Space in Architecture:
The Identity of Space and Place of
Vernacular Architecture in West Sumba

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Abstract. Vernacular Architecture of West Sumba, East Nusa Tenggara Province with its unique natural background, socio-cultural systems, and building technology systems is significant to study. Every element of Sumba life, including residential building and community layout, is influenced by the *Marapu* belief. On the website of the West Sumba district government, 60 villages are listed and divided into 6 sub-districts, each village has a characteristic spatial pattern. By examining space in architecture as a cultural form, this study seeks to investigate the idea of local wisdom in West Sumba vernacular architecture and assess how it contributes to the identity of place and space. The paradigm used is naturalistic in the form of a qualitative research strategy with an Interpretative-Historical research approach. The sample selection was carried out by purposive sampling, namely Tarung Village (Loli Sub-District), Praigoli Village and Weegalli Village (Wanokaka Sub-District), Praijing Village (Waikakubak Sub-District) with an observation focus covering: village arrangements, spatial conception and ownership, and ceremonies related to the community's life cycle. According to the study, the primary idea of space in West Sumba's architecture is reverence for the Sumba nature's features and the representation of *Marapu* culture. In the four objects taken, the form of space in architecture becomes a group identity as well as forms space which is then also adapted to several aspects namely socio-culture, economics, and environment as the influence of sustainability of vernacular architecture.

Keywords: Space in architecture, Vernacular architecture, *Marapu,* West Sumba Architecture.

1   Introduction

1.1   Issue Relating to Vernacular Architecture in Indonesia

Environmental, social, and cultural elements that arise from cross-cultural encounters and exchanges have an impact on architecture as a cultural product. In the twenty-first century, studying vernacular architecture involves more than just documenting its expression; it also entails examining how it fits in with the local environment, community, and geographic setting, as well as how it relates to sustainability and the advantages of theoretical understanding of vernacular architecture for coming generations. The first publication on vernacular architecture was in 1986. A study of the increasing trend of international studies on vernacular architecture in the following 3 decades shows that research on vernacular architecture in Asia and Europe has a significant number of studies [1]

By analyzing the settlements' varied spatial behavior and morphology, one might infer the social structure of the community. The spatial behavior types that govern the interactions between individuals and their surroundings give rise to the space's hierarchical structure, with the physical space reflecting the phenomena of territoriality and privacy [2].

With 1,340 distinct ethnic groups dispersed throughout more than 17,000 islands, Indonesia is home to a variety of regional customs and architectural styles with its distinct natural setting, sociocultural systems, and construction technology systems, West Sumba, East Nusa Tenggara Province's vernacular architecture is one architectural style that is important to research. The location of West Sumba Regency can be seen in Fig. 1. Meanwhile, Wazir & Indriani (2019) [3] have conducted a comparative study of a total of 51 houses from 31 ethnicities and 28 provinces in Indonesia. This study able to create a typology of vernacular houses in Indonesia based on its floor plan flexibility, distance from the ground/water, gendered space, house mobility, sunlights and air circulation, semi-public space, the role of anthropometry.

Fig. 1. West Sumba Regency on the Map of Indonesia. Source: Authors, 2024

1.2   Vernacular Architecture of West Sumba

On the website of the West Sumba district government, 60 villages are listed and divided into 6 sub-districts, each with a characteristic spatial pattern (see Table 1). However, only 2 villages become a leading regional destination, namely Prai Ijing Village and Tarung Village [4]. The Vernacular Architecture of West Sumba, East Nusa Tenggara Province with its unique natural background, socio-cultural systems, and building technology systems is significant to study.

Table 1. The numbers of traditional villages in West Sumba Regency
Source: Processed by the authors based on data from historical tourist attractions in West Sumba

