The continuity of *Rumoh* Aceh spaces on the development of houses in *Gampong* Lambheu, Aceh Besar

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Abstract. The objective of this research was to find out the continuity of *seuramoe keu*, *tungai*/*rambat*, and *seuramoe likeut* (three fundamental spaces in *rumoh* Aceh) in three development stages of houses since 1980 until present time. The development starts from the stilt house (*santeut*), non-stilt house, up to the contemporary house. In the period in which modern life has an impact in changing people lifestyles and then affects the mindset of the need for spaces, the study of the continuity of the three spaces mentioned reflects how far the culture of the people of Aceh in the past persist today, considering architecture, including spaces, is the reflection of the socio-cultural of inhabitants/community. The study was conducted by observing the spaces on seven sample houses and by interviewing the house owners to find out the factors that affect the existence/non-existence of spaces. The results showed that the three spaces (*seuramoe keu*, *tungai*, and *seuramoe likeut*) undergone the continuity despite the differences occurred in the interior compared to *rumoh* Aceh, meanwhile the continuity factor was based on the culture of life that is still firmly held by Acehnese.

1. Introduction

*Rumoh* Aceh, horizontally, generally consists of three rooms that reflect the lifestyle of Acehnese to maintain their relationship with God (Islamic beliefs) and with humans [5]. It starts from the room at the most front, namely *seuramoe keu*; then at the middle, namely *tungai*; and at the back, namely *seuramoe likeut* [3]. Front room (*seuramoe keu*) is provided for guests reception, reflect the culture of Acehnese "*peumulia jame, adat geutanyoe*" (honor the guests, our custom). Middle room (*tungai*), higher 50 cm from the foyers flanking consists of owner’s room and daughter's room, reflecting adherence to the religious belief, namely Islam, which the existence of this space is to provide a private room for women (mother and daughter) to protect them in doing activity that may showing their *aurat* (refer to body’s external part except hands palm and face). Back room (*seuramoe likeut*), the room which is equipped with a kitchen, provided for residents of the house to have a chit-chat, cook, and have meals, reflects the living habits of the Acehnese. So, it is obvious that *rumoh* Aceh obtained the identity and cultural uniqueness.
Over time, the development of education-culture-experience occurred and made changes to the architecture [2]. Changes in architecture is inevitable because although they are criticized in certain ways as the local identity is being lost, they are anticipated as an alternative way to build the future [2]. Beside, all of the generations have the right to express themselves with the formation of architecture itself [6]. However, considering that the traditional house contains the identity and cultural uniqueness [9], therefore able to maintain the continuity of it reflects the ability to maintain identity and uniqueness. Just like Quirix and Suleman [7] stated that the continuity implies the maintenance of architectural identity. The matter of the continuity of those 3 (three) spaces and the cultures that underlies the existence of them, whether occurred or not in the development of Acehnese houses, is attempted to be solved through this research. It is expected to give an idea about the conditions of Acehnese residences and cultures in order to prevent the threat of identity loss.

1.1. The continuity of Architecture
The matter of continuity in the realm of architecture has three wide discussions [4], namely: first, the continuity of forms received by senses when subjected to movement (seeing or walking down the building space per each room and per each building); secondly, the continuity of harmony between inside-outside in the sense of the interior of the building and the interior of the city; and third, continuity related to time, the past and the future, which showing elements that keep appearing from time to time. In this research, the study focus on continuity related to time therefore the continuity was observed time by time, period by period. The aspects of study that related to this sort of continuity are the recurrence of styles, ideas, the use of materials and concepts, forms, and functions [7]. In this paper, the discussion is focused on the concept and functions. Concept talks about appearance of the spaces, while function talks about use of the spaces.

The forms of continuity are not always exactly the same as its predecessor because it could have been modified. This is as Giovannoni said that continuity does not mean rejecting the changes, but on the contrary, to accept changes, but organizing and integrating them [6]. Rapoport stated that in case of changes in the architecture, there is a condition in which a traditional architectural element is not easy or slow to change [9]. As those elements keep experiencing the continuity over time, those elements become the identity of the owner of the architecture. Such elements was introduced by Rapoport [9] with the term “core element”. Usually those core elements that are hard to change due to their relation with the cultural life of the community. From the statement of Rapoport concluded that culture is an important study as well in discussing the continuity of architecture, therefore it was being a focus as well in this research.

