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SIMPORA XVI: 2025**

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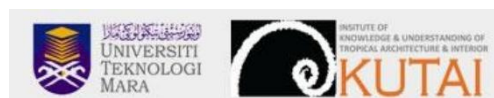
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COMPARISON OF PHYSICAL ELEMENTS OF GAYO TRADITIONAL HOUSES BASED ON HABRAKEN'S PHYSICAL SYSTEM THEORY

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Abstract: This study compares the physical architectural elements of traditional Gayo houses, focusing on Umah Pitu Ruang, an original heritage structure, and Umah Adet Gayo Quine, a contemporary adaptation. Using a qualitative, descriptive, and comparative approach based on Habraken's (1978) concept of physical building systems, data were collected through direct observation and a literature review. Findings reveal that although Umah Adet Gayo Quine maintains key traditional features such as roof shape, columns, walls, and ornamentation, it incorporates modern materials and construction techniques, including concrete and plywood, to meet functional needs. The study highlights differences in scale, material, and structural methods, reflecting a balance between preserving cultural identity and adapting to contemporary requirements. This research contributes to understanding how traditional Gayo architecture can be sensitively revitalised in modern contexts without losing its vernacular character.

Keywords: Umah Pitu Ruang, physical elements, traditional architecture comparison

INTRODUCTION

Traditional architecture is the result of accumulated local knowledge, shaped by functional needs, environmental conditions, and a community's social systems. In the Gayo region of Aceh, this architectural form is evident in the Umah Pitu Ruang, a traditional house passed down through generations and a symbol of Gayo cultural identity. It is characterised by distinctive physical elements and construction systems, including roof forms, column structures (suyen), wooden walls, stilted floors, stairs, and openings, all adapted to the natural environment and the community's way of life. Traditional architecture itself encompasses both tangible and intangible elements, incorporating physical and symbolic standards with various natural and human dimensions (Salwin & A, 2012).

Over time, traditional dwellings such as Umah Pitu Ruang have become increasingly rare in their original form. Efforts to preserve their architectural values continue, one of which is the construction of Umah Adet Gayo Quine, a modern residence that incorporates architectural elements of traditional Gayo houses, including roof forms, column arrangements, and traditional wooden structures. In addition to serving as a private residence, the house has also

been developed as a tourism site due to its strategic location near Lake Lut Tawar. The diminishing presence of Umah Pitu Ruang in Gayo is closely linked to limited public understanding of the importance of cultural heritage as a vital component of regional identity (Setianingsih et al., 2017).

According to Habraken (1978), as cited in Jannah and Ridwan (2024), architectural form can be analysed through three principal systems, one of which is the physical system. This refers to the construction elements that constitute a building's tangible form, such as roof structures, walls, floors, and columns. The physical system is essential for understanding how a building is constructed from a technical perspective, how its components function structurally, and how they endure shifts in environmental context and usage.

His study compares the physical elements of the traditional Umah Pitu Ruang with those adopted in the Umah Adet Gayo Quine. The focus lies on the building's physical system, including the form and structure of the roof, columns (*suyen*), walls, floors, doors, windows, stairs, and other construction elements. The aim is to identify the extent to which traditional architectural elements are preserved, modified, or transformed in a modern residence that also functions as a tourism site.

LITERATURE REVIEW

According to Zulfikri et al. (2023), the physical elements of Umah Pitu Ruang consist of several primary components that serve both structural and symbolic functions within the traditional Gayo architectural system:

a. Roof

The roof of Umah Pitu Ruang typically takes on a gable form. Initially, its roofing material was made from natural resources, namely *serule* leaves. Over time, these materials became increasingly scarce and less commonly used. Consequently, many roofs have since been replaced with zinc sheets in response to material availability and modern development (Zulfikri et al., 2023).

b. Walls

The walls are constructed from *meudang jeumpa* wood, arranged horizontally as a primary structural component (Partiwi & Novianti, 2022). This configuration not only contributes to structural integrity but also reflects local aesthetics and cultural identity.

c. Flooring (*Tete*)

Floors are likewise made of *meudang jeumpa* wood, consistent with the wall material. This uniform use of resources underscores the practical sustainability and ease of maintenance inherent in traditional practices.

d. Columns (*Suyen*)

Suyens are vertical columns that support the building structure, bearing the load of the *bere bujur* and the entire roof. These columns are also made from *meudang jeumpa* wood. The

number of *suyen* varies, usually between 27 and 36, depending on the size and structural requirements of the house (Sari et al., 2020).

e. Doors

Doors are crafted from *meudang jeumpa* wood. At the front of the house, two main doors lead to the *Serami Banan* and *Serami Rawan* spaces. At the rear, two additional doors provide access to the kitchen or *serami* area. Each sleeping room (*Umah Rinung*) typically features four doors (Zulfikri et al., 2023). Historically, an additional entrance known as *pintu kaul* was found at the *lepo* (terrace), serving as the main point of entry (Jannah & Ridwan, 2024).