DISTRICT OF LOLI	DISTRICT OF LAMBOYA	DISTRICT OF WANOKAKA
1. Gelakoko Village	25. Sodana Village	48. Ububewi Village
2. Ketoka Village	26. Manga Village	49. Weigalli Village
3. Tanarara Village	27. Welowa Village	50. Praigoli Village
4. Wannokedu Village	28. Ubu Maleha Village	51. Weinadahu Village
5. Weekalowo Village	29. Litti Village	52. Waiwuang Village
6. Bodowoo Village	30. Weyelo Village	53. LahipangabangVillage
7. Taruba Village	31. Kadengara Village	54. Kabba Village
8. Praingilu Village	32. Buhang Village	55. Kadoku Village
9. Berakowe Village	33. Watukarere Village	56. Wehola Village
10. Takaraki Village	34. Allang Village	57. Praikapetang Village
11. Tabera Village	35. Kangali Village	
12. Ratewana Village	36. Deke Village	
13. Praigege Village	37. Wuntalaka Village	
14. Tarung Village	38. Bondobela Village	
15. Waitabar Village		
DISTRICT OF KOTA WAIKAKUBAK	**DISTRICT OF LAMBOYA BARAT**	**DISTRICT OF TANA RIGHU**
16. Praijing Village	39. Ubuoleta Village	58. Dikita Village
17. Prairame Village	40. Dassang Village	59. Bondoboghila Village
18. Bodowitu Village	41. Tokahale Village	60. Ombarade Village
19. Bondomaroto Village	42. Rowa Village	
20. Gollu Village	43. Todajara Village	
21. Kanakata Village	44. Malissu Village	
22. Wanno Muttu Village	45. Motodawu Village	
23. Paledi Village	46. Balirama Village	
24. Gollu Wunuta Village	47. Ubumoto Village	

Source: *Objek Wisata Sejarah Kabupaten Sumba Barat* (2022)[5] and Author's field study 2019-2024

The interaction between West Sumba's architecture and its natural and cultural assets in the coherence of a large area and a long period. Each of the several ethnic groups that make up Sumba's population has its own customs and wisdom that help them adapt to their surroundings and the representation of their architecture. The *Marapu* belief influences all aspects of the life of the Sumba people, including village arrangement and residential architecture [6][7][8]. The ancestral spirits become spirits that remain in the village and become part of village life [9][10]. The specificity that can be seen from the villages in Sumba is the blending of the burial area with the residential environment, humans and houses [11]. Mross also study how Sumba settlement design responds to thermal conditions[12].

To get the significance of local wisdom from each traditional village, exploration is needed in the form of spatial studies of architecture as a form of culture in other villages.

This is also an effort to support one of the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), namely to make human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable [13]. On Sumba Island, the arrangement of traditional houses and the spaces formed in a vernacular style, inside and outside traditional villages, illustrates the complex cultural transformations that are taking place due to globalization [14].

There is a relationship between cosmology, space and the vernacular architectural forms of West Sumba [15]. Another studies of vernacular architecture of Sumba was conducted by Solikhah & Fatimah (2020) in Praigoli village [16]. Praigoli village residents now have residential homes and structures to meet their everyday requirements as well as ritualistic activities of traditional customs, which are their traditional inheritance. The spatial conception and the entire traditional procession—which encompasses house construction, birth, marriage, death, and Pasola—represent a cycle of human existence from birth to death. Traditional houses represent a high level of complexity between: the origin of the self and relationships with parents, family, the existence of clans and ancestors, time, nature, and *Marapu* [17].

This study aims to explore the concept of local wisdom of vernacular architecture in West Sumba by studying space in architecture as a form of culture to evaluate how it contributes to the identity of space and place.

1.3   *Marapu* and Kinship System

Marapu is a belief where its form and name are unknown, but its presence is believed (*ndapa nunga ngara, ndapa teki* tamo means unnamed, incomparable). *Marapu* does not specifically refer to a God or ancestral spirit, but is a characteristic possessed by an object that is visible and invisible. Ancestral spirits are called *Marapu* because they are believed to have the ability to act as a link between humans and the God. Because of this ability, the spirits are respected and sanctified, but not necessarily the *Marapu* itself. The relationship between *Marapu* is related as siblings. This means that *Kabisu* (kinship system) in Sumba society can be considered siblings if they have the same Marapu [6].

Kabisu (Clan), the Sumbanese kinship group, is a patrilineal kinship group (male lineage) based on the shared ancestors' origin and all of their inheritance. A *Rato* is in charge of each *Kabisu*. Membership in a *kabisu* is legalized through marriage or dowry (*belis*), even though it is *patrilineal* and passed down from father to kid. The Sumbanese believe that only the mother's side (*matrilineal*), or *Ole Dadi*, may pass on flesh and blood. The distinction is that the mother's lineage *(matrilineal)* is not discernible in the name it bears, whereas the father's lineage (p*atrilineal*) has a distinct name as an identity (*Kabisu*) [16], [18].

1.4   Architecture for the Sustainability of Identity, Space, and Place

Identity is the distinctiveness and difference of something, a person, a group of people, a culture, a country, or even a nation [19]. According to Norberg-Schulz (1980) [20], in his book *Genius Loci: Toward a Phenomenology of Architecture*, human identity presupposes the identity of place. Thus, architecture's core is determined by the call of place.

