

REPRESENTATION OF CULTURAL IDENTITY IN LIMAS HOUSE PALEMBANG

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ABSTRACT

This study analyzes the *limas* house as reflect of Palembang cultural identity, which is interpreted as the identity of "as to becoming". The change in the *limas* house as a cultural marker is adaptive and dynamic following changes in cultural identity, mainly a family structure, kinship relationship, gender, and marital status. This research uses a qualitative method with the structuralism and phenomenological approach. The informant criteria determined purposively. The data was collected using observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. The study uses structural analysis to find the structure of form and the layout of the *limas* house. The analysis of cultural studies is carried out to provide context for the dynamics of changes in cultural identity that affect changes in the *limas* house. The results showed the structure of the *limas* house reflects the organizing the layout of the house according to family structure, kinship relationship, gender, and marital status as the cultural identity Palembang. The cultural identity is dynamic through the processes of production and reproduction, thus influencing changes in the *limas* house. The dynamics of change show the *limas* house can accommodate social continuity. *Limas* house is an arena that shows cultural identity through building changes that are adaptive to the social processes. *Limas* house needs to be protected, maintained, and developed through reinterpretation and revitalization in line with the cultural dynamics of the society.

Keywords: Limas house; representation; production; reproduction; cultural identity.

INTRODUCTION

One of the buildings with vernacular architecture in Indonesia is the *limas* house of Palembang in South Sumatra Province. This house has existed since the time of the Palembang Darussalam Sultanate (1455 – 1851) and is the residence of a noble family with the titles prince, Raden, and Masagus. Currently, the *limas* houses are mostly owned by descendants of noble families through the inheritance process, some of which have even been traded to other people.

The location of the *limas* house faces the river and extends along the river bank or over the river body in a row, thus forming linear settlement patterns, either from the right or the left of the river. This settlement pattern can also be clustered, especially houses built-in dry river deltas. This condition is inseparable from the geographical location of Palembang, which consists of rivers and mostly consists of wetlands or swamps so that it is not far from the river.

The *limas* house has a split pyramid roof with a rectangular building form and is located above the height of the house 1.5 – 2 meters above ground level. The layout of the *limas* house or house body consists of the front (*luan*), the middle (*tenga*), and the back of the house (*buri*). The three body parts of the *limas* house have different floor heights (*bengkilas*). The height limit between these *bengkilas* is a *kekijing* with a thickness of 5 cm.

The architectural feature of the *limas* house is the result of adaptation between the natural environment and the culture of the community that meets the comfort aspect (Siswanto *et al.*, 2011). *Limas* house is built according to the values, norms, and cultural rules of the community. Culture is the main factor in the formation of architectural space (Askarizad, 2018; Gulati *et al.*, 2019), which is closely related to the structural, historical, political, economic, and social aspects of society, which are built by, from, and for the community (Sheida Ettehad, Amir Reza Karimi Azeri, 2014).

Limas house has a philosophy based on the culture of its people related to the essential values contained in the house, which contains cultural knowledge passed down from one generation to the next so that the house can reflect cultural identity (Aziz *et al.*, 2019; Bedeleian, 2012). Bourdieu (1977: 94) states that the house to a 'book' that children can read and study in understanding world views. Levi-Strauss (1973) states that the house can reunite conflicting principles, such as descent and no descent, matrilineal and patrilineal kinship systems, or marriage with close and distant relatives.

Currently, *Limas* house has undergone many changes that cause it is no longer like the original shows that there has been a change in the form and function of the house (Taal, 2008). There have been changes in residential elements, including houses on stilts, including *limas* houses, both in the form of top-

down, horizontal, and adjustment. This change cannot be separated from the process of meaning by the community, along with the socio-cultural processes that occur. The dynamics of cultural identity then affect changes in the form and layout of the house (Bambang *et al.*, 2016).

This article analyzes changes in the form and organization of the *limas* house layout as a manifestation of the dynamic process of Palembang's cultural identity. Cultural identity is not a kind of permanent essence rooted in the past. Cultural identity "goes through constant change" throughout history as it "constantly plays out in history, culture and power. Cultural identity "is not an essence, but a placement" (Hall, 1996). Cultural Identity is defined as identity "as becoming". The form and layout of the *limas* house act as a 'cultural marker' that describes cultural identity "as becoming".

METHODOLOGY

This study uses a qualitative-verification research design with structuralism and phenomenological approach, which focuses on the form and layout of the *limas* house as a product of the activities of the people's minds. The technique of determining the informants was done by purposive sampling. Data were collected by observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation.

