

Design of a *Rumah Budaya* in the Context of Preserving Karo Culture in Desa Lingga, Karo Regency, North Sumatra

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ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 05 July 2023

Revised 18 September 2023

Accepted 16 October 2023

Available online 31 October 2023

E-ISSN: 2654-3591

P-ISSN: 2623-1999

How to cite:

Nasution, P.H. & Ginting, S.W. (2023). Design of a *Rumah Budaya* in the Context of Preserving Karo Culture in Desa Lingga, Karo Regency, North Sumatra. *International Journal of Culture and Art Studies*, 7(2), 77-85.

ABSTRACT

The *Siwaluh Jabu* Traditional House is one of the cultural heritages from the ancestors of the Karo people from the past. This traditional house is in Desa Lingga (Lingga village), Karo Regency, Province North Sumatra, Indonesia. The interest of tourists in visiting this traditional house has made the local government make Desa Lingga a cultural village. Traditional houses and other cultural heritage symbolize the greatness of the Batak Karo ancestors in the past. Nevertheless, the "remains" (inheritance) of greatness seems to have less attention. This paper was created to examine the existence of cultural heritage with tourism potential of the *Siwaluh Jabu* Traditional House in Desa Lingga and provide architectural design solutions as a form of Karo Cultural preservation by creating a *Rumah Budaya* that provides lodging facilities and cultural learning facilities in order to preserve Karo Culture. The research was conducted using a qualitative descriptive method where the authors obtained the data by observing and describing the environmental conditions of the object. Referring to the research results, it was found an idea for a design that has a cultural program where visitors and tourists can enjoy the atmosphere of Desa Lingga, which is unique to its Karo Culture, while learning about this culture. The design of this cultural learning facility will impact the *Siwaluh Jabu* Traditional House because this traditional house will experience preservation, which is expected to lead to an increase in tourist visits to the Desa Budaya Lingga.

Keywords: Karo, *Siwaluh Jabu*, Preservation, Heritage, Tourist



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<http://doi.org/10.32734/ijcas.v7i2.13692>

1. Introduction

Human culture always encompasses a part of history and society. Culture from a historical point of view itself means that culture emerges from a particular time era, a particular meaning, and responds to certain situations and conditions. Besides that, this culture becomes an identity passed down from generation to generation. Kusumohamidjojo (2017) reveals that culture can be captured as a whole of a dynamic process of change that arises from a unity of thought, soul, and conscience, which is made as a unit of behavior and work in the form of materialization in the form of ideas that are developed and continued with the learning process and applied in real life.

Indonesia is a country that has a lot of ethnic diversity, culture, and customs, which are passed down as a legacy from our ancestors. The enchantment of cultural heritage and natural beauty can be used as tourist objects expected to invite tourists.

Meanwhile, for the preservation of local culture itself, Jacobus Ranjabar (2006, p. 114) argues that the preservation of the old norms of the nation (local culture) is to maintain artistic and cultural values, traditional values by developing dynamic embodiments, and adapting to ever-changing situations and conditions and

growing. According to Peursen (1988, p. 233), culture is not a noun but a verb, which means that culture is our work and responsibility.

Thus, culture is described functionally as a relationship to our life plan. Referring to the definition of preservation in the Indonesian Dictionary above, preserving culture (or local culture) itself is an effort to maintain/so that culture remains as it is.

The interest of tourists in visiting the Siwaluh Jabu Traditional House has made the local government make Desa Lingga a cultural village. Tourism is seen as a sector that can encourage and enhance development activities, open new business fields, create employment opportunities, and increase people's and original regional incomes if managed and developed optimally.

However, the conditions of this Karo cultural heritage building are proportional to its uniqueness and diversity. The condition of this traditional house is that only two are livable, while the rest of the traditional houses have collapsed. This cultural heritage is no longer maintained and is starting to fade, so the potential for cultural tourism objects has also begun to decrease, which impacts the reduction of foreign tourists who visit. In the past, when many foreign tourists came to visit, the residents of Desa Lingga put on dance performances to increase the interest of other tourists to come. However, it has never been held again.

