From sacred to secular: *Baruk* architecture on secular buildings in Sarawak

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Abstract. The Bidayuh people of Sarawak are known for their *baruks*. A *baruk* is often observed as having a round form with a conical roof that has various functions such as a courthouse, a meeting place and a residence for the male adolescents. These are all secular purposes built around its religious functions, constructed based on their traditional beliefs that qualify it to be considered as a sacred building. Recently, the pursuit for fulfilling political and commercial objectives has made the architecture of *baruks* to be copied onto various secular buildings in Sarawak, ranging from a visitor centre to a governmental building. Despite much have been praised as an attempt to revive this endangered architecture, applying its language onto contemporary secular buildings sparks a debate whether the sacredness of the original *baruks* are respected or is it just a cultural commodification. This paper attempts to justify the adaptation of *baruk* architecture into secular buildings. It is discussed through a grounded theory approach, with the methods used were in the form of literature review and on-site observations. This paper suggests the extent of applying *baruk* sacred architecture into secular buildings should be observed, allowing more potential discussions in the academia pertaining adaptation of sacred indigenous architecture in contemporary buildings.

Keywords: Baruk, Bidayuh, secular building, sacred building, Neo-Vernacularism

1. Introduction
The new Sarawak State Legislative Assembly (SSLA) building is located just a few hundred meters opposite of the Kuching Waterfront, standing far enough by the river to signify the might of the Sarawakian people and their belief in the democratic system [1]. Designed by Hijjas Kasturi and completed in 2009, it is intended to be an icon - a testament to Sarawak’s bold vision for the future. This building resembles what the local lay public might be familiar with – consciously echoing architectural characteristics of a *baruk*, a special community hall and a sacred place for the Bidayuh ethnic group [2]. The conspicuous *baruk* form reflects the institution as the oldest state legislative assembly in Malaysia [1]. It is one of many contemporary architectural pieces in Sarawak that echoes the image of this sacred building.
Borrowing vernacular architectural languages into modern, contemporary buildings is not an uncommon practice in Malaysia. Many have sparked debates, but this trend has constantly reappeared and seems to resonate with the local leaders’ quest in creating a unique local architectural identity. Similarly, it is also a straightforward schema in formulating a vivid appearance of an identity which is also perceived can be beneficial for commercial objectives. Baruks’ image can be seen across various building typologies such as on the visitor centre in Matang National Park, the White Baroque Restaurant near the Kuching Waterfront and the Damai Beach Resort in Santubong just to name a few. Many of these buildings are built in Kuching division in the western region of Sarawak as there are more Bidayuhs living there than the other parts of the state.

In the modern days, despite some baruks are still being used for religious activities mostly by the traditional Bidayuhs practising the old belief, many have been demolished and become obsolete. This is a direct result from the conversion of most traditional Bidayuhs to Christianity [3], apart from other factors associated with modernization. Thus slowly, baruks which once were a Bidayuhs’ sacred institution has slowly become just a showpiece of their historical past. Therefore, the attempts of reviving baruks’ architectural language in modern and mostly secular buildings in Sarawak have been well received as an effort to monumentalize their identity, but there is one concern that is rarely questioned. Baruks are highly revered by the Bidayuhs and have played a very important role in their traditional beliefs, as the baruks were likened to their sacred temples [4]. As a sacred building, baruks’ architectural image that is borrowed to mostly secular buildings may yield a question of morale pertaining to their new status. Therefore, in this paper, the rationales behind embracing baruks’ architectural language on secular buildings are discussed.

2. Methods
This paper mainly relies on qualitative method of dredging information from our prior knowledge, literature sources and on-site observations on neo-vernacular buildings that adapted the baruks’ architectural characteristics as case studies. It is worth to note that the Bidayuh people and their
material cultures such as baruks do also exist in other parts of Borneo, particularly in Indonesia. However, it is only in the interest of this paper to focus on secular buildings in Sarawak, Malaysia. The literature sources are mainly associated with the research conducted on baruks by previous scholars and observers from as early as the 19th century to the present ones. Additionally, this paper serves as an overview, thus it is not necessarily of our intention to derive a conclusive outcome. This study is also inclined to use a grounded theory approach to arrive at the issue – a logical method to explore an alternative viewpoint of an issue.