f. Windows

Windows are also made from *meudang jeumpa* wood. Every *Umah Rinung* has four windows. The *Serami Banan* room contains two, while the *Serami Rawan* has one. At the rear of the house, a small rectangular horizontal window called *tingkep* is present (Zulfikri et al., 2023).

g. Stairs (*Kite*)

The stairs of *Umah Pitu Ruang*, referred to as *kite*, are built using *meudang jeumpa* wood. The number of steps is always odd, symbolising balance and prosperity in Gayo tradition (Jannah & Ridwan, 2024).

h. Floor Beams (*Ruk*)

Ruk are horizontal beams that support the floor and distribute its weight to the vertical columns (*suyen*). These are also made from *meudang jeumpa* wood, reinforcing material consistency throughout the structure.

i. Fascia Board (*Lisplang*)

Lisplang refers to the board affixed to the roof edges. Its function is to protect the roof structure from rain seepage and enhance the building's exterior aesthetics. Like other components, it utilises *meudang jeumpa* wood.

j. Horizontal Beam (*Bere Bujur*)

Bere Bujur is a horizontal beam placed at the top of the walls, just beneath the roof junction. It supports the roof structure and connects the *suyen* columns, thereby maintaining the house's structural stability.

k. Column Base Stones (*Atu Kenunulen Suyen*)

Atu Kenunulen Suyen are the foundation stones on which the *suyen* columns rest. These stones serve to separate the wood from the ground, preventing decay and ensuring structural stability across the house.

l. Wind Barrier (*Tolak Angin*)

Tolak angin is an additional protective element installed in certain areas of the house to block direct wind penetration. This feature represents an adaptive strategy for the cold, windy climate typical of the Gayo highlands.

a. Spatial System

This concerns spatial planning, including layout division, spatial organisation, building orientation, and the hierarchy between rooms. It demonstrates how interior spaces are designed to meet functional needs, cultural values, and user requirements.

b. Physical System

This encompasses the construction elements that form the building's tangible structure and can be directly observed. It includes material usage, structural systems such as roofs, walls, floors, columns, and other technical components. The physical system plays a critical role in materialising architectural form and function.

c. Stylistic System (Appearance)

This relates to the building's visual aspects, including façades and other decorative elements. It covers the design of doors, windows, ventilation, and ornamental or decorative motifs that represent cultural identity, symbolic values, and the aesthetic preferences of its supporting community.

In architectural studies, the physical system is a vital aspect that comprises the observable construction elements of a building. According to Habraken (1978), as cited in Jannah and Ridwan (2024), it includes structural components such as roofs, columns, walls, floors, and other elements that collectively shape the building's physical presence. This system supports the building's functional performance while illustrating the construction methods employed to achieve structural stability and material efficiency.

This research focuses specifically on the physical system of the Umah Pitu Ruang, using a comparative approach that examines the physical elements of both the original Umah Pitu Ruang structure and its replica or reinterpretation built in different locations. The analysis centres on the shapes of elements, the utilised materials, and the construction principles applied. Through this comparison, the study seeks to identify the degree to which physical elements of Umah Pitu Ruang have been preserved, altered, or adapted in the context of contemporary development.

METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative descriptive approach using a comparative method, which aims to identify differences between objects based on specific variables (Sugiyono, 2018), to analyse the physical architectural elements of Umah Pitu Ruang. The main focus is to compare the form, configuration, and materials of architectural elements between the original Umah Pitu Ruang located in Gayo Lues and Bener Meriah and its representative version in Kampung Mendale, Central Aceh. This approach is intended to examine the continuity and transformation of architectural elements in the context of cultural preservation and adaptation.

Primary data were obtained through direct observation of both case study objects, focusing on physical components such as roofs, columns (suyen), walls, floors, stairs, doors, windows,

eaves (lisplang), and other structural elements. Secondary data were collected from relevant literature, including works by Zulfikri et al. (2023), Sari et al. (2020), Partiwı & Novianti (2022), and Jannah & Ridwan (2024), to provide historical and technical context for the field findings.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1: List of Important Dates

