

# ‘Back Spaces’ as Features of Tengger House, Indonesia

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**Abstract**— House is never a finished product. It changes through time, just as Tengger's house has a deviation from its original characteristics. Changes occur on the facade of the building, which no longer characterizes the traditional Tengger house architecture. Despite this phenomenon, as a community still carrying out Tengger customs with many mandatory ritual activities, some spaces in the house still use Tengger rules, both in terms of the spatial arrangement and other essential spaces. It is known from previous studies that there are several essential and sacred spaces at the backside of the houses. Therefore, the objective of this study was to examine the features of these spaces in the appearance of modern Tengger house; thus, it can still be characterized as a Tengger house. The methods used in this study were literature and critical review. This study found that back spaces which consist of pawon, petangaring, and pedaringan, still existing as long as the occupants carry the Tengger belief.

**Keywords**— Back Spaces, Existence, Petangaring, Tengger House.

## I. INTRODUCTION

The Tengger tribe, located in a mountainous area, has its unique characteristics in managing settlements and spaces. Tengger is a sub-tribe of Java, Indonesia. Therefore, the unique pattern is quite similar to the villages in Java. In Tengger, the concept of a house is connected to the ancestral spirits and their belief system. The Tengger region was originally part of a government-centered in the lowlands in the 10<sup>th</sup> century AD. Since then, the population has begun to worship the gods of the mountains (Hefner, 1999). Tengger people's belief in customs and traditions is ingrained within their daily life. The community celebrates annual ritual activities such as *Kasada*, *Karo*, *Unan-Unan*, *Barikan*, *Pujan Mubeng*, *Birth*, *Entas-Entas*, *Tugel Kuncung*, *Marriage*, *Death*, and *Liliwet* Ceremonies (Warouw *et al.*, 2012).

Amid the progress and modernization nowadays, the Tengger is trying to keep up with the progress and development. The spatial arrangement of the traditional Tengger house is a manifestation of the relationship between activities and the use of space which is influenced by the socio-cultural characteristics of the occupants (Ayuninggar, 2012). As a society that adheres to and obediently applies the customs of the Tengger people in various aspects of their lives, the activities and use of space by the Tengger cannot be separated from the Tengger customs.

The house exterior or facade in Ngadas Tengger Village nowadays does not characterize the original Tengger house. Instead, the facade design of the house is more ‘modern’ and

full of ceramics filling the walls. As a community that adheres to Tengger customs based on the ongoing implementation of all traditional activities, of course, there must be spatial arrangements that are still following Tengger house regulation. Therefore, this study was conducted by identifying spaces that still maintained their existence. The Tengger house's exterior design deviation in a mountainous area is shown in Figure 1 below: a (Lelono, 2019) and b (personal documentation).



a) Tengger traditional house' exterior in a mountainous area



b) Tengger house' exterior nowadays

Fig. 1. Tengger house' exterior in a mountainous area

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

This study was different from the previous architectural studies because it discussed specifically the back space. Studies on Tengger architecture in the last five years included: Dewi (2015) regarding the role and segmentation of the fireplace in the house, Agustapraja (2017) regarding the Karo ceremony ritual space, Ayuninggar (2012) regarding the influence of myth on space, Enderwati (2013) regarding the ritual space, and Naruseito *et al.* (2016) regarding the transition space.

A. Back Spaces

The back space in the archipelago community is obtained from the division of space influenced by the *dualism* concept. The concept of *dualism* is the principle of the axis as a separator. The separation here is not a contradiction, but a relationship between two different but harmonious (Ronald, 2005) things, so dualism is a concept of balance. According to Granito (2009), there is also a back space in China, a room with certain rituals. The back space is a spatial and temporal dimension formed from social interactions at a particular time and for a particular community. Granito (2009) exemplified the Mosuo community in a tourist village arrange their house with a flat front and back space. The frontage is a space that serves tourism, such as souvenir shops and restaurants, or can be visited by tourists. In contrast, the back space functions as a domestic space, family intimacy, and worship of Gods and ancestors.