Data analysis uses structural analysis techniques and cultural studies. Researchers used structural techniques to analyze the cultural structure as reflected in the form and layout of the *limas* house. Analysis of cultural studies is carried out to provide a context for the dynamics of cultural identity changes that impact changes in the *limas* house.

Researchers analyzed the structure of the form and the layout of the *limas* house belonging to Pangeran Syarif Abdurachman Alhabsi. The *limas* house is a typical pattern of the *limas* house that has not undergone many changes to represent the general pattern of a Palembang *limas* house. Researchers also analyzed the changes in the *limas* house building by taking examples of cases that other researchers have studied.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Limas House of Palembang

The basic form of the Palembang *limas* house consists of three parts, namely the top (*head*), middle (*body*), and bottom (*legs*) (Budiyuwono, 2016). The head is in the form of a split pyramid-form roof with a

slope of 45° - 60° , while the kitchen roof (*pawon*) is 10° - 17° . The body part of the house is the room where the occupants of the house carry out their daily activities in the house. The legs of the house are wooden poles to support the body of the house. These poles are positioned symmetrically and go into the ground. The stairs of the house are on the left and right of the house. This wooden ladder is called the *kiai-kemulan*.



Fig. 1. Head, body, and leg of *limas* house (Source: Budiyuwono 2016)

The first room of the *limas* house after climbing the stairs is the *paggar tenggalung*. This space is the front porch which is bordered by an open fence (*paggar tenggalung*). This room has the lowest floor than the other floors. Anyone can enter this room, because this room is public. This *paggar tenggalung* room is a veranda and is located one level below the *bengkilas bawa*. In this section, there is a *jogan* or guard room. This room is exclusively for men, while women are prohibited from being in this *jogan*. Every day this room serves as a bedroom for boys (*bujang*). The *paggar tenggalung* and *bengkilas bawa* rooms are the *luan* or front of the house.

The *jeroo* or *tenga* whose floor is higher than the *bengkilas bawa*. *Jeroo* consists of *bengkilas pucuk* and *gegajah* room. The two rooms are bordered by the *lawang kiyam*, which is only opened when needed, such as during traditional ceremonies. The *bengkilas pucuk* has a lower floor than the *gegajah* (*pedalon*), which is the highest floor. This *gegajah* is the main room of the house under the main roof of the *limas* house. This room functions as a place for traditional ceremonies performed by women. Men are not allowed in this room when traditional ceremonies are being held.

The *gegajah* floor is further divided into three rooms, namely the *amben tetuo* (place for the elders), the *pangkeng penganten* (the bridal bedroom), and the *pangkeng keluargo* (the family bedroom). *Amben tetuo* is the floor right between the *pangkeng penganten* and the *pangkeng keluargo*. The *amben tetuo* has no walls, so it is open. The *pangkeng penganten* is on the left there is *amben tetuo*, while on the right is *pangkeng keluargo*. The *pangkeng penganten* functions as the place for the newlyweds'

room, while the *pangkeng keluarga* or the family room of the house owner. The location of the *pangkeng kepuntren* is on the side of *pangkeng penganten*, while the *pangkeng keputran* is on the side of the *pangkeng keluarga*. *Pangkeng kepuntren* is a special room for girls, while the *keputran* is for boys.



Fig. 2. Front View of Limas House



Fig. 3. Pagar Tenggulung (left) and Ruang Paggar Tenggulung (right)



Fig. 4. Gegajah room

The back of the *limas* house is the *buri*, which functions as a *pawon* (kitchen). This kitchen is no longer under the main pyramid roof but has its own roof. A kitchen is a place where the food production process takes place and is sacred. Men shouldn't be in this room. There is also a *nyai's* (grandmother's) bedroom. The kitchen as a women's area is also associated with women as a symbol of fertility that gives life to humanity.

The legs of the *limas* house are wooden poles to support the body of the house. These poles are positioned symmetrically and burrow into the ground. The *limas* house is a house on stilts with a pole height

of 1.5 – 2 meters, requiring steps to enter the house. These stairs are on the left and right of the house.

The structure of this *limas* house forms the same pattern, which is divided into three parts of the house, both horizontally (layout) and vertically (section). The layout consists are the head, body, and leg, while the section consist is the *luan* (front), *jeroo/tenga* (central/middle), and *buri* (back). Two parts of the house are in opposition to each other, while the other part is united into two opposing parts to become a unity that reflects harmony.

