

**BUBUHAN: A CONCEPT AS A BASIS FOR DEVELOPMENT**  
**Case: Resettlement Program of Dayak Meratus tribes in South Kalimantan**

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**ABSTRACT**

This paper is aimed at exploring the living culture of Dayak Meratus tribes and explaining the implementation the concept of *bubuhan* in an existing government resettlement program, namely Indigenous Community Empowerment or *Pemberdayaan Komunitas Adat Tepencil (PKAT)*. Knowing and understanding the cultural values of Dayak Meratus tribes are the key and very important in ensuring the successful of resettlement programs. Research is carried out by ethnography method, in particular, the approach of field observation and in-depth interviews. The descriptions presented in this paper are an overview of cultural interpretation and the notion of Dayak Meratus tribes, particularly related to the implementation of resettlement program (PKAT) that so far have been doing well. From the research analysis, there are two factors that determine the success of the PKAT resettlement program for Dayak Meratus tribes in South Kalimantan, those are the maintenance of kinship system i.e. concept of *bubuhan* as the basis for the resettlements program and the selection of the resettlement locations base on the *balai-adat* or traditional dwelling of each kinship group.

Keyword: resettlement, Dayak Meratus, kinship, ethnography.

**INTRODUCTION**

The major problem or weakness in all government policies that relate to the traditional communities is ‘to match’ the purpose of program with the cultural values of local communities. It is common, the program that offered to the remote community is lacking of understanding to local cultures or in other words the local values are less accomodated into the program, that cause the prolong failure of the program. As a consequence, both of results and impact of the program will not be optimal. The importance of synchronizing the purpose of the program with the cultural values is due to the differences in assumptions that exist in community, such as the level of knowledge, the basic needs, lifestyle, etc. In the context of architecture, particularly the settlement issue, it is commonly found in the program of resettlement for isolated tribes in various regions in Indonesia. At the moment, the purpose of the program which is already good cannot be understood and accepted by

the society, it is no longer something to be gained. In other words, the potential failure of the program is very huge. It is very important to understand the culture values of the community, especially the living culture, therefore, the result of the resettlement program can be applied to the local communities.

Indigenous Community Empowerment or *Pemberdayaan Komunitas Adat Terpencil* (PKAT) of resettlement Dayak Meratus tribes is acknowledged as one of the best practice in synchronizing the purpose of the government program with the cultural values. Traditionally, Dayak Meratus tribes live in Meratus Mountain region, South Kalimantan Province, Indonesia (Figure 1). The unique of their living tradition which lived by both of groups and nomad tradition is a challenge for PKAT program and becomes the focus of this paper.

