

House Aesthetics and Social Identity: Perigi Village Case Study

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ABSTRACT. Palembang's stilt house is an important cultural heritage that embodies the richness of traditional Indonesian architecture. This study analyses the aesthetic values and social identity expressed in a stilt house in Kampung Perigi, Palembang, and proposes strategies for developing heritage tourism. Using a qualitative descriptive approach, data were collected through field observation, documentation, and a literature review. The findings show that the stilt house owned by Pak Kiagus Amir Hamzah, built in 1930, has distinctive architectural characteristics that blend Dutch influences with local Palembang traditions. Measuring 12 m × 39 m with a floor height of 3.60 m, the building is constructed from ironwood and features ornaments such as *lawang kipasan* and tiered *kijing* elements. Heritage tourism strategies recommended for Kampung Perigi include guided historical tours, improved supporting facilities, educational programs, and Musi River boat tours. These initiatives are designed to strengthen heritage conservation while generating community-based economic benefits through local guiding, storytelling, and small-scale tourism services. Beyond description, the study offers a conceptual contribution by showing how hybrid architectural elements can be treated as systematic "identity markers" and converted into clear interpretation themes and tourism products, providing a practical bridge between architectural heritage analysis and community-led tourism planning.

Keywords: stilt house, heritage tourism, traditional architecture, Palembang, Kampung Perigi

ABSTRAK. Rumah panggung Palembang merupakan warisan budaya penting yang merepresentasikan kekayaan arsitektur tradisional Indonesia. Penelitian ini bertujuan menganalisis nilai estetika dan identitas sosial yang terkandung pada rumah panggung di Kampung Perigi, Palembang, serta merumuskan strategi pengembangan pariwisata warisan (*heritage tourism*). Metode yang digunakan adalah pendekatan deskriptif kualitatif, dengan pengumpulan data melalui observasi lapangan, dokumentasi, dan studi literatur. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa rumah panggung milik Pak Kiagus Amir Hamzah yang dibangun pada tahun 1930 memiliki karakter arsitektur yang unik, memadukan unsur Belanda dan lokal Palembang. Bangunan berukuran 12 m × 39 m dengan ketinggian lantai 3,60 m ini menggunakan kayu ulin dan menampilkan ornamen khas seperti *lawang kipasan* serta elemen *kijing* bertingkat. Strategi pengembangan heritage tourism di Kampung Perigi meliputi tur sejarah berpemandu, peningkatan fasilitas kawasan, program edukasi, dan wisata perahu di Sungai Musi. Implementasi pariwisata warisan ini diharapkan memperkuat pelestarian bangunan dan tradisi lokal sekaligus mendorong ekonomi masyarakat melalui jasa pemandu, narasi sejarah, dan layanan wisata skala kecil. Penelitian ini tidak hanya mendeskripsikan bentuk bangunan, tetapi juga menawarkan temuan konseptual bahwa elemen arsitektur hibrida (kolonial-lokal) dapat dipahami sebagai "penanda identitas" yang sistematis dan diterjemahkan menjadi tema interpretasi serta produk wisata berbasis komunitas.

Kata kunci: rumah panggung, heritage tourism, arsitektur tradisional, Palembang, Kampung Perigi

INTRODUCTION

Traditional Indonesian architecture is a manifestation of local wisdom that has developed over centuries and is an important part of the nation's cultural identity (Prima, L., 2025). Palembang's stilt houses, as a form of vernacular architecture in Indonesia, hold high historical and

cultural value, serving not only as residences but also as symbols of social status and identity for the people of Palembang. The existence of these stilt houses reflects the community's adaptation to the city's low-lying, frequently flooded geography, making the stilt building model a wise architectural solution (Ashadi, 2020; Nas & Handinoto, 2019; Sujatmiko, 2022).

Perigi Village is one of Palembang's heritage areas with significant potential to develop into a cultural tourism destination. Its strategic location on the banks of the Musi River adds value to the development of heritage tourism, given that the Musi River is an icon of the city, serving as a trade route and center of civilization since the time of the Srivijaya Sultanate. However, the challenges of preserving historic buildings and the public's lack of understanding of their cultural value must be addressed immediately to prevent this cultural heritage from being lost to time (Adishakti, 2018; Dinas Kebudayaan Kota Palembang, 2022; UNESCO, 2021).



Figure 1. The Perigi Heritage Village Location Map shows the position of the historical area on the banks of the Musi River, Palembang
Source: Authors, 2024.