The "Phenomenology of Space" which was created in the 20th century by the German philosopher Martin Heidegger, is one of the fundamental conceptions of space in architecture. In Heidegger's thought regarding place, people understand place through the usage of things in the world (Heidegger, 1996) [21]. According to Ven (1991)[22], Western and Eastern perspectives of space differ from one another. According to Plato's definition, space in the western sense is anything that is constrained by physical clarity (a finite element) and a visible enclosure (an intangible enclosure) in order for its existence to be realized. In the meantime, the idea of space is founded on the emptiness of something invisible (intangible), according to Eastern philosophy as embodied by Lao Tzu.

In buildings, the unique relationship between function and social significance is created by the fact of space. In actuality, the arrangement of space in structures is a reflection of the arrangement of interpersonal relationships [23].

Space is a social product produced by a group of people [24]. According to Tuan (2001)[25], space has abstract meaning, meanwhile place has a physical and added value. The human body's posture, with the human being at its center, can be used to explain the meaning of space (see fig. 2).
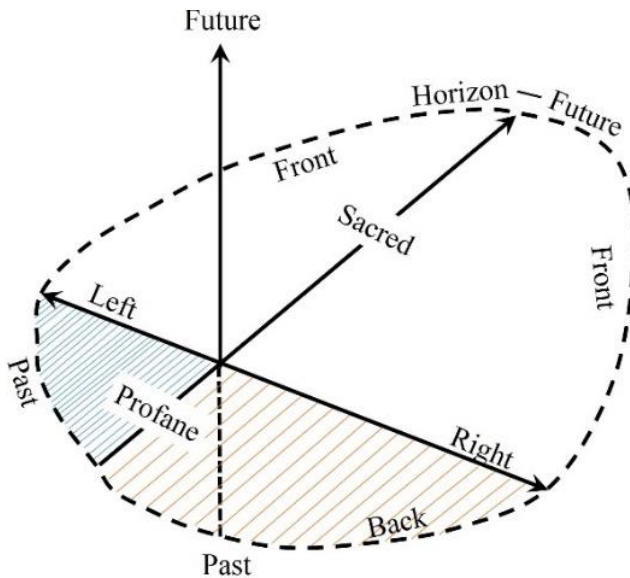

Fig. 2. An illustration that shows the human body's coordinate axes in relation to time and space. Source: Tuan (2001) [25]

The top-middle-bottom positions indicate status and hierarchy. The top depicts the head, which has a higher status and represents future life. The middle position depicts the navel as a space in the world. Meanwhile, the bottom depicts the feet, which represent the lowest hierarchy. This concept is manifested in the diversity of vernacular architectural forms in Indonesia, which are dominated by the tri-partite house type [26]. The head in the form of a roof is associated with the upper world where spirits and gods or ancestors reside. The body in the form of a living space is associated with the middle

world where humans reside. The legs in the form of a footrest are associated with the underworld where lower powers and pets reside.

The front position of the human body is the visible part, so it is considered the sacred part. While the back is the profane part because it is not visible. According to cosmology, the left side is thought to be connected with the lower world, or earth, while the right side is frequently seen to symbolize the higher order, the upper world, or sky.

Lefebvre argues in the production of space that spatial practices and perceptions are influenced by space, which is a complex social construction based on values and the social production of meanings. This argument suggests that the focus of the research be shifted from space to the processes of its production; that the variety of spaces that are socially produced and made productive in social practices be embraced; and that the processes of producing space be emphasized for their contradictory, conflictual, and ultimately political nature [24]. The experience that a person has will influence the concept of space and place and the human body provides a picture or meaning to space. Instinct will appear if we feel urgent. Intuition will appear when we feel calm, peaceful and balanced. Lived Space is the space that is lived in. Conceived space is the space that is imagined. While perceived space is the space that is felt (see fig. 3).
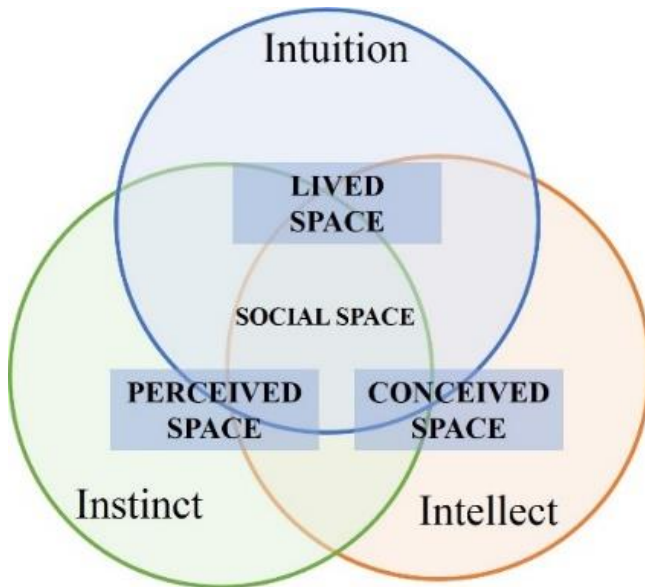

Fig. 3. The production of space. Source: Lefebvre (1991).

