

Application of Rumoh Aceh Elements in Office Buildings as Forming Socio-Historical Society (case study: Banda Aceh city center area)

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ABSTRACT

The area in a city should display an architectural product that is able to maintain an architectural formation that is worthy of being maintained to be enjoyed by the city community as a transformed socio-cultural symbol, and cannot be separated from the local history. This is part of the hospitality that shows its identity to the community and people who visit the city, one of which is shown through the architectural characteristics of offices which are public service buildings. The characteristic appearance of office architecture can be a concept that distinguishes a city from other cities as an identity that forms the image of the city. The application of this concept in the city of Banda Aceh is shown by applying the architectural elements of rumoh aceh on the appearance of office architecture, but not all office buildings have implemented it. This qualitative research using the observation method of office buildings in the downtown area of Banda Aceh analyzes the typological parameters of the rumoh aceh architecture. The results of the study conclude that offices in the downtown area have not shown an area that has a strong Acehese identity. Of the fourteen samples of office buildings, there are only seven samples that can be identified with the application of the rumoh aceh elements as a form of building. The application of the rumoh aceh style element in the downtown area in Banda Aceh is carried out with a design that is integrated into the modern architecture of office buildings. Efforts to familiarize the regional identity so that it can play a socio-historical role through the presence of the local identity of rumoh aceh in office buildings for the community have not been achieved, because the appearance of office architecture is still diverse in the area.

Keywords: architectural, buildings, government, identity, office

1. Introduction

Physically, a city is formed by the presence of buildings that collectively shape its visual character, spatial structure, and identity. Among various building types, office buildings—particularly government offices—play a strategic role because they are commonly located in central urban areas and function as public-facing symbols of authority, governance, and service. Architectural identity expressed through public office buildings therefore contributes significantly to how a city is perceived by both residents and visitors, influencing collective pride, attachment, and recognition of place [1][2].

In the context of contemporary urban development, architecture is increasingly understood as an instrument for reinforcing city identity and branding. The integration of cultural values into public architecture has been widely adopted as a strategy to articulate local distinctiveness while responding to modernization pressures

[3]. Within heritage-sensitive cities, this approach aligns with the historic urban landscape perspective, which emphasizes continuity between cultural heritage, urban form, and contemporary development [4]. Public buildings, in this regard, serve not only functional purposes but also symbolic roles in expressing cultural narratives and reinforcing urban identity [5].

The identity of a city can be understood as a socio-historical construct formed through the interaction between physical environments, cultural traditions, collective memory, and social values [6]. Government office buildings, due to their symbolic and spatial prominence, are frequently employed as landmarks that represent regional character and institutional presence within the urban fabric [9][11]. Empirical studies indicate that when traditional architectural values are meaningfully embedded in public buildings, they can strengthen urban identity and foster a sense of cultural continuity among communities [7][8].

In Banda Aceh, the expression of city identity through architecture has been closely associated with the application of *Rumoh Aceh*, the traditional Acehese house, as a source of architectural elements and cultural values. *Rumoh Aceh* represents an important manifestation of Acehese cultural expression, reflecting social structure, climatic adaptation, religious principles, and local craftsmanship. As a vernacular architectural form, *Rumoh Aceh* embodies cultural responses to environmental and social conditions and has historically guided the formation of the Acehese built environment [10].

Architecturally, *Rumoh Aceh* is traditionally composed of three hierarchical parts—head, body, and foot—which symbolically and functionally structure the building. The head is represented by the pitched roof with distinctive elements such as *tulak angen* and *theup gaseue*, the body consists of the main living space articulated through wooden walls, openings, and ornamentation, while the foot is expressed through the stilted structure supported by timber columns (*renyeun*). These elements, including *bara*, *binteih*, *peulangan*, and *kindang*, form a coherent architectural system that integrates structure, climate adaptation, and cultural symbolism, as illustrated in Figure 1. Such characteristics represent local wisdom that continues to serve as a reference for architectural identity in Aceh [8], [10].