3. Discussion

3.1. The Bidayuh People

The Bidayuhs are believed to be true indigenous inhabitants of Borneo [5], despite the origin of the Bidayuhs in Sarawak is uncertain and unknown, as many depend on legends and oral traditions of how they came thus it is difficult to prove its accuracy [6]. Their cultures and architectural knowhows may be a result of long cultural exchange and improvements, as according to [7], the vernacular process of design, procurement and implementation in building construction of indigenous community in Sarawak were usually passed down from shared community knowledge.

Geographically, Sarawak is located on the island of Borneo. It was reported in 2010, there are around 190,000 Bidayuh people in Sarawak [8] with a large number of Bidayuh people live in the western region namely Kuching and Samarahan (94% of the total Bidayuh population). Before the advent of Christianity, the Bidayuhs on the olden days believed in the omen [3]. The sort of danger from evil spirits what may have caused misfortunes and sickness, thus every action in their daily lives were an act of taking care of these bad spirits by not provoking them. Occasionally if these spirits were not pleased, they will conciliate them by means of ceremony or feast called Gawai. The common means of protection is also through seeking protection from Tampa Riyuh (God) and the good spirits of their ancestors to drive the bad spirits away. They show gratitude and seek guidance from Tampa Riyuh to help them in all matters in life to protect them from dangers [8]. The traditional Bidayuhs did pray and believe in the concept of God and much of their acts of tribute to the God and spirits were in the form of respecting the land and nature itself.

The traditional Bidayuhs believe the communication from the omen birds is a form of forewarning in certain circumstances. If a bird is heard calling while they were hunting, it is a sign that they should return home. Obeying these signs from the birds can prevent bad omens that it is common to see the replica of these omen birds placed at the peak of baruks’ roof. To some extent, the traditional Bidayuhs had so much to be afraid of that they were viewed to be ideal subjects to conversion to Christianity [3]. This conversion later changed the fate of baruks in terms of their function as a sacred traditional belief institution.

The Bidayuhs were also once an oppressed group in which their villages were usually the target of vicious attacks and massacres by the Ibans and the Brunei Rulers. It was due to this that the Bidayuhs had decided to set up their settlements in mountain areas and far into the interior to avoid threats. The Bidayuh people have survived these hardships and modern Bidayuhs since 1963 have participated in the creative process of maintaining, discovering, restoring and creating their traditions to some extent. Such is evident in the establishment of Dayak Bidayuh National Association (DBNA) by the educated Bidayuhs that modernizes the ethnic group’s values and identity which include the recognition of baruks as one crucial architectural heritage of the Bidayuhs [9,10].

3.2. Sacred Architecture

The ‘sacred’ and ‘secular’ are 2 classic dichotomous sides that often been discussed as being opposite to one another, divided conveniently, or sometimes naively, into a holy and a profane institution. This divide came about into the mainstream view after the dispute between the religious and the scientific institutions during the Renaissance in the 18th to 19th century, which eventually resulted to what is come to known today as the separation of the church and the state. The term sacred stemmed from the
Latin word *sacer* means ‘to make holy’ [11], thus being sacred is the act of aligning to the holy forces that set apart humans from the ordinary world that is already known. Sacred buildings or spaces then can be directly implied as the venue to perform the act of worshipping. Sacred spaces are for performing the ritual for the divine through the act of consecration, or sacrifice which excluded from the dominion of the profane, often determined by the architectural framework of the temple itself or by the act of sanctification [12]. It usually can be identified through a limited penetration by human agencies, in which it can only be accessed by a certain priestly caste, group of people or individuals, usually revolves around the idea of ‘precinct’ and ‘threshold’[11]. There is a concept of ‘precinct’ and ‘threshold’ that split certain spaces in *baruks* that can be accessed for sacred occasions and by certain individuals, that some are through a granted permission from the important figures in the community. There is also the sense of connection of the building to the spiritual world, an explicit notion to suggest that *baruks* are indeed a sacred building.

