

Architectural narratives and spatial language: a discourse study of traditional house descriptions in Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

Background: Traditional houses in Indonesia embody complex interrelations between physical architecture, cultural narratives, and spatial language, making them vital subjects for understanding how heritage is materially and discursively preserved. **Objective:** This study aims to examine how spatial terms, orientations, and symbolic references in descriptions of Rumah Gadang, Tongkonan, and Lopo encode and transmit cultural meaning. **Method:** Using a qualitative multiple-case study design, the research integrates Spatial Discourse Analysis, Ethnographic Discourse Analysis, and Critical Discourse Analysis to analyze ethnographic texts, museum materials, and archival interviews. **Results:** The findings reveal that spatial orientations—such as east–west moral polarities, central zones as harmony spaces, and north-facing cosmological alignments—serve as discursive mechanisms for reinforcing social hierarchy, gender roles, and ancestral authority. Cross-case comparison shows that while each house type manifests unique cultural markers, all employ spatial discourse to sustain intangible heritage and legitimize custodianship. Furthermore, the analysis demonstrates how institutional mediation and tourism framing can recontextualize these narratives, sometimes diluting their original meaning. The results underscore the need for heritage preservation strategies that safeguard both physical structures and the narrative vocabularies that animate them. **Implication:** This research has implications for culturally responsive heritage policy, inclusive museum interpretation, and participatory conservation practices. **Novelty:** This study shows how spatial discourse functions as a key mechanism through which architectural forms encode, sustain, and negotiate cultural meaning across different Indonesian traditional houses.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Traditional houses in Indonesia are not merely physical shelters; they are intricate embodiments of cultural memory, social organization, and cosmological beliefs encoded in spatial arrangements and linguistic representations. In narrative descriptions—whether in ethnographic accounts, architectural treatises, or museum captions—direction, placement, and function of space convey symbolic values: east may signify masculine domains, the west sacredness, and the central hall social harmony. These descriptions operate as cultural scripts, guiding behavior and reinforcing identity. The urgency of studying such architectural narratives lies in their shifting mediations: as heritage moves from oral transmission to written and curated forms, meanings can be recontextualized, standardized, or even commodified for tourism. This textual transformation influences who holds interpretive authority and how traditions are preserved or adapted.

Understanding these dynamics is crucial not only for safeguarding tangible heritage but also for sustaining the intangible linguistic and symbolic frameworks that give architecture its cultural resonance.

Scholarship on Indonesian vernacular architecture has documented typologies, construction techniques, ritual uses, and aesthetic symbolism, with notable works focusing on the Rumah Gadang, Tongkonan, and Lopo [1], [2], [3]. Linguistic studies have analyzed spatial deixis and metaphor, revealing how language shapes perception of space [4], [5], [6], while ethnographies have explored the integration of social hierarchy, gendered roles, and cosmology in spatial organization [1], [7], [8]. Heritage studies have examined museum representation and tourism narratives [1], [4]. However, three gaps remain. First, there is limited comparative analysis of spatial terms across multiple genres of text—academic, curatorial, and promotional. Second, the relationship between patterned spatial language and symbolic authority is underexplored, leaving unclear how different stakeholders shape heritage discourse. Third, comparative discourse studies across diverse traditional house types are scarce, hindering our understanding of how spatial semantics adapt or resist across cultural and institutional contexts.

This study addresses these gaps through an integrated approach combining Spatial Discourse Analysis, Ethnographic Discourse Analysis, and Critical Discourse Analysis. The research focuses on three central questions: (1) What linguistic patterns of spatial orientation and function appear in textual descriptions of Rumah Gadang, Tongkonan, and Lopo? (2) How do these patterns embed and convey cultural narratives concerning kinship, cosmology, and sacred–profane boundaries? (3) In what ways do discursive practices construct or contest symbolic authority over heritage interpretation? By analyzing ethnographic texts, museum materials, and interviews with cultural custodians, the study aims to reveal how language both reflects and shapes the social and political dimensions of architectural heritage. This approach foregrounds the interplay between textual form, cultural meaning, and institutional power in the preservation of traditional houses.

