

Typology of domestic spatial organization among the Toraja community of Seriti, South Sulawesi

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
<i>Article history:</i> Received June 16, 2026 Received in revised form July 18, 2026 Accepted August 12, 2026 Available online September 01, 2026 <i>Keywords:</i> House transformation Spatial typology Tacit knowledge Tongkonan Toraja community *Corresponding author: Tarcicius Yoyok Wahyu Subroto Department of Architecture, Faculty of Engineering, Universitas Gadjah Mada, Indonesia Email: yoyokws@ugm.ac.id ORCID: https://orcid.org/0009-0006-0929-9215	<i>During the past 73 years, the houses of the Toraja community in Seriti, South Sulawesi, have experienced continuous physical transformation while retaining essential characteristics of traditional Torajan spatial organization. This study investigates the organization of domestic space and explores the persistence of the spatial concepts embedded within successive phases of housing transformation. A qualitative descriptive methodology was adopted by integrating spatial typology and morphological analyses. Empirical data were obtained through field observation, photographic documentation, reconstruction of historical floor plans, and in-depth interviews with six purposively selected households. The analysis identifies four distinct spatial typologies according to the number of spatial zones, namely one-zone, two-zone, three-zone, and four-zone houses. Although these houses exhibit considerable variation in architectural form, every typology consistently demonstrates a front-middle-rear spatial sequence comparable to that of the traditional Tongkonan house. The enduring presence of Kale Banua as the principal domestic space indicates that the core spatial structure has remained remarkably stable despite successive architectural transformations. Although contemporary residents no longer consciously apply customary principles when arranging domestic space, the recurring spatial configurations reveal the continued transmission of tacit spatial knowledge across generations. Furthermore, changes in settlement conditions and religious beliefs have not displaced the underlying spatial logic; instead, they have reshaped the functions and meanings of domestic spaces within contemporary living environments.</i>

Introduction

Residential architecture cannot be explained solely through environmental adaptation or physical determinants, as its configuration is fundamentally influenced by cultural values, social beliefs, and patterns of everyday life (Rapoport 1969). More recent scholarship likewise demonstrates that traditional houses function as material expressions of cultural identity, spatial hierarchy, and collective memory

while continually adapting to evolving social circumstances (Antaryama and Dianagri 2026; Prayitno 2026; Ratodi et al. 2025). Accordingly, within traditional and vernacular societies, the house extends beyond its role as physical shelter to become a manifestation of cultural knowledge and cosmological belief systems that structure the relationship between human beings, nature, and the cosmos (Said 2004). Consequently, domestic spatial organization emerges through culturally embedded values, cosmological principles, and



local environmental conditions rather than through arbitrary spatial arrangements (Pardo 2023).

Koentjaraningrat (1990) explains that culture encompasses ideas, activities, and material artifacts acquired through social learning. From this perspective, traditional houses constitute tangible cultural products that embody the accumulated knowledge, values, and collective identity of a community. Beyond their material existence, contemporary studies further demonstrate that traditional dwellings preserve intangible cultural heritage through spatial organization, symbolic representation, architectural narratives, and the intergenerational transmission of knowledge, all of which continue to influence everyday residential practices (Hasan, Noor Prabowo, and Bava Mohidin 2021; Antaryama and Dianagri 2026). Across diverse vernacular societies, the continuity of these cultural principles is expressed through different architectural mechanisms. Within the Kaili Ledo community of Central Sulawesi, for example, Tambale functions as the principal element governing residential spatial organization by directing the incremental addition of domestic spaces while preserving the underlying spatial framework throughout the process of house development (Arief, Subroto, and Marcillia 2023). Similarly, the concept of Katuvu ri Sou illustrates that domestic space embodies collective memory and cultural values that reinforce residents' attachment to their homes beyond purely physical attributes (Arief, Wahyu Subroto, and Marcillia 2024). Studies of Rumah Godang likewise reveal that architectural components such as Tiang Tuo extend beyond structural functions to serve as enduring cultural symbols that strengthen community identity and facilitate cultural continuity across successive generations (Faisal, Subroto, and Rahmi 2023). Comparable patterns are likewise evident within migrant and diaspora settlements, where inherited spatial concepts continue to be reproduced despite substantial socio-cultural and environmental change. Research investigating Chinese houses in Kampung Ketandan, Yogyakarta, demonstrates that traditional spatial arrangements adapt to new residential circumstances while maintaining their essential spatial configuration (Safitri, Subroto, and Rahmi 2025). Similarly, studies of Chinese houses in Lasem indicate that although

morphological transformation substantially alters building form, it does not necessarily diminish the centrality of the courtyard as the organizing spatial element; rather, this spatial concept is reinterpreted within changing settlement contexts (Mandaka et al. 2023). Taken together, these studies indicate that the resilience of vernacular architecture depends not merely upon the preservation of physical form but, more importantly, upon the continued reproduction of spatial knowledge, cultural values, and symbolic meanings that collectively govern the organization of domestic environments through everyday living practices. Within this broader theoretical context, the Tongkonan, the traditional house of the Toraja people of South Sulawesi, provides an important case through which the persistence of inherited spatial concepts can be examined across successive stages of architectural transformation. Although these studies investigate different vernacular traditions, they consistently demonstrate that the continuity of vernacular architecture is sustained primarily through the preservation of spatial organization, cultural values, and symbolic meanings rather than through the permanence of architectural form alone.

The designation Tongkonan originates from the Torajan word *tongkon*, meaning "to sit," reflecting its traditional role as the place where members of the extended family and the wider community assemble to deliberate, negotiate, and resolve communal affairs (Tangdilintin 1980). The architectural configuration and spatial organization of the Tongkonan are fundamentally governed by Aluk Todolo, the ancestral belief system that defines the cosmological principles underlying Torajan architecture. Vertically, the house embodies a tripartite cosmology consisting of the upper world, the middle world, and the lower world. Horizontally, its spatial arrangement is generally organized into three principal sections: Tangdo, Sali, and Sumbung (Rachmalia et al. 2022).

Based on their social roles and spatial characteristics, Tongkonan houses are commonly classified into four principal types, each representing a distinct level of social function and architectural organization (figure 1) (Parung, Antariksa, and Suryasari 2016; Oktawati and Hardiansyah 2021; Aldana and Sunarmi 2021).