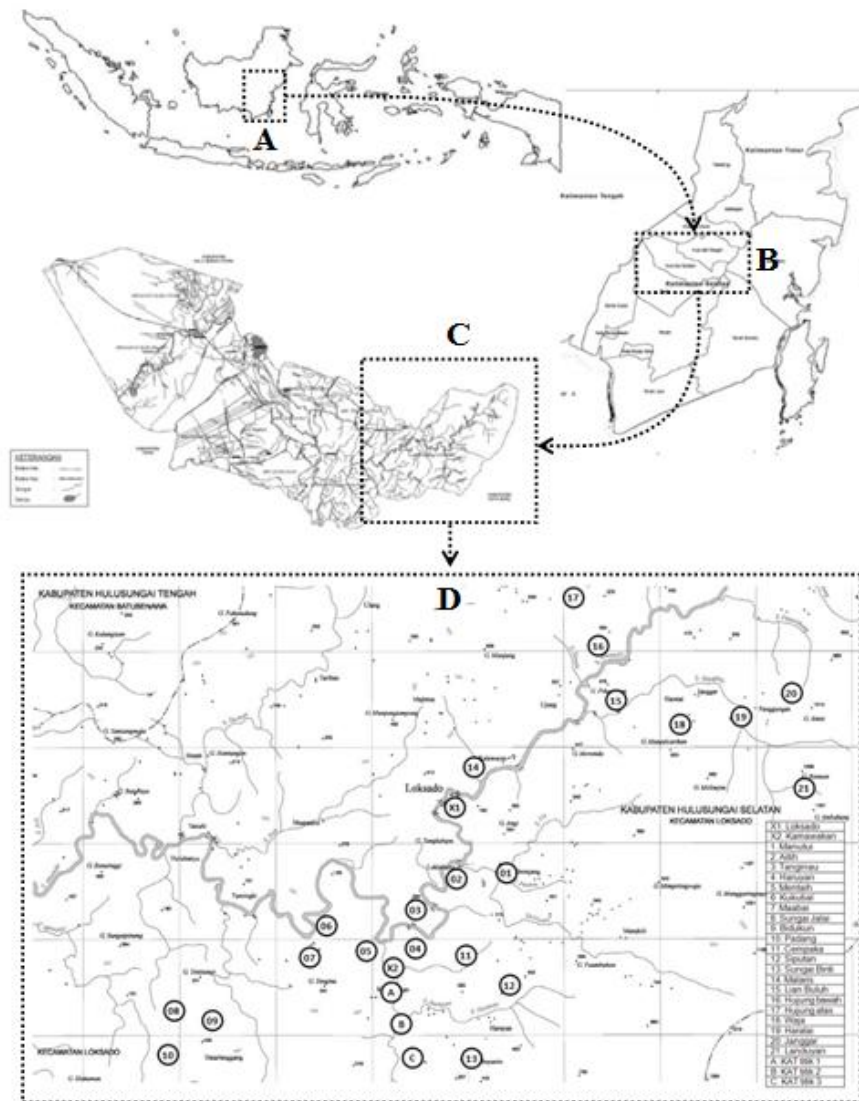


Figure 1 Research location and Dayak Meratus settlements  
 (A) South Kalimantan Province in Borneo island, (B) Hulu Sungai Selatan regency, (C) Loksado sub-district, (D) The spread of 21 balai-adat (settlements) as a research case.

Source: Muchamad, 2012.

Based on the problem or weakness and to show the best practice, this paper is aimed at exploring the living culture of the Dayak Meratus tribes and explaining the implementation of cultural values in an existing government resettlement program. Knowing and understanding the cultural values of Dayak Meratus tribes are the key and very important in ensuring the successful of resettlement programs.

The research is carried out by ethnography methods. In general, the term ethnography refers to the distinctiveness of writing or reporting based on intensive field research and eventually became the method which is intended to produce the reporting. Distinctive feature of ethnography is holistic, integrative, thick description, qualitative analysis in order to get a native's point of view. The main data collection techniques were participant observation and open interviews and in-depth by the researchers themselves. In operational research, this method refers to structure of Spradley's ethnographic methods (1979). This research used 21 balai-adat as a research case, all at once represents the settlements of Dayak Meratus tribes in Loksado sub district. The descriptions presented in this paper are an overview of cultural interpretation and the notion of Dayak Meratus tribes, particularly related to the implementation of resettlement program (PKAT) that so far have been doing well.

## **DAYAK MERATUS and CULTIVATION CULTURE**

In South Kalimantan and in some literature, there are various terms that refer to indigenous people of Meratus Mountains region, i.e. Dayak Meratus, Dayak Bukit, Dayak Banjar, Dayak Loksado, Orang Bukit, etc. The variety of names that refer to these tribes shows that the position of the Dayak Meratus tribes have not been studied yet or still unknown. However, all terms refer to the same entity, and in this study, the terminology used is Dayak Meratus tribes.

According to the characteristic of traditional societies, the Dayak Meratus tribes have elements of faith that dominantly influence other aspects of life, namely religion of *huma* (agricultural field). As a system, *huma* religion made up of religious beliefs and rituals associated with such belief. *Huma* religion belief essentially contains a variety of everyday behaviors that will influence or determine the success or failure of the farm, while the religious acts, especially the ceremonies, are held mostly during farming activities or related activities (Radam, 2001). Therefore, in everyday life, the main work of Dayak Meratus is farming (*bahuma*) especially rice (*Oryza sativa*) on non irrigated agricultural field. For comparison, in the District of Loksado, as a research location, paddy fields made up the largest (3595 ha with harvest yield as much as 11,276 tones) compared to corn, peanut, soybeans, etc. (BPS. HSS district, 2011:65).