Our preliminary argument is that spatial discourse functions as a cultural technology—standardizing meanings for broader circulation while simultaneously regulating who can speak for tradition. Across textual genres, we expect to find a recurring set of spatial schemas, such as east/west moral polarities, center as harmony, and thresholds as liminal spaces. While these schemas offer coherence and recognizability, they may also reduce complexity and privilege certain interpretive voices, particularly state curators and senior male custodians, at the expense of women, youth, and marginalized clans. By revealing these dynamics, the research underscores the need for inclusive heritage narratives that not only conserve physical structures but also diversify the linguistic and symbolic repertoires through which they are understood. The implications extend to heritage policy, museum practice, and community education, offering a framework for culturally responsive and participatory architectural preservation.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Spatial discourse

Spatial discourse refers to the use of language to represent, structure, and interpret physical space, encompassing both literal descriptions and metaphorical associations. Scholars in discourse analysis define it as the linguistic encoding of spatial relations, orientations, and boundaries within texts [9]. While some researchers treat spatial discourse narrowly as the grammatical expression of location and direction (e.g., prepositions, deictic markers) [3], [4], [10], others adopt a broader perspective that includes the cultural and symbolic meanings assigned to spatial arrangements [5], [6], [11]. In the context of architectural heritage, spatial discourse captures how descriptions of orientation (“east for male gatherings”), functional zones (“central hall for rituals”), and thresholds (“doorway as liminal space”) convey social order and identity [12]. These definitional differences matter because they determine whether analysis remains at a linguistic-structural level or expands to ethnographic and critical interpretations. In this research, spatial discourse is understood holistically, bridging linguistic form and cultural meaning in traditional house descriptions.

Spatial discourse can be analyzed through several interrelated categories. First is spatial orientation, involving references to cardinal directions, vertical hierarchies, or relational positions, often tied to cosmology. Second is spatial function, which maps physical areas to social roles, such as gender-specific spaces or ritual zones. Third is spatial boundaries, focusing on thresholds, enclosures, and markers that signal transitions between public and private or sacred and profane domains. Fourth is spatial symbolism, where space carries metaphorical significance, such as equating the “center” with harmony or “west” with sanctity. Finally, narrative sequencing addresses how spatial descriptions follow culturally meaningful paths, like moving from the entrance to the inner sanctum. These categories enable systematic identification of how space is encoded in text, allowing comparisons across genres and cultural contexts. In this study, they serve as the analytical scaffolding for uncovering patterns in descriptions of Rumah Gadang, Tongkonan, and Lopo.

2.2. Ethnographic discourse

Ethnographic discourse encompasses the narrative forms and linguistic strategies used to represent and communicate cultural practices, beliefs, and material artifacts within specific communities. It draws from ethnography's commitment to contextualizing language within lived social realities [1]. While some scholars define it narrowly as verbatim transcripts of field interactions [1], others include curated ethnographic texts—articles, monographs, and public exhibitions—that synthesize field data for broader audiences [7]. These varying definitions affect methodological emphasis: a narrow focus prioritizes authenticity and interactional detail, whereas a broader view examines how ethnographers mediate and translate local voices into disciplinary or institutional discourse. For traditional house descriptions, ethnographic discourse illuminates how spatial features are narrated by community members, how meanings are embedded in ritual or everyday use, and how these narratives are recontextualized in academic or curatorial forms. This research treats ethnographic discourse as a bridge between local knowledge and its textual representations.

Ethnographic discourse in architectural contexts can be categorized along several dimensions. First is voice and agency, identifying whether the speaker is a community elder, an external researcher, or an institutional curator. Second is narrative framing, which can be descriptive (focusing on material facts), interpretive (linking to beliefs and values), or reflexive (acknowledging the narrator's position). Third is temporal orientation, distinguishing between historical accounts, contemporary practices, and imagined futures. Fourth is genre hybridity, where ethnographic description blends with tourism promotion, policy advocacy, or educational materials. Fifth is translation and mediation, addressing how indigenous terms, metaphors, and spatial logics are adapted—or altered—for external audiences. By parsing these categories, analysts can see how ethnographic narratives about traditional houses both preserve and transform cultural meanings, and how institutional contexts shape which aspects are highlighted or omitted.