Limas House as Representation of Palembang's Cultural Identity

According to Purnama (2000), the *limas* house structure shows two axes that connect the binary opposition between the *paggar tenggalung* (PT) – *pawon* (PW) spaces with the *pangkeng penganten* (PP) – *pangkeng/amben keluarga* (AK) axis. The other two shafts are the axis between the *jogan room* (JG1) – *the keputran* (KPA) and the *jogan room* axis (JG2) – *the kepuntren* (KPE). These four axes meet at the same common ground as the centre of balance, namely *amben tetuo* room, thus forming a relationship structure based on social categories, namely the five classification system, which consists of four axes that are in binary opposition to each other and one point which is the centre of balance of the four axes, as shown in the following picture.

The five classification structure is symbolic, meaning that something can explain something else. The organizational structure of the layout of the *limas* house can explain the cultural identity of Palembang by identifying the value system and rules regarding the use of the *limas* house by the community. The use of spaces in the *limas* house is related to the social categories of whether or not the house occupants may occupy certain parts of the house according to the culture of the Palembang society. The importance of social categories in the use of space in the house is also found in the studies, which describe the relationship between the use of space in the house and the order of social relations based on social categories (Cunningham, 1964; Ng, 2006) and Purnama (2008).

The *paggar tenggalung* – *pawon* space is the first axis of the *limas* house classification system. The axis connects the *luan* which is the male territory with the *buri* which is the woman territory. *The paggar tenggalung* room is a place to receive guests who have no kinship, so it is public, while the *pawon* is a room that only applies to house women. Other people are not allowed into the *buri*, so it is private. This axis shows two rooms that have characteristics based on gender classification (Purnama, 2000).

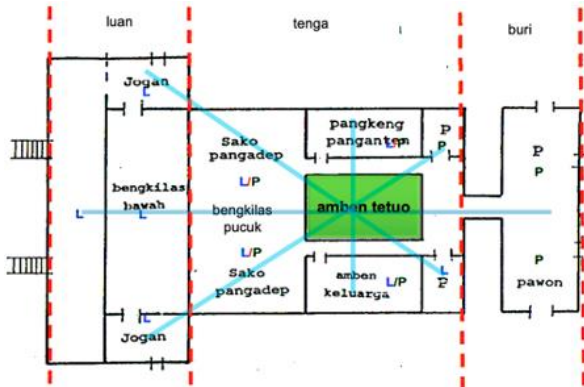


Fig. 5. Use of space according to social categories

The second axis is the *pangkeng penganten* – *amben keluarga* which connects the room used by the newly married couple with the parent's room from children newly married. The axis connects two rooms that have different characteristics according to family relationship and marital status. The third axis is *jogan 1 – keputran*, which relates to the function of the room for boys. The *jogan 1* is for boys who are growing up (*akil balig*), while *keputran* is for boys. The axis shows the use of two rooms based on the level of family relationship status. The last axis is the *jogan axis 2 – keputren*. The axis relates to the function of the room according to family relationship status and gender. Similar to the function of *jogan 1*, the *jogan 2* is for boys who are *akil balig*, while the *keputren* is a room used for girls. These two rooms form an axis based on gender categories and family relationship status.

The four axes are centered in the *amben tetuo* room, thus forming a five classification system. *Amben tetuo* has characteristics that unite the functions of the four axes as the center of harmony and balance, thus forming a relationship structure based on the five classification system. According to Levi-Strauss (1973), the structure appears unconsciously, which is obtained through binary oppositions and forms a system of relationships between one element and another. However, the *limas* house architecture building shows a structure in the form of a symbolic classification system is dynamic. The changes that occur in the form and layout of the house implicitly show changes in interpreting the concept of a *limas* house. This is actually as stated by Ellen (1986), who view the structure of the house architecture is not 'static'. The house represents not only one fixed order, not only an expression of order but also the expressed order must be implemented in different ways by different people in different conditions so that the meaning of the house can be carried out. There are changes.

The layout of the *limas* house can also be distinguished based on the category of the occupants marital status. *Keputren* is a bedroom specifically for girls, while the *keputran* room is for boys. The two rooms are located opposite each other. The *keputren* room is located next to the *pangkeng penganten*, while the *keputran* room is adjacent to the *pangkeng keluarga*. This layout shows that the rooms of the residents of the house who are married are placed in front of the rooms for the occupants of the house who are not married, especially the nursery for the children. The space organizing is done as a form of parental protection and supervision of children. Their parents can monitor children who leave or enter their room to monitor children who leave or enter their room.