Figure 2. Map of the location of the stilt houses in Perigi Village, which is the object of the research study
Source: Authors, 2024.

Several previous researchers have studied traditional Palembang architecture with diverse focuses. However, studies on strategies for developing heritage tourism based on stilt houses in Perigi Village remain very limited, despite the area's tremendous development potential. Therefore, this study is crucial to fill this gap. The primary

objectives are to identify the architectural characteristics and cultural values of the stilt houses in Perigi Village, analyze the potential for heritage tourism development, and formulate strategies for implementing sustainable cultural preservation-based tourism activities (Ashadi, 2020; Rahmawati, 2023; Setiawan, 2020).

Therefore, the research questions are:

- How are the aesthetic values of Palembang stilt houses (form, ornament, spatial hierarchy, and materials) translated into heritage tourism strategies and products-such as interpretive narratives, guided routes, educational activities, and conservation-friendly visitor management?
- What is the role of stilt houses as markers of social identity (status, lineage, cultural values, and river-based way of life) in the context of tourism, and how can this identity be communicated ethically without commodifying community life or undermining authenticity?

RESEARCH METHOD

This research employed a qualitative descriptive case study approach to examine the Stilt Houses in Perigi Village, Palembang. This method was chosen to gain a deep understanding of the architectural characteristics, cultural values, and social context of the research object. Data collection was conducted through field observations of the physical condition of the buildings, the surrounding environment, and community activities in Perigi Village.

Visual documentation was a crucial part of this research, with detailed photographs and measurements of building dimensions for architectural analysis. In-depth interviews were conducted with homeowners and members of the surrounding community to understand the buildings' history, cultural values, and the area's development over time. A literature review was conducted on traditional Palembang architecture and heritage tourism, drawing on a range of academic sources and government documentation.

Data analysis was conducted descriptively to explain the architectural characteristics, cultural values, and tourism potential by comparing field findings with previous theories and research. The results were then used to formulate heritage tourism development strategies that align with local conditions and the local community's aspirations. Data validity was maintained through triangulation of data sources and collection methods to ensure the accuracy of the information obtained.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Characteristics of Stilt House Architecture

The stilt house in Perigi Village, the object of this study, was built in 1930 and is a valuable legacy from the Srivijaya Sultanate era, demonstrating the architectural glory of the past. The construction process took approximately 2 years, as wood processing was still done manually with traditional tools. This magnificent building has been occupied by four generations and still serves today as the home of the Halimah and Makmun Rusli families, direct descendants of the original owner, Pak Kiagus Amir Hamzah, a trader at Lemabang Market (Authors, 2024).



Figure 3. The exterior of the stilt house features two stairs at the front, a characteristic of Palembang architecture.

Source: Authors, 2024.



Figure 4. The right exterior view of the stilt house shows its structure, made of ironwood.

Source: Authors, 2024.



Figure 5. Exterior Perspective of Stilt House from different angles shows

Source: Authors, 2024.

This house has quite large dimensions, measuring 12 meters wide, 39 meters long, and 3.60 meters high, with a sturdy two-story structure. The primary materials used are ironwood, known for its extraordinary strength, as well as tembesu and medang wood for certain parts. The choice of ironwood as the primary material is not without

reason, as it offers exceptional strength and resistance to extreme tropical weather and termite infestations. Initially, the building was painted with transparent mangosteen paint, allowing the beautiful wood grain to be clearly visible. However, over time, some parts have been repainted with more striking colors for maintenance purposes.

This stilt house is characterised by two staircases at the front, a strong identity of Palembang architecture. This cultural and traditional design creates an attractive, harmonious appearance with the surrounding environment while maintaining a traditional village atmosphere. One of the most striking features of this house is the *lawang kipasan* (fan door), a door that opens and closes by swinging upwards and, when opened, is supported by the ceiling. This door system is unique and rarely found in other regions, demonstrating the distinctiveness of Palembang's traditional building technology (Ashadi, 2020; Rahmawati, 2023; Hariyanto et al., 2022).

The levels of the tombstones in this house have deep philosophical significance, symbolising the social status and stratification of Palembang society in the past. This demonstrates that traditional architecture is not merely about visual aesthetics but also represents the prevailing value systems and social hierarchies within the community. The traditional carved ornaments that adorn various parts of the house reflect the craftsman's skill and high artistic value, though some high-value carvings have been sold due to economic pressures on families (Rahmawati, 2023).