1.2. The spaces of Rumoh Aceh
The design of rumoh Aceh is based on the life habits and principles of Acehnese (Figure1). Acehnese that influenced by the beliefs of Islam, has formed a pattern of religious ritual held in the house, including khanduri (pray together for safety), weddings, aqiqah (celebration of the child birth), circumcision, pray for the death, and so forth [3]. Such events involve people around (neighborhood), so that rumoh Aceh equipped with seuramoe keu which is reserved for the guests (the neighbor especially the men) who are coming over to the house to attend the event (Figure 2).
The presence of seuramoe keu is therefore a manifestation of Acehnese principles of peumulia jamee, adat geutanyoe (honor the guests, our custom). In daily basis, this room used as the place for family members to pray, for the children to learn/recite the Koran, and sleeping place for the boys/sons of the householder [3]. Seuramoe keu is apart from seuramoe likeut by tungai. Seuramoe likeut is provided for the family get together as well as where the neighbors (women) gather to help peurumoh (house lady) preparing the feast when there is an event, as in this space is laid the kitchen (without dividing wall). Tungai/rambat, which is located between Seuramoe Keu and Likeut, consist of 2 bedrooms, for the owner (parents) and for daughters (Figure 3).

Rumoh Aceh built with a high awareness of protecting women as well. The tradition of Aceh mentions that, when the girls have stepped on 7 years old, the father begins collecting wood materials, roofing materials such as palm leaf and other materials to build a house for his daughter [1]. Father builds rumoh Aceh to provide shelter for his daughter who is married. But while still living together at her parents house, a room is provided for her (called rumoh anjong), which is located opposite to the parents’ room (called rumoh inong), which are both located in the area of tungai (Figure 1). Room reserved for son is not provided because he sleeps in seuramoe keu or meunasah (place of worship under the scale of the mosque). So that Rumoh Aceh in general only have 2 rooms. If the parents could not afford a new house for their daughter, yet they have two daughters who are married, the parents leave the room they occupy for the oldest one [3].

From study literature and observation to Rumoh Aceh, the concepts and functions of the three spaces as in Table 1.
Table 1. Concept and function of *seuramoe keu*, *tungai/rambat*, and *seuramoe likeut* in *Rumoh* Aceh.

| Space        | Concept                                                                 | Function                           |
|--------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| *Seuramoe keu* | Public, semi-open (mix-use without separated wall), wide enough, barrier | Guest reception, pray room         |
|              | wall to block the view to other room                                    |                                    |
| *Tungai/rambat* | Private, surrounded by barrier wall.                                    | Sleeping room, private activity    |
| *Seuramoe likeut* | Semi-public, semi-open (mix-use without separated wall), wide enough   | Family room, cook, have meals      |

2. Method

This research is a qualitative descriptive. The data collected comes from the study of literature, observation, and interviews. *Rumoh* Aceh was observed to get deep understanding of concept of the three spaces. Literature study of written sources conducted to find out the functions of three spaces. Meanwhile, interviews of residents who have lived in Aceh for more than 50 years conducted in collecting information that figuring out the development of residential houses in Aceh since the period of 1980 to the present day. The result showed that there were three types of the development, namely: the stilt houses (*santeut*), non-stilt houses, and contemporary houses. The research was continued to determine the research area that met the criteria which included all three types of houses mentioned in it. By observation, *Gampong* Lambheu was chosen as it met the criteria mentioned, yet this region was not affected by Tsunami which hit Aceh province in 2004, so that the existing of houses there have been established since long ago. The area is one of the districts of Aceh Besar in Aceh Province (Figure 4).

![Figure 4](image-url)

Observations was continued to select the sample of houses by purposive sampling method. The samples are those that represent three (3) types of house developments mentioned above and owned by Acehnese. Selected samples were seven houses. Each sample represented a development of houses types which divided into three stages (Table 2).
Table 2. Sample houses.

|                        | Description                                                                                                                                 |
|------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Stilt houses/Santut    | The type that developed right after the period of rumoh Aceh so that they got enormous influences from rumoh Aceh in terms of design, which still has three sections vertically (upper part, middle part, under part) and still dominated by organic materials. |
|                        | ![R1](image1) ![R2](image2)                                                                                                               |
| Non stilt houses       | The type that is not applying under part and quite simple in design, whether those are the size, spaces, and visual.                           |
|                        | ![R3](image3) ![R4](image4)                                                                                                               |
| Contemporary houses    | The type that is not applying under part, dominated by prefabricated materials, influenced by international architectural, and has larger size.     |
|                        | ![R5](image5) ![R6](image6) ![R7](image7)                                                                                                 |

The samples were observed to identify the existing of the three spaces, the concept and function. The concept and function then compared to rumoh Aceh which has been compiled in Table 1 to find out if the continuity occurred. Observation then followed with interviewing the owners to gather informations in finding the factors of existence/non-existence of seuromoe keu, tungai, and seuramoe likeut in houses observed. Interviews with the residents who have lived in Gampong Lambheu for more than 50 years also conducted for gathering informations related to the habits/patterns of living that have relations to the existence of spaces. The interviewees were seven people (Table 3).