Important notes	Umah Pitu Ruang Reje Baluntara	Umah Pitu Ruang Reje Baluntara	Explanation
Roof	 The roof of Umah Pitu Ruang Reje Baluntara is a steeply pitched gable, designed to suit the humid, high-rainfall climate of the Gayo highlands. Originally covered with serule leaves, it has since been replaced with corrugated metal for practicality and material availability, though this reduces its natural aesthetic value.	 The roof of Umah Adat Gayo Quine features a gable shape with a similar pitch to Umah Reje Baluntara but on a larger scale to suit the building's dimensions. It uses corrugated metal sheets for roofing and pine wood for the structural framework, reflecting a modern approach that prioritises material availability and efficiency, although it lacks the durability of meudang jeumpa wood.	In general, both umah use gable roofs with similar pitches and currently feature corrugated metal roofing. However, Umah Reje Baluntara originally used serule leaves, reflecting local tradition, while Umah Adat Gayo Quine has used metal roofing from the outset. Additionally, the roof of Umah Gayo Quine is larger in scale and constructed with modern materials, differing from the traditional structure of Umah Reje Baluntara.
Wall	 The walls of Umah Reje Baluntara are made from horizontally arranged meudang jeumpa wood, following traditional Gayo construction techniques. The surfaces have remained unpainted since the house was built.	 The 4-meter-high walls of Umah Gayo Quine use concrete as the primary structural material to meet modern building standards. The exterior is clad in pine wood panels by Pak Martis to create a traditional appearance,	The walls of both houses reflect the contrast between traditional construction and modern approaches. Umah Reje Baluntara is built entirely of local wood using traditional techniques, while Umah Gayo Quine employs concrete as its main structure, clad in pine wood panels to preserve a traditional appearance.

	nearly 200 years ago, preserving its original appearance as a tribute to the authenticity of Gayo cultural heritage.	although pine is less durable than local meudang jeumpa. This approach reflects an effort to preserve traditional visuals within a permanent and modern construction context.	Both feature wooden exterior panels, but differ in building height and structural materials.
Floor(Tete)	 The flooring in Umah Reje Baluntara is composed of tightly arranged horizontal planks of meudang jeumpa wood, creating a solid, durable surface. This choice of material aligns with the house's primary structural framework, while also preserving the traditional character of Gayo architectural aesthetics.	 The flooring of Umah Gayo Quine is based on a cement foundation, subsequently overlaid with wood-patterned vinyl to evoke the visual impression of traditional wooden flooring. This approach merges the strength and low-maintenance characteristics of modern flooring materials with the distinctive aesthetic of Gayo vernacular architecture.	The flooring of Umah Reje Baluntara is made of meudang jeumpa wood, reflecting authenticity and traditional craftsmanship. In contrast, Umah Gayo Quine features a cement-based floor covered with wood-patterned vinyl, designed to visually replicate traditional flooring within a modern construction framework. Similarity: Both houses incorporate a wood-like visual aesthetic. Difference: The core flooring materials differ—solid hardwood in the original house, cement with vinyl overlay in the modern replica.
Column (Suyen)	 The main structural columns of Umah Reje Baluntara measure 15 x 15 cm and are crafted from meudang jeumpa wood. A total of 27 columns support the house's framework, exemplifying traditional Gayo building techniques and local wisdom in selecting environmentally appropriate materials.	 The structural columns of Umah Gayo Quine measure 35 x 35 cm and are constructed from concrete to ensure strength and durability. To replicate the appearance of traditional wooden pillars, the exterior is clad in pine wood planks, effectively blending modern structural techniques with the aesthetic sensibilities of Gayo vernacular architecture.	The columns of Umah Reje Baluntara are made from medium-sized meudang jeumpa wood, reflecting traditional craftsmanship and structural practices. In contrast, Umah Gayo Quine utilises large concrete pillars, externally clad in pine wood to simulate the appearance of traditional timber supports. Similarity: Both houses feature wood-like visuals and serve structural support functions. Difference: The original materials and dimensions differ—solid wood in the authentic

			traditional house, and concrete in the modern replica.
Foundation (Atu kenunulen suyen)	 The original foundation of Umah Reje Baluntara consisted of stacked natural stones without adhesive, embodying the traditional Gayo architectural technique. This approach has since been replaced with 40 x 40 cm concrete footings to enhance stability and durability, which now directly support the wooden columns.	 Visually, the house pillars appear to follow traditional forms with a wider base. However, the structure is made of uniformly sized concrete from bottom to top. A wider pine wood cladding at the base mimics the look of traditional pillars standing on stone foundations. The foundation itself employs a modern below-ground construction system.	The foundations of both houses illustrate differing construction approaches between tradition and modernity. Umah Reje Baluntara initially used stacked stones as a non-permanent foundation, later replaced with cement for structural reinforcement. In contrast, Umah Gayo Quine has used a concrete foundation embedded underground from the outset. Despite these structural differences, both maintain a traditional visual impression through wooden cladding at the base of the pillars.
Stairs (Tangga)	 The staircase of Umah Reje Baluntara is entirely constructed from wood, consistent with the primary material of the house. There are three staircases: one positioned at the front serving as the main entrance, and two at the rear providing access to serami rawan and serami banan, in accordance with the traditional Gayo architectural pattern.	 Umah Gayo Quine features two staircases: one at the front, in an L-shape, designed primarily for aesthetic appeal, and another at the side, providing access to the kitchen and serving as an evacuation route. Both staircases are constructed using pine wood to maintain a traditional visual impression.	Both houses utilise wooden stairs and maintain the stilt-house structure characteristic of Gayo architecture. Umah Reje Baluntara features three stairs made from meudang jeumpa wood, aligned with traditional functions, while Umah Gayo Quine has two stairs constructed from pine wood, with modern adjustments in form and placement. Similarities: Use of wood, multiple access points, and integration with the stilt-house structure. Differences: Number of stairs, type of wood, and variation in form and placement.