2.3. Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is an approach to studying language that emphasizes the ways discourse enacts, reproduces, or challenges power relations, ideologies, and social inequalities [13]. CDA treats language not as neutral description but as a social practice embedded in historical and institutional contexts. While some practitioners focus on micro-level textual features, such as modality, transitivity, and lexical choice [14], [15], others prioritize macro-level analysis of discursive formations and intertextual networks [16], [17]. Definitions also diverge in their emphasis on theory: Fairclough integrates systemic functional linguistics with social theory, whereas van Dijk foregrounds cognitive models of ideology. In the context of traditional house descriptions, CDA examines how spatial language legitimizes certain custodians of tradition, marginalizes alternative interpretations, or aligns heritage narratives with state or commercial agendas. Here, CDA serves to interrogate not only *what* is said about space but also *who* gets to say it and to what ends.

CDA in architectural heritage texts can be organized into key analytical categories. Power and authority focuses on identifying which actors—state agencies, cultural elites, or tourism industries—control narrative production [18]. Ideology and representation examines how language frames heritage as nationalist identity, community property, or commodified spectacle. Inclusion and exclusion considers whose voices and perspectives are present or absent in textual accounts. Discursive strategies analyze rhetorical devices, framing, and lexical choices that naturalize certain interpretations. Intertextuality and recontextualization trace how narratives circulate and transform across contexts, from oral tradition to museum display to online promotion. These categories allow researchers to connect linguistic patterns with broader socio-political processes. In this study, applying CDA alongside spatial and ethnographic discourse analysis makes it possible to reveal the intertwined cultural, linguistic, and power dynamics shaping the textual life of Indonesia's traditional houses.

3. METHOD

The unit of analysis in this study comprises narrative and descriptive texts containing spatial representations—direction, location, room function—and cultural symbolism embedded in traditional house descriptions. These include structural explanations, historical narratives, and philosophical meanings articulated in written form. The focus is on three representative Indonesian vernacular houses: the Rumah Gadang (Minangkabau), Tongkonan (Toraja), and Lopo (Sumba). Each case is analyzed not only for its architectural features but also for the discourse that mediates its cultural interpretation. This multi-case scope enables comparative insight into how spatial language varies across ethnolinguistic contexts yet shares thematic patterns.

This research adopts a qualitative design, employing a multiple-case study approach with an interpretive paradigm. The interpretive stance is appropriate because it seeks to understand how spatial language is socially constructed and culturally situated [19]. A case study framework allows for in-depth

exploration of each house type as a bounded unit of cultural practice, while still enabling cross-case comparisons to identify recurring or divergent discursive patterns. This study integrates three complementary analytical lenses—Spatial Discourse Analysis, Ethnographic Discourse Analysis, and Critical Discourse Analysis—to capture linguistic structure, socio-cultural context, and power relations. This triangulated approach enhances validity by addressing the same data from multiple interpretive angles. Such a design is particularly suited to heritage discourse research, where meanings emerge through the interplay of local knowledge, institutional mediation, and broader socio-political forces.

Table 1. Unit analysis of research

Traditional House	Region/Culture	Data Type	Key Spatial/Cultural Focus
Rumah Gadang	Minangkabau, West Sumatra	Ethnographic and museum texts	Gendered space, lineage symbolism, east–west orientation
Tongkonan	Toraja, South Sulawesi	Ethnographic and archival texts	Ancestral rituals, cosmic alignment, hierarchical levels
Lopo	Sumba, East Nusa Tenggara	Field transcripts and promotional texts	Communal meeting space, sacred pillars, cardinal symbolism