Traditional houses and other cultural heritage symbolize the greatness of the Batak Karo ancestors in the past. However, the "remains" (inheritance) of greatness seems to have less attention anymore. One of them is the result of a more modern influence. Many stone-roofed brick buildings have been found and built according to today's architectural models in Desa Lingga. This happens because of the times' progress and the cultural acculturation process.

1.1. Desa Lingga and Karo Culture

Desa Lingga is a tourist attraction in Kelurahan Simpang Empat, Kabupaten Karo, North Sumatra. This village is approximately 5 km from Kabanjahe, the capital of Kabupaten Karo. Today, remains of traditional Karo houses can be found in Desa Lingga, which can still be seen today. This village there is a village of the Karo people which has several traditional buildings, including the *Siwaluh Jabu* House (the main house of the Karo people), *Geriten* (a place for storing the skulls of their ancestors), *Jambur* (a place for the village community meetings), *Lesung* (a place for pounding rice), *Barns* (a place for store rice) and *Lipo* (chicken coop).

Many experts link the *Siwaluh Jabu* Traditional House with traditional values such as the concept of *gotong royong*, known in the Karo language, namely *aron-aron*, and *siempat-sampati*, which are the values of residents. Besides this, one thing is quite dynamic for the Karo community, which has resulted in the preservation of the *Siwaluh Jabu* Traditional House. One of the reasons why the *Siwaluh Jabu* Traditional House is decreasing is the impact of modern life on changing times. Living together with eight households in one house is considered incompatible with the current concept of housing, which prefers comfort and privacy. Apart from this, materials such as wood as the primary material for the *Siwaluh Jabu* Traditional House are somewhat challenging to find in the forests around the village, coupled with the lack of human resources who are experts in Karo Traditional Architecture.

The condition of this traditional house is that only two are livable, while the rest of the traditional houses have collapsed. This cultural heritage is no longer maintained and is starting to fade, so the potential for cultural tourism objects has also begun to decrease, which impacts the reduction of foreign tourists who visit. In the past, when many foreign tourists came to visit, the residents of Desa Lingga put on dance performances to increase the interest of other tourists to come. Nevertheless, it has never been held again.

The Desa Budaya Lingga area does not have lodging, so tourists who visit usually stay around the capital of Kabupaten Karo, namely Kabanjahe. The distance from Kabanjahe to Desa Lingga is about 5 km, or tourists can also stay in Berastagi City, one of the tourism icons of Kabupaten Karo, about 15 km from Desa Lingga. In Berastagi, there are many hotels and other types of lodging; usually, these are more commonly found in the City of Kabanjahe and Berastagi.

1.2. Rumah Budaya Design

The *Rumah Budaya* is a facility that functions to develop, maintain, and continue traditional culture. *Rumah Budaya* is a means of all existing and existing cultural and cultural identities and a memo for the community about their cultural identity. The *Rumah Budaya* can also be used to perpetuate the ancestral culture that is less meaningful today. The *Rumah Budaya* also functions as a place to study to reflect on continuity and discontinuity in cultural traditions.

The *Rumah Budaya* usually has rooms that accommodate cultural learning activities in the area. The available facilities include a room for learning traditional dance, a room for learning traditional fine arts, a hall for carrying out cultural activities, a room for learning to play traditional musical instruments, etc.

This *Rumah Budaya* has three functions; the first is Culture Learning, which is intended for people who want to increase their knowledge about this culture to learn their culture directly from the facilities of this Culture House. The second function is Culture Expression; this function is usually carried out by holding regional cultural festivals, cultural exhibitions with museums containing ancient objects, displaying various activities carried out by local people, etc. The third or final function is Culture Advocacy and Promotion, a forum for promoting culture and promotion from the area (Dewi, 2023).