floor beam (Ruk)		The ruk element in Umah Reje Baluntara uses solid wood as its original structure, while Umah Gayo Quine employs concrete covered with wood. Both function as floor supports and column connectors, but differ in material, visual authenticity, and traditional value.
Top Beam (Bere bujur)		The bere bujur in both houses serves as an upper-column connector and a roof support. The differences lie in the materials, forms, and structural strength, reflecting the contrast between traditional and modern construction approaches.
Door		The doors in both houses serve as primary access points and spatial dividers but differ significantly in number, ornamentation, and aesthetic meaning. Similarity: Both use wood for the doors. Difference: They differ in the number and design of the doors.

enriching its traditional significance.			
Window	 The windows of Umah Pitu Ruang Reje Baluntara are made from meudang jeumpa wood without ornamentation, reflecting a natural and functional character. Their placement—two at the front, one at serami rawan, two at serami banan, four in the bedrooms, and two small rear windows (tingkep)—follows traditional patterns aligned with spatial function and natural ventilation.	 The windows of Umah Adat Gayo Quine are made of wood and feature designs reminiscent of traditional Gayo windows. There are two at the front, five on each side arranged symmetrically, and four at the back—two of which are taller and centrally positioned. All windows have a uniform design and feature ornamental details on the shutters, preserving a traditional aesthetic despite modern construction.	Both houses use wooden, double-leaf windows to support natural lighting and ventilation. However, they differ in number, size, and design details: Umah Reje Baluntara has 11 plain windows, including small tingkep openings, while Umah Gayo Quine features 16 ornamented windows that enhance its traditional appearance.
Tolak Angin	 The tolak angin in Umah Pitu Ruang Reje Baluntara is made of meudang jeumpa wood and decorated with traditional Gayo ornaments. Positioned above the wall or between the upper beam and the roof, it serves both as ventilation and a symbolic decorative element, enriching the house's aesthetic and cultural value.	 The tolak angin in Umah Adat Gayo Quine is made of plywood, chosen for its light weight and ease of shaping. The front features calligraphic carvings that add a religious touch, while the back displays Gayo ornaments. Despite its modern materials, it serves as a ventilation system and enhances aesthetics with traditional elements.	The tolak angin in both houses serves as both a ventilation and a decorative element featuring Gayo motifs. The difference lies in material and carving style: Umah Reje Baluntara uses meudang jeumpa wood with traditional ornaments, while Umah Gayo Quine uses plywood with a combination of calligraphic and Gayo carvings.
Fascia	 The Fascia of Umah Pitu Ruang Reje Baluntara is made from <i>meudang jeumpa</i> wood and carved	 The Fascia of Umah Adat Gayo Quine is made of pine wood and features pre-made ornamental pieces attached	The fascia in both houses functions to cover the underside of the roof and display Gayo ornaments as aesthetic elements. While both use wood, they differ in material and ornamentation technique: Umah Reje

directly with traditional ornaments. In addition to covering the underside of the roof edge, it reinforces the traditional character and affirms the house's aesthetic and cultural identity.	to its surface. Serving as both a roof edge cover and a visual element, it presents Gayo motifs through a more practical modern approach while preserving traditional aesthetics.	Baluntara features direct carvings on meudang jeumpa wood, whereas Umah Gayo Quine uses applied ornaments on pine wood.
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CONCLUSIONS

The research findings indicate that while Umah Adat Gayo Quine attempts to replicate the form and elements of Umah Pitu Ruang, significant differences exist in materials, dimensions, and construction techniques. Umah Reje Baluntara employs local materials such as meudang jeumpa wood and traditional building methods, whereas Umah Gayo Quine adopts a modern structure using concrete, pine wood, and additional layering to mimic the traditional appearance.

Among the twelve physical elements studied, most in Umah Gayo Quine have undergone modifications—such as vinyl flooring, applied ornaments, and wooden cladding over concrete. These changes affect the house's authenticity, despite preserving its visual aesthetic. Therefore, the preservation of traditional houses should strive to balance traditional appearance, material authenticity, and modern functional demands, ensuring that revitalisation efforts remain culturally and technically sensitive.

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