This study draws on three primary categories of information sources. First, ethnographic and architectural literature, including the *Buku Arsitektur Tradisional Indonesia* by Pusat Studi Arsitektur ITB and peer-reviewed journals such as *Wacana Seni Budaya*, which provide formal descriptions and analyses of traditional houses. Second, field-based sources, such as written transcripts from interviews with cultural custodians, elders, and practitioners, drawn from previous research, theses, and reports by Balai Pelestarian Nilai Budaya. These sources provide insider perspectives on spatial functions, cosmological symbolism, and ritual significance. Third, curatorial and promotional texts, including museum catalogues, exhibition panels, and official brochures from institutions such as Museum Pusaka TMII and regional heritage centers. This diversity of sources ensures a rich dataset that captures both emic (insider) and etic (observer) viewpoints, as well as institutional representations intended for public dissemination.

Data collection involved systematic text gathering from academic, institutional, and community-based repositories. Ethnographic and architectural literature was accessed through university libraries and online academic databases. Curatorial texts were collected during visits to heritage museums and through institutional archives, ensuring inclusion of original descriptive panels and catalogues. For field-based narratives, previously published transcripts from interviews with cultural custodians were compiled, supplemented by publicly available oral histories and community documentation. Each text was screened for relevance, ensuring it contained explicit references to spatial orientation, functional zoning, and cultural symbolism. To maintain consistency, all materials were digitized and organized in a database, with metadata on source type, author/speaker, year, and context of production. This process aligns with Creswell’s (2018) recommendation for transparent and traceable qualitative data management, ensuring reliability and replicability in discourse analysis [20].

The analysis followed a multi-stage process integrating Spatial Discourse Analysis (SDA), Ethnographic Discourse Analysis (EDA), and Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). First, coding for spatial language was conducted, identifying lexical items and phrases related to orientation, location, and movement (SDA stage). Second, contextual interpretation was applied to link spatial descriptions with ethnographic themes such as gender roles, cosmology, and social hierarchy (EDA stage). Third, critical interrogation examined how texts position authority, prioritize certain voices, and reflect institutional or political agendas (CDA stage). These stages were iterative, allowing insights from one lens to refine interpretations in another. Analytical memos were used to track emerging patterns, thematic overlaps, and contrasts across the three house types. NVivo software facilitated the organization and retrieval of coded segments, enhancing analytical rigor. This integrated method enables the study to move beyond structural description toward a deeper understanding of how spatial narratives function as cultural and political discourse.

4. RESULTS

4.1. Spatial terms and orientation in traditional house descriptions

The floor plan of Rumah Gadang (Minangkabau traditional house) illustrates key spatial orientations and functional zones: *ruang ateh*, *ruang tengah*, and *ruang tupi*, aligned along a central axis; stair placement and kitchen location are indicated, reflecting culturally significant directions. Figure 1 underscores how architectural layouts encode gendered, ritual, and hierarchical meanings. Such diagrams, common in architectural ethnography, demonstrate how spatial orientation is not arbitrary—but rather intentionally

designed to convey social order, cosmological alignment, and domestic ritual roles [21], [22]. The visual data thus provide concrete material for analyzing spatial discourse as both linguistic and structural practice.

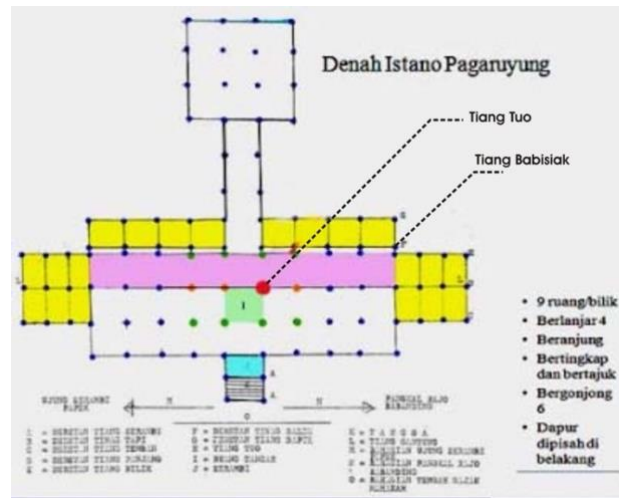


Figure 1. The floor plan of Rumah Gadang (Minangkabau traditional house)