Understanding of space can shape a place [27]. Space is created by a specific set of natural and artificial things whose architecture is involved in its creation. the semiology approach by considering the architectural system as a system of signs [28]. Although space is the primary medium of architecture, it is also defined and contained by form [29]. The organization of space and meaning reflects and influences communication, an important way of relating the built environment and social organizations.

The meaning of architectural space in residential houses and vernacular settlements will be a reference in responding to modernization and lifestyle [30]. Creating architecture in the course of daily living influences society, practice, and human consciousness [31], [32]. The community's chosen, decided, and owned values are reflected in the built environment, which is interconnected and inextricably linked to nature [33].

2   Method

The research paradigm used is naturalistic with a qualitative research strategy, an Interpretive-Historical Research approach. The procedure incorporates historical research techniques like historiography, interpretation, criticism, and heuristics [34]. According to Groat and Wang (2002)[35], interpretive research looks at socio-physical phenomena in intricate contexts with the goal of using narratives to explain them. A systematic evaluation of fundamental data or occurrences can give historical tracing or reconstruction outcomes [36]. An illustration of the interpretive-historical research methods used can be seen on figure 4.
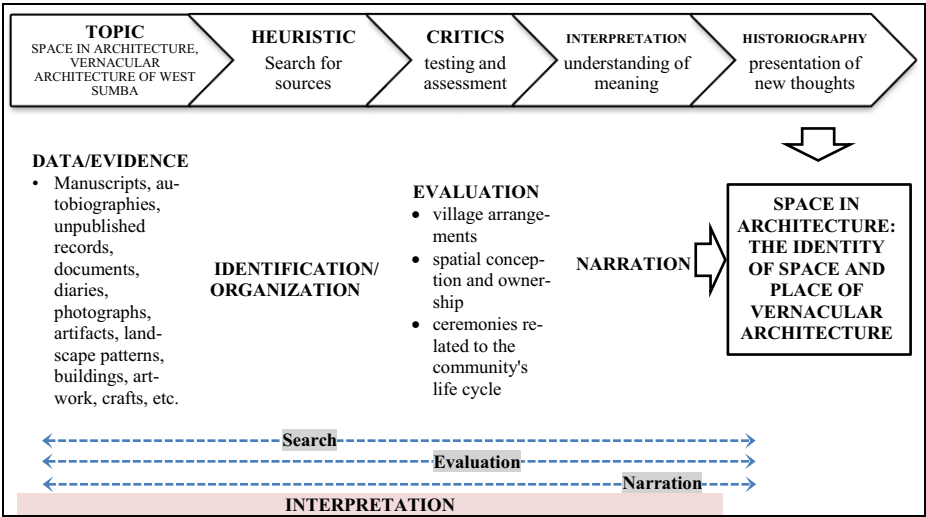

Fig. 4. Illustration of Interpretive-Historical Research approach used. Source: Authors, 2024

This study focuses on the exploration of space in architecture as the identity of space and place of vernacular architecture in West Sumba. It serves as a foundation for exploring how how vernacular architecture represents the meaning of space by its occupants which ultimately becomes the identity of each of its manifestations.

The information utilized comes from primary and secondary sources, such as manuscripts, autobiographies, newspapers, unpublished notes, documents, diaries, photographs, buildings, artwork, crafts, interviews, and landscape patterns.

As an initial exploration, the team has conducted field study. The primary sources of information used by the authors throughout the field survey were field notes,

sketches, and documentation. Additionally, the authors conducted unstructured interviews with visitors, the local government (Head of Culture and Tourism Office, West Sumba Regency, and two stakeholders), traditional leaders and residents in each village. Purposive sampling was used to choose the informants listed above. Each field study contributes to enriching the study (Table 1).