Based on the belief, rice farming is considered as a sacred work and an obligation for all member of *bubuhan* (a group of Dayak Meratus tribes). The sanctity of the rice plant can be understood from the Bukit Dayak's name given for the rice. The name was not rice or *banih* (local name for rice), but *rezeki* (blessing of God), *buah tahun* (fruit of year), *buah pohon* (fruit of trees), *buah musim* (fruit of season), *kembang musim* (flower of season), dan *diyang* (Holy Spirit). The rice planting called *pergi berlayar* (going to sail), or *berlayar mencari kawan* (sailing looking for a friend). Rice grown is called *lahir di atas tilam berlapis lapis* (born-plated pads). Rice harvested is mentioned as *dijemput* (picked up). Rice put into the barn is called elevated to *balai peristirahatan* (resort place). Pounded rice is called

*dilepaskan baju keemasannya* (released golden dress). Rice ready to eat is called *diisap sarinya* (sucked the juice). While offering ceremonies, rice referred to *sari buah tahun* (essence of fruit of year), *sari buah pohon* (essence of fruit of trees), *sari bunga tahun* (essence of flower of year), and *sari bunga langit* (essence of flower of sky). The whole parable attached to rice planting and the process cannot be separated from respect for the sanctity and dignity of rice.



Figure 2 Opening of farmland  
Source: documentation, 2011.

Dayak Meratus tribe farming in line with the tradition of living in a kinship, called *bubuhan*. Each *bubuhan* consists of several core families called *umbun*, and an *umbun* is made up from the parents (fathers and mothers) and the children, especially those who are still children or not married. Diagrammatically, the hierarchies of the Dayak Meratus tribes are shown in Figure 3. Cultivation is done by all members of *bubuhan*, men and women, and parents, adults / teens, and children alike. Each *bubuhan* has an indigenous territory (called *banua*) which large enough to allow each *umbun* to have some arable fields (*huma*). It is what makes the system of shifting cultivation can be carried out; that is the belief of the underlying obligation cultivates community groups and the availability of some farm fields.

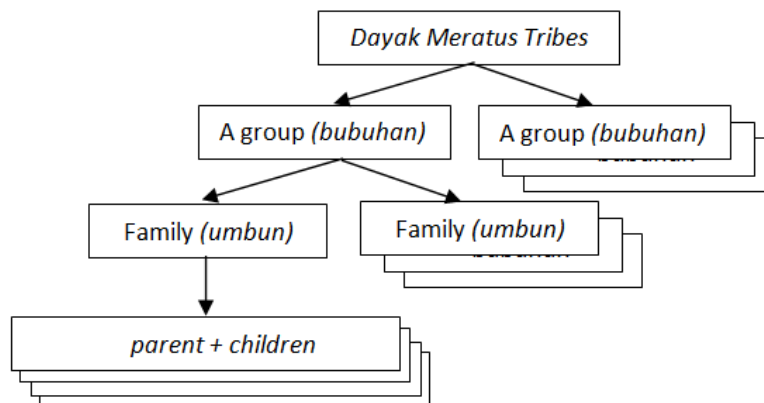


Figure 3 the structure of Dayak Meratus kinship  
Source: compiled from the interview / field observation, 2012.

## SOME PROBLEMS AND GOVERNMENT POLICY

### Some problems related to shifting cultivation

Currently, one of the problems faced by the Dayak Meratus tribes, especially seen from the perspective of the science of architecture, is the increasing of housing needs and feasibility standards. This problem is closely related to Dayak Meratus tribes during this farming tradition. The need of housing was caused by rapid population growth. The imbalance of the increase between the *umbun* (family) in a *bubuhan* (group) and the traditional land of a *bubuhan* is considered as the root of the problem. Because the farm fields owned by each family divided among new *umbun* as a legacy, the area of land farm becomes less and less (narrow). As a consequence, less land owned by each *umbun* cause switching cycle farming traditions became shorter. Finally, the impact of the reduction of the acreage every *umbun* and arable field's short cycle is also reducing the crops. This condition is due to the unavailability of land to be planted in rotation so it does not give enough time for the land that has been planted to restore fertility. Nowadays, Loksado's area is 338.89 km<sup>2</sup> with a population of 8173 inhabitants (BPS, 2011). With population that continues to increase the ratio of the number of inhabitants per km<sup>2</sup> will continue to rise or the land owned by each family becomes narrowing (Figure 4). From the comparison between the total population and land area (Figure 5) and comparison with the land paddy for rice (Figure 6) the tendency has been much reduced. In some villages, there have been an increase in ratio and if it is calculated for shifting cultivation with a 10-15 year cycle, as in the past, for now on, this is no longer possible. The variety of problems, ranging from the increasing demand for housing, loss of arable land, reduced crop yields, to which the lost soil fertility led to increased poverty and decreased standard of living. From some existing settlements of Dayak Meratus tribes, the threat of poverty and the decline of living standards can be vividly recognize from the unfulfil of housing needs and the unhealthy living conditions.

