

# From House Society to Homestay: Re-domestication in the settlement and architecture of the Ngadha traditional village in East Nusa Tenggara, Indonesia

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## Abstract

Cultural richness in Indonesia, including its vernacular settlement and architecture, are strategic sources for tourism development in the country. The program usually promotes cultural authenticity as touristic spectacles. It encourages the local people to preserve their ethnic characters, including their vernacular architecture and settlement. In reality, the success of the preservation does not impede the transformations of the dwelling culture. This study is conducted through field observations and documentations in Bena and Tololela Hamlets, in Ngada Regency, in Flores Island, Indonesia. Further, we analyzed this dynamic of the Ngadha vernacular settlement and architecture, and narrate it using a re-domestication framework, in the following three milestones of transformation phases: 1) the introduction of the Catholic religion in the early 20th century, 2) national development in the 1980s, and 3) tourism and globalization in 2010. Support on preservation and adaptation of homestay program into *sa'o* (house) and *nua* (village) is the result of the contemporary progression itself. The local practice of clan system, *voe* sustain the people to keep their existence, despite the present changes.

**Keywords:** Ngadha, *sa'o*, *voe*, re-domestication, domesticity, domestic space, tourism.

## An introduction to the Ngadha community

Ngadha community is an indigenous ethnic in Flores Island, Indonesia. Ngadha villages are primarily located in the west side of Jerebuu valley, a fertile enclave between the seafront ecology of Sawu Ocean and the Inerie Mountain. Administratively, the Ngadha community resides on Ngada Regency. The regency was established in 1958 and named after the ethnic community as its largest population. Ngada is here referred to as the name of the regency. In contrast, Ngadha (with 'h') is referred to the ethnic community. Their settlement was built from the network of houses (*sa'o*) and hamlet (*nua*), bound by matrilineal kinship.

Present Ngadha villages cannot be separated from tourism. Promoting the idea of "authentic and traditional" to increase tourists' and visitors' number enhances people's lives. As highlighted by authors, this has been part of the reality of present vernacular architecture and settlement life in many places (Alsayyad, 2001; Cole, 2003; Hitchcock and King, 2003; Prieto Arranz, 2004; Ivkowska, 2014), including in Indonesia. Today, Ngadha people manage to preserve their architecture primarily due to tourism. *Ka Sa'o*, or the celebration ritual of house

construction, is now part of the attractions for tourists' spectacles (Ellisa and Azharia, 2020). Since the early 2000s tourism, has been introduced in Ngada Regency as a means of economic growth while maintaining the cultural identity and environmental sustainability. However, behind the well-preserved *sa'o* and the *nua* of Ngadha's lay dwelling characters, which is not purely traditional. The preservation retains its vernacular dwelling culture and traditional expression while embracing contemporary life. The current vernacular architecture and settlement may demonstrate traditional expressions, but it's architectural productions demonstrate a transformed domesticity and motif from the earlier ones (Jagatramka et al., 2021).

This paper frames and highlights this transformation as a re-domestication process. With the re-domestication framework, we would try to understand the nature of the transformations and aspects that made them, to some extent, sustain their traditions, despite significant changes through time. Moreover, we explored how the people keep the sense of homeliness despite the changing natural and social environment. The framework elaborates some concepts, such as domestication - to understand the wholesome of the making of dwelling culture; and re-domestication - to discuss the transformation.

### **Re-domestication, tourism, and vernacular architecture**

Domestication is here a concept used to understand that equilibrium is achieved in forming a habitable place. It is an evolutionary process of acquiring equilibrium of cultural reproductive patterns after the destabilized situation of the earlier state of equilibrium (Coppinger and Smith, 1983; Klaudy and Heltai, 2020). The evolution and formations include the restructuring of conflict management, social codes, and social contracts. The operation of households and their members' behavior, the symbolic systems, and the exclusion and inclusion of external parties reflect the domestication process's result (Haddon, 2011).