Table 1. Study of Functions of a Kind of Rumah Budaya

| Facilities | Omah Tembi, Yogyakarta | Kampung Sindang Barang, Bogor |
|----------------------------|---|--|
| Lodging |  |  |
| Cultural Learning Facility |   |   |
| Information | <p>The facilities available at this inn are breakfast by the rice fields, Romantic Senthir Light Dinner, enjoying the sunset at Parangkusumo, riding a carriage around the village, and body scrubs and massages.</p> | <p>Several cultural facilities and activities are offered in the form of deepening the history of Sundanese culture, learning to plant and pound rice with farmers, practicing angklung, playing traditional games, learning martial arts, and others.</p> |
| Source | <p>Santoso, (2015). Accessed from https://www.tribunnews.com/travel/</p> | <p>Fadhilah, N. (2016). Accessed from https://www.journaliberta.com/</p> |

This paper aims to examine the tourism potential of Desa Lingga in the form of the cultural heritage of the Siwaluh Jabu Traditional House. It provides solution ideas related to cultural preservation in the form of a design in architecture. One of the architectural ideas related to cultural acculturation, wherein the present era,

the Desa Budaya Lingga, has experienced this process, is to create an innovation that aims to increase the potential of Karo cultural tourism again.

The author provides an idea in the form of designing an inn that has a cultural program where visitors and tourists can enjoy the atmosphere of Desa Lingga, which is typical of its Karo Culture, while learning culture and visiting the *Siwaluh Jabu* Traditional House, which has no facilities in Desa Lingga. The design of this cultural learning facility will impact the *Siwaluh Jabu* Traditional House because this traditional house will undergo preservation, which is then expected to lead to an increase in tourist visits to the Desa Budaya Lingga. Cultural performances in the form of dances, traditional activities, and others will also be able to appear again as a form of the Karo Culture learning program. These things are intended so that Desa Budaya Lingga tourism can progress and the cultural heritage maintained for years is still around.

2. Method

The research method used in this paper is descriptive qualitative, where the writer obtains data by observing and describing the condition of the object's environment regarding the existence of cultural heritage with tourism potential of the *Siwaluh Jabu* Traditional House in Desa Lingga. This research was conducted in Desa Lingga, Kelurahan Simpang Empat, Kabupaten Karo, Provinsi Sumatera Utara. This is because the research location follows the problems studied and can help the writer complete this research.

Observations were made by direct observation in Desa Lingga, which is the object of research. This observation aims to obtain data regarding the Existence of Cultural Heritage as a cultural tourism object in Desa Lingga, Kelurahan Simpang Empat, Kabupaten Karo. This observation technique is carried out so that researchers obtain more in-depth data regarding the theme of this research.

The documentation study takes secondary data from the parties concerned and various related agencies and documents the research object with pictures. This is done to obtain data from related parties to obtain data about the existence of these cultural tourism objects.

3. Result and Discussion

Currently, in Desa Lingga, only 2 *Siwaluh Jabu* Traditional Houses are left, along with other Karo legacies in *jambur*, *geriten*, etc. The uniqueness and distinctiveness of the architecture of *Siwaluh Jabu* itself is an attraction for tourists. This is because this traditional house was built without nails, and the age of this house itself has reached hundreds of years.

The meaning of *Siwaluh Jabu* itself is a house inhabited by eight families where each family lives in this traditional house with their own roles. This traditional house comprises *Jabu Jahe* (downstream) and *Jabu July* (upstream). *Jabu Jahe* is divided into *Jabu Ujung Kayu* and *Jabu Rumah Sedapur Ujung Kayu*.