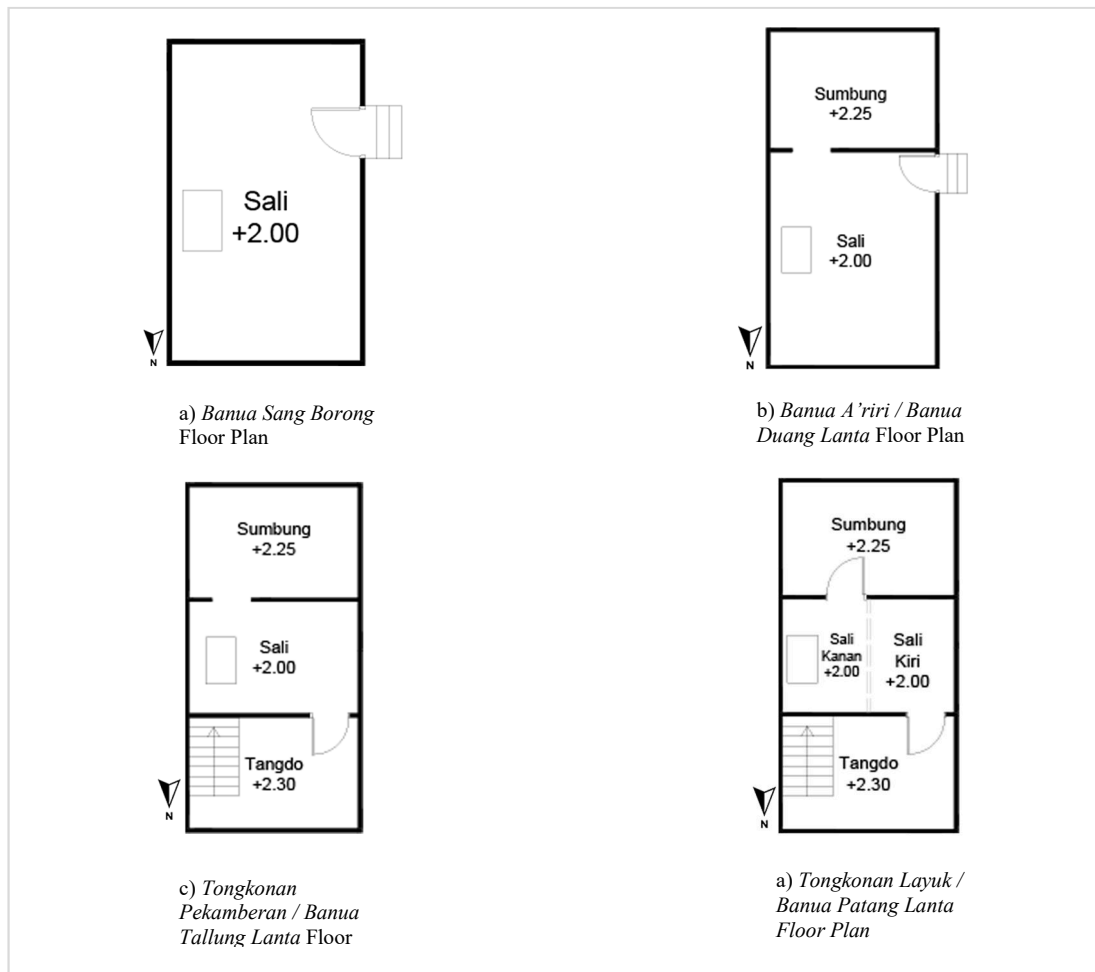


Figure 1. Floor plan of a Tongkonan house

Source: Redrawn by the author based on (Parung, Antariksa, and Suryasari 2016)

As historical migration expanded across South Sulawesi, Torajan communities gradually dispersed into several regions, including the territory formerly governed by the Luwu Kingdom. Population movement from Tana Toraja and Rante Balla toward the southern part of Palopo began during the early twentieth century. However, political instability that

emerged in 1952 seriously threatened community security, compelling many Torajan families to flee and relocate to the Lamasi region (figure 2). Supported by the Indonesian National Armed Forces (TNI), these displaced families subsequently established a new settlement that later became known as Seriti Village (Grasia, Sahabuddin, and Malihu 2023).



Figure 2. Research location: Seriti Village, East Lamasi District, Luwu Regency, South Sulawesi

The Toraja community originating from South Palopo has now inhabited Seriti for approximately seventy-three years (2026). Throughout this period, residential architecture has gradually evolved from modest stilt houses into contemporary ground-level dwellings. Such transformations are characteristic of vernacular architecture, where physical modifications frequently accompany socioeconomic development while simultaneously maintaining cultural continuity (Michelle and Purbadi 2021; Antaryama and Dianagri 2026). Architectural transformation may involve the expansion, reduction, or reconfiguration of domestic spaces to accommodate changing functional requirements (Michelle and Purbadi 2021). At the same time, these processes may reveal forms of tacit knowledge embedded within everyday

community practices and transmitted through lived experience rather than explicit instruction (Subroto 2024).

Previous investigations of Torajan domestic architecture beyond the traditional homeland have primarily emphasized architectural form, construction techniques, symbolic representation, and religious dimensions, reflecting broader tendencies within Indonesian vernacular architectural scholarship (Ratodi et al. 2025; Natsir et al. 2025; Lolo, Ridha, and Jumadi 2019; Nole and Tampake 2024). Nevertheless, little attention has been devoted to understanding how Torajan communities residing outside their ancestral territory organize domestic space through inherited spatial concepts that continue to be reproduced in everyday residential practices.

The continuing physical transformation of houses in Seriti suggests that the architectural identity of the community cannot be interpreted solely through observable building forms. Rather, the persistence of spatial organization indicates the survival of intangible cultural knowledge that continues to shape domestic architecture despite significant changes in architectural appearance. As numerous studies have demonstrated, vernacular architecture possesses the capacity to respond to evolving environmental, social, and cultural circumstances while maintaining its underlying spatial logic (Wang et al. 2024; Rapoport 1969; Subroto 2024). Accordingly, this study seeks to reveal the tacit spatial knowledge that continues to underpin the organization of domestic space within the Toraja community of Seriti.

Methods

This research adopts a qualitative descriptive methodology that combines spatial typology and morphological analysis to identify patterns of residential transformation and examine the organization of domestic space within Torajan houses in Seriti Village (Creswell and Poth 2024). Empirical data were collected through direct field observations, photographic documentation, reconstruction of historical floor plans illustrating successive stages of residential development, and in-depth interviews with residents to understand patterns of spatial use and the long-term processes of house transformation.