3.3. Baruk – A Bidayuh Sacred Architecture

*Baruks* are described as a traditional headhouse, a meeting place, a bachelor residence, a ritual place and many others [7,8,13]. To some extent, it is a typology of its own that has no precedence manifested by other ethnic groups in Malaysia. The first *baruk* in Sarawak is believed to be built in the in Kampung Opar in Bau (western Sarawak region) after a disease outbreak which claimed the lives of their children. The *baruk* then was built using *belian* and *kapur* timber as a place for them to discuss solutions to the outbreak [8]. Through the process of improvements, *baruks* slowly evolved into a more complex structure to become one of the most recognizable forms that have been emulated in different sites.

The *baruk*, which is also referred to as a *pangah*, *balu* and *pangaran* in different dialects [14], is also widely known mostly to the western observers as the headhouse as old human skulls of their headhunting days are positioned above the fireplace in the centre of the hall in reverence [15]. Apart from the skulls, *baruks* are also where the traditional musical instruments particularly the drums which are called the *sebbang* (used for certain rituals) are stored [5]. The Bidayuhs believed that human skulls are a symbol to instill bravery and vigilance among the youths in defending their villages[10]. In an observation, there were a few cases where there were even no skulls in certain *baruks* thus it reinforces the fact that a ‘headhouse’ is purely some westerners’ term because the Bidayuh people also never called their *baruks* as such [16].

![Figure 3. An original baruk in Opar, Bau still serves as a ritual and ceremony place for the traditional Bidayuhs today](image)

In 1993, the Bidayuh Community Cultural Seminar has addressed this misconception to re-elevate *baruks*’ status as a significant cultural manifestation more than just a headhouse. Admiration over *baruks* among Bidayuhs is apparent in their myth tales, epics and traditional poems or *bajo*, which contain mostly praises and reverences over this structure. The sanctity of this institution is ultimately defined by the religious activities associated with it. Without *baruks*, these rituals and ceremonies cannot be done elsewhere. The comments from several observers have mentioned *baruks* were also a gathering place [3,8], which implies that other non-religious activities were just secondary to that of the religious ones. *Baruks* as more like a temple that is considered sacred that no one could enter and sleep in it without granting the permission from the village chief’ [4,8]. Even the heads were taken
from battles needed to undergo elaborated ceremonies and rituals for them to be finally qualified to be displayed in baruks.

3.3.1. Site & Construction
The Bidayuh people put great stress on baruks’ height and the ideal location are often on the edge of a steep terrain as to give an illusion of hanging from the sky when viewing from the inside [10,13]. It is either by this or they would prefer to build baruks much taller when there is no such terrain [16]. Baruks are often built strategically in the middle of the village, which reflects its institutional appeal and accentuates its importance. The construction of baruks would be by unmarried Bidayuh men through collective efforts [14]. Even if the decision to erect a baruk was rejected by just one member of the community, the project will be halted to avoid discontent among the villagers [8]. Dishonouring this would only summon misfortune to the village itself, which in turn might befall their yearly crop and badly impact other aspects of their life. With the culture that honours land as a source of substance and life [3], the selection of site should be done respectfully. The site must be in a strategic location with a good soil condition, which is to be selected by the shamans [8]. Certain prohibitions were imposed on every aspect throughout the process. Prayers and rituals accompanied most actions in the construction process from the early stage until completion [8]. It is through the blessings from the spirits that baruks can eventually be erected successfully.