For this reason, the central government, in this case the Department of Social of South Kalimantan Province and Local Government launched the empowerment program for remote indigenous communities particularly in the field of housing.

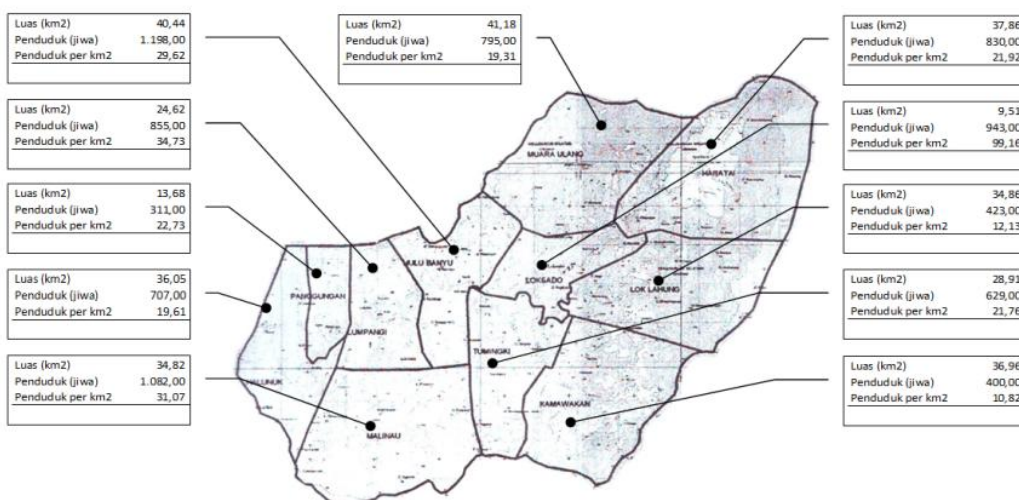


Figure 4 the ratio of the area, the amount and the density of population  
Source: Graphics processing of the BPS District HSS, 2012.



Figure 5 the ratio of the area and the amount of people  
Source: Graphics processing of the BPS District HSS, 2012.



Figure 6 the ratio of the area and the land use  
Source: Graphics processing of the BPS District HSS, 2012.

## Local Effort

Thus far, the problem of the growing need for housing has been responded by the Dayak Meratus tribes. Various efforts to meet the housing needs have been implemented, by adding extended *bilik* (chamber spaces) at the *balai-adat*, build huts around the *bilik* or *balai-adat*, and, currently, build separate homes in outside the *balai-adat*. The whole efforts to meet the housing needs are not running evenly, because it depends on awareness, education and of course, the economic capabilities of each family or group. Economically, when they have the ability, they will build homes with a variety of types (area), kinds of materials, structures, and other supporting elements. Meanwhile, for families who have not been able to build a home, they will stay in *balai-adat* and extend existing *bilik* space. This is why there are some Dayak Meratus people seemed to be less feasible.

Schematically, the initiative to build a place to stay in that has been done by the Dayak Meratus can be distinguished based on self-supporting or by the government programs (Figure 7). It is also can be seen from the distance to their traditional settlement (*balai-adat*). However, in this paper is not to discuss the whole initiative, but only with respect to the involvement of government programs.



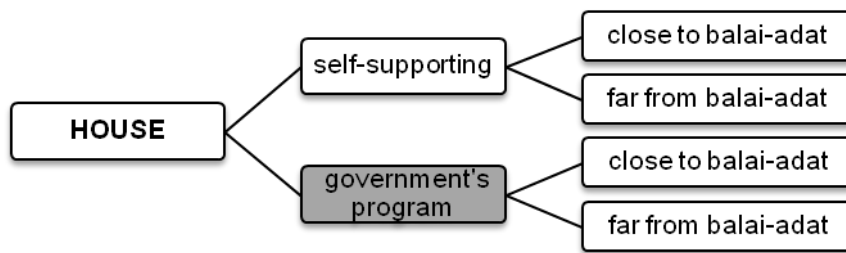


Figure 7 House development pattern  
Source: researcher, 2012.

Of the 21 cases of existing research, the following data and distribution of Dayak Meratus settlements base on the initiative.