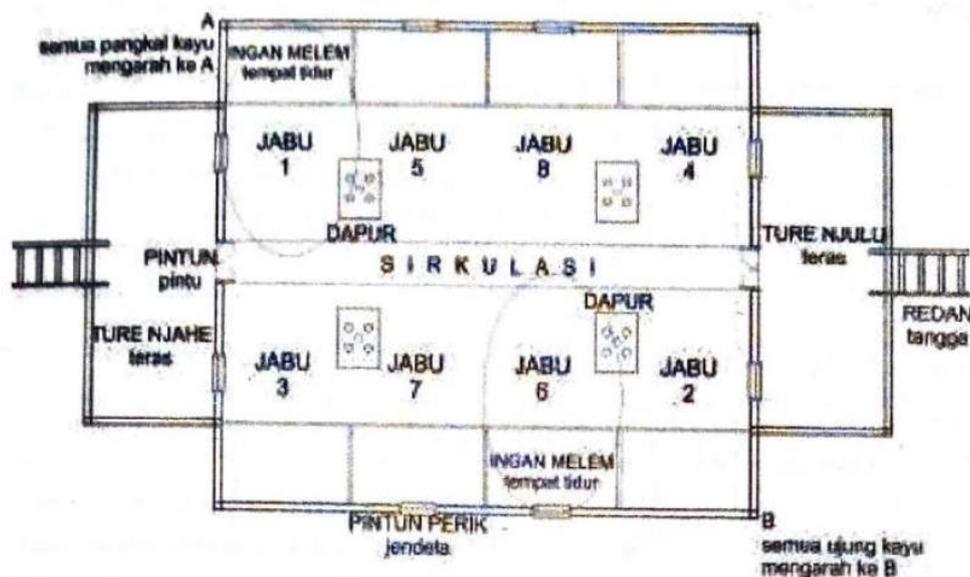


Figure1. Floor Plan of the Karo Traditional House
Source: Singarimbun, 1975.

In this house, there are only four kitchens, with each *Jabu* divided into two so that the resulting *Jabu-Jabu* *Sedapuren Bena Kayu*, *Sedapuren Ujung Kayu*, *Sedapuren Lepar Bena Kayu*, and *Jabu Sedapuren Lepar Ujung*

Kayu are formed. This house has high pillars and does not have a single-room partition. However, the room dividers are still there in the form of boundaries formed by lines of strong customs, even though the lines themselves are not visible. Each room has a name and a description of who should occupy that room. This has also been determined by Karo custom.

The order of the rooms in the Siwaluh jabu house is as follows:

- a. *Jabu Bena Kayu*: the room in front of the left side of the house occupied by the land clan and the village's founder.
- b. *Jabu Ujung Kayu/Jabu Sungkun News*: occupied by *Anak Beru Toa*, who has the task of solving every problem in the family.
- c. *Jabu Sedapur Ujung Kayu*: a room that has the same kitchen as *Jabu Ujung Kayu*. Jabu is occupied by *Beru's* son from *Jabu Sungkun Berita*.
- d. *Jabu Lapan Bena Kayu*: a room opposite *Jabu Bena Kayu*, occupied by *Biak Mondaya*.
- e. *Jabu Sedapur Lapan Bena Kayu*: a room that has the same kitchen as *Jabu Lapan Bena Kayu*, occupied by *Senina Sepemeran* or *Separiban*.
- f. *Jabu Lapan Ujung Kayu*: occupied by *Kalimbuh*, the party that gave the girl.
- g. *Jabu Sedapur Lapan Ujung Kayu*: a room that has the same kitchen as *Jabu Lapan Ujung Kayu*, occupied by *Jabu Simalungun*.

3.1. Parts of the Karo Traditional House

The parts of the house in the form of a pole position where the house stands are called *binangun*. At the top of the pole of this traditional house is placed a white cloth with palm fiber at the bottom. This house also has pedestals as a substitute for the foundation, which is called *palas* in the Karo language. Then the ladder is made of bamboo and the position of the ladder is not directly attached to the door like traditional houses in other areas.