The diagram reveals a longitudinal arrangement: the *ruang ateh* (upper room) at one end, *ruang tengah* (central room) in the heart, and *ruang tupi* (front/guest space) at the opposite end. Entrances and circulation align along the central axis, suggesting movement from public toward more intimate or sacred zones. Kitchen and service areas positioned laterally highlight functional separations. The spacing of posts and room divisions creates directional flow—entry, gathering, domestic labor—mirroring a spatial hierarchy. This pattern aligns with observed linguistic descriptions that frame Rumah Gadang’s center as harmony domain, front as formal reception, rear as domestic nucleus. The diagram’s clarity makes visible how architecture parallels the textual spatial discourse.

Why does this pattern occur? Structurally, the linear layout reflects matrilineal descent and gendered roles: the central space as communal kitchen contexts and female authority; the front as male-centered reception. Cosmologically, cardinal directions may be implicitly embedded—east/west as symbolic binaries. The floor plan visualizes these roles literally. Linguistic descriptions emphasizing “center as harmony,” “front as male domain,” etc., mirror the physical arrangement. Such patterns are maintained in discourse to contextualize social values (Minangkabau matriliney, kinship cohesion), spatial order, and ritual use. Thus, architecture and language intersect: spatial layout physically encodes gendered and symbolic orders, while textual narratives articulate—and reinforce—the underlying cultural logic.

4.2. Cultural narratives embedded in architectural language

A photograph depicting a cluster of Tongkonan houses in Toraja, with their dramatic upswept rooflines and distinctive longhouse arrangement, captures cultural narratives visually. Figure 2 presents not just architectural form but a culturally coded landscape: the northward orientation, ritual carvings, and communal layout articulate beliefs, ancestral lineage, and cosmic symbolism. The visual manifests narratives about cosmic ancestry (Puang Matua), hierarchical lineage, and cosmological directions embedded in architectural form.



Figure 2. Traditional house of South Sulawesi

The Tongkonan are arranged facing north along a communal axis, with elaborated roof silhouettes soaring upward, signifying ancestral authority and cosmic orientation. The north-facing façade aligns with Puang Matua, the creator, situating the houses metaphorically toward the “head of the sky.” The carvings on beams and gables encode status, clan identity, and ritual prestige. Spatially, the communal placement reinforces social hierarchy (grand *tongkonan layuk*, family units) and ritual embodiment of ancestry. The image thus displays how built form narrates social structure via orientation, decoration, and siting.

This visual pattern arises from Torajan cosmology: facing north is not arbitrary but a deliberate alignment toward the sacred realm of Puang Matua. The architectural language—shape, ornamentation, orientation—serves as narrative [23], [24]. Linguistic descriptions embed the cultural narrative: “tongkonan faces north to honor the creator,” “roof curves mimic ancestral canoes,” etc. These spatial narratives sustain collective memory. Linguistic and visual representations reinforce each other: orientation encodes mythic origin; discursive framing makes that encoded meaning explicit. It reveals how architectural language is a vessel for cultural narratives.

4.3. Symbolic power and cultural preservation through spatial discourse

An image of the Sumba Lopo house, elevated on stilts with thatched roof and pillar-centric structure, reveals its simplified but potent symbolism: communal gathering, sacred threshold, and ancestral space. The stylized single-room platform supported by central pillars channels cosmological symbolism—axis mundi, tribal unity, and spiritual foundation. Figure 3 demonstrates how modest form carries elaborate cultural meaning.



Figure 3. Sumba Lopo house

The Lopo’s design emphasizes its open stilted platform and prominent central pillars, without partitioned rooms. The elevated structure, often used as a meeting lodge, encapsulates communal functionality and spiritual convergence. Spatially, there is no front or back; the central pillars provide vertical anchoring. The simplicity foregrounds collective orientation, ritual egalitarianism, and symbolic resilience. The image conveys how space itself plays a role as cultural symbol, rather than detailed room orientation or decoration.