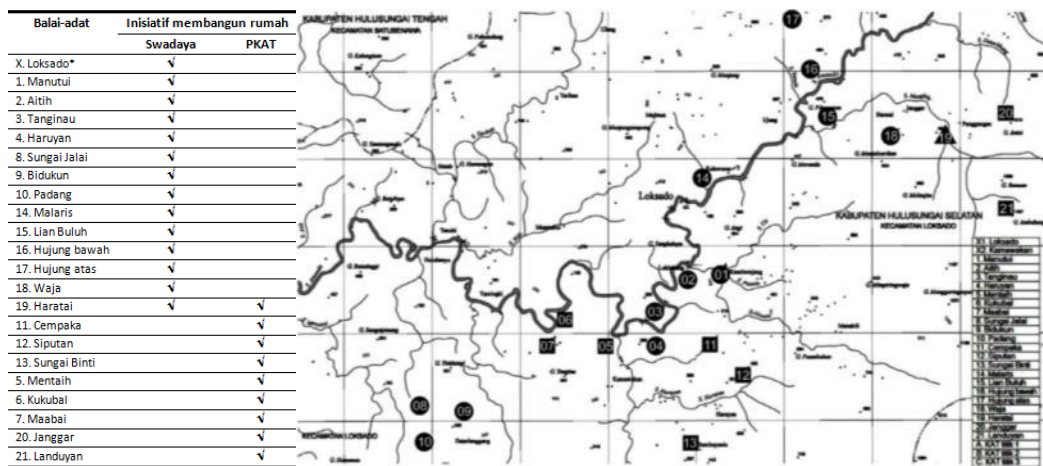


Figure 8. Distribution of Dayak Meratus settlements based on the initiative  
Source: researcher, 2012.

Data and distribution of Dayak Meratus settlements base on the distance of balai-adat shown below.

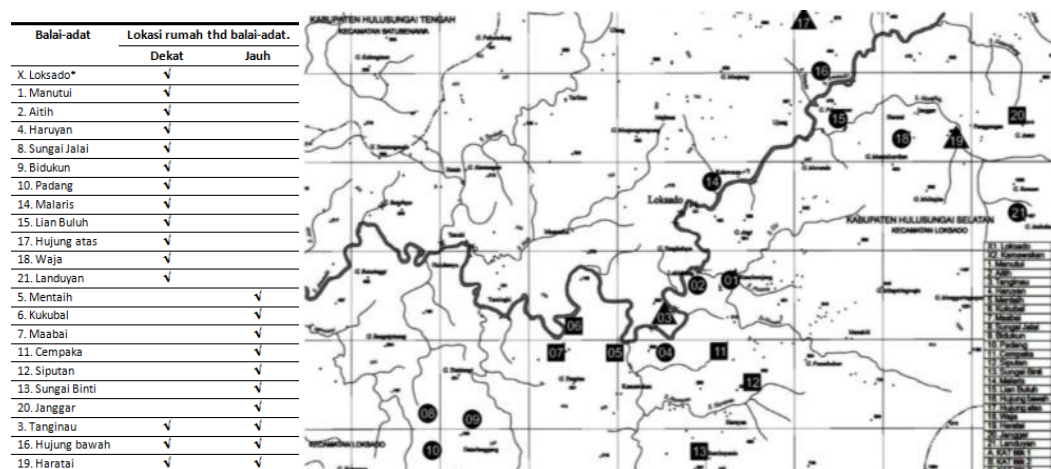


Figure 9 Distribution of Dayak Meratus settlements base on the distance to balai-adat  
Source: researcher, 2012.

## Resettlement Program

One of the government's policy to break the chain of poverty and improve living standards as well as cater for the families of the Dayak Meratus that economically not have the ability to build their own is by the provision of a healthy housing. Previously, a similar program has also been implemented around the 1970s that is the PMKT program or called by locals as the *kampung pemerintah* (the government's village). However, the PMKT program is hardly accepted by Dayak Meratus tribes, and most residents resettled in PMKT were back to their traditional dwelling or *balai-adat*.

In this study, from the 21 settlements or the research case found that there are eight settlements received resettlement assistance program and built in five locations. Three settlements were united in a location, point A (called *titik A*), two settlements united at point B (*titik B*), and one settlements at point C (*titik C*). The three of PKAT locations are far from the *balai-adat*. While existing settlements at point 19 and point 21 to be located around of *balai-adat*.

Based on the field observations, the data, and the analysis obtained, there are two characteristics of the policies implemented in the PKAT program that gained success, those are the location of resettlement around traditional dwelling (*balai-adat*) and maintenance of the system of kinship (concept of *bubuhan*) in the resettlements.