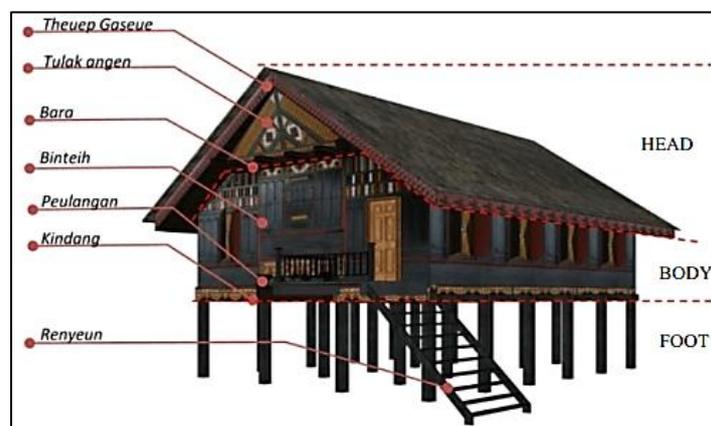


Figure 1. The view of rumoh aceh which shows its elements

However, adapting *Rumoh Aceh* elements into modern office buildings presents significant challenges. Differences in building function, spatial organization, construction materials, and regulatory requirements often limit the direct application of traditional forms. Consequently, contemporary public architecture in Banda Aceh frequently exhibits a hybrid character, combining modern architectural principles with selectively adapted traditional elements such as roof forms, entrance articulation, column composition, and decorative motifs [7][12]. This hybridization reflects broader processes of negotiation between tradition and modernity in urban architectural practice [13].

Several scholars have cautioned that the superficial adoption of traditional forms without a deep understanding of their cultural and symbolic meanings may result in architecture that lacks authenticity and fails to convey a coherent identity [14]. Regionalism in architecture, therefore, should not be understood merely as stylistic

imitation, but as a contextual and value-based integration of local culture with contemporary needs, technologies, and urban dynamics [15]. Within this framework, the application of *Rumoh Aceh* elements in government office buildings becomes a critical case for examining how traditional architecture contributes to the formation of socio-historical identity in a modern urban setting.

Based on these considerations, this study examines the application of *Rumoh Aceh* architectural elements in office buildings located in the city center of Banda Aceh. The research aims to analyze the extent to which these elements are applied and to assess their role in shaping the socio-historical identity of the city through public architecture.

2. Method

This qualitative study aims to find the application of the architecture of rumoh aceh and the architectural elements that most dominantly affect government buildings in the city of Banda Aceh. The process of collecting data was carried out by direct observation to the field. The variables studied in this study are the characteristics of the form and physical elements of the rumoh aceh architecture in office buildings. Characteristics of Traditional Aceh Architecture are: consists of 3 parts; feet (under), body (wall), head (roof); simple gable roof with *tulak angen* (wind repellent); the middle floor in the transverse direction is higher than the floor on the left and right; there is a pit composed of pillars; windows on the front and side; the door is always under (floor); ornaments in the form of flora, fauna, nature, and Islamic elements; Using material, walls, floors, wooden poles and thatched roofs [8].

Regionalism is expected to produce buildings that fuse or merge between the old and the new, between the regional and the universal [9]. The three conditions for unity in architectural composition are dominance, repetition, and continuity [10]. The research location is in the center of Banda Aceh, precisely around the Mesjid Raya Baiturrahman, Pasar Aceh, and Tamansari., see Figure 2. Fourteen samples were identified in the study locations, which were marked by coding KPK1 to KPK14.