Elements of Dutch colonial architecture are also visible on the ceiling of the house, demonstrating the cultural acculturation that occurred during the colonial period, where European architectural styles blended with local elements. This blend creates a unique architectural character and serves as a testament to Palembang's history of cultural interaction. The roof still uses old tiles that have survived for decades, adding to the building's historical value and authenticity (Nas & Handinoto, 2019).



Figure 6. The details of the roof and window ornaments of the stilt house display the beauty of traditional Palembang carvings.

Source: Authors, 2024.



Figure 7. Details of the facade ornaments of a stilt house with intricate wood carvings and philosophical meaning.

Source: Authors, 2024.

Interior and Spatial Layout

The interior of this stilt house reflects the lifestyle of traditional Palembang residents, with a clear division of space by function and privacy level. Inside, the house features a variety of original furniture dating back decades, although some has been sold due to family financial needs. Antiques such as carved wooden chests, antique lamps with classic designs, and other traditional furnishings can still be found in various corners of the house, creating a strong sense of nostalgia (Rahmawati, 2023; Tim Survey, 2024).

The living room, a semi-public area, is sometimes used for receiving guests and family social activities, while other spaces are more private for the family. The hallway connecting the rooms is designed to allow for good air circulation, in keeping with

tropical architectural principles that prioritize natural ventilation. Natural light is also maximized through large windows strategically placed on various sides of the building (Sujatmiko, 2022; Tim Survey, 2024).



Figure 8. Interior of the corridor between the rooms of the stilt house with wooden floors that are still sturdy after decades
Source: Authors, 2024.

Social and Cultural Values

This stilt house is not just a physical residence, but also a center for family social and cultural activities, crucial to the lives of the Palembang community. Every year, this house hosts various traditional events and celebrations involving large numbers of people, serving up to 35 typical Palembang dishes. This tradition underscores the home's social role in strengthening family ties and preserving local cultural values. This building was also once used as a venue for wedding celebrations due to the limited surrounding land, demonstrating the home's flexibility in community life (Rahmawati, 2023).

The levels of the tombstones found in this house are not merely decorative elements, but rather symbolize the titles and social status of Palembang society in the past. This stratification system demonstrates that traditional architecture is a complex representation of the community's social structure, where a person's position in society can be reflected in the house they live in. This demonstrates that traditional architecture has a deep sociological dimension and cannot be separated from the cultural context of the community that supports it (Rahmawati, 2023).

Existing Condition and Conservation Challenges

Despite being nearly a century old, the house still stands strong and has not undergone major renovations that altered its original structure. However, some elements have been damaged by age and natural factors, such as a light fixture at the front of the house that once fell and required repair. Original furniture and antiques, such as carved chests and antique lamps, are still well preserved, though some have been sold due to economic pressures on the owner's family. Traditional carvings of high artistic and economic value have also been sold, highlighting the dilemma between economic needs and efforts to preserve cultural heritage (Adishakti, 2018; Hermawan, 2019; Tim Survey, 2024; UNESCO, 2021).

The current owner of the house, Mr. Syarif, demonstrates a very positive attitude towards heritage preservation by rejecting numerous offers to sell the house despite its high value. He considers the house a priceless cultural asset that must be preserved for future generations. This attitude reflects a strong awareness of the importance of heritage preservation, but also highlights the economic challenges faced in maintaining historic buildings without adequate support from the government or other parties (Adishakti, 2018; Australia ICOMOS, 2013; UNESCO, 2021).

Surrounding Environment and Accessibility

The Perigi Village area has distinctive environmental characteristics, with a traditional village atmosphere still preserved amidst modern urban development. The Musi River, a central element in the area's landscape, provides a strong identity and significant tourism potential. The relatively clean condition of the river surrounding the area is a crucial asset for the development of river-based tourism (Dinas Kebudayaan Kota Palembang, 2022; Tim Survey, 2024).



Figure 9. The condition of the Musi River in the Kampung Perigi Tourism Area, with attractive views
Source: Authors, 2024



Figure 12. Access to the Stilt House is via a narrow but well-maintained village road
Source: Authors, 2024.



Figure 10. Side view of the Stilt House showing the relationship of the building to the surrounding environment
Source: Authors, 2024.



Figure 11. The condition of the side of the Stilt House in a traditional village environment
Source: Authors, 2024.

