

RAMBLINGS - LOCAL BUILDING MATERIALS

The recent email exchange below, in italics, prompts me to expand on the subject with my usual "rambling".

The main reason for the use of cinder blocks for houses is the resistance to "anay" (termites), which is a big problem in the Philippines. As the oldtimers say, a stone house is better than a wooden house, because termites cannot attack. From Carlos

I guess you're right. The old Spanish style houses were made of the termite-proof quarried adobe softstones on the street floor which termites could not eat and the upper levels were made of timber and lumbered mahogany. We had such a house before and we never had any problem with termites. The Spanish were so smart! From Frank



Yes, so true. When we built the house extension six years ago, we used concrete hollow blocks, concrete beams & steel for the roof trusses, as shown on left.



In contrast, above is a resthouse in a resort we visited recently, near the Palimpinon geothermal plant below. It uses native and modern materials.

The original house, built in early 60s, used mahogany hardwood impervious to termites. We made the mistake of placing wooden parquet flooring over the original concrete granolithic first floor, and it got attacked by termites within 3 years, so we retiled.



Its hexagonal base is concrete, sitting on concrete pylons that raises it up for a commanding view of the nearby river, water falls, swimming pools, as shown, (yours truly on left, and grandson on right). Walls are "sawali" bamboo woven slats; roof is "nipa" thatch tied to steel roof trusses, with concrete beam members.



The river water was cold, much in contrast to another resort with a hot pool half a mile away. After all, portions of the rock face on road have fissures gushing steam where we cooked eggs. See above and right photos.

But going back to the subject of building materials, our six year old rest house at the beach, made of coco lumber, sawali and nipa will not be eaten by termites; it will be eaten by the sea.

Photo below shows beach house in 2007 with front fence that was about 20 meters from shoreline. This distance see-sawed as "Amihan" & "Jabagat" seasons moved shore back and forth. But in 2009, the river mouth



nearby shifted drastically; since then the sea has relentlessly encroached.

Neither (above) sand bags nor bamboo stakes could stop the sea pounding (see left night shot). Now, the sea laps at the patio foundation (see above). Boat belongs to our



Belgian neighbor, whose house is even worse off. Concrete & steel construction wouldn't have helped.

Danny Gil 12/18/11