3.3.2. Functions
Apart from as a defense fort, baruks also served as a crucial social institution such as a residence for the bachelors, a guesthouse for visitors, a site for performing rituals or ceremonies, a meeting place and a local court [8,13]. It is in baruks where the elderlies discuss local issues regarding their community [15]. Residing in baruks is an act of gratitude and honour for the visitors or guests. When issues need to be trialled, baruks function as a local court for the chief to decide what kind of punishment to serve. Despite these seemingly common functions, ultimately baruks are a manifestation of the traditional Bidayuh beliefs as there are rituals and ceremonies exclusively tied to baruks. During Gawai celebration, baruks are a venue for the traditional and religious ceremony [3]. One of the ceremonies celebrated is Gawai Muka, which is the returning of warriors with the enemy heads. The dried skulls with various omens had to undergo rituals to make them favourable to be installed in the baruks. The spirits of the old skulls are highly revered and respected among the traditional Bidayuhs that they dignified them in the highest regards [8].

A baruk is a place for interaction between humans and the hidden spirits that protect them in life [17]. It is, therefore, the best site to serve as a place for shamans to cure their male patients that without baruks the activities pertaining the worshipping of the spirits cannot be performed. Other religious ceremonies that had to be taken place in baruks are often related to their agricultural activities such as worshipping the spirits of the paddy before the farming can take place [8]. This connection between the humans and the spirits is highly significant in the traditional Bidayuhs’ belief. All these rituals had to be done in baruks as they believed that baruks contain holy and mighty forces that are more powerful than mere mortals.

3.3.3. Architecture
Baruks’ usually had a simple, centric layout of internal space. The floor of the main gallery is usually made out of double-layered bamboo halves just so it would not be penetrable to attacks from spears coming from below [18]. The floor structure is split into 2 levels with the higher one being approximately 2 feet higher than the one below. Circling the main gallery is a raised timber platform, or akat, which serves as a sleeping and seating area [8]. The lower section is split into another 2 sections, which are akat guna and akat batin. Akat guna is a space for placing offerings for the spirits of the skulls while akat batin is a place reserved for the spirits during ritual and ceremonies in baruks. These spaces are considered sacred and are restricted for human use.
In the middle part of the gallery, there are usually 4 central posts bounded by rattan and ropes that extend to the peak of the roof, which supports much of the weight of the roof itself. The roof has open skylights usually braced by a bamboo or a timber stick at the lower end of the roof to allow lights and fresh air to ventilate into it [15]. Palm-leaf thatch is greatly relied upon as the material rather than timber shingles which are scarce. The high pitch steep of the gable widened as it goes lower along the roof elevation as to quicken the withdrawal of rainwater and control any sprays from it [8]. The omen bird replica usually found at the peak of the roofs is associated with the Bidayuhs’ belief that they can give early warnings of misfortunes. The omen bird replicas were also installed to dispel satans and bad spirits from perching on the roof saddle.

The Bidayuh people relied heavily on bamboo as they live in areas in which lumber trees are scarce [19]. Some observers regarded *baruks* as octagonal or round with a conical roof, which in some cases there were also in square and irregular forms [13]. He added round is inconsistent with the characteristics of other Dayak groups as evident in their traditional longhouse architecture and other artefacts in which are all rectilinear. It is still very much unknown why they favour a round shape but Simmins [11] has pointed out generally indigenous peoples often believe certain fundamental geometrical shape such as round has a certain power. It is also not difficult to understand their preference, as round floor plans are generally practical as they serve large, unobstructed area for gatherings. This is also aligned with an observation reported by Riri [19] on the *Maniamas* dance performed by Kalimantan (Indonesia) Bidayuhs. The dance is performed as a ritual of circling the gallery to symbolize unity and unobtrusive flow of current. Some *baruks* are also observed as having parallelogram forms and some also had a non-conical, high steep pitched roof [3]. There were also some inconsistencies reported based on the observations by European travellers and writers who had visited Sarawak regarding the structure of *baruks*. They reported some were built in a single storey while some had double, and some had doors on the side and some had no doors on the side but with a trap door on the floor [3]. The universal vernacular language of *baruks* is not consistent, thus this inconsistency suggests that the idea of sacredness are not associated with *baruks* physical form.
3.4. Baruks Architecture on Secular Buildings

As a reaction to the economic liberalization in the 1980s, Malaysian cities are fast becoming modernized through buildings that are directly influenced by internationalization [20]. Some architects with the support from the government officials have pursued to a more alternative style that would be able to reflect the local culture. Neo-vernacular approach as according to Rasdi [21] is a popular method in fulfilling the plea of local leaders in creating a new regional identity, despite mostly were built using modern methods of construction to create an image of ‘progress’. Neo-vernacularism can be argued as a goof-off imitation, simply underplay the significant history of local architecture that came about through rigorous process.