The analytical procedure consisted of reconstructing the chronological development of each dwelling, abstracting and classifying reconstructed floor plans into spatial typologies, and subsequently comparing these typologies with the spatial organization of the traditional Tongkonan house. Through this comparative analysis, the study interprets the continuity of Torajan spatial concepts among communities that have resided outside the Toraja homeland for several generations.

Six houses were purposively selected as case studies (figure 3) according to several criteria. First, each dwelling belonged to families who had experienced forced displacement from South Palopo during the period of persecution. Second, the occupants were either direct historical participants or first-generation descendants possessing firsthand knowledge of the migration experience. Third, the informants retained clear memories regarding the chronological transformation of their houses. Fourth, each dwelling remained structurally intact and continuously inhabited. Finally, every selected house had undergone at least two distinct stages of architectural transformation. Collectively, these six cases adequately represent the diversity of residential development observed within Seriti Village and satisfy the criterion of data saturation because no additional spatial typologies, transformation sequences, or organizational patterns beyond those already identified emerged during subsequent investigation (Hennink and Kaiser 2022).

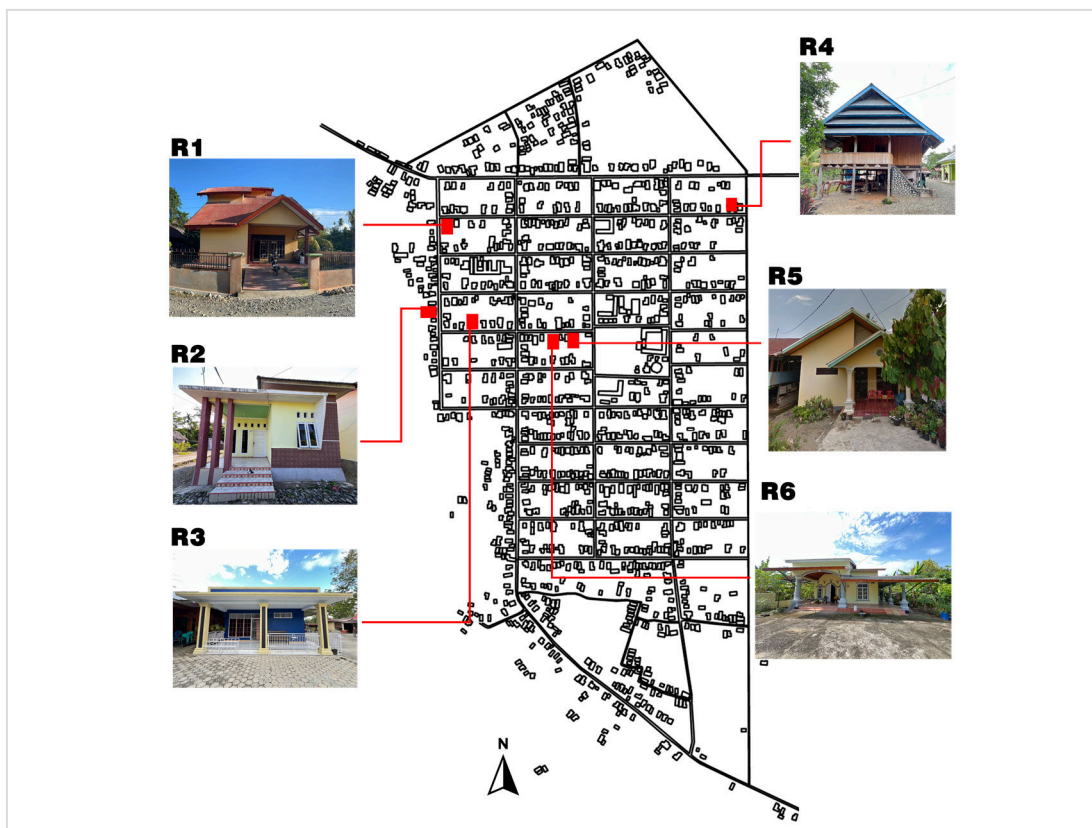


Figure 3. Locations of the case study houses

Results and discussion

Seriti Village, located in East Lamasi District, Luwu Regency, was founded in 1952 following the relocation of Christian Torajan communities from South Palopo during the DI/TII conflict. With logistical and security assistance provided by the Indonesian National Armed Forces (TNI),

the displaced population established a permanent settlement that subsequently developed into two administrative villages, namely Seriti and Pelalan (Grasia, Sahabuddin, and Malihu 2023). The following discussion examines the spatial evolution of Torajan houses in Seriti through six representative case studies, emphasizing patterns of domestic transformation and the persistence of inherited spatial concepts.

Table 1. Spatial transformation of the houses of the Toraja Community in Seriti

Cases	Initial floor plan	Transformation stage 1	Transformation stage 2	Transformation stage 3
R1				



Source: Prepared by the author based on field observations and the reconstruction of housing development histories from informant interviews (2026)

Legend:

- Complete transformation of the house and/or its spatial configuration
- Addition of house spaces
- Spatial zoning

As presented in table 1, the residential architecture of the Toraja community in Seriti has undergone a gradual process of transformation from relatively simple dwellings toward increasingly complex spatial organizations. Across the six case studies, each house experienced two or three successive phases of development, progressing from layouts composed of one or two spatial units to final configurations consisting of four spatial zones. According to informant NJ (2026), these architectural changes were primarily stimulated by expanding family requirements, improving household economic conditions, and the establishment of a safer settlement environment, all of which encouraged the transition from modest stilt houses to permanent ground-level residences.

An examination of the transformation sequence across all case studies reveals a consistent process of spatial differentiation throughout residential development. Although substantial modifications occurred in architectural form, structural systems, construction techniques, and building materials, one spatial component remained consistently preserved during every stage of transformation, namely Kale Banua. The uninterrupted presence of Kale Banua as the core domestic space demonstrates that the fundamental principles governing spatial organization remained stable despite extensive physical alterations to the houses. By contrast, Muka'/Bo'do, Kamara', and Dapo' emerged progressively through the addition and differentiation of space in response to the evolving functional needs of household members.

The cumulative effect of these transformations produced increasingly sophisticated spatial organizations while simultaneously preserving a recurring front-middle-rear zoning pattern throughout all examined houses. Based on these consistent patterns of spatial differentiation, four principal typologies of domestic spatial organization were identified within the Toraja community of Seriti: the one-zone, two-zone, three-zone, and four-zone house types.