B. The Physical Appearance of Tengger House

The traditional form of the Tengger house has a pyramid/*limasan* roof. This shape reflects a country house in a mountainous area. Furthermore, the foundation of this house is a stage with twenty-five cm high stone pillars. The flooring material uses spruce boards—the basic shape of a rectangular house. Local materials and village roofs reflect the simplicity of the Tengger people. The form of the house of the Tengger Tribe has undergone chiefly a change in form, especially in the material. The wall material is made of cypress wood combined with woven bamboo. The roof is made of zinc to avoid fire hazards (Lelono, 2019). In the Figure 2 below: a (Ayuninggar, 2012), b (Dewi, 2002), c (Lelono, 2019).



a)



b)

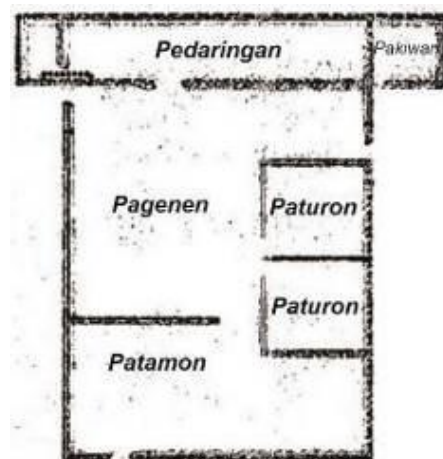


c)

Fig. 2. Tengger house' facade

C. The Spatial Pattern in the Tengger House

Although most of the *Tengger* houses have changed facades, the spatial pattern in the house is still following traditional rules. The Tengger house is commonly called *Omah Tengger*. The seven *po* concept regulates the spatial structure of the Tengger traditional house (Ayuninggar, 2012), namely the division of spaces into seven including the yard, the courtyard, *patamon* (living room), *paturon* (bedroom), *pagenen* (kitchen), *pedaringan* (storage room), as well as *pakiwan* (bathroom). This spatial structure forms a front-back and right-left layout pattern based on the function of the space. This front-back pattern is supported by Lelono (2019), that the Tengger traditional house is divided into three main parts; the frontage (*omah ngarep*), the middle space (*omah tengah* or *paturon*), and the back space (*omah mburi* or *pawon* or *prapen*). On average, the width of the house is between five and six meters, and the length is about ten meters. An illustration of the spatial layout of a traditional Tengger house can be seen in Figures 3 below: a (Ayuninggar, 2012), b (Dewi, 2002), and c (Lelono, 2019).



a)

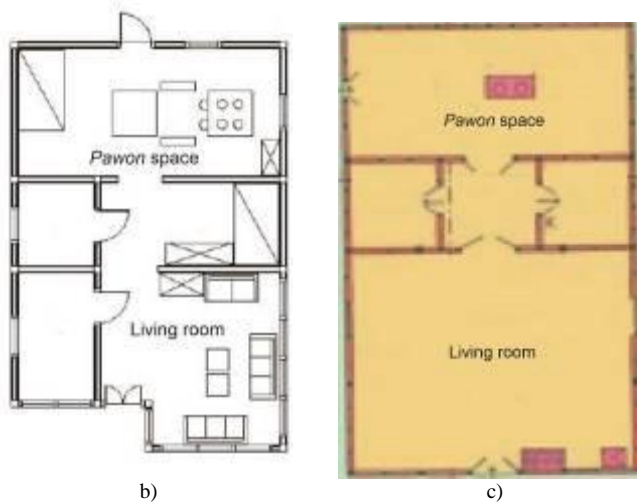


Fig. 3. Layout of Tengger house

Based on the picture of the layout of the Tengger house above, based on Lelono (2019), the frontage is the living room, so this space is near the main entrance of the house. Then, after the living room, there is a middle space, including the bedroom. Finally, the back spaces consist of service rooms such as the kitchen, storage room, and bathroom. The back spaces occupy the essential house functions, so the back space exists, even though the Tengger house has deviated. Further information on the back spaces provided in the following section.