Apart from imitating the modern language imported from the west, contemporary buildings in Sarawak also seem to be drifted along with this trend of borrowing the vernacular aesthetics from the local tribes. There is a tendency of having the ‘Sarawak element’ into everything. Explicably, notable neo-revivalism language applied to buildings throughout Sarawak resonate to the immediate culture of a majority group in each area or division. The institution buildings in Mukah for instance, which has about 60% of the people are predominantly of Melanau descent [22], tend to apply the metaphor of a Melanau terendak (traditional Melanau headwear). The Kuching South City Hall, which is in a predominantly Chinese area, borrowed its image from the pagoda, in sympathy with its Chinese neighbourhood [23].

![Figure 6. Left: An institution building in Mukah [23]. Right: The Kuching South City Hall [2]](image)

3.5. Physical Architecture

In 1988, through a meeting in celebrating Sarawak’s 25th independence through Malaysia, the government had requested the representatives from various ethnic groups of Sarawak to discuss which parts in their culture should be regarded as outdated, thus to be rejected, and which one should be retained [13]. To contribute to the state and national culture, the Bidayuh community has preferred a more distinctive round baruks with conical roof rather than rectilinear forms as their cultural identity, taking precedence from the one in Opar as an epitome of baruks architecture. Since then the round form with conical roof has been recognized as a universal language of baruks used widely in contemporary buildings around Sarawak. The recurring architectural traits that are being repeated in most contemporary secular buildings in Sarawak echoing that of baruks are summarized in Table 1.

| Table 1. Most recurred architectural traits of baruks in contemporary buildings |
|---|


The obligatory elements applied to these buildings are mostly of its rounded form and conical roof, which at this point can be attributed as the primitive form of a baruk. Some examples also show the tendency to enrich the image of baruks by adding some elements such as the slanted outer walls with much thinner roof peak (SSLA building), and some were elevated to give an image of being built on stilts (Bau Civic Centre; Damai Beach Resort). Other buildings used either one of the elements or a combination of all. The omitted elements are mostly of religious and sacred elements. Despite some have retained the feature of the omen bird such as can be seen on Bau Civic Centre (designed by the late Marcel Wu of KDI Architect), the intention may not be a religious one. This is a gesture to pay homage to the historical past to many Bidayuh locals living in that part of the region and the patron of the project.

Based on this, the physical aspects of baruks adapted by secular buildings mostly have very little to do with, if not unrelated at all, to baruks’ sacred elements. The physical sacred elements are only reflected through certain components in baruks, which are the spatial layout (akat guna & akat batin), the artefacts related to rituals (sebbang etc) and the omen bird replica on the peak of the roof. Despite the raised floor component in most Austronesian indigenous buildings as according to Ting [7] are used to represent their cosmological belief, there is no strong evidence suggesting that the raised floor in baruks are related to religious belief, unlike in the Iban architecture, in which the ground floor of their longhouses represents the underworld, the first floor represents the realm of humans while the attic or the roof represents the spirit world. The openings and the conical roof are more of a climatic response as to allow airflow and efficient rainwater withdrawal [8], rather than arousing spiritual presence. At a glance, it can be regarded as acceptable for secular buildings to use unsacred physical characteristics of baruks, as long as they are not replicating the sacred components.
Figure 7. The cross section of SSLA Building clearly echoes the profile of
baruks (conical roof & the illusion of being raised on stilts), but the replicated
sacred components are non-existent [1].