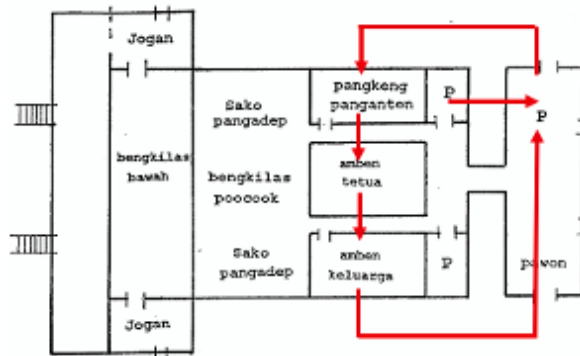


Fig. 6. The room shift cycle follows changes in women's marital status

Unmarried girls are placed in the *keputren* room, which is located beside the *pangkeng penganten*. However, when the girl has been proposed or to will marry, the girl is then *dipingit* by her parents. He was placed in the bedroom in the kitchen until the wedding was held. The couple would change rooms again by occupying the *pangkeng keluarga* if she was the eldest daughter in the family. This room change will occur if his parents have bequeathed the house. The parents will move to the *penunggu jeroo* in the *pawon*.

The newly married couple will live in the house because the custom of settling after the marriage of Palembang people is *uxorilocal*. This couple will occupy the *pangkeng penganten*. The couple will then change rooms again by occupying the *pangkeng keluarga* if the woman's parents have inherited the house or their parents are dead. His parents will move to the *penunggu jeroo*, which is located in the *pawon*. If this condition is not possible, then the newly married couple will temporarily remain in the *pangkeng penganten* until finally the rotation of rooms among the residents of the house is made

possible by having one of the family members die or establishing a new house not far from their parent's house or being brought by her husband moved away from the house of the woman's parents. The cycle process of moving rooms according to marital status takes place from generation to generation so that the existence of the *limas* house will always be maintained.

The *limas* house represents the cultural identity of the Palembang society relates to the societal system based on four social categorization systems. First, the *limas* house is used for extended families, namely families consisting of the nuclear family and other family members who are cognate relationship in the household economic unit. Second, the spatial arrangement according to gender differences. Three, organizing the layout of the *limas* house according to kinship relationship status. Four, the layout of the bedrooms is adjusted to the cycle of moving bedrooms based on changes in marital status. The four social categories are the embodiment of the cultural values of the Palembang society so that this vernacular house reflect the cultural identity. Cultural identity as a central mechanism in architectural renewal. Cultural identity is closely related to architectural renewal. Therefore, both serve as effective and valuable tools that can improve the quality of architectural innovation updates (Hosseini & Shahedi, 2011). The vernacular architecture can be interpreted as a relationship between form, function, meaning within a culture of people living in that area (Ashadi, 2020; Zare & Kazemian, 2014). Culture is a determining factor in the embodiment of an architectural building, while climate, construction, materials, and technology are only influencing factors (Rapoport, 1980). Vernacular building practices are more sustainable, environmentally friendly, and promote socio-cultural values (Shrestha, 2019).

This cultural identity of Palembang is dynamic. These are influenced by globalization that leads to the unification and standardization of cultures globally. Palembang society is doing social mobilization, both vertically and horizontally. Social interaction with other societies groups is getting more intense and widespread. The local cultural identity, social beliefs and traditional values are influenced by current consumerism trends and homogenization (Asquith & Vellinga, 2006). Palembang society is doing social mobilization, both vertically and horizontally. These conditions affect Palembang's local cultural values, including change in the societal system, such as family structure, kinship relationship, gender, and the replacement bedroom according to marital status.

Women are *wong ruma*, which shows the house is identical to women, while men are *penegak juray*

(family enforcers). Women have responsibilities in domestic affairs, including maintaining the house. A married woman with her husband will stay in her parents' *limas* house. In time, she will become the owner of the *limas* house until finally, she becomes the *penunggu jeroo*. Currently, the newly married couple tends to be neolocal. Newly married couples tend not to live in the woman's family home but away from her parents' house. Although some are still uxori-local but stay in the vicinity of her parent's residence. Women are no longer interpreted as *wong ruma* but also have a role in the public sector by working. The public sector is a domain for men in Palembang culture. This condition resulted in the *limas* house being slowly abandoned by the children of the married homeowners. They prefer not to settle in their parent's house so that the family structure changed to a nuclear family, only consisted of parents and unmarried children.

The implication of changing the family structure from extended family to nuclear family is that there is no longer a cycle of changing bedrooms according to changes in marital status. The *pangkeng penganten* occupied by the newly married couple is not used because it is uxori-local. Therefore, household members' use of the bedroom tends fixed. For example, a girl will stay in her bedroom until she finally leaves the house for marriage. This change in the family structure resulted in the house's occupants changing one function of the room unused. This change in the function of the house, for example, was experienced by H. Muhammad's *limas* house in Lorong Tanggo Rajo Village 7 Ulu Palembang. Basically, the layout of this house still follows the general pattern of the layout of the *limas* house. However, the *pangkeng keluarga* turned into an open space. Likewise, with the Wak Da Family in Lorong Kenduruan, 7 Ulu Village, Palembang. The function of *keputran* turns into a warehouse, and the *pangkeng keluarga* becomes an open space. The owner of the house is *pangkeng penganten*. Homeowners also change the lower part of the house into rooms for other family members as the number of family members increases (Anwar, 2019).

