

BRUNEI KAMPONG AYER : AN ANALYSIS OF THE STRUCTURE AND THE CONDITIONS OF EVOLUTION OF A BORNEO MALAY URBANISM

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For the past 15 years Kampong Ayer, Brunei's famous water villages and former empire's capital has been left to decay slowly. Debates about its future are held far from its inhabitants and away from Brunei's population that all have their roots in it. This paper attempts to show that this static phase of the village history, with centralized external forces holding its development and planning its redevelopment, has not occurred during 1300 years of history. This does not follow the traditional pattern of urban development of the Vernacular Southeast Asian Coastal Cities [VSEACC], thus any decision made with this new process will dramatically change the face of Kampong Ayer.

I argue that Kampong Ayer is an example of a unique type of city that existed during the historical period from the 7th century to the end of the 20th century. The raison d'etre of these cities were to be polities and trading centres, connected with outside world, points of exchange between people, goods, ideas, between seas, rivers and land.

There is no research in the urban discipline about the structure of the VSEACC, I propose to use the anthropological model of urban definition developed by O'Connor(1983) as framework of analysis of its structure and evolution. As he postulates, in Southeast Asia, urban fabrication is a corollary of social structures. To describe the urban form it is

then necessary to understand these structures and spatialise them. This will set the background for a brief sketch of the history of Brunei Kampong Ayer.

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Keywordsf

Water Villages, Kampong Ayer, Southeast Asia, Traditional city

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