Table 2. preliminary study and its output

Year	Location	Output
2019	Pasola Lamboya, Praijing Village, Ratenggaro Village	Initial enrichment of Sumbanese Architecture insight.
2019	Tarung Village, Ratenggaro Village, Praigoli Village	The built process of traditional house in Praigoli
2020	Pasola Wanokaka, Praigoli Village, Weegolli Village	Exploration of Vernacular Architecture
2022	Tarung Village, Praigoli Village, Praijing Village	Exploration of Vernacular Architecture
2024	Tarung Village (Loli Sub-District), Praigoli Village and Weegalli Village (Wanokaka Sub-District), Praijing Village (Waikakubak Sub-District)	*Juxtaposing of Space in Architecture*

Source: Authors, 2024

Of the 60 traditional villages, not all of them are called *Kampung Adat* (Traditional Villages). There are several criteria for *Kampung Adat*, such as still being inhabited by indigenous people and rituals still taking place. Therefore, the selection of samples was carried out by purposive sampling, namely villages with Traditional Village status, namely Tarung Village (Loli District), Praigoli Village and Weegalli Village (Wanokaka District), Praijing Village (Waikakubak District). These four Traditional Villages represent the vernacular character of three districts in West Sumba. The assessment was carried out using three indicator approaches namely village arrangements, spatial conception and ownership, and ceremonies related to the community's life cycle.

These indications will then be used to analyze the identified data using a narrative-interpretive approach. Historiography is the last step to present new findings on space in architecture as a form of culture to evaluate how it contributes to the identity of space and place.

3   Result and Discussion

3.1   Tarung Village (Loli Sub-District)

Village Arrangements. The architectural features of Tarung Village consist of a traditional house layout that aligns with the natural character of Sumba Island and is oriented towards the natar at the center of the settlement (see Fig. 5). There are two types of houses: the Main House (*Tubba*), which plays a role during the Wollu Poddu ceremony, and the children's house (*Ana Uma*). While the *Tubba* is significant during the Poddu ceremony, it is also used as a residence for the daily activities of its inhabitants.
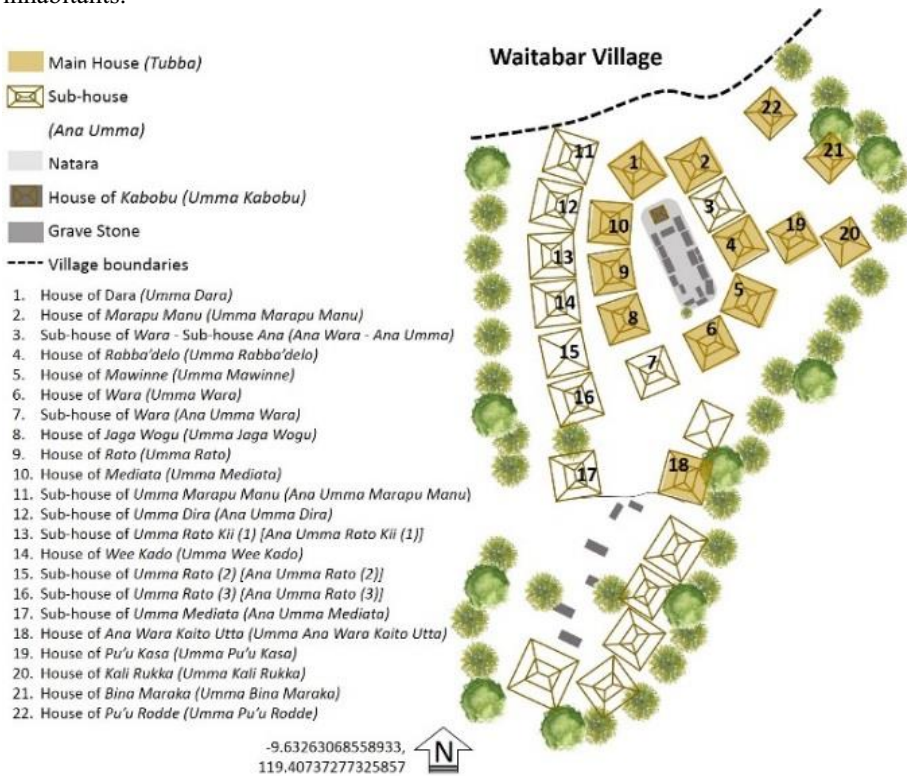

Legend:
- Main House (Tubba)
- Sub-house (Ana Umma)
- Natara
- House of Kabobu (Umma Kabobu)
- Grave Stone
- ---- Village boundaries