The stilt houses are accessible via a fairly narrow village road, but are still passable by both two-wheeled and four-wheeled vehicles with caution. The surrounding roads are in relatively good condition, with paved surfaces, although they still require improvement to support tourism activities. Basic infrastructure, such as electricity and clean water, is readily available in the area, but supporting tourist facilities, such as public restrooms, parking, and information boards, are still very limited (Hermawan, 2019; Tim Survey, 2024).

Potential for Heritage Tourism Development

Perigi Village's strategic location on the Musi River offers significant potential for sustainable heritage tourism development. Several supporting factors enhance this potential, including the unique architecture of traditional buildings with distinctive Palembang ornaments rarely found elsewhere, its strong historical significance linked to the Srivijaya Sultanate and the development of Palembang City, and its location on the banks of an iconic river that has been a key part of the city's identity since ancient times (Setiawan, 2020; UNESCO, 2021).

The community's tradition of cooperation and local cultural values are a unique draw for tourists seeking to experience authentic Palembang life. Interactions between tourists and locals can create meaningful tourism experiences and have a direct economic impact on the community. The presence of Palembang's culinary specialties, such as pempek (rice cake made from pempek), tekwan (rice cake

made from sticky rice), and model (rice cake made from mangosteen), which can be used as culinary tourism attractions, also enriches the tourist experience in this area (Puspitasari & Hidayat, 2021; Setiawan, 2020; Wicaksono et al., 2022).

Heritage Tourism Development Strategy

Heritage tourism development in Perigi Village requires a comprehensive and integrated strategy to ensure economic, social, and cultural sustainability. Guided historical tours are a top priority, providing tour packages led by trained local guides who explain the history of Perigi Village and its historic buildings in an engaging and informative manner. Implementation of this strategy includes providing area maps with detailed information about heritage buildings, training local tour guides to create new jobs, developing a mobile application with digital information that tourists can access independently, and providing audio guides in several languages for international tourists (Hermawan, 2019; Puspitasari & Hidayat, 2021; Syafrini et al., 2025; Timothy & Boyd, 2003; UNESCO, 2021).

Developing area facilities is crucial to improving tourist comfort and encouraging longer stays. The construction of a tourist information center, complete with promotional and educational materials about the heritage area, needs to be implemented immediately. Souvenir shops selling local crafts and Palembang souvenirs can provide added economic value to the community. Palembang food stalls serving authentic Palembang cuisine with traditional recipes will enrich the culinary tourism experience. Homestay services for tourists seeking a deeper experience of local life also need to be developed with high-quality standards while maintaining authenticity (Hermawan, 2019; Setiawan, 2020).

Education and preservation programs need to be designed to increase tourists' and the community's understanding of the importance of preserving cultural heritage. Traditional handicraft workshops, such as weaving and woodcarving, can teach skills while preserving traditional knowledge. Cooking classes for traditional dishes like pempek and tekwan provide memorable, interactive

experiences for tourists. Seminars and discussions on traditional architecture can involve academics, practitioners, and the community to share knowledge. Heritage school programs for students can foster young people's awareness of the importance of cultural heritage from an early age (Puspitasari & Hidayat, 2021; UNESCO, 2021).

Utilizing riverbanks for traditional boat tours along the Musi River offers a different perspective on heritage areas. Sunset cruises with views of Perigi Village from the river can be a prime attraction for tourists. Stories about the Musi River's history and its role in the city's development can be shared during the boat trip, enhancing the educational value of this tourism activity (Setiawan, 2020).



Figure 13. Layout of the development plan for boat tourism on the Musi River to support heritage tourism activities.

Source: Google Maps (edited by authors), 2024.

Cultural festivals and events should be held regularly to attract tourists and preserve traditions. Malay Cultural Festivals, featuring traditional dances, music, and other artistic performances, can become a major regional attraction. Reconstructions of historical events and artistic performances involving local communities provide immersive experiences for tourists. Traditional culinary markets, featuring a variety of traditional foods in an authentic atmosphere, can become anticipated regular events. Celebrating major holidays by involving tourists in traditional activities creates an immersive cultural experience (Setiawan, 2020; UNESCO, 2021).

Digitalization and promotion are key to successfully reaching a wider tourist audience. Creating high-quality virtual tours allows potential tourists to explore an area before visiting in person. Actively utilizing social media for promotion and interaction with tourists can build an engaged online community. An official website with comprehensive information about the area, attractions, facilities, and travel guides is essential. Collaboration with online booking platforms like TripAdvisor and Traveloka can increase visibility and ease of access for tourists (UNESCO, 2021).