From our on-site observations, literature sources and prior knowledge, notable physicality aspects of
baruks adaptation on secular buildings in Sarawak can be primarily categorized into these approaches:

1. ‘Museumification’: Accurate replica of baruks built in a traditionalist way to preserve its
full glory usually used for tourism and educational purposes (i.e. the Sarawak Cultural
Village);
2. Hybridization: Mixing some architectural elements of baruks with other styles, materials,
construction, and functions (i.e. Bau Civic Centre & Damai Beach Resort in Santubong);
3. Metaphor: More abstract and liberal way of interpreting and recreating baruks’
architecture into a more sculptural or monumental structure. An advanced result of
hybridization (i.e. SSLA building).

Minos stressed that the architecture of baruks has to be accepted and built which can keep alive the
identity of Bidayuhs [6]. Ungang highlighted, if the new approach of sustaining and promoting the
architectural language of baruks in tourism industry does not diverge to the interests of the Bidayuh
people, it is most welcome if it carefully respects the sanctity or sacredness of baruks [8]. These
secular buildings are mostly interested to replicate the form of conical roof and the round floor plan,
rather than the sacred components. However, to highlight a point from [5] research, even the recording
of sebbang played for promotional or commercial purposes are considered as non-ethical. They
expanded the concern to include other Bidayuhs’ cultural objects. Our paper suggests that baruks fall
under the same category. Using this argument, the commercial use of baruks architectural language as
exemplified in these secular buildings may have some harm to the culture, as they somehow remove
the sacred meanings to create something that is less valuable. Ironically, when there are sacred
components being replicated, such as the omen bird on the roof of the Civic Centre in Bau, it is rather
unethical despite the good intention of being in sympathy to the local culture. Therefore, to simplify
the arguments, we outlined some examples of the secular buildings with our comments built upon
these concerns in Table 2.

Table 2. Some examples with comments on secular buildings with architectural references taken from
baruks.
| Building                        | Image | Approach/ Comments                                                                 |
|--------------------------------|-------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Sarawak Cultural Village       | ![Image](image1.jpg) | Museumification  
Respects traditional culture through cultural reenactments for educating visitors while maintaining commercial interests. |
| Bau Civic Centre               | ![Image](image2.jpg) | Hybridization  
In sympathy with local Bidayuh community and respectful to the culture as it serves also as a gallery about Bidayuh culture. A bit careless in adapting *baruk* architecture by treating omen bird replica as just a cultural object. |
| Damai Beach Resort             | ![Image](image3.jpg) | Hybridization  
Aggressively using *baruks*’ images that can be interpreted as cultural commodification to fulfil commercial objectives. |
| The White Barouk Restaurant    | ![Image](image4.jpg) | Hybridization  
*Baruks*’ image is used as cultural commodification to fulfil commercial objectives. |
| SSLA Building                  | ![Image](image5.jpg) | Metaphor  
Paying homage to *baruks*’ institutional appeal while avoiding using sacred elements. Less harmful to the sacred meaning of *baruks*. |
| Tebedu Community Hall          | ![Image](image6.jpg) | Hybridization  
Restoring *baruks*’ common function as a community venue with no reference to sacred elements. Less harmful to the sacred meaning of *baruks*. |

Morality of Using Baruks’ Architecture in Secular Buildings
There is already consent from the Bidayuh community in the form of an approval to use *baruks* architectural language for commercial and tourism purposes. *Baruks* are essentially a sacred building but they also serve as a place of gathering, thus any new version of *baruks* in line with the spirit of gathering people may be regarded as appropriate. Despite there is already a rule indicating that it should align with the interests of the Bidayuh community and be respectful to the sanctity of *baruks* institution itself, the execution of these still very much open to interpretation. This is where the line should be drawn.