Table 3. The list of interviewees.

| No. | Name                  | Age | Criteria                                                                 |
|-----|-----------------------|-----|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1.  | A. Latif              | 53  | The owner of house R1                                                  |
| 2.  | T. Zulhusni           | 40  | The owner of house R5                                                  |
| 3.  | Cut Raudhah           | 36  | The owner of house R4                                                  |
| 4.  | Mohammad Junaidi      | 51  | The owner of house R3                                                  |
| 5.  | Tgk. Nazar Asyek      | 69  | Resident who has lived in Gampong Lambheu more than 50 years            |
| 6.  | Hamdani Hasballah     | 57  | Resident who has lived in Gampong Lambheu more than 50 years            |
| 7.  | Oktivina              | 55  | Resident who has lived in Gampong Lambheu more than 50 years            |
3. Result and Discussion

3.1. The continuity of rumoh Aceh spaces in the development of houses

From the observations that have been conducted showing that the sample houses contain spaces such as the following:

3.1.1. Stilt houses (Santeut). According to the interview of the owners, in its development period, santeut houses were well-known to have those sort of spaces and the arrangement as in Figure 5, seen from the house R1 and R2 which have the similar floor plan and organization. In santeut houses type were found the guests reception room, living room adjacent to the kitchen, and 2 bedrooms. The guest reception room serves as seuramoe keu and the living room together with the kitchen adjacent to it serves as seuramoe likeut. By coincidence, the owner of house R1 and R2 had no daughter yet, but according to the interview, one of the bedrooms belongs to the daughter once they have one later. Overall, the concepts and functions of the three rooms undergone continuity with modification by the existence of the furnitures on the present spaces.

![Figure 5. Layout of house R1 and R2.](image)

3.1.2. Non stilt houses. The house R3 and R4 which represent the non-stilt type of houses contain sort of rooms as shown in Figure 6. The houses R3 and R4 show variations of the existence of spaces. The house R3 shows the existence of guests reception room, living room, parents and children room. But at the house R4, guests reception room is functioned as well as living room, while the actual room serves as seuramoe likeut is functioned only as the dining room. That is because of the existence of dining table and cupboard gave no more rooms for other activities that take place on the floor. So the guests reception room became the living room as well. According to Hadjad et al [3], seuramoe keu is used by family member to have a chit-chat, recite the Koran, and praying as well, so the guests reception room which has mix-use in the house R4 still following the concepts and function of seuramoe keu.

![Figure 6. Layout of house R3 (a) and house R4 (b).](image)
3.1.3. Contemporary houses

The houses R5, R6, and R7 contain the rooms as shown in Figure 7-9. The three houses have variety of existing spaces compared to the ones in *rumoh* Aceh that showing the progressive life style. But all three still contain a guest reception room, living room (with the kitchen adjacent to it), as well as the main room and the room for daughters. In the three contemporary houses below, the particular activities in *seuramoe likeut* is separated in particular room, for instance the existence of rooms reserved for dining room and kitchen. It showed that *seuramoe likeut* undergone continuity in contemporary houses but experienced some modifications.

**Figure 7.** Layout of house R5.

1. Front terrace
2. Guests reception room
3. Living room
4. Main bedroom
5. Bedroom for children
6. Bedroom for children
7. Kitchen
8. Dining room
9. Garage

**Figure 8.** Layout of house R6.

1. Front terrace
2. Guests reception room
3. Living room and dining room
4. Main bedroom
5. Bedroom for children
6. Bedroom for children
7. Bedroom for househol assistant
8. Bedroom for househol assistant
9. Kitchen
10. WC
11. Garage
12. Back terrace

**Figure 9.** Layout of house R7.

1. Front terrace
2. Guests reception room
3. *Mushola* (praying room)
4. *wudhu* (cleansing ritual for praying) spot and WC
5. Living room and dining room
6. Main bedroom
7. Bedroom of children
8. Bedroom for children
9. Kitchen
10. Garage
11. Courtyard
12. WC
From the discussions above, concluded that the conditions of continuity of *seuramoe keu*, *tungai*, and *seuramoe likeut* on the houses development start from 1980 to 2000 as shown in Table 4 and 5.