### III. METHODS

This study used a critical review by exploring data from previous studies, literature and comparing it with field observations on houses that have undergone changes in appearance but still have the original Tengger architecture characteristics. This critical analysis was conducted by juxtaposing the back space of the traditional Tengger house with the modern Tengger house, which has undergone physical changes and the facade. The study took place in Ngadas Tengger Village. This village is called Tengger Village because all the people who carry out the Tengger customs and rituals ultimately are in the Tengger territorial area and do not sell their land.

### IV. BACK SPACES IN TENGGER HOUSE

This back space in Tengger is also called *Omah mburi*, in which there is a *pawon* or *pagenen* space (Ayuninggar, 2012) used as a place to cook and warm oneself, *pedaringan* and *pekayon*. In Tengger house, there are *pedaringan*, *petangaring*, *pedayohan*, and a bathroom. This back space has a door from the outside. The kitchen for the Tengger Tribe has a high social function, apart from being a place to store household tools and store food (corn) harvested for food supplies during the season. As a social function upon arrival of relatives, neighbors, and guests are already familiar, they will be invited to talk and relax in the kitchen while serving special foods (grilled corn, cassava, tubers) and drinking coffee (Lelono, 2019).

The characteristics of each space are adapted to the functions and daily activities that use the space (Ayuninggar, 2012). *Pagenen* (kitchen) was originally the first space built and also the main space. This space is used for cooking and a dining room, also used as a place for family gatherings. During ritual events, this space is used for cooking and preparing offerings. *Pagenen* can also be combined with *pedaringan*. *Pedaringan* is a space for storing crops and supplies. *Pagenen*, there is a fireplace called *prapen* (Ayuninggar, 2012) or *pawon* (Dewi, 2002), which is the center of the spaces in the house (Dewi, 2015) because it is the place where various activities are carried out. If a guest is accepted and invited to sit near the wasp, it means that he is received with respect. Therefore, this *pagenen* can also function as a living room. In the study (Ayuninggar, 2012), *prapen* or *pawon* also serves as a place to dry corn, similar to Lelono (2019) findings.

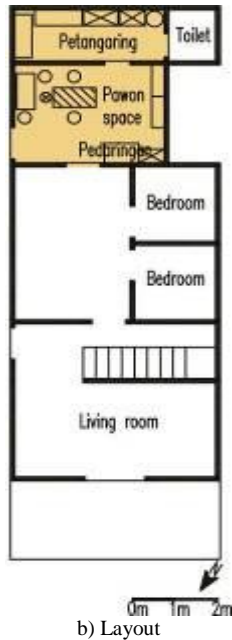
The Tengger house is included in the architecture of the archipelago house because it has a Tengger cultural identity; namely, every house has a *pawon* which is believed to have a guardian spirit as the Guardian of the House (Ayuninggar, 2012). Every ceremony and particular ritual of this *pawon* still has to be given offerings as a form of respect. Regardless of the house's exterior, there are rules for the existence of the *pawon*, which is constantly maintained as one of Tengger house's identities. In addition, this *pawon* formed other supporting spaces, namely *pawon space*, *petangaring*, and *pedaringan*.

Field observations were made to obtain two samples of houses that had undergone many deviations to prove the existence of the *pawon* and its supportive space. These two houses are the house of the traditional head of Ngadas Tengger Village (house 1) and one of the traditional stakeholders' houses called *legen* (house 2). Thus, the context of the Tengger house observed is a house with deviation but still has a Tengger identity, namely a *pawon* space and a supportive space.

It is house 1, which shows the deviation of the facade made of ceramic material. Although the style of the house has followed the times, in the back of the house, there are still *pawon* space, *petangaring*, and *pedaringan* (Figure 4).