Why this pattern? In Sumba cosmology, the Lopo serves as a meeting house, a communal node where social harmony and ancestral presence converge. The central pillars symbolize lineage and cosmic axis. Linguistic discourse amplifies this symbolism: descriptions of Lopo often note “centrality,” “vertical connection,” and “communal threshold.” Spatial discourse here wields symbolic power: by textual emphasis on centrality and ancestral pillars, the descriptions legitimize cultural preservation and continuity. This discourse preserves Sumba’s intangible heritage by embedding social values in spatial language. It underscores that preservation requires safeguarding not only physical structure but the narrative meaning inscribed within spatial forms [25], [26], [27].

5. DISCUSSION

The spatial terms and orientations identified in the Rumah Gadang floor plan have functional implications for cultural continuity and social organization. By explicitly encoding gendered domains, ritual zones, and communal centers, the spatial discourse operates as a mnemonic device, preserving intangible heritage alongside physical form. This intentional arrangement ensures that social behaviors are reinforced through movement and spatial awareness—guests are received in public zones, rituals occur in sacred zones,

and daily life unfolds in spaces aligned with cosmological principles. However, such rigid spatial codes can also be dysfunctional in contemporary contexts, where shifting gender roles and urban living conditions may challenge traditional allocations. As noted by Asriana et al (2024), preservation efforts that ignore these tensions risk fossilizing heritage rather than enabling its adaptation [4]. Thus, the implication is clear: safeguarding spatial discourse must balance respect for traditional orientation with flexibility for evolving social realities.

The correlation between spatial layout and social structure in Rumah Gadang arises from the deep integration of matrilineal kinship, cosmology, and architectural design. The longitudinal axis and differentiated zones mirror the Minangkabau worldview, in which space is a medium for expressing lineage, gendered authority, and harmony. As Hasan et al (2021) argues, architecture in such contexts functions as a “cultural text” that communicates norms without explicit verbal instruction [3]. The east–west orientation may derive from agricultural rhythms and solar symbolism, while the central room’s primacy reflects the role of women as custodians of lineage. These patterns are sustained through oral tradition, formal description, and ceremonial use, creating a feedback loop in which physical design and linguistic representation reinforce each other. The underlying structure is therefore a tripartite system—spatial design, cultural narrative, and daily practice—each element dependent on and sustaining the others.

The cultural narratives embedded in Tongkonan architecture illustrate how built form functions as a living archive of collective memory and identity. The northward orientation and elaborate carvings not only honor ancestral origins but also actively sustain social cohesion by visually reinforcing clan hierarchy and mythic history. This has functional value in maintaining community solidarity and legitimizing leadership roles. Yet, there are potential dysfunctions: when such symbolic elements are commodified for tourism or reproduced without context, they risk becoming aestheticized fragments divorced from their narrative depth. According to Subroto and Malangyudo (2014), decontextualized representations can lead to “heritage dissonance,” where the image of tradition persists while its meanings are diluted [23]. The implication is that preservation must integrate the narrative dimension into both physical conservation and public interpretation, ensuring that symbolic elements remain tethered to the cultural stories they embody.

The alignment of Tongkonan to the north and its symbolic ornamentation stem from Torajan cosmology, which maps spiritual geography onto physical space. This cosmological map dictates that north represents the realm of Puang Matua, the origin and ultimate authority, while the roof’s canoe-like form recalls the mythical migration of ancestors. Such architectural symbolism operates within a socio-political structure where the Tongkonan is both a residence and a ritual center, legitimizing clan leadership and mediating intergenerational continuity. Kuba et al (2023) notes that these structures are “cosmograms”—physical manifestations of metaphysical order [2]. The replication of these orientations and decorations in every Tongkonan perpetuates the cosmological schema, embedding it in daily visibility. The underlying structure is thus a fusion of spiritual geography, kinship politics, and material craft, each reinforcing the others to maintain both tangible and intangible heritage.