One-Zone house type

Analysis of the reconstructed transformation sequences indicates that the one-zone house represents the earliest and most elementary form of dwelling, consisting of a single undivided interior space (figure 4). This typology was identified in Cases R1 and R5 and is locally referred to as Lantang. It represents the initial housing form constructed by Torajan migrants shortly after they arrive in Seriti. The defining characteristic of this typology is the absence of internal spatial differentiation. All essential domestic activities, including food preparation, dining, sleeping, family interaction, and religious observance, were accommodated within Kale Banua, which functioned as a completely multifunctional living space. Interviews with the informants indicate that this undifferentiated spatial arrangement was primarily influenced by limited financial resources, the scarcity of available construction materials, and the challenging environmental conditions encountered during the early phase of settlement establishment.

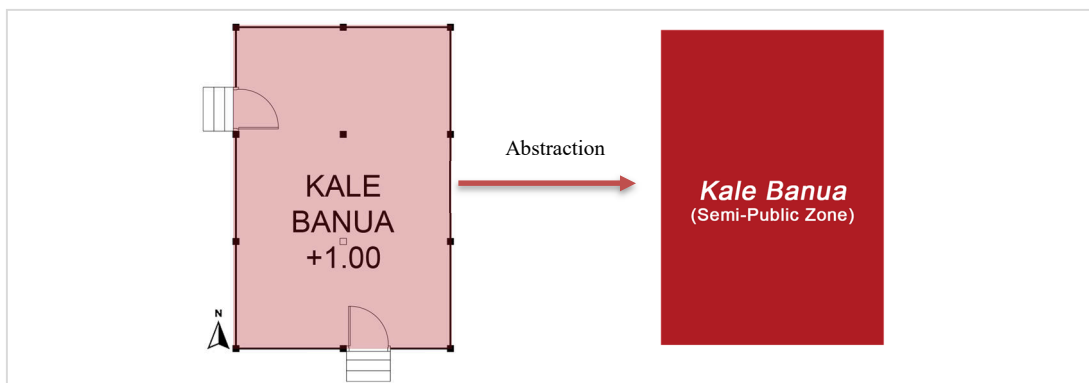


Figure 4. One-zone house type: *Banua Lantang*

Two-Zone house type

The two-zone house type (figure 5), also locally known as Lantang, emerged during the

early settlement period under socioeconomic conditions comparable to those associated with the one-zone house. The principal distinction

between these two typologies lies in the introduction of Muka'/Bo'do (veranda) and/or Dapo' (kitchen), which marked the initial stage of functional differentiation within the dwelling. These newly incorporated spaces enabled selected domestic activities to be separated from Kale Banua, thereby establishing a more organized spatial arrangement while retaining an overall simple configuration. Despite this initial differentiation, the spatial organization remained relatively uncomplicated because only a limited number of domestic functions were allocated to independent spaces. Kale Banua continued to function as the primary center of household life,

whereas the newly added spaces accommodated activities that previously occurred within the undivided interior. Consequently, this typology represents an intermediate stage in the evolution of domestic space, illustrating the community's gradual response to increasing functional requirements without fundamentally altering the core spatial structure. The two-zone typology was identified in the initial floor plans of Cases R2 and R4, indicating that different households entered the transformation process from distinct stages of residential development depending on the timing of construction and household circumstances.

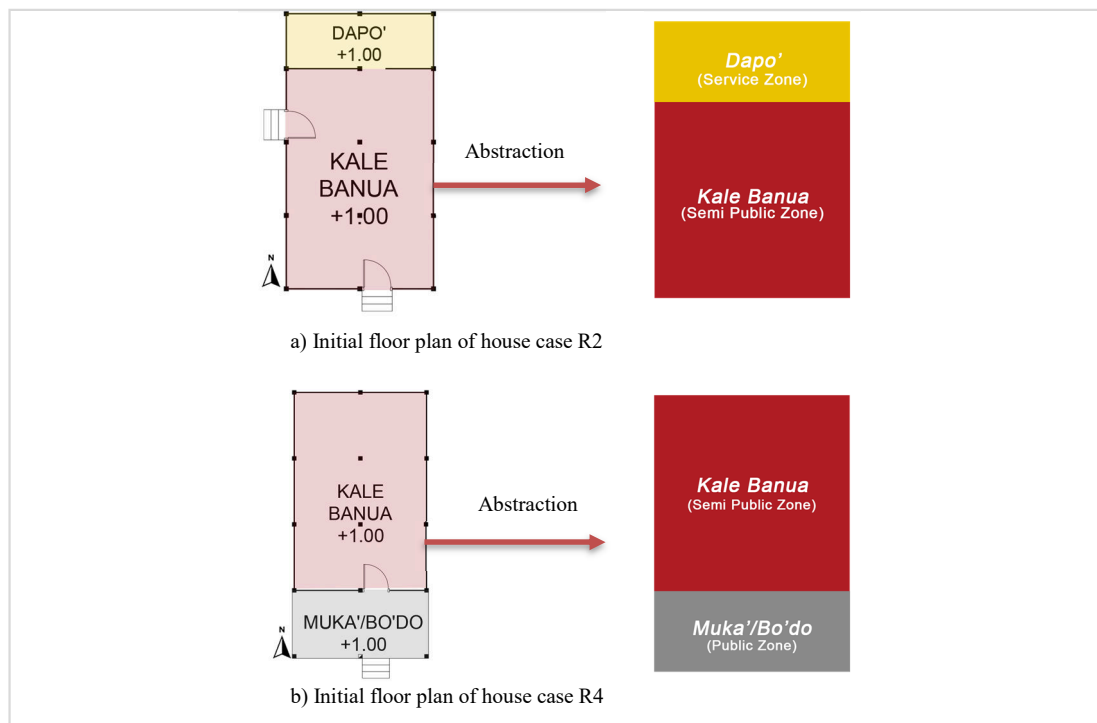


Figure 5. Two-Zone house type: *Banua Lantang*

Three-Zone house type

The emergence of the three-zone house type can be traced to 1958, following the implementation of the government-sponsored transmigration program in Seriti. After they transitioned from refugee status to officially recognized transmigrants, members of the Toraja community received governmental assistance to

construct standardized stilt houses measuring approximately 4×6 m, commonly referred to as Banua Transmigrasi (figure 6). According to informant NR, the assistance program included both financial support and construction materials, enabling households to replace their temporary shelters with more permanent dwellings.