a) Facade



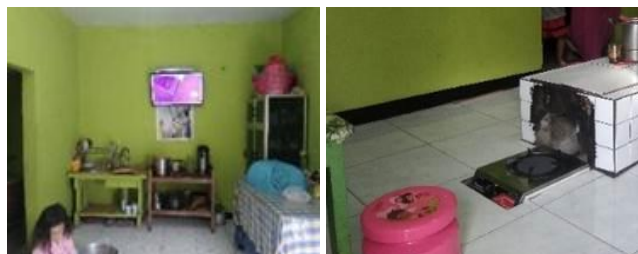
Likewise, house 2 in Figure 5 below is a modern-style house. It is seen from its simple shape, with an exterior that does not have much decoration. Judging from the layout of the space, this series of *pawon* space, *petangaring*, and *pedaringan* are placed on top, but the presence of this series of spaces is maintained by placing them in one ample space that almost fills the space on the upper floor. The arrangement above is to adjust the area of this minimalist house. In Ngadas Tengger Village, this series does not exist other than in the back space. Slightly different from Dewi (2002) that the *pawon* can be placed in the living room, a *pawon* can be placed on the *pagenen*, *pedaringan* and *pedayohan*. In Ngadas Tengger Village, the *pawon* is still located at the back, but its function can be *pedayohan*, namely receiving guests. The *pawon* space is the main space, while the *pedaringan* and *petangaring* are the supporting spaces. *Pawon* space is the primary space because it is used for cooking and becomes the focus of activities at home.



c) Petangaring



a) Facade

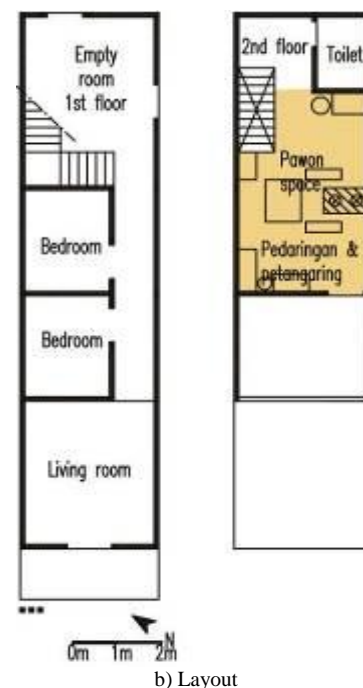


d) Pedaringan

e) Pawon space

Fig. 4. House 1

In house 1 above, the *pawon* space, *petangaring*, and *pedaringan* become a series of spaces that are not separate, as evidenced by their location at the back, close together, and related. A wall partition separates these three spaces. In this house, *petangaring* is used for cooking and putting kitchen utensils, *pedaringan* is used to store dry food or cooked food, while the *pawon* space is used to gather, eat, chat, and warm-up.





c) Back spaces  
Fig. 5. House 2

Apart from the three back spaces of the house, the presence of a bathroom always follows the arrangement of this space. The position of the bathroom is always close to the series of spaces and is on the left side of the house. The location of the bathroom in Tengger house is always on the left side of the house. It is called *pakiwan* (Lelono 2019), which in Javanese and Tengger means left. Left is associated with exile. In addition, this bathroom is located close to the back space series. This location means that there is a close function between the two. The bathroom as a water provider is needed to meet the service needs of the kitchen.

In outline, the back space of the Tengger house has functioned as a family gathering place, a domestic space to meet household needs, and a sacred space because *pawon* has similarities with the back spaces of Mosuo people in China (Granito, 2009), which function as domestic, intimate, and sacred spaces. Both Tengger and Mosuo people consider that back spaces can cultivate the warmth of family, relatives, and guests.

## V. CONCLUSION

The Tengger people in managing their houses and spaces have their unique characteristics. This front-back and left-right

pattern space structure are based on the function of space utilization. Even though it does not identify as Tengger house from the exterior, inside, especially the back space, it still has the identity of Tengger house. Then it is known that Tengger architecture manifests its culture in the characteristics and arrangement of the back space so that the back space, which consists of the *pawon*, *petangaring*, and *pedaringan*, continues to exist as long as their beliefs and traditions continue. The naming of these three spaces in the Tengger people in East Java has different names, but functionally these three spaces are always present in every house. This space can be separated by a bulkhead or three areas made into one ample space located at the back of the house or on the top floor of the back. Based on the literature review and field observations results, it can be concluded that the back space could form the characteristics and became the marker of the Tengger house.

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