1. House of Dara (Umma Dara)
2. House of Marapu Manu (Umma Marapu Manu)
3. Sub-house of Wara - Sub-house Ana (Ana Wara - Ana Umma)
4. House of Rabba'delo (Umma Rabba'delo)
5. House of Mawinne (Umma Mawinne)
6. House of Wara (Umma Wara)
7. Sub-house of Wara (Ana Umma Wara)
8. House of Jaga Wogu (Umma Jaga Wogu)
9. House of Rato (Umma Rato)
10. House of Mediata (Umma Mediata)
11. Sub-house of Umma Marapu Manu (Ana Umma Marapu Manu)
12. Sub-house of Umma Dira (Ana Umma Dira)
13. Sub-house of Umma Rato Kii (1) [Ana Umma Rato Kii (1)]
14. House of Wee Kado (Umma Wee Kado)
15. Sub-house of Umma Rato (2) [Ana Umma Rato (2)]
16. Sub-house of Umma Rato (3) [Ana Umma Rato (3)]
17. Sub-house of Umma Mediata (Ana Umma Mediata)
18. House of Ana Wara Kaito Utta (Umma Ana Wara Kaito Utta)
19. House of Pu'u Kasa (Umma Pu'u Kasa)
20. House of Kali Rukka (Umma Kali Rukka)
21. House of Bina Maraka (Umma Bina Maraka)
22. House of Pu'u Rodde (Umma Pu'u Rodde)

-9.63263068558933, 119.40737277325857

Fig. 5. Village arrangements of Tarung Village (Loli Sub-District). Source: Authors, 2024

Spatial Conception and Ownership. The *Natara* is transformed into a hallowed location for performing customary rites (such as animal sacrifice and offerings) at special occasions. On other days, however, the Natara region turns into a location for obscene activities like drying clothes, weaved textiles, and the harvest (rice, corn). Nonetheless, *Natara* constantly has a religious purpose as a location for offerings during customary ritual occasions (see Fig. 6). The House of *Kabobu (Umma Kabobu)* in Natara is revered and should never be walked past or approached carelessly.

   The traditional house in Tarung Village is a stilt house, consisting of three parts: a head (high roof), a body (inhabited house), and feet (underground path). Domestic and social spaces work together in everyday life. For example, the *Birapu* (kitchen) in the middle of the house has a deep significance as the heart of the family. The Birapu also embodies the spirit of *Marapu* to protect the lives of family members. The terrace near the kitchen is accessible for women and is commonly used for weaving or crafting. Meanwhile, the terrace at the front of the house is designated for men, illustrating the concept of gender space.

Ceremonies Related to The Community's Life Cycle. Tarung Village holds significant socio-cultural importance for the Sumba community, particularly the *Marapu* belief, which is evident in daily life (see Fig. 6). Other ceremonies performed by the Tarung Village community include the *Wulla Poddu* ceremony (a ritual for sanctifying and purifying sins in November), a ritual for removing gravestones, a wedding ceremony, and a funeral ceremony.

Fig. 6. Natara, In the center of the community, Natara is crucial in establishing areas for ceremonial and household activity. Source : Authors, 2022

3.2   Praigoli Village (Wanokaka Sub-District)

Village Arrangements. The people of West Sumba typically construct their villages atop hills. This is due to the tribal wars that often occurred in the past. The religious idea that a location is closer to the Creator the higher it is is another justification. Megalithic tradition beliefs assume that the deceased will continue to live in the spirit world like human life in the world. This is one of the reasons behind the respect of the Praigoli Village community for family graves placed in the middle of the settlement

(*Natara*) (see Fig. 7). In the future, the spirits of these predecessors are believed to become the guardians of the village.

INFORMATION

a.   Megalithic Stone *Kajiwa*
b.   Megalithic Stone *Taribang*
c.   Megalithic Stone *Lada Katala*
d.   Megalithic Stone *Todi Kabunu*
e.   Megalithic Stone *Uma Ka-hi*
1.   House of Bakul (*Uma Bakul*)
2.   House of Hara (*Uma Hara*)
3.   House of Bora Bali (*Uma Bora Bali*)
4.   House of Taribang (*Uma Taribang*)
5.   House of A'a Gallu (*Uma A'a Gallu*)
6.   House of Mawu Jirik (*Uma Mawu Jirik*)
7.   House of Tabina Deta (*Uma Tabina Deta*)
8.   House of Tabina Wawa (*Uma Tabina Wawa*)
9.   House of Ka-hi (*Uma Ka-hi*)
10. House of Lahi Pewu (*Uma Lahi Pewu*)
11. House of Praihaloru (*Uma Praihaloru*)

No house exists (2022)

Grave Stone

Courtyard (Natara)

-9.7260961631926, 119.44924436726217

ENTRANCE

Fig. 7. Village arrangements of Praigoli Village (Wanokaka Sub-District). Source: Authors, 2024

Spatial Conception and Ownership. As a symbol of the unity of the human body with the universe, the house does not only function as a place to live for the Praigoli community, but as a form of strong bond between past-present-future generations. Therefore, the Praigoli community is prohibited from buying and selling traditional houses, traditional villages, traditional land, heirloom property to anyone even in the most difficult circumstances.