Domestication is elaborated further by using the concept of domesticity, domestic space, and *domus*. Referring to Chee and Park, domesticity is the performative aspect of the body in space (e.g., residents, tenants, parents, and children) related to certain traditions, continuity, and privacy (Chee and Park, 2013). It connotes the achievement of biological and psychological balance of the dwellers, and material and social production, which leads to the attainment of supra-individual ideas of the people, such as ethnicity to nationality. Domestic space is a multi-dimensional cognitive domain established by a vocabulary of architectural elements that imply the emergence of a sense of homeliness (Martella, 2020). *Domus* is home, in physical sense, wherein all consciousness and subjectivity form (Tuan, 2007). From inside, *domus* the assumptions about the world are formed (Colomina, 2007). The concept of *domus* has been continuously re-read throughout history, as domesticity and domestic space concepts keep changing, manifesting in renewed formations of subjectivity. A house can sit firmly on a place, but the idea of placeness and homeliness is not always stable. Re-domestication is, therefore, a process of equilibrium re-attainment after an impactful event that causes the discontinuity of the old relational system – socio-economic and cultural – generally triggered by disasters or wars. The changes could be in a form of shifts of value, typological adaptation, or translation (re-reading) of meaning. As vernacular architecture is considered dynamic, this paper argues that re-domestication is useful to explore and to understand the transformations in vernacular settlement and architecture.

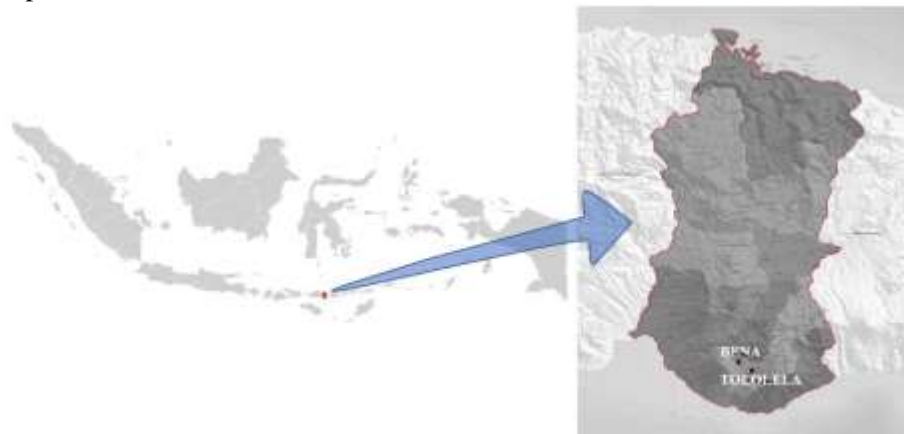
In Indonesia, tourism policy and practices depend much on cultural and ecological potent. Before the pandemic, by 2014, the Ministry of Tourism aims to increase tourism's contribution to the country's GDP from 9% to 15% by 2019 (Rachman, 2015). Earlier, the traditional village of Wae Rebo in Manggarai Regency, also located on Flores island, received the Top Award of Excellence from UNESCO in 2012 (Indonesia Tourism - Indonesia Travel, 2019). This confident forecast and fact help promote preservations, including traditional villages, endemic plants, and animal species in Flores Island. As a result, many traditional houses of the Ngadha community became a tourism commodity and turned into homestays, and the community maintained their villages' authentic looks. This scheme makes the traditional looks of Ngadha villages are factually not a pure traditional reality: It is very modern and

supported by the global market economy upon which tourism flourished. This reality gains good acceptance among the Ngadha people. Bena and Tololela villagers – whose homestay business is thriving – believe that adding the homestay function to their *sa'o* is an acceptable way of living to survive in the modern world.

