

Study of Vernacular Coastal Architecture: The Construction of Akit's House in Rupert Island

Yohannes Firzal*, Muhammad Rijal, Gun Faisal

Department of Architecture, Universitas Riau

yfirzal@eng.unri.ac.id

*Corresponding Author

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Abstract: Akit's house is made mainly by a wood construction, and found as a stilt type house. Roof of the house is made by leaves, and skin of tree is still used as its wall. Nowadays, some changes have occurring on this vernacular house. In turn, this changing becomes an interesting phenomenon, particular on its construction of the house. This research has conducted in qualitative approach in order to find how the changes of the house. Field data gathered by a range of methods such as observation, story-telling, and documentation. The data are analysed and interpreted within an iterative process to expand understanding of the house's changing. Thus, this research offers an architectural insight into how the cultural life affects on Akit's house.

Keywords: Akit; Vernacular; House; Wood Construction.

Introduction: Non-Muslim Malay in Rupert Island

Akit can be identified as an ethnic people who have settled down at Rupert island for centuries. They are recognised as landed-sea gypsy people who have housed on land, but are mostly living with sea life tradition such as fisherman and is also found as an animism ethnic people.

The word of Akit itself is originated from 'Rakit' which is literally meant a raft. According to Limbeng (2011), Akit people came from Gassib Sultanate era, and is found as descendants of a mixture of local and Chinese. Today, they are mostly housed in Rupert Island and Bagansiapiapi, Riau. In Rupert Island, more than 70% population of Titian Akar village are Akit. They are settle on coastal area of the island, or at estuary of river.

Literature Review: Vernacular Architecture on Coastal Area

Vernacular architecture is defined as common architectural that produce by common people, and based on nature and ecological values that is respect to local culture and environment. Vernacular architecture can be seen as a product architectural which is based on local tradition in order to maximise the local such as material, and knowledge (Rapoport, 1969). Oliver (1987) points out character of the architecture can be known as rural settlements; types and processes of construction; built on the ground; maximise local resources; coping with climate; living space; respect local values, symbols and meanings; and decorated dwelling. Kingstone (2003) argues that vernacular architecture is built based on local culture, influenced by regional, and constructed by community by local people.

In this research, Akit's house has found as house in the way in which is build on pile with local material (Limbeng, 2011). As found as vernacular architecture, the house is built by unwritten knowledge how its constructed. Despite constructed by tradition that handed down from one generation to another, the house has found can make a well adaptation with coastal and island environment.



3. Research Methods: Listening Voice from the Field

This research has conducted by using qualitative approach in order to find variety character and changing of Akit's house. Grounded theory is used to classify and categorise filed data. According to Burgess (1991: 1), fieldwork study become a main instrument of social investigation in order to acquire a detailed understanding of situation.

The data was gathered by wide range of methods such as field observation, interview, and documentation. Observation was mainly aimed to take a sense of existing by seeing existing of Akit's house. Storytelling method was performed to local people in order to make a close relationship with local people. As Kellett (2011: 341) posits that relationships have always been central to fieldwork ... everything is contingent on the quality of the relationships which the fieldworker is able to build up with others. Documentation was used as visual frame not only on the house, but also on situation around the house.

4. Akit's House: A Vernacular Coastal Architecture

Akit's house is built on piles. Interior of the house can be found in three main parts; umbra as front space, main hall, and kitchen. According to local people, despite nowadays can be found at interior of the Island, original houses were mostly constructed near to coastal. They had erected as a traditional wood construction. Roof of the house was made by leaves, and its wall was assembled of tree bark. Connection of its construction was fasten by wooden pegs, or tied up with rattan. However, this house is barely found today.

Akit's house today can be seen in wide range of form variation, but is mostly mimic to the original. The basic form is still same with several changing. This changing has mostly caused due to lack of original's house materials, and also of influences new knowledge in house construction.



Figure 1. Roof material (left); Typical Akit's house at Titian Akar Village, Rupert (right)

In house construction, wood based material is mostly used on all over the house. This can be seen on house frame, wall, floor, roof, and its windows.



Figure 2. Vernacular Wooden Construction

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Replacing the bark wall to wooden plank is mostly occurred on the house. The bark can be only made by skinning particular kind of tree from forest. According to local people, unavailability the tree becomes the main reason why Akit replaces the wall's material. This follows to change on its fastening ways from the pegs or rattan to iron nail. The roof is also an object to change as well. Metal roof has replacing the leaves. Moreover, colour paint and glass windows are also used on the house today.

Due to wood decay and lack of material, construction of Akit's house is changing as well. This changing is mostly occurred on foundation and frame of the house.

As a vernacular coastal architecture, Akit's house cannot avoid to influence of what today's call modernisation. In this research, the house has changing, and is trying to accommodate today's needs, in particular adopting current materials. However, despite these changing, Akit people are still preserving the basic form of the house until today. This can be seen how they are preserving house construction in applying new material.

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Figure 3. Replacing with today's material



Figure 4. Replacing house's pile to concrete pedestal

Conclusion

As a vernacular coastal architecture, Akit's house cannot avoid to influence of what today's call modernisation. In this research, the house has changing, and is trying to accommodate today's needs, in particular adopting current materials. However, despite these changing, Akit people are still preserving the basic form of the house until today. This can be seen how they are preserving house construction in applying new material.

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