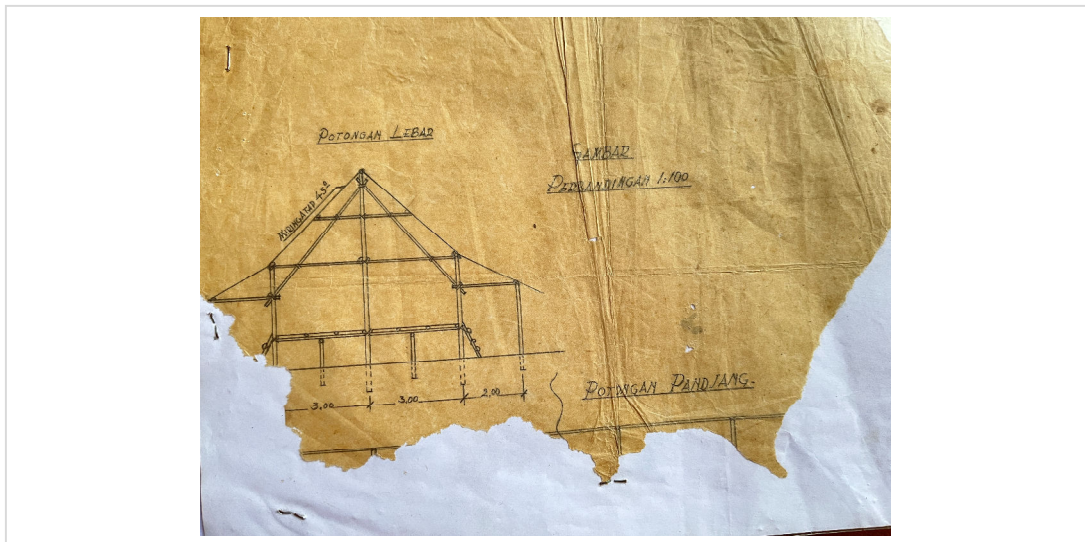


Figure 6. Section of a transmigration house

Source: Technical document of a transmigration house (1958), prepared by the Commander of VAK A/SS.X/I-K1/B.506; archived by the family of P.S. Gasong and documented by the author (2026)

The spatial configuration of Banua Transmigrasi comprises Muka'/Bo'do (veranda), Kale Banua (main living space), and Kamara' (bedroom) (figure 7). Compared with the preceding one-zone and two-zone typologies, this arrangement demonstrates a substantially higher degree of spatial differentiation. Although Kale Banua continued to function as the primary setting for shared family activities, the addition of Kamara' introduced a dedicated private domain within the dwelling. Consequently, domestic space became more systematically organized according to functional requirements and levels of privacy, replacing the more open and multifunctional arrangements characteristic of earlier house types. The incorporation of a

separate bedroom reflects not only changing household needs but also broader improvements in living standards following the stabilization of the settlement. Rather than replacing the original spatial organization, this development expanded the existing spatial system by introducing specialized functions while preserving Kale Banua as the central organizing element of the house. The three-zone configuration was identified in the initial floor plan of Case R6 and in the first transformation stage of Case R1, demonstrating that this typology represented a transitional phase linking the simpler early houses with the more spatially differentiated dwellings that emerged in subsequent decades.

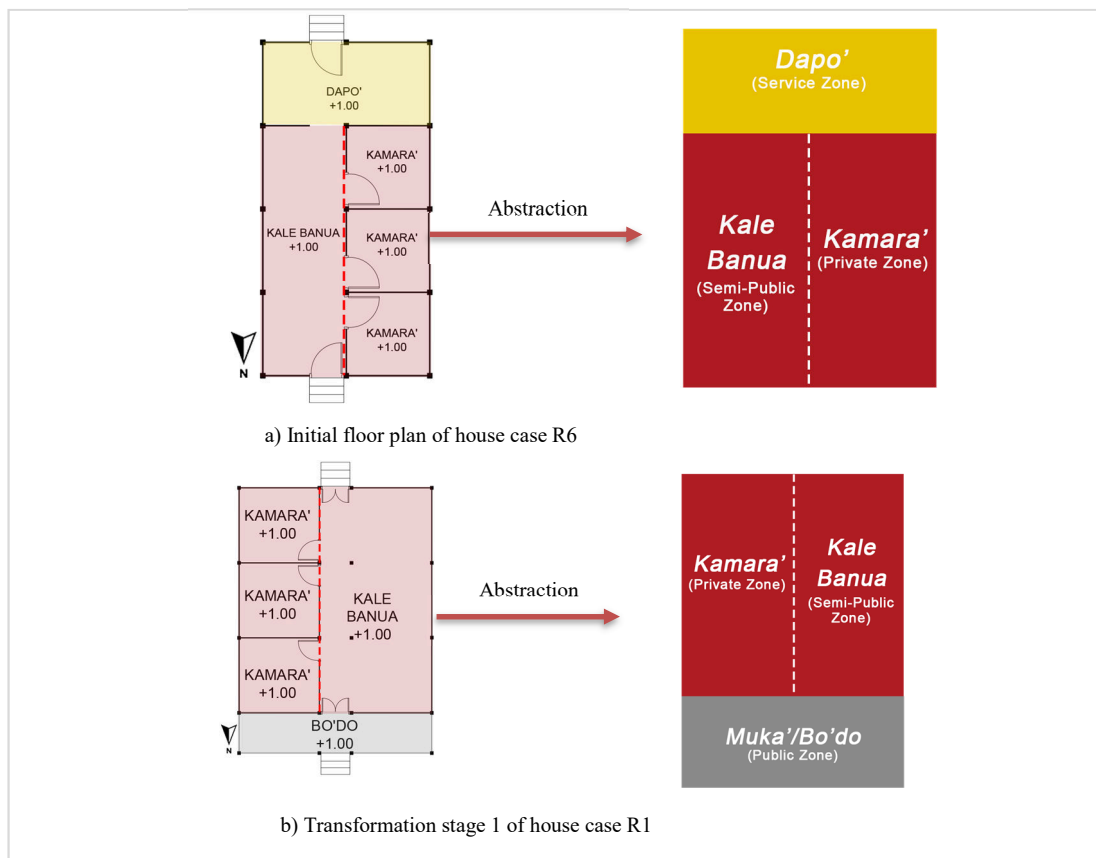


Figure 7. Three-Zone house type: *Banua Transmigrasi*

Four-Zone house type

The four-zone house type represents the most spatially differentiated residential configuration identified in this study. Its organization consists of Muka'/Bo'do (veranda) positioned at the front of the house, Kale Banua (family room) and Kamara' (bedroom) occupying the central section, and Dapo' (kitchen) located at the rear. Collectively, these spaces establish a clearly defined front-to-back zoning sequence in which domestic, social, and private activities are distributed according to their respective functions (figure 8). Compared with the earlier typologies, this configuration exhibits a substantially more sophisticated level of functional organization while maintaining the underlying spatial logic observed throughout the transformation process.