Ceremonies Related to The Community's Life Cycle. The production of space arises from a series of cultural and daily activities. Women often work on the terrace engaging in weaving or other handicrafts. Meanwhile, men participate in the construction of houses or farming in the fields. Natara is situated in the center of the building complex, which provides space and a place for all these activities. Although there are sacred areas, such as Kajiwa Stone or an ancestor's grave, the domestic and social spaces coexist harmoniously in their daily lives.

Fig. 8. Domestic and social space with its activities in Praigoli Village. Source: Authors, 2024

3.3   Weegalli Village (Wanokaka Sub-District)

Village Arrangements. *Marapu* belief influences the space production. The houses in Weegalli Village are built in rows surrounding an open area *(Natara)* where megalithic stones are placed, some of which also function as tombs. Main house *(Umma)*, Sub-house, Grave Stone, and *Natara* surrounded by vegetation as village boundaries (see Fig. 9). Natara as a sacred space becomes the center of orientation.

Main House *(Umma)*
Sub-house *(Ana Umma)*
Natara
Grave Stone
---- Village boundaries

-9.711165957762509,
119.45564179798082

Fig. 9. Village arrangements of Weegalli Village. Source: Authors, 2024

Spatial Conception and Ownership. In the middle of the settlement, precisely on the highest plains, there is a burial area for the ancestors of this village which has also been used for generations as a place to carry out traditional ceremonies (see Fig. 10). This is in line with the concept of hierarchy and spatial ownership where the head as the top-most part represents the most sacred area.

Fig. 10. Megalithic Stone Graves in Natara Village Weegalli (Wanokaka Sub-District). Source: https://kebudayaan.kemdikbud.go.id/bpcbbali/situs-kampung-wei-galli/

Ceremonies Related to The Community's Life Cycle. Rato Kameni Bili, Head of Weegalli Traditional Village, has a role in the Pasola ceremony series in Wanokakak District to carry out rituals in the form of offerings to ancestors. After that, the group of traditional leaders will walk together to Wanokaka Beach to carry out the nyale ritual and continue with Pasola. Sea worms obtained during nyale are believed to be a marker of the journey of people's lives in the following year (see Fig. 11).

Fig. 11. A series of Pasola Wanokaka rituals led by the Rato (traditional head) of Weegalli Traditional Village. Source: Authors, 2020

3.4   Praijing Village (Waikakubak Sub-District)

Village Arrangements.   Praijing Village's architectural features include the arrangement of traditional homes facing Natar in the middle of the community (see Fig. 12). The Main House (Umma) and the children's house (Ana Uma) are the two different kinds of dwellings. The head, or high roof, the body, or occupied building, and the feet, or underground path, make up the traditional stilt house in Praijing Village. Domestic and social spaces work together in everyday life. Praijing Village is famous for its tower-shaped traditional house called 'Uma Bokulu' and large grave stones that are symbols of ancestral heritage. This unique architectural form symbolizes the strong relationship between humans, nature, and ancestors.

Fig. 12. Village arrangements of Praijing Village (Waikakubak Sub-District). Source: Authors, 2024

Spatial Conception and Ownership. The lower part of the Praijing house symbolizes the realm of spirits and is typically used for livestock pens. The middle portion is designated for daily human activities, while the upper area serves as a place for ancestors and is used for food storage as well as a sacred space in *Marapu* beliefs. Four central pillars support the main room of the houses. Two of these are referred to as

female pillars, positioned within the room where the mother usually engages in activities. The other two are known as male pillars, located near the father's room, living area, and space where men gather for discussions. Not all family members have unrestricted access to every room in their home; there is a distinction in access between male and female residents. This division reflects the philosophy that men and women have different roles and responsibilities within the household also as .

Ceremonies Related to The Community's Life Cycle. The production of space arises from various cultural and daily activities. Women often work on the terrace of the house, weaving or creating other handicrafts. Meanwhile, men contribute by building houses or farming in the fields. Natara is situated in the center of the building complex, following a contoured layout that extends to the back, which accommodates all these activities (see Fig. 13). At the far end, there is a sacred area featuring megalithic stones and tombs that can only be accessed by Rato during rituals.