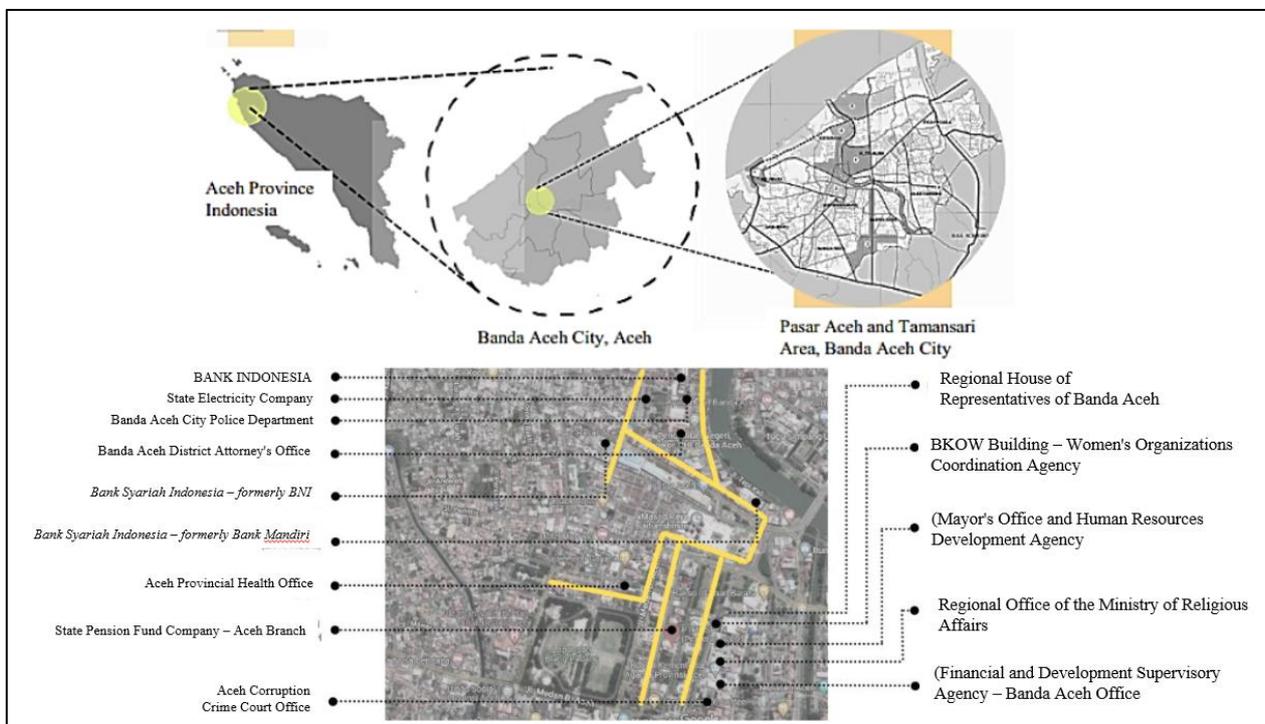


Figure 2. Study location in Banda Aceh City center area

The results of the analysis related to the application of the rumoh aceh architectural elements (ARA) in office buildings (ABP) can be in the form of: (a) ARA elements paste on ABP, (b) ARA physical elements are integrated into ABP, (c) ARA physical elements are not clearly visible inside ABP, (d) ARA form dominates

ABP and (e) ARA form expression is integrated in ABP [11]. The word ARA is used to refer to the architecture of *rumoh aceh*, while ABP is to refer to the architecture of office buildings.

3. Result and Discussion

The results of this study indicate that the application of *Rumoh Aceh* architectural elements in office buildings within the city center of Banda Aceh varies considerably in both form and intensity. The observed office buildings are concentrated in the central urban area surrounding Masjid Raya Baiturrahman, Pasar Aceh, and Taman Sari, which function as administrative, economic, and socio-cultural nodes of the city. The spatial distribution of the fourteen sampled office buildings is illustrated in Figure 3, showing their strategic location within the historical and governmental core of Banda Aceh. This spatial context reinforces the importance of office buildings as visible markers of urban identity, as suggested by previous studies on public buildings and urban symbolism [9][11].

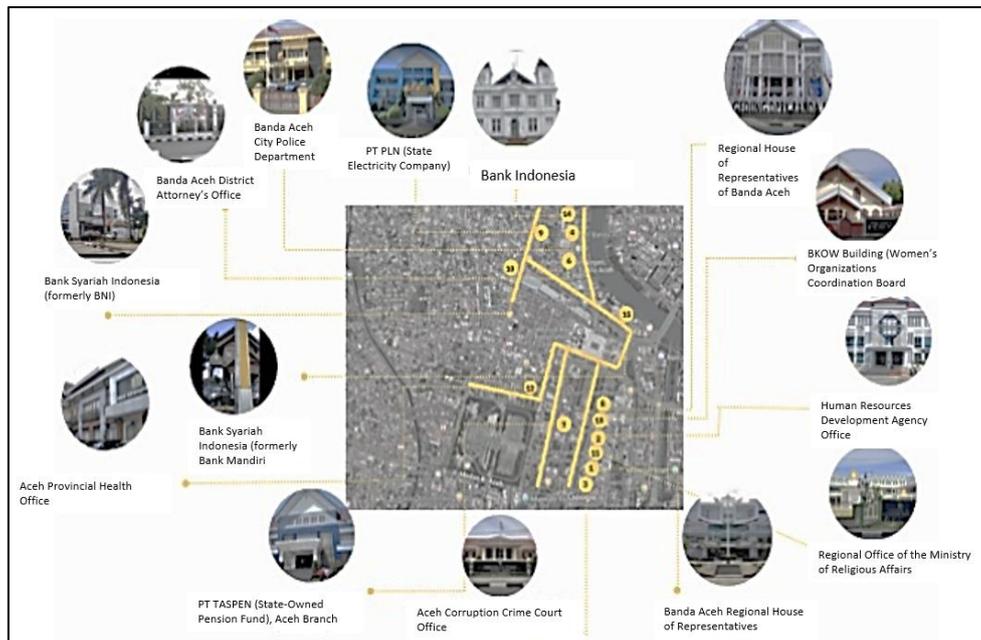


Figure 3. Identification of Office Buildings in the Study Location

Based on field observations, the degree to which *Rumoh Aceh* elements are applied in office architecture differs across the fourteen samples. The identification and quantification of these elements are summarized in Table 1, which presents the percentage of *Rumoh Aceh* architectural parameters applied in each building. The results show that only seven office buildings exhibit an application level exceeding 50%, indicating that the integration of traditional architectural elements into contemporary office buildings remains inconsistent. This finding aligns with recent studies emphasizing that architectural identity in public buildings is often selectively constructed rather than comprehensively applied [1][15].