The four-zone typology is represented by two principal dwelling forms, namely Banua Jambong and Banua Rapa', both of which correspond to the final stage of residential transformation and continue to constitute the predominant house forms in Seriti today. During the 1980s, many residents replaced their smaller stilt houses with Banua Jambong, a substantially larger elevated dwelling characterized by a ground-level Dapo' and an underfloor space approximately two meters in height. This lower area served multiple purposes, functioning as a communal gathering space while simultaneously providing shelter for livestock. The generalized abstraction of the four-zone typology is illustrated in figure 9.

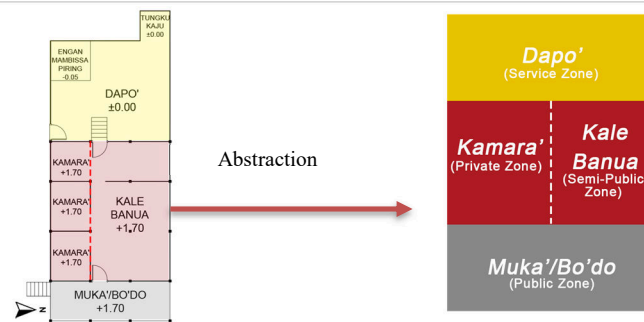


a) *Banua Jambong*: Transformation stage 2 case R4

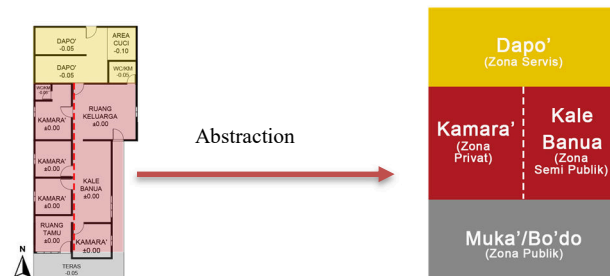


b) *Banua Rapa'*: Transformation stage 2 case R6

Figure 8. Front elevation of the four-zone house type



a) Transformation stage 1 of house case R2



b) Transformation stage 3 of house case R3

Figure 9. Four-zone house type

According to informant PH, Banua Jambong closely resembles the traditional dwellings occupied by the Toraja community before they migrated from South Palopo and is regarded as one of the indigenous residential forms' characteristics of South Palopo Torajans. This observation suggests that the construction of Banua Jambong was motivated not only by the need to accommodate expanding household activities and improve economic conditions but also by the community's aspiration to re-establish a dwelling form that embodied its collective residential memory and cultural identity.

During the 1990s, the community gradually shifted toward the construction of Banua Rapa', a ground-level house type. Informant NJ explained that this transition was facilitated by improved environmental security and more favorable economic circumstances. Houses built during this period displayed a more clearly articulated spatial organization and incorporated durable construction materials, including brick masonry walls, ceramic tile flooring, and corrugated metal roofing, replacing the predominantly timber construction that characterized earlier generations of houses.

Analysis of the four identified house typologies demonstrates that the principal differences among them are not associated with

modifications to Kale Banua, but rather with the progressive incorporation of additional surrounding spaces. The earliest dwellings consisted exclusively of Kale Banua. As domestic requirements expanded, either Muka'/Bo'do or Dapo' was introduced, giving rise to the two-zone house type. The subsequent addition of Kamara' generated the three-zone configuration, whereas the integration of all four principal spatial elements, Muka'/Bo'do, Kale Banua, Kamara', and Dapo', resulted in the fully developed four-zone house type.

These typological developments therefore represent a gradual process of spatial differentiation in which new functional spaces were incrementally incorporated without altering the original spatial framework centered on Kale Banua. Rather than replacing the preexisting spatial order, each successive stage expanded the architectural system while preserving its fundamental organizational structure. This developmental pattern corresponds closely with recent studies demonstrating that transformations in traditional house layouts generally occur through the incremental addition and reorganization of domestic spaces while maintaining the continuity of the underlying spatial configuration (Asriana and Khidmat 2024; Rahmi 2025).

Table 2. Typology matrix of floor plans based on the spatial transformation of the houses of the Toraja community in Seriti

Floor Plan Typology	Case House 1				Case House 2				Case House 3				Case House 4				Case House 5				Case House 6			
	I	T	T	T	I	T	T	T	I	T	T	T	I	T	T	I	T	TS	TS	I	T	TS		
	P	S	S	S	P	S	S	S	P	S	S	S	P	S	S	P	S	2	3	P	S	2		
	1	2	3		1	2			1	2	3		1	2		1				1				
One-zone house type	●	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	●	○	○	○	○	○	○		
Two-zone house type	○	○	○	○	●	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	●	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○		
Three-zone house type	○	●	○	○	○	○	○	○	●	○	○	○	○	○	●	○	○	○	○	○	○	○		
Four-zone house type	○	○	●	●	○	●	●	○	●	●	●	○	○	○	●	○	●	●	○	●	●	●		

Note:

- IP = Initial floor plan
- TS1 = Transformation stage 1
- TS2 = Transformation stage 2
- TS3 = Transformation stage 3
- = Spatial transformation occurred;
- = No spatial transformation occurred

The distribution of spatial typologies presented in table 2 indicates that the one-zone house type appears only in a limited number of cases, whereas the four-zone house type constitutes the predominant residential configuration. This distribution demonstrates that residential transformation did not occur

simultaneously across all households but instead progressed at different rates depending on the period during which individual dwellings were initially constructed. The one-zone typology represents the earliest houses erected by the first generation of Torajan refugees during the establishment of the Seriti settlement.