Partnerships with local communities are a crucial foundation for sustainable tourism development. Community involvement in the planning, implementation, and management of tourism ensures that communities directly benefit from tourism. Encouraging tourists to purchase local products to support the local economy creates a tangible economic impact. Training and empowerment of communities in various aspects of tourism, such as hospitality, tour guiding, and small business management, builds local capacity (Puspitasari & Hidayat, 2021; UNESCO, 2021).

Benefits of Heritage Tourism Development

The implementation of a heritage tourism strategy in Perigi Village provides multiple and sustainable benefits for various parties. From a cultural preservation perspective, tourism activities raise awareness among local residents and tourists about the importance of preserving and maintaining historical buildings and existing cultural traditions. Funds generated from tourism activities can be allocated to the maintenance and restoration of heritage buildings that require special care. Documentation and research conducted as part of tourism activities enhance knowledge about Palembang's architecture and culture (Adishakti, 2018; UNESCO, 2021).

From a local economic perspective, heritage tourism creates new jobs, including those for tour guides, homestay managers, souvenir makers, and food vendors. Increased tourist visits stimulate the local economy by boosting spending on necessities during their stay. Community-owned micro and small businesses have the opportunity to develop through new markets generated by the tourism

sector. Property values in heritage areas also tend to increase as the tourism sector develops (Puspitasari & Hidayat, 2021; UNESCO, 2021).

From an educational perspective, heritage tourism provides an effective learning platform for tourists and the younger generation about history, culture, and traditional architecture. Direct interaction with historic buildings and their owners provides a learning experience unavailable from books or other media. Specially designed educational programs can enhance the cultural literacy of the wider community. Academic research on heritage areas also contributes to the development of scientific knowledge (UNESCO, 2021).

From a cultural promotion perspective, visiting tourists become informal ambassadors, promoting Palembang culture in their hometowns and even internationally. Social media enables the rapid and widespread dissemination of information about Palembang's rich cultural heritage. A positive image of Palembang as a cultural tourism destination can attract more tourists and investment. Local pride in their culture also increases, along with appreciation from outside (UNESCO, 2021).

From a community welfare perspective, tourism development encourages improvements in regional infrastructure, such as roads, drainage, and public facilities, which are also enjoyed by local residents (Hermawan, 2019; Setiawan, 2020).

CONCLUSION

The study concludes that Palembang's stilt houses in Perigi Village are not merely residential buildings, but a living cultural heritage that embodies both aesthetic values and social identity. Their form, spatial hierarchy, materials, and ornaments reflect local wisdom-especially adaptation to a flood-prone environment-while also communicating cultural meanings and status within the community. The case of Pak Kiagus Amir Hamzah's 1930 stilt house demonstrates this clearly through its hybrid architectural character, which combines local Palembang traditions with Dutch influences, as evidenced in features such as ironwood construction and distinctive ornamental elements.

Based on these findings, the study concludes that Perigi Village has strong potential for heritage tourism development, particularly due to its historical setting along the Musi River. However, tourism must be designed to strengthen-not threaten-authenticity and community life. Therefore, the recommended strategy emphasises community-oriented heritage tourism through guided historical tours, improved area facilities, educational activities, and river-based experiences, supported by interpretation that explains architectural meaning and identity. Overall, the study highlights that translating aesthetic and identity “markers” into tourism narratives and visitor management can simultaneously support cultural preservation and generate local economic opportunities when implemented sustainably and ethically.

This study is limited by its single-case focus on Perigi Village and selected stilt houses, so the findings may not represent the full diversity of Palembang stilt-house forms in other kampungs. In addition, the qualitative descriptive approach relies on interpretation and does not provide statistical generalisation. The proposed tourism strategies are also conceptual, because the study does not measure post-implementation impacts such as visitor learning, resident attitudes, conservation outcomes, or economic distribution. Finally, the research captures a snapshot in time and may be constrained by access and privacy issues, especially in interior spaces and family histories.

Further research could conduct comparative studies across multiple heritage kampungs in Palembang to strengthen typologies and test the transferability of the strategy model. Future work should also pilot and evaluate specific tourism products (guided routes, interpretation tools, educational programs) to assess authenticity, visitor experience, and community acceptance. Additional studies on carrying capacity, flood/climate risks, and conservation guidelines would help ensure that tourism supports long-term preservation while meeting residents’ needs.

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