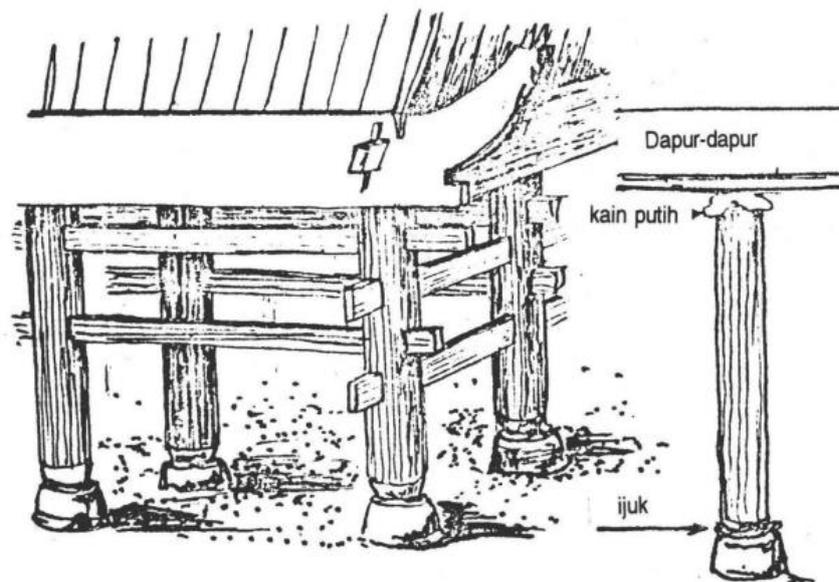


Figure 2. The Pillars of The Traditional Karo House
Source: Singarimbun, 1975.

The stairs and doors of this traditional house are separated by a porch named after a *ture* made of bamboo. Usually, the porch (*ture*) is used as a place to weave mats. This *ture* is also used as a toilet and a place to bathe children. This *ture* can also be used to meet young Karo people at night.

The roofing material used is palm fiber, which is quite wide in size. The roof of this house is then arranged so that it looks like combed hair. The roof of this traditional house uses buffalo horn decoration on the top of the roof, namely the east and west peaks. This decoration means that the Karo people respect every newcomer who comes to their area.

The facade of this traditional house is usually made of woven bamboo or planks that have been carved or painted. Usually, these carvings or paintings are based on Karo carvings and add various colors. A carved board supports the lower part of the façade. The carvings on the façade of this traditional house symbolize the

nature of the occupants who inhabit this house. The woven on this facade is beautiful and has a meaning in the form of the Karo people having good qualities.

Ornament

The decorative motifs usually depend on the homeowner's wishes, but the decoration's variations depend on the homeowner's skill and imagination. The order in which the decoration is done in this Ayo section always starts from the bottom to the top. As for the kitchens, it was done when the house was finished. There are several types of carvings in the Karo area, namely:

- *Gega* (carving) of the house, *jambur geriten*
- *Gega Pisau*
- *Gega Tumbalan*
- *Gega Ukat*
- Various decorations on the webbing

At home, *jambur* and *geriten* usually use the same *gerga* but differ only in the variation of the motif. This can be seen in the carvings of the *Tapak Raja Sulaiman* and *Bandu Matogu* ornaments. The Raja Sulaiman Footprint Ornament is the oldest in the Karo Region. *Gega* (carving) usually has eight pieces at both ends of the kitchens. However, for the *jambur* and *geriten* buildings, the *Tapak Rja Sulaman* ornament is next to the *Badu Matogu* ornament.

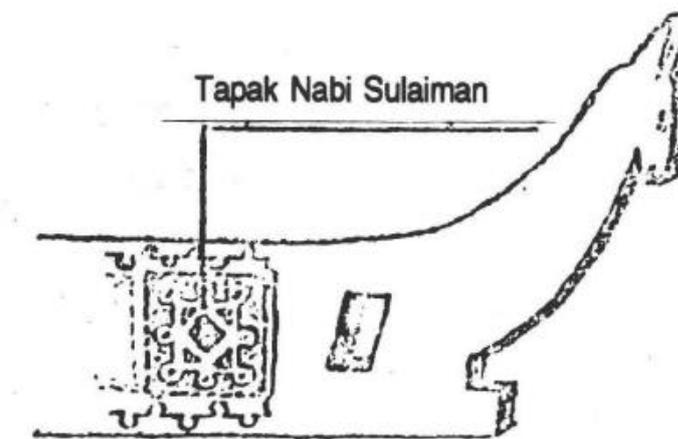


Figure 3. *Tapak Raja Sulaiman*
Source: Sitanggang (1991)

In addition to the several carved ornaments above, there are also several decorative ornaments such as:

- *Gega Umang*
- *Gega Tulak Paku*
- *Gega Tonggal*
- *Gega Tutup Dadu*
- *Gega Cimba Lau*

Besides *gerga* (carving), there are other decorations in the form of buffalo heads, sledgehammers, and ayo. The buffalo head decoration is usually placed on each roof of the traditional house, with the neck covered with palm fiber and colored white. The function of this buffalo horn is to describe the attitude of the Karo people, who are always ready if there is resistance from other villages. The dragretard itself is a lizard-shaped motif made of palm fiber. This motif is a symbol of the god of prosperity and also functions as a wall binder. In the Ayo Rumah section, *gerga* (carvings) are woven in geometric shapes. There are many types of ornaments on woven ayo, and they are given a variety of colors (Sitanggang, 1991).