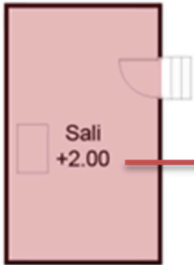
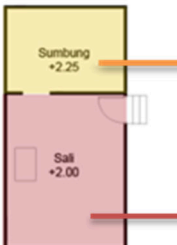
Conversely, several of the houses examined in this study were built after the community had already begun adopting more advanced residential forms, including Banua Transmigrasi and Banua Jambong. Consequently, the predominance of the four-zone house type reflects the fact that it represents the most advanced stage of architectural transformation documented among the investigated cases (2026).

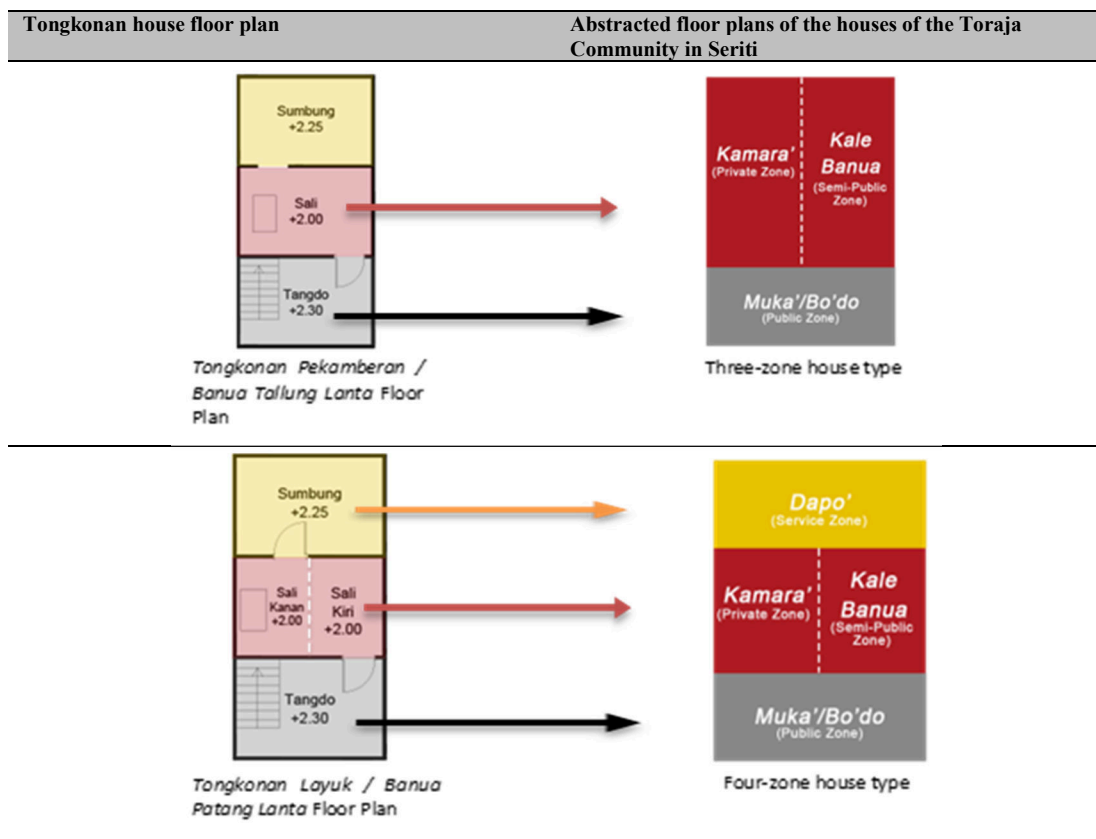
Interviews conducted with informant NJ revealed that contemporary members of the Toraja community in Seriti no longer consciously adhere to explicit customary regulations governing house construction or the organization of domestic space. Following their conversion to Christianity, daily life has become primarily structured by Christian beliefs rather than by traditional customary prescriptions. Nevertheless, the remarkable consistency observed in the spatial organization of all examined houses indicates that domestic space is not arranged randomly. Instead, recurring spatial configurations suggest the

continued operation of deeply embedded spatial principles that remain actively reproduced through everyday residential practices.

The inability of community members to articulate these organizing principles explicitly further suggests that they exist in the form of tacit knowledge. This circumstance may reflect the community's prolonged residence outside the Toraja homeland, where explicit knowledge of traditional architectural principles has gradually diminished over time, even though corresponding spatial practices continue to be maintained through habitual use and intergenerational experience. To investigate this phenomenon more comprehensively, the spatial organization identified in Seriti was subsequently compared with that of the traditional Tongkonan, the ancestral architectural prototype of the Toraja people. The comparative analysis presented in table 3 examines the relationship between Tongkonan spatial configurations and the domestic spatial typologies documented in Seriti.

Table 3. Relationship Between the Spatial Configuration of Tongkonan and the House Spatial Typologies of the Toraja Community in Seriti

Tongkonan house floor plan	Abstracted floor plans of the houses of the Toraja Community in Seriti
 Banua Sang Borong Floor Plan	 One-zone house type
 Banua A'riri / Banua Duang Lanta Floor Plan	 Two-zone house type



The comparative analysis presented in [table 3](#) demonstrates a strong correspondence between the spatial organization of traditional Tongkonan houses and that of the dwellings occupied by the Toraja community in Seriti. This close resemblance indicates that tacit spatial knowledge continues to inform residential practices despite the community's prolonged separation from its ancestral homeland. Within this context, tacit knowledge refers to spatial understanding that has become deeply internalized through long-term cultural experience and is transmitted across generations through everyday practice rather than explicit instruction. Consequently, although contemporary residents no longer intentionally replicate Tongkonan typologies during the construction of their houses, the resulting spatial arrangements continue to embody the same underlying organizational logic inherited from the ancestral dwelling tradition.

Despite these structural similarities, the functions and symbolic meanings associated with individual spaces have not remained entirely unchanged. Instead, they have undergone reinterpretation in response to shifts in religious

beliefs and evolving patterns of social life. This finding supports recent studies indicating that vernacular architecture is capable of accommodating cultural and functional adaptation while preserving the essential principles governing its spatial organization ([Rahmi 2025](#)). Nevertheless, several domestic spaces continue to exhibit a remarkable continuity with the spatial concepts embedded within Tongkonan architecture. One of the most significant examples is Kale Banua, which occupies the central portion of the dwelling in a manner comparable to Sali within the traditional Tongkonan. According to [Said \(2004\)](#), supported by more recent investigations of Torajan ritual and spatial traditions ([Sanderan, Tarrapa, and Pasulu 2025](#); [Allo, Firmansyah, and Kusuma 2026](#)), Sali functions not only as the principal gathering place for family members but also as the location where the deceased are laid before the performance of the Rambu Solo' funeral ceremony. An equivalent pattern is evident in the houses of the Toraja community in Seriti, where Kale Banua serves both as the principal space for family interaction and as the location in which

deceased family members are placed before burial (figure 10). The correspondence observed in both spatial position and functional role indicates that Kale Banua continues to operate as the focal point of domestic life as well as an important setting for major life-cycle events. Although the broader ritual context has changed following the community's adoption of Christianity, the

centrality of this space has remained remarkably consistent. This continuity demonstrates that architectural transformation has not disrupted the fundamental spatial hierarchy inherited from the Tongkonan tradition but has instead preserved its organizational significance within a different cultural and religious framework.



