sumatra lived sailing using a boathouse which they called the *Sampan Kajang* that not only functions as transportation but also as a home or dwelling place or that protects them from the hot sun, exposure to rain and hurricanes (Azhari et al., 2020).

Bonu Redi is the name of the Duano people for the residence they first built on land; Bagan House is a house that was founded by the Duano community in the middle of the sea as a transit point in search of marine commodities; whereas Pongdu's house is a house as a temporary escape during colonial times (Bestari et al., 2019). Judging from the shape of the house, Redi House is a stage house with a saddle roof, has three parts of the room, namely the *Selasar* or front passage, the living room which has a room, the backside readiness as a kitchen, and the shower and place to tether the canoe. This house is made of mangrove wood construction, with the bark's initial walls and palm leaves roof.

Rumah Suku Laut in Lingga Island

Laut tribe house is a house that they make based on their knowledge of living and settling. Their house is called the "*Rumah pancang*: a house made of wood stuck, a pole called *pancang*. The pillar of this house is installed on the ground so that the house does not sink at high tide. The Laut tribe people began to settle in the settlement since there was assistance from the government to gather this community into an adequately recorded area. On the front of the *Pancang* house, a terrace is combined with a roofless platform and divided into the house; a multi-functional living room functions as a bed, meals, and other activities. The back is varied, and there is a kitchen and or bathroom and development in the form of a room for storing power supplies and a place to repair canoes and tie them up.

The room in this *pancang* house is based on the knowledge of the Laut tribe living on a *Kajang* canoe, where the spatial arrangement of the canoe is transformed into the form of a stake. Like the *Kajang* canoe, in the middle, there is a protective cover in the form of a *Kajang* (awning roof), and the front and rear sides are not protected. In a group of settlements, Laut tribes group and congregate among themselves; the houses are stacked next to one another, between which there is a connecting bridge so that it is easier for them to visit each other. Prawirosusanto (2015) states that understanding the sea people about a house's concept is not limited to a physical building that functions as a place to live only but is based more on individual kinship relationships (social organizations).

The house is oriented towards the sea, where the sea is a living source and resources and livelihoods. As life reveals itself, the water world is about engagement and not an imposition; about dwelling and not a building; and about embracing a view rather than formulating a view which alternatively put, the Orang Suku Laut inscribe their identities into the seascape (Chou, 2016)

*Comparison of Akit, Lom, and Duano House in east Sumatra***Table 2.** The Comparison of Akit, Lom and Duano House in east Sumatra

Architectural Characteristics		Suku Akit Rupert	Suku Akit Meranti	Suku Lom Bangka	Suku Duano Indragiri Hilir	Suku Laut Lingga
	Space Pattern	Umba-umba (front space); Ruang Dalam (living); Dapur (kitchen)	Selaso(front); Luang Tengah (living); Luang Dapur (kitchen)	Jabo/luer (front); Tengah (living); Dapur (kitchen)	Selasar (front); Tengah (living); Pelantaran (back)	Pelantaran with porch (front); Living room; Kitchen with Pelantaran (back)
Spatial System	Orientation	Sea	South (called angin tua-old wind)	Sea	Sea / East (sunrise)	Sea
	Hierarchy	Public, semi-private, private	Semipublic, semiprivate, private	Semipublic, semiprivate, private	Public, semiprivate, private	Public, semiprivate, private
	Physical form	Rakit (boat, raft)	Rakit (boat, raft)	Boat	Sampan Kajang (boat, canoe)	Sampan Kajang (boat, canoe)
Physical System & Figural Quality	Materials	Woods, bamboos, Skin of wood, Rattan	Wood, Bamboos, Midrib Sago, Rattan	Wood, Bamboo, Rattan	Bakau wood, nipah, Rattan	Bakau-Nibung-Resak wood, Nipah, Rattan,
	Space Barrier	Benul, Room wall	Bendul	Bendul	Room wall	-
	Roof	Gable roof (palm fronds)	Gable roof (sago leaf)	Gable roof (palm fronds)	Gable (Kajang)/ screw-pine leaf, palm fronds	Gable (Kajang)/ screw-pine leaf, palm fronds
Stylistic System	Column	pole	Poles and bolts	Plentok or piles, sumul, tael	Bakau wood – bloti (pole)	Pole (Nibung and Bakau wood)
	Openings	Windows of skin wood	Opening of midrib sago	Jenang (windows frame)	opening windows	opening windows

Source: Author

Conclusion

The study noted that spatial characteristics in the Proto Malay tribe's residence emphasized efficiency and flexibility. Space in residential homes is always divided into three parts, with the center being the core because that is where most of the time and household activities are carried out. The front room has always been a semi-public space that functions to socialize and perform traditional rituals. In comparison, the back is always a part of storing kitchen and household appliances.

The functional aspect animates the shape of the Proto Melayu tribe's house-building, inspired by the spatial arrangement of a simple boat (raft boat). The Proto Malay house's basic shape is a square consisting of 3 zones without wall insulations. It resembles a simple boat's basic shape where humans, as boat drivers, are in the middle to carry out their boat activities. The Proto Melayu tribe's house's bottom and roof are inspired by how the boat is at sea and how humans protect themselves from the weather. The boat must continue to float on the water so that the humans in it are safe; that is why the Proto Melayu tribe house was built using a wooden pillar foundation above the ground. Simultaneously, the form of roof covering used is a simple prism using natural materials that exist. If the Proto Melayu tribe adds space, they will add a mass of new buildings connected to the main building, and this is similar to what was done by the Proto Melayu tribe when carrying goods by boat.

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