### 1. Location was nearby *balai-adat*

As alluded earlier, to meet the need for housing, Dayak Meratus tribes have been adding extended space of *bilik* (chamber spaces) at the *balai-adat*, build huts around the *bilik* or *balai-adat*, and, currently, build separate houses outside the *balai-adat*. Effort to meet the needs for housing is centered on the *balai-adat*, so it can be understood if the dwelling always be around the *balai-adat*. This is an evident that the government assistance through the housing program for indigenous communities or PKAT programs can be accepted by Dayak Meratus tribes and keen to stay although far from the *balai-adat*. This phenomenon occurs in PKAT resettlements at Kamawakan village that includes locations in point 1, 2 and 3 (Figure 11).

Locations of houses most likely were built around the *balai-adat*, but in some settlements (i.e. Kukubal, Maabai, Cempaka, Siputan, Sungai Binti, and Janggar) the house is far from the *balai-adat*. It is likely due to the lack of ability or economic willingness to built houses. This case can be seen in the resettlement at Haratai village, which built not far from the *balai-adat*.



21. PKAT at balai-adat Landuyan



19. PKAT at balai-adat Haratai

Figure 10. Resettlement at Haratai Village  
Source: documentation, 2011.



## 2. Bound by kinship system

For people who live in groups in extensive kinship ties or *virilocal* extended family, the bound of kinship is always maintained. Although some Dayak Meratus people have no belief on *huma* religion, their settlements remain clustered based on ancestry or *bubuhan*. This also applies to PKAT resettlements program, people who come from some *balai-adat* will remain together in their new location. The case of PKAT resettlement away from the *balai-adat* (like PKAT at Kamawakan village) commonly used field site that belongs to the possession of their ancestors.

Any evidence that Dayak Meratus maintain their kinship can be seen at PKAT resettlement program at Kamawakan village. It is intended to resettle residents from the seven settlements or *balai-adat* on three locations or points (*titik*). People from *balai-adat* Mentaih, Kukubal, and Maabai united on one point (point 1) with totaling 17 units, while from *balai-adat* Cempaka and Siputan united at point 2 amounting to 28 units, and from *balai-adat* Sungai Binti located at point 3 amount to 25 units.



Figure 11 resettlement program at Kamawakan village  
Source: documentation, 2011.

To this point, the term of *bubuhan* understood by Dayak Meratus tribes settled in the implementation, particularly in PKAT program, has a very important significance. Traditionally, the term *bubuhan* refers to the meaning of both of bound by kinship (family or marriage) or by conviction. However, from the analysis, it turns out of the existing implementation of PKAT entirely influenced by socio-civic system of kinship. Starting from the beginning of the tradition of living up to build houses in order fulfill the growing need for a place to stay, all reflect the meaning and nature of this kinship. Therefore, in the context of dwelling of Dayak Meratus tribes, terms and concepts of *bubuhan* have been meaningful more than just denotative attribute, but already understood as the connotative meaning. Meaning of the concept of *bubuhan* which is found in this study comes from the perspective of Dayak Meratus tribes.

## CONCLUSION

There are two factors that determine the success of the PKAT resettlement program at Dayak Meratus tribes in South Kalimantan Province. The first is maintenance of the kinship system (concept of *bubuhan*) as a concept of the resettlements. The second is the selection of the resettlement locations base on the *balai-adat* or traditional dwelling of each group. Essentially, implementation the concept of *bubuhan* is a key to the PKAT resettlements program and an answer of why the Dayak Meratus tribes can receive and live in their new homes.

In general, although the resettlement program of traditional communities at Dayak Meratus tribes can be regarded as successful, if seen from the aspect of design architecture (or architectural design) it seems not yet according to vernacularism. For that reason, this study recommended a research for design houses based on the culture and living tradition of Dayak Meratus.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This paper is a part of author's dissertation on the dwelling concept of Dayak Meratus in the Meratus Mountains region, South Kalimantan, Indonesia. This study under the supervision: Prof. Ir. Tony Atyanto Dharoko, M.Phil., Ph.D., Dr. Arya Ronald, and Prof. Dr. Heddy Shri Ahimsa-Putra, M.A., M.Phil. For the supervision, researchers would like thanks to the promoters, Doctoral Program Department of Architecture and Planning UGM, and the Directorate General of Higher Education (DGHE) for the BPPS scholarships.

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