Table 1. Identification of the application of the *rumoh aceh* style in office buildings

No.	Sampels	Application of Parameters	Percentage
1.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • consists of 3 parts • gable roof with <i>tulak angen</i> • the middle floor is higher • there is a pit composed of round pillars • windows on the front and side • the door is under (floor) • ornaments in the form of flora, fauna, nature, dan islamic elements • use wood 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • not • not • not • not • there is • not • not • not
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • not

No.	Sampels	Application of Parameters	Percentage
2.	<p>KPK1</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • consists of 3 parts • gable roof with <i>tulak angen</i> • the middle floor is higher • there is a pit composed of round pillars • windows on the front and side • the door is under (floor) • ornaments in the form of flora, fauna, nature, dan islamic elements • use wood 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • there is • not • there is • not
3.	<p>KPK2</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • consists of 3 parts • gable roof with <i>tulak angen</i> • the middle floor is higher • there is a pit composed of round pillars • windows on the front and side • the door is under (floor) • ornaments in the form of flora, fauna, nature, dan islamic elements • use wood 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • not • not • not • not • there is • not • not • not
4.	<p>KPK3</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • consists of 3 parts • gable roof with <i>tulak angen</i> • the middle floor is higher • there is a pit composed of round pillars • windows on the front and side • the door is under (floor) • ornaments in the form of flora, fauna, nature, dan islamic elements • use wood 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • not • not • not • not • there is • not • not • not
5.	<p>KPK4</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • consists of 3 parts • gable roof with <i>tulak angen</i> • the middle floor is higher • there is a pit composed of round pillars • windows on the front and side • the door is under (floor) • ornaments in the form of flora, fauna, nature, dan islamic elements • use wood 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • there is • not
6.	<p>KPK5</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • consists of 3 parts • gable roof with <i>tulak angen</i> • the middle floor is higher • there is a pit composed of round pillars • windows on the front and side • the door is under (floor) • ornaments in the form of flora, fauna, nature, dan islamic elements • use wood 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • there is • not
7.	<p>KPK6</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • consists of 3 parts • gable roof with <i>tulak angen</i> • the middle floor is higher • there is a pit composed of round pillars • windows on the front and side • the door is under (floor) • ornaments in the form of flora, fauna, nature, dan islamic elements • use wood 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • there is • not

No.	Sampels	Application of Parameters	Percentage
		100%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • not 87,5%
14.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • consists of 3 parts • gable roof with <i>tulak angen</i> • the middle floor is higher • there is a pit composed of round pillars • windows on the front and side • the door is under (floor) • ornaments in the form of flora, fauna, nature, dan islamic elements • use wood 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • there is • not • not 75%
	KPK13		
	KPK14	100%	

The architectural elements most frequently adopted include the tripartite composition of head, body, and foot, the use of gable roofs incorporating *tulak angen*, and the visual expression of stilted structures through round columns. These elements are primarily applied as symbolic representations rather than functional reproductions of traditional *Rumoh Aceh* architecture. As shown in Table 1, roof forms and entrance articulation contribute the most to the overall percentage of traditional element application, whereas materials and construction techniques associated with vernacular architecture are rarely preserved. This selective adaptation reflects a broader tendency in contemporary architecture to prioritize visual identity over structural authenticity [7][10].

The entrance configuration emerges as a dominant feature in buildings that demonstrate a higher level of *Rumoh Aceh* integration. In several cases, the entrance is recessed inward and supported by four round columns, forming a transitional space between exterior and interior zones. This spatial articulation echoes the entrance hierarchy of *Rumoh Aceh* and creates a welcoming impression consistent with the socio-cultural values embedded in traditional Acehese architecture. Such design strategies support the argument that public buildings can foster cultural familiarity and collective memory when traditional elements are meaningfully interpreted [5][13].

Roof design also plays a significant role in expressing architectural identity. Office buildings with higher percentages of traditional application typically feature simple gable roofs with *tulak angen* as a recognizable visual marker. However, field observations reveal that in most cases *tulak angen* functions purely as an ornamental element rather than as a climatic device, indicating a shift from functional vernacular principles to symbolic representation. This transformation is consistent with contemporary regionalist practices, where traditional forms are reinterpreted to suit modern construction systems and regulatory constraints [7][12].