Being respectful to *baruks* can be in the form of what type of secular activities being hosted in the buildings. If it was meant for education or as an institutional building such as a legislative assembly, a tourist information centre or a community hall, despite does not in any way reflecting original *baruks*’ sacred functions, this may be acceptable as the original function of *baruks* to gather the community and as a place for meeting is not fully compromised. If the building is used as a restaurant or a hotel, then there is a risk of being exploitive. Though is tolerable to the Bidayu community, commercial activities may relegate the sanctity of *baruks* depending on the commercial owners who would decide on what type of commercial activities going to be hosted there. Commercial activities are also often ephemeral and ever changing, as there is money involved, thus it is highly probable that the activities may not be in line with the idea of sacredness. For instance, further perversion of it can happen if it was converted into a nightclub or a karaoke bar.

Suggestions
This architectural hybridization between contemporary and vernacular style is not so much the exception but the norm in Malaysia, so much so that it is quite regular to see buildings in Malaysia flexing styles taken from various ethnic references. Imposing vernacular characteristics on relatively modern buildings is considered by some as a run-of-the-mill approach, but there is also some appealing dimension to it. This is at least may be agreed from the perspective of post-modernist architects who love to spark a broader sense of appreciation by different groups of people across dichotomous levels of intelligence. The interplay between abstraction and obviosity as a result from what the American architectural historian Charles Jencks dubbed as the ‘dual code’ in post-modern buildings triggers a wider sense of appreciation by both learned professionals and the lay public. This has made some buildings appear to use revivalist and metaphorical approaches becoming too literal to some intellectual senses.

The reason behind of why certain architects chose to use the language of *baruks* is dubious. The format in which Hijjas Kasturi (the architect of the SSLA building) applied to most his iconic buildings in Sarawak are all similar, with round floor plan and the conical roof is set to exploit the moulding potential of concrete in giving an impression of being futuristic and give an element of visual surprise to the context [23]. This can also be found in his other works in Sarawak such as the Bintulu Development Authority (1995), the North Kuching City Hall (1994), and the South Kuching City Hall (1995). These buildings could as well be regarded as using *baruks* metaphor as they all have a similar conical roof and rounded floor plan. It seems that the justification for using the image of *baruks* could as well be secondary. Thus, removing the theme of *baruks* from the intention of architectural form making may be a more dignified approach rather than claiming one to be a thing that it is not. It is therefore possible to create something similar looking but without mentioning the intention of replicating the architecture of *baruks* itself, which may be less harmful to the culture. It is even better if the ‘dual code’ approach is used to let the observers to suggest for themselves that the image of *baruks* is there without even mentioning it.
Figure 8. Other Hijjas Kasturi’s works in Sarawak that may resemble baruks but are not [31,32]

4. Conclusion
The hybridization of the language of baruks with some other language may hurt the original architectural language, what they represent and their meanings. For instance, using the external façade of baruks with modern spatial configuration does not represent baruk architecture in total. This is also due to the omission of sacred spaces of akat guna and akat batin that define what baruks architecture is and how it functions. Such can be seen in almost all secular baruk buildings in Sarawak, in which what has been retained only the physical appearance of a baruk. The metaphor approach of translating baruks language into an avant-garde result can be perceived as an artistic sculpturing of the original structure, thus itself can be considered as a form of art that uses physicality of the environment as the canvas. This approach generally may be less harmful, as it may be just an artistic rendition of baruks and often can be open to interpretation.

The initiatives to incorporate baruks’ image into contemporary buildings are applauded and well received. However, as far as architectural morality and ethics are concerned, there would be a very limited way to do this, as it is always best not to jeopardize the original sacredness of baruks. Due to this dilemma, the most practical solution by far is by respectfully compromising the sacred elements of baruks just for keeping the architectural image alive. This seemingly paradoxical approach may not be the best, but it may be what keeps the modern society conscious of this architecture, thus empowering the culture itself. However, by doing this in a long run may also give birth to a new problem in the future. There is already an abundance of examples of architectural works that used sacred language that has become a new breed of secular architectural language itself. It is not impossible that someday this is going to happen to baruks. It may also be plausible in future, if without the intellectual interventions done in the process, baruks would only become just an image that can be copied and reproduced without having to know its raison d’etre, submerged or drifted along with the current of other architectural styles.

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