Types of ornaments on the Ayo Karo Traditional House:

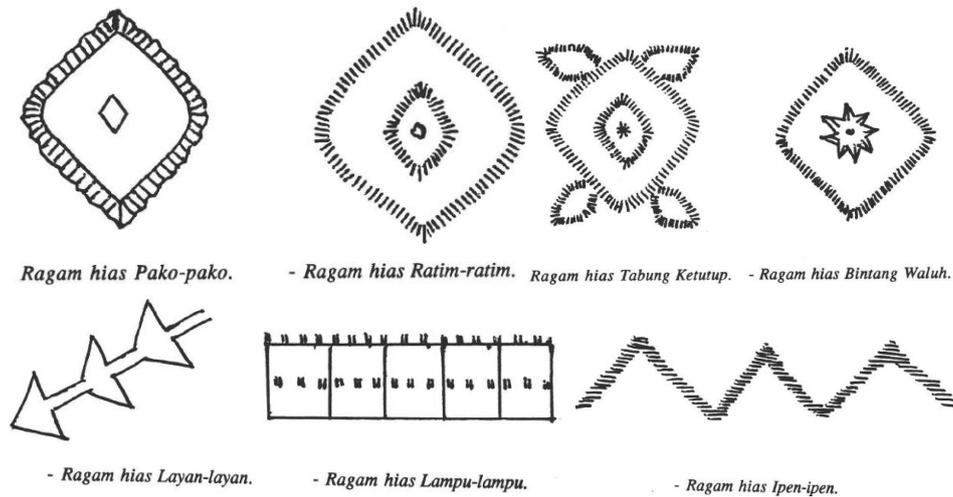


Figure 4. Ayo Ornament
Source: Sitanggang (1991)

Rumah Budaya Design

The Culture House, which implements the Karo Culture, is proposed to provide various cultural learning facilities for visitors and tourists. The facilities in question are learning facilities for traditional musical instruments, restaurants specializing in regional food, literacy learning facilities, trying on traditional clothes, learning the daily culture of the Karo people, and so on. The proposed cultural facilities manifest the three functions of the House of Culture: Culture Learning, Cultural Expression, and Culture Advocacy and Promotion.

Table 2. Space Category Based on the Function of the Culture House

| Function Category | Room |
|---------------------------------|---|
| Culture Learning | Reading Room Weaving Room Visual Room |
| Culture Expressions | Gallery Hall (Jambur) |
| Cultural Advocacy and Promotion | Craft Room |



Figure 5. (a) Rumah Budaya Karo’s Perspective 1; (b) Rumah Budaya Karo’s Perspective 2



Figure 6. (a) Rumah Budaya Karo's Perspective 3; (b) Rumah Budaya Karo's Perspective 4



Figure 7. (a) Interior of Weaving Room; (b) Interior of Craft Room

4. Conclusion

In Desa Lingga, only 2 *Siwaluh Jabu* Traditional Houses are left, along with other Karo legacies such as *jambur*, *geriten*, etc. The interest of tourists in visiting this traditional house has made the local government make Desa Lingga a cultural village. However, the current situation of this Karo cultural heritage building is quite the opposite of its uniqueness. This cultural heritage is no longer maintained and is starting to fade, so the potential for cultural tourism objects has begun to diminish, which impacts the reduction of foreign tourists who visit.

One of the ideas that can be given is to create an innovation that aims to increase the potential of Karo's cultural tourism again. The author gives an idea in the form of designing an inn with a cultural program where visitors and tourists can enjoy the atmosphere of Desa Lingga, which is unique to its Karo culture while learning about it. The design of this cultural learning facility will impact the *Siwaluh Jabu* Traditional House because this traditional house will experience preservation, which is expected to lead to an increase in tourist visits to the Desa Budaya Lingga.

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