Wall treatments and ornamental elements derived from *Rumoh Aceh* are applied more sparingly and often simplified. Vertically arranged wall panels inspired by traditional wooden boards are commonly rendered in concrete and finished with neutral colors, reducing their material authenticity while maintaining visual continuity. Similarly, ornamental motifs are used selectively as identifiers rather than as integral components of façade composition. While this approach supports visual coherence, it also demonstrates the limitations of superficial adaptation, which may weaken the cultural depth of architectural expression if not accompanied by an understanding of underlying values [14].

Overall, the findings suggest that the application of *Rumoh Aceh* elements in office buildings in Banda Aceh functions primarily as a strategy of architectural identity signaling rather than as a comprehensive embodiment of vernacular principles. The varied levels of application across the study area indicate the absence of a unified design guideline or regulatory framework governing the integration of traditional architecture in public buildings. As emphasized in recent studies, architectural identity is most effective when supported by coherent planning policies and value-based design approaches rather than isolated stylistic decisions [3][4].

From a socio-historical perspective, the inconsistent application of *Rumoh Aceh* elements limits the ability of office architecture to function as a collective symbol of Acehese identity. While certain buildings successfully convey traditional references through dominant forms and spatial articulation, the overall urban landscape remains visually diverse. This condition supports the argument that architectural identity in public buildings must balance symbolic representation with contextual continuity to effectively contribute to urban identity formation [6][15].

4. Conclusion

This study demonstrates that the application of *Rumoh Aceh* architectural elements in office buildings within the city center of Banda Aceh is predominantly characterized by selective and symbolic adaptation rather than comprehensive integration of vernacular principles. Although several office buildings successfully incorporate key elements such as the tripartite composition (head, body, and foot), gable roofs with *tulak angen*, entrance articulation, and column composition, these elements are largely employed as visual identifiers integrated into modern architectural forms. The findings indicate that only half of the observed office buildings exhibit a level of traditional element application exceeding 50%, suggesting that the architectural expression of Acehese identity in public buildings remains fragmented and inconsistent. From a theoretical perspective, this condition reflects the broader challenge of translating vernacular architecture into contemporary public buildings, where functional requirements, modern construction technologies, and regulatory frameworks often constrain the faithful application of traditional forms. As emphasized in recent studies on architectural identity and regionalism, identity formation in public architecture is most effective when traditional values are interpreted contextually rather than reduced to surface-level ornamentation. In socio-historical terms, the limited and uneven application of *Rumoh Aceh* elements reduces the potential of office architecture to function as a collective cultural symbol that reinforces Acehese identity within the urban landscape. While certain buildings demonstrate the capacity of traditional elements to evoke familiarity, memory, and cultural continuity, the overall visual diversity of office architecture in the study area weakens the formation of a coherent socio-historical identity at the city scale. This finding supports theoretical arguments that urban identity emerges not from isolated architectural expressions but from consistent and value-based design approaches embedded across public spaces. The study also contributes to the discourse on architectural regionalism by illustrating that the integration of vernacular elements into modern office buildings in Banda Aceh aligns more closely with a symbolic regionalism rather than a critical or value-driven regionalism. Without a clear conceptual framework guiding design decisions, traditional elements risk being reduced to stylistic markers detached from their original cultural, spatial, and environmental meanings. This reinforces the need for a deeper understanding of vernacular architecture as a system of values, spatial logic, and socio-cultural practices rather than merely a source of formal inspiration. From a practical and policy-oriented perspective, the findings highlight the importance of governmental regulations and design guidelines that explicitly support the integration of local architectural identity in public buildings. Regional regulations that go beyond formal imitation and emphasize the reinterpretation of vernacular values—such as spatial hierarchy, climatic responsiveness, and symbolic meaning—are essential to ensure that public architecture contributes meaningfully to the socio-historical identity of Aceh. Such policies would not only strengthen architectural coherence in urban centers but also enhance public awareness and appreciation of local cultural heritage. In conclusion, this research underscores that the role of *Rumoh Aceh* elements in office buildings extends beyond aesthetic representation. When thoughtfully interpreted and consistently applied, these elements have the potential to serve as a powerful medium for expressing socio-historical identity in contemporary urban environments. Future research may expand this investigation by incorporating users' perceptions, comparative

studies across different cities, or policy analysis to further explore the relationship between vernacular architecture, public buildings, and urban identity formation.

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6. Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this paper. The research was conducted without any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

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