## Methodology

This paper uses a qualitative-exploratory approach and field research method, conducted in two Ngadha hamlets, Bena and Tololela (Fig. 1), in August and December 2019. We refer to Martinus Bambang Susetyarto for the earlier studies on the vernacular architecture of the Ngadha people. The two hamlets were selected because they are among the oldest surviving traditional hamlets (*nua*) in western part of Jerebu'u enclave, maintaining cultural and natural performativity. At the same time, actively deliver tourism activities (e.g., homestay, cultural festival, village guide). The data was collected through architectural observations, in-depth interviews with the occupants (owners) of *sa'o*, and participation in the traditional festivals. Our informants – Maria Mole [62] and Emanuel Sebo [63] of Bena; and Julia [67], Lien [40s] and Valentinus [50s] of Tololela, provide information on dwelling cultures, buildings, shelters, artifacts, landscapes and settlements, history, and social organizations.

The data is decoded into a re-domestication framework to yield: (1) the domesticity concept, related to the aspects of dwelling culture that reflect acquired resources; (2) the domestic space, as reflected spatially and formally in the architecture and settlements; and (3) the *domus* or physical aspects of the building. Then, it is diachronically mapped to extract milestones of thematic re-domestications and how it reflects changes in architectural manifestation, then narrated in a narrative of dwelling evolvments in three phases and a post-pandemic phase.



**Fig. 1:** Location of Ngada Regency in Indonesia (left) and Bena and Tololela Hamlet in Ngada Regency (right)

Accordingly, we need a concept to describe settlement as a network of houses that can frame the *nua* and *sa'o* and their distributions over the landscape of the of Jerebu'u Valley, mostly on western part. The location of west side of the valley, made these *sa'o* and *nua* enjoy sunrise and warm climate on the slope of Inerie mountain down to Sawu ocean. For understanding the network, we refer to House-Society. *House society* is a concept coined by Levi-Strauss that defines a house as a physical structure and representation of the social organization or kinship. Residential architecture in a house-society concept is characterized as follows: 1) the house has a name; 2) the idea of the house is perpetuated over time through the collective memory of the family's origin, even though the house may no longer exist; 3) has a complex elaboration of the facade as representing the symbolic system of ethnicity and clan; 4) have a place for ceremonies; and 5) has a corner for the ancestor. The architecture of the Ngadha people reflects a house-society, established by the superimposed layers of matrilineal clan (*voe*), and the distributions of *sa'o* (house), and *nua* hamlets. The concept of domesticity,

domestic space and *domus* are used to analyze the spatial embodiment of the network. And this wholesome unity is apparently dynamic. Re-domestication is used to understand transformations in dwelling culture regarding the changing ecology and social-cultural situations, which lead to the modification of the house's design, meaning, and dwelling experiences.

### The networks of *sa'o*, and *voe* as *House-Society*

The Ngadha people adhere to matrilineal kinship (Schröter, 2005; Susetyarto, 2013). They see blood ties through mother lines so that the rights to land, residence, ancestral property, and inheritance and the family property go to the mother's lineage. *Voe* is a prominent matrilineal clan established by several matrilineal lineage members (*dii sa'o*). Each *dii sa'o* dwells in several residential structures, called *sa'o*. The eldest daughter of a family or *dii sa'o* customarily inherits the *sa'o* and becomes the custodian of the *sa'o*. Marriage established alliances among *voe* or *sa'o* descendants and managed social cohesion over the landscape.

The *dii sa'o* members of a *voe* created a hierarchical lineage organization, each represented by their house – the *sa'o*. The first level of *sa'o* is *sa'o saka* (main house), the second is *sa'o kaka* (supporting house), and the third is *sa'o* belonging to ordinary family members. Traditionally, these levels constitute the social significance of the lineage. Each *sa'o saka* and *sa'o kaka* have a designated name, a consecrated ancestral room or *one*, and its ancestor's relic, a gender symbol. They are entitled to have a signifier ornament (male and female) on its' roof, while common *sa'o* do not have these features. On a *nua* level, each *sa'o* has a specific social role continuously negotiated through elders' assembly consisting of custodians of each *sa'o* (female) and hamlet leaders/*mosalaki* (male). The custodian over the communal assets, including houses in female hands, keeps the communal and egalitarian solidarity of the people maintained, despite the hierarchical *voe* and *sa'o* organizations.