Fig. 13. Linear path that is part of the community's life cycle. Source: Authors, 2022

3.5   Space in Architecture: The Identity of Space and Place of Vernacular Architecture in West Sumba

Lefebvre's concept of spatial formation closely aligns with his understanding of dwelling. From both an individual and collective perspective, inhabiting involves taking possession of a space—not in the sense of ownership, but by transforming it into a work, personalizing it, marking it, modeling it, and shaping it. This notion applies to individuals, small groups like families, and larger social groups that inhabit cities or regions. To inhabit signifies taking possession of space, often in the context of conflict—frequently intense—between limiting powers and the forces of domination.

In Heidegger's philosophy regarding place, humans comprehend it through their interaction with objects in the world. This suggests that space transforms into a place

when it is utilized, holds value, and features visible markers that render it meaningful and develop an identity (see fig.14).
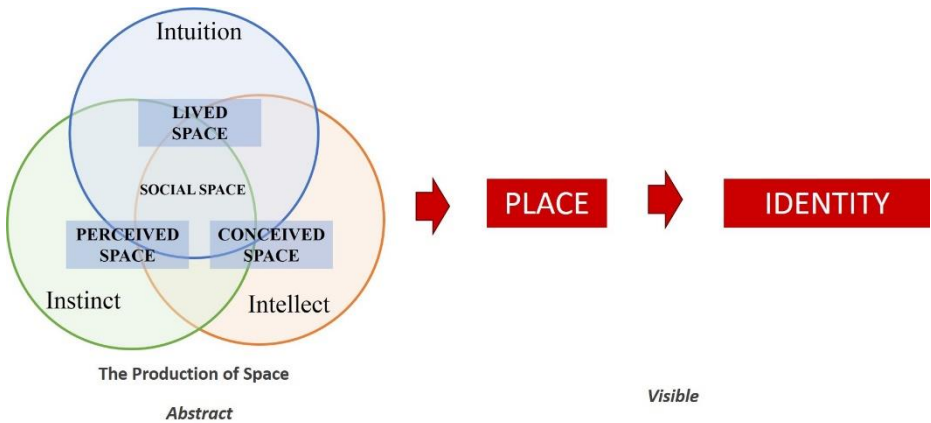

Fig. 14. The production of space to create an identity of vernacular architecture in West Sumba. Source: Authors, 2024.

The meaning of space is related to the posture of the human body and describes time. Therefore, the meaning of space can be described in the posture of the human body with the human itself as its center. The depiction of the coordinate axes of the human body is related to the concept of space and time (see fig. 2).

As we can see, domestic and social spaces work together in daily life. For instance, the *Birapu*/kitchen in the middle of the house from four villages has a deep meaning as the heart of the family, and it also keeps the spirit of Marapu itself to protect the family member's life.

One or two Kinship or *Kabisu,* each with one clan home, reside in each Kampung Adat. The homes in Kampung Adat are arranged in a line around a public space where megalithic stones—also referred to as *Natara,* or family graves—are erected. The *Natara* region is transformed into a hallowed space for the performance of customary rites (animal sacrifice, offerings) at special occasions. But in day-to-day living, the Natara region becomes a site for obscene activities like drying firewood, clothing, weaved textiles, and crops like rice and corn.

Regarding the sacred-profane notion, Praigoli Village differs slightly from Weegalli Village and Praijing Village-Tarung Village. In Praijing Village and Tarung Village, there are parts of the *Natara* that are sacrosanct (cannot be crossed and entered carelessly) at all times, despite the fact that every house faces the *Natara. Natara* in Praigoli village and Weegalli, on the other hand, always has no prohibited zones and is open to anyone. However, *Natara* always serves a religious purpose as a place of giving during customary ritual occasions.

4   Conclusion

The concept of space in West Sumba architecture reflects respect for the characteristics of Sumba's nature and embodies Marapu culture. In the four selected objects, the spatial form in architecture serves as group identity, and the configuration of space is adjusted according to various aspects, including socio-cultural, economic, and environmental factors, which influence the sustainability of vernacular architecture. Village history, the kinship system (*kabisu*), *Marapu* beliefs, village planning, the conception and ownership of space, and ceremonies related to the community's life cycle all play essential roles in the process of creating space. Respect for the deceased, who are regarded as ancestors, also shapes the understanding of the sacred-profane area. Each aspect holds equal significance in this context. This illustrates the relationship between humans and God and/or ancestors, humans and each other, and humans and nature.

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