Figure 10. Ritual activities conducted in Kale Banua

Source: (a & b) Author (2026); (c) Family documentation of Lamba' Simpín (2025)

A comparable process of continuity and reinterpretation can also be observed in the front section of the house. Within the traditional Tongkonan, Tangdo functions as both a public reception area and a sacred ritual space, including serving as the location for worship directed to Puang Matua (God) within the Aluk Todolo belief system (Said 2004). In contrast, among the Toraja community in Seriti, the ritual significance of Muka'/Bo'do is no longer associated with ceremonies dedicated to Puang Matua. Rather, the symbolic meaning of this space has been redefined within the context of Christian religious practice.

In everyday activities, Muka'/Bo'do primarily functions as a public area for receiving visitors

and facilitating social interaction with neighbors and relatives. During religious events, however, the same space is transformed into a setting for Christian worship, where pastors or church leaders conduct religious services, offer prayers, and deliver sermons (figure 11). This transformation demonstrates that religious conversion has not eliminated the ceremonial importance of the front space but has instead reshaped the nature of the rituals performed within it. Accordingly, what has persisted across generations is not the ritual practice associated with Aluk Todolo, but the broader spatial concept of the front zone as a place where communal interaction integrates both social and sacred dimensions.

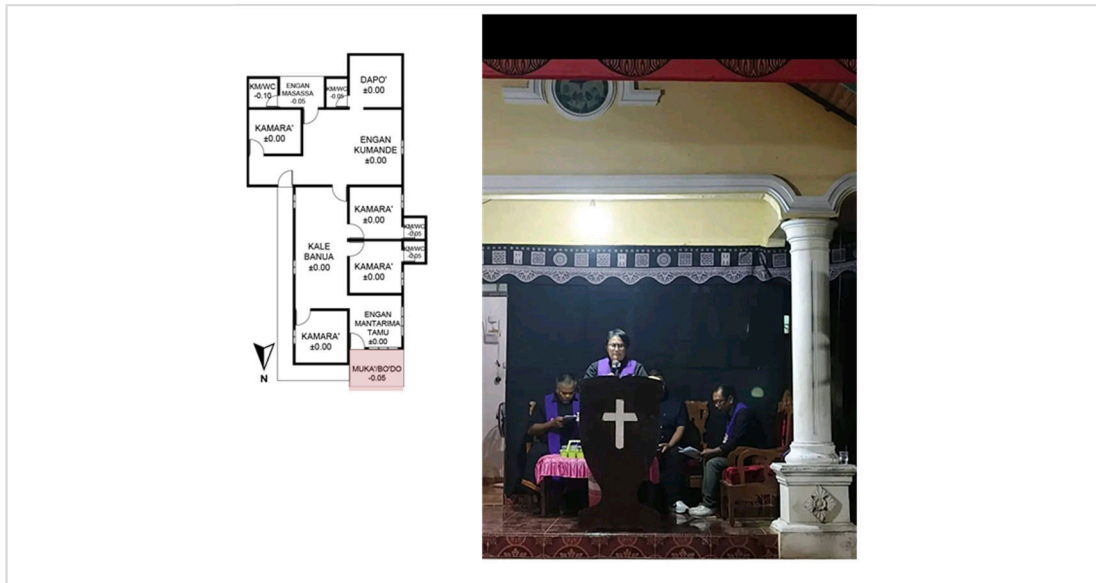


Figure 11. Pastor leading a consolation service in Muka'/Bo'do (Case R5)
Source: Family documentation of Lamba' Simpín (2025)

Conclusions

This study demonstrates that the transformation of houses belonging to the Toraja community in Seriti has generated four principal spatial typologies through a gradual process of spatial differentiation, beginning with Kale Banua as the original core space and progressively developing into increasingly complex domestic configurations. Throughout every stage of residential evolution, Kale Banua remained the only spatial element consistently preserved, whereas Muka'/Bo'do, Kamara', and Dapo' emerged incrementally in response to changing

household requirements, improving economic conditions, and evolving settlement circumstances. Collectively, these developments produced a front–middle–rear spatial organization that closely parallels the spatial configuration of the traditional Tongkonan house.

The continuity between the two residential traditions is particularly evident in the central role of Kale Banua, which corresponds closely to Sali as the principal organizing element of Tongkonan architecture. In both contexts, this space functions as the primary location for family gatherings while also serving as the place where deceased family members are laid prior to burial. Likewise,

Muka'/Bo'do maintains a spatial role comparable to Tangdo, integrating both communal interaction and religious activities within a single architectural setting. Although the Toraja community in Seriti no longer consciously applies customary principles when organizing domestic space, the remarkable consistency of these spatial patterns indicates that tacit knowledge continues to influence residential practices through accumulated cultural experience and intergenerational transmission. These findings demonstrate that social, environmental, and religious transformations do not necessarily dismantle deeply rooted spatial structures. Instead, they generate new interpretations of spatial functions and symbolic meanings while preserving the underlying organizational logic inherited from earlier architectural traditions. Consequently, the persistence of Torajan domestic architecture in Seriti is expressed not through the conservation of physical form alone but through the continued reproduction of tacit spatial knowledge embedded within everyday dwelling practices. This study therefore contributes to a broader understanding of vernacular architectural resilience by demonstrating that cultural continuity is sustained primarily through the persistence of spatial logic rather than through the unchanged preservation of architectural form.

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Jessica Batara contributed to the research concepts preparation, methodologies, investigations, data analysis, visualization, articles drafting and revisions.

Tarcicius Yoyok Wahyu Subroto contribute to the research concepts preparation and literature reviews, data analysis, of article drafts preparation and validation.