The difference between men's rooms in the front (public) and women's rooms in the back (private) as an embodiment of women's protection has also changed. The use of space in the *limas* house is more focused on practical interests so that the use of space-based on gender differences is less considered, except in ritual ceremonies. Women are no longer the housekeepers who do more activities in the domestic sector but can also play the roles that men have done in the public sector.



Fig. 7. Layout of Muhammad's limas house (Source: Anwar 2019)

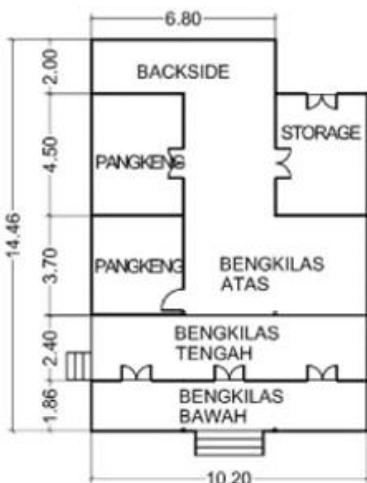


Fig. 8. Layout of Wak Da's limas house (Source: Anwar 2019)

This phenomenon of change describes the function of the *limas* house due to adaptation to changes in the social system, which has become the new identity of the people of Palembang. *Limas* house architecture continues to develop as part of the formation of this identity. *Limas* house as a marker of Palembang's cultural identity is produced, modified, and reproduced so that it has new meanings that can be different from previous meanings. This dynamic continues to process so that changes in the shape and layout of the *limas* house continue. Nevertheless, these changes still show their function as a residential building. For the Palembang society, the *limas* house is a place to live; its residents use that to foster family life, both for daily life and traditional ceremonies. *Limas* house is a place for the internalization, socialization, and enculturation of its inhabitants to

occur, which shows intimacy and hierarchy as reflected in horizontal and vertical linearity relationships (J.M.Nas, 1998).

This *limas* house building changes take place dynamically. The changes in the two case examples that have been raised actually also show that the *limas* house is no longer meant to live but also as a place of business. The two *limas* houses turned the room into a place of business. The warehouse room in the Wa Da's *limas* house is where the family's business items are stored, while H. Muhammad changed one room into an open space to be used as a clothing store. In other cases, many of the bottom (legs) of the house is walled so that it becomes a closed room and is used as a room or shop, as in the following picture.



Fig. 9. Changes to the Limas House

Changes in the form and layout of the *limas* house will continue so that gradually the *limas* house building with the general pattern of vernacular architecture will disappear. It's just that another "*limas* house" will appear that has a different form and layout from the previous typical *limas* house, especially until now there has been no construction of a new *limas* house. This means that the current *limas* house will experience changes according to the social dynamics in the community and bring out the architectural characteristics of the *limas* house with a different form and layout from the previous *limas* house.

CONCLUSION

The vernacular architecture of the *limas* house acts as a cultural marker that can represent Palembang's cultural identity. This identity represents the societal system, such as family structure, kinship relations, gender, and marital status. This cultural identity is dynamic, which is produced, modified, and reproduced through social processes. The influence of modernization and globalization has affected the societal system, so the form and layout of the house must be adapted to these changes. This change also affects the function of the house, which is no longer just a place to live but also functions as a place of business.

Palembang's cultural identity is not "as being" but "as becoming". *Limas* house is modified and reinterpreted as a building capable of accommodating social continuity based on the dynamics of the societal system.

The *limas* house will still represent the cultural identity of Palembang, and it's just that the embodiment of its form and layout will change following changes in the dynamic cultural identity of the society. The *limas* house is an arena that shows cultural identity through building changes that are adaptive to ongoing social processes. *Limas* house will become a symbolic identity that the society interprets differently along with the changing times.

The existence of the *limas* house is a manifestation of the harmonious human space between the natural environment and the socio-cultural environment. Rumah *limas* is a cultural landscape that refers to ecological architecture, which considers an ecocentric approach by prioritizing harmony with nature. Therefore, it is necessary to protect, maintain, and develop the *limas* house by reinterpreting and revitalizing according to the dynamics of the Palembang culture so that the *limas* house as a cultural identity can be adaptive to the social processes that occur in the community.

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