**Table 4.** The continuity of *rumoh* Aceh spaces on the development of houses in period of 1980-2000.

| Spaces of Rumoh Aceh | 1980 | 1990 | 2000 | Note  |
|----------------------|------|------|------|-------|
| **SEURAMOE KEU**     | +    |      |      | Occurred |
| **TUNGAI** (room for parents and room for daughter) | + |      |      | Occurred |
| **SEURAMOE LIKEUT**  | +    |      |      | Occurred |

Note: (+)= Continuity    (-) = Discontinuity

**Table 5.** Concept and function of *seuramoe keu*, *tungai/rambat*, and *seuramoe likeut* in house development from 1980-2000.

| Spaces             | Concept                                                                 | Function                                                                 |
|--------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Seuramoe Keu       | The concepts of the room still has the similarity with the one in *rumoh* Aceh. It is surrounded by the barrier wall to block the view into another room with a door to link it with another room. But the room undergone modifications by the existence of furnitures (sofa, table, drawer). Furniture will be moved out in case the room is used for the event “khanduri” | Its function is still the same, namely as a space to receive the guests, in individual and in group, and sometimes used to pray room |
| Tungai             | The concept of the room is still similar with the one in *rumoh* Aceh which is surrounded by barrier wall that can obstruct the vision from outside. The outer wall is featured with a window facing the courtyard. However, some modifications are occured by the use of furnitures (bed, toilette, wardrobe, etc). | The function is similar namely as the private room for women. |
| Seuramoe Likeut    | The concept of the room is modified by having separated spaces (living room, dining room, kitchen) by a dividing/barrier wall and facilitated with furnitures | The function is similar, namely the main room for the family to gather, cook, and have meals |

### 3.2. The Factors of Continuity

From the interviews conducted, have been obtained the informations that at least once or twice a year, residents, relatives, and work partners visit each others (*silaturrahmi*) from one house to another on Islamic holiday of *Eid-ul-Fitr* and *Eid Adha*. In addition, religious rites or social events involving the participation of villagers usually are still held at home, such as *khanduri* (a feast for commemorating something or as a thanksgiving to a good thing that happened), consensus in holding specific event (i.e marriage), recitals of the Koran, and so forth. It underlies *seuramoe keu* still experience continuity which is known as the guests reception room at later time.

In Islamic beliefs, women are so honored. There is a must for women to keep *aurat* (parts of the external body besides the face and hands palm) to be covered with proper clothing according to Islam. Acehnese are honor and aware of the *shari’ah* (law/rule in Islam). The provision of sleeping room as
the private room for women, the mothers and daughters, to give a peculiar space for them doing the activities that having possibility of the *aurat* is being seen, such as changing clothes, sleeping, and others. Meanwhile, the continuity of *seuramoe likeut*, known as the living room with kitchen and dining room adjacent to it, due to the house as the main place for family get-together and doing the activity of daily habits, namely having meals, cooking, chatting, and so on.

From the results of interview above concluded that the factors affecting the continuity of spaces in the development of houses are based on the continuity of culture, more precisely, are based on the Islamic beliefs.

4. Conclusions and Recommendations

The continuity of *rumoh* Aceh spaces occurred yet modified. It was seen from the functions of the spaces that remained the same, but the concepts changed, including the layout of spaces and the presence of furnitures. The factors that affecting the continuity of these spaces were the conformity to the *shari’ah* (rule) of Islam and the culture of Acehnese. This is in accordance to the statement of Rapoport [9] that there are conditions which a traditional architectural element is not easy or slow to change because it has strong relation with the cultural life of the community, therefore categorized as the core element of architecture. As Islam and the culture, such as visiting each other and so forth, are still significant in Acehnese daily life, so that drive the provision of the three spaces. Meanwhile, the changes happened to adjust the house with the new creation at the time, i.e design, material, furniture, etc, but did not lose the main concept and function of the spaces. This is in accordance to the statement of Giovannoni that continuity does not mean rejecting the changes, but on the contrary, to accept change but organizing and integrating it [6].

The continuity occurred means that at this point the loss of identity has not really happened yet. Acehnese still can be at ease but still the preservation efforts of the three spaces have to be carried on in order to preserve the culture and uniqueness of Acehnese house. Just like the case of sickness where prevention is better than cure, so is the threat of architecture identity lost where prevention is better than restore.

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