The Lopo’s emphasis on central pillars and communal openness functions as a spatial metaphor for unity, equality, and ancestral presence in Sumbanese culture. Its design enables functional inclusivity—gathering without hierarchy, open visibility, and physical centrality—making it adaptable for both ritual and everyday deliberation. In terms of preservation, the Lopo’s minimalism offers resilience: fewer specialized spaces mean fewer constraints in modern adaptation, allowing communities to maintain core symbolism while adjusting usage. However, the simplicity can also be a vulnerability; without overt ornamentation or complex layout, its symbolic richness depends heavily on oral explanation and cultural knowledge. As Bogetic (2023) highlights, intangible narratives tied to minimalist architecture risk erosion if intergenerational transmission weakens [17]. The implication is that safeguarding the Lopo requires active narrative preservation alongside physical maintenance, ensuring its symbolic power remains accessible and comprehensible to future generations.

The structural centrality of the Lopo’s pillars reflects a cosmological model in which verticality connects the human realm with the ancestral and divine. This “axis mundi” concept is a common motif in Austronesian architecture, serving as a symbolic and practical anchor for social gatherings. The absence of walls or partitions embodies egalitarian values, removing spatial barriers that might otherwise signal hierarchy. At the same time, the elevation on stilts protects from environmental threats, reflecting adaptive responses to climate and terrain. Hasan et al (2021) observe that such central-pillar traditions are integral to the ritual life of many eastern Indonesian societies, where the physical structure becomes a focal point for seasonal and life-cycle ceremonies [3]. The underlying cause is thus a synthesis of cosmology, environmental adaptation, and social ethos—each inscribed into the Lopo’s architecture and preserved through consistent spatial discourse in both oral and written forms.

6. CONCLUSION

The most significant finding of this research is that spatial discourse in traditional Indonesian houses functions as both a cultural repository and a mechanism of social regulation, linking physical layout, linguistic representation, and symbolic meaning in an interdependent system. The study reveals how orientation, spatial zoning, and architectural symbolism—whether in the Rumah Gadang's gendered domains, the Tongkonan's cosmological alignment, or the Lopo's central pillars—encode complex cultural narratives that guide social behavior and sustain collective identity. This research contributes to scholarship by integrating Spatial Discourse Analysis, Ethnographic Discourse Analysis, and Critical Discourse Analysis within a multi-case framework, enabling a holistic examination of architecture as a “living text.” By combining linguistic, ethnographic, and critical perspectives, the study advances methodological approaches in heritage discourse research and broadens theoretical understanding of how tangible and intangible heritage are co-constructed and preserved through language.

Despite these contributions, the study faces several limitations. The reliance on existing literature, archival records, and previously documented interviews means that the analysis is constrained by the quality, scope, and representativeness of available sources. Direct fieldwork and participant observation could provide richer, more nuanced insights into how spatial discourse is enacted in everyday life and ritual practice. Furthermore, the focus on three traditional houses, while offering comparative depth, limits the generalizability of findings to other Indonesian vernacular architectures. Future research should expand the scope to include more diverse case studies and engage in longitudinal ethnographic work to capture shifts in spatial discourse over time. Incorporating participatory methods with local communities could also ensure that the preservation of architectural narratives remains inclusive, contextually grounded, and adaptable to contemporary socio-cultural changes.

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AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS STATEMENT

Daroji: conceptualization (lead), investigation (lead), discourse analysis (lead), writing – original draft (lead), writing – review and editing (lead).

CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

Authors state no conflict of interest.

INFORMED CONSENT

We have obtained informed consent from all individuals included in this study.

ETHICAL APPROVAL

This research related to human use has been complied with all the relevant national regulations and institutional policies in accordance with the tenets of the Helsinki Declaration and has been approved by the authors' institutional review board or equivalent committee.

DATA AVAILABILITY

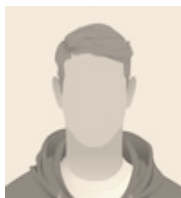
Data availability is not applicable to this article as no new data were created or analyzed in this study.

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