A *voe* unit is represented by a pair of totems and a pair of ancestral houses (*sa'o saka*). The totem pair consists of the female totem, the *bhaga*, and the male totem, the *ngadhū*. The pair's ancestral house is the *sa'o saka* of the *voe*. *Sa'o saka pu'u* is the female ancestral house, and *sa'o saka lobo* is the male ancestral house. *Sa'o saka pu'u* is recognized by the "*ana iye*" ornaments on the roof's ridge. The ornaments resemble the miniature of *one* (sacred inner room of a *sa'o*). The male *sa'o* is called *sa'o saka lobo*, recognized by a small puppet ornament holding a sword on its roof's ridge, called "*ata*" (Fig. 2). Each *sa'o saka* is an independent matrilineal clan; therefore, inter-marriage between *sa'o saka* of the same *voe* is allowed. In the constellations of *sa'o saka*, *sa'o kaka*, and ordinary *sa'o*, a *voe* and *dii sa'o* articulate its domestic space.



**Fig. 2:** *Ana iye* (left) and *ata* (right) on the roof's ridge of *sa'o*.

Source: Christina Gantini

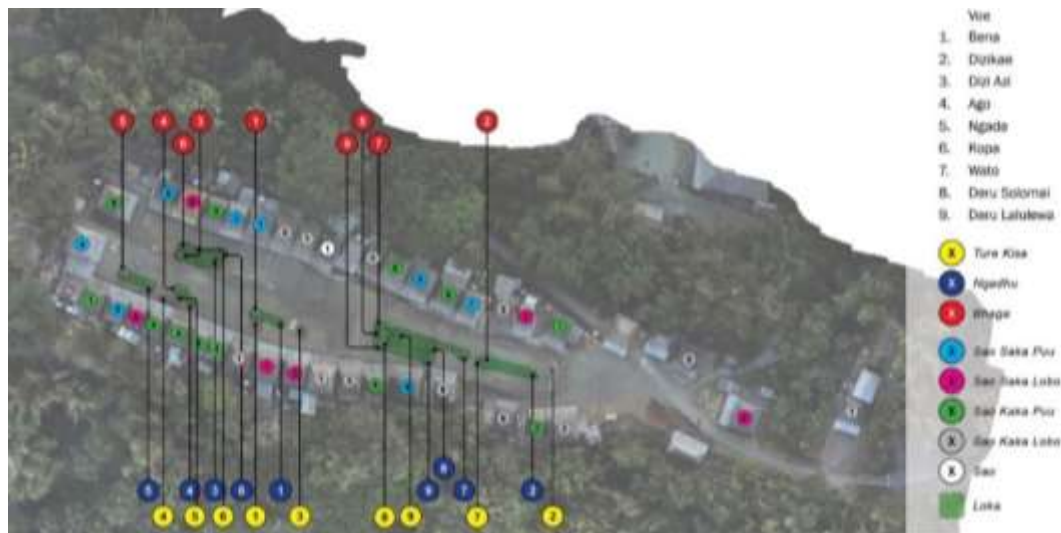
The social organization of the Ngadha community constructs the ramification of settlement and architecture over the west side landscape of Jerebu'u valley and the idea of domesticity by networks of *sa'o* and *voe*. The network of *sa'o* represents domesticity that bracket community of a common *voe* and *dii sa'o*. *Sa'o saka* navigates the social affairs of its *voe* matrilineal kin-members. Therefore, even though uninhabited, a *sa'o* as an artifact is still essential. It is the center of the resident community's orientation (Jatmiko, 2015). The network of *sa'o* acknowledges the importance of particular matrilineal clans over the others. They can

be the oldest *dii sa'o*, the family of the *voe* founders, or significance by the power of wealth. This marks traditional caste orientation in the social and communal network of houses. The continuing redistribution of *sa'o* extends its domesticity over a cultural landscape of Ngadha as complex interlacing networks of matrilineal clans (*voe*), settlements (*nua*), and houses (*sa'o*) over Jerebu'u Valley. In this way, a *sa'o* demonstrate the quality of a house-society.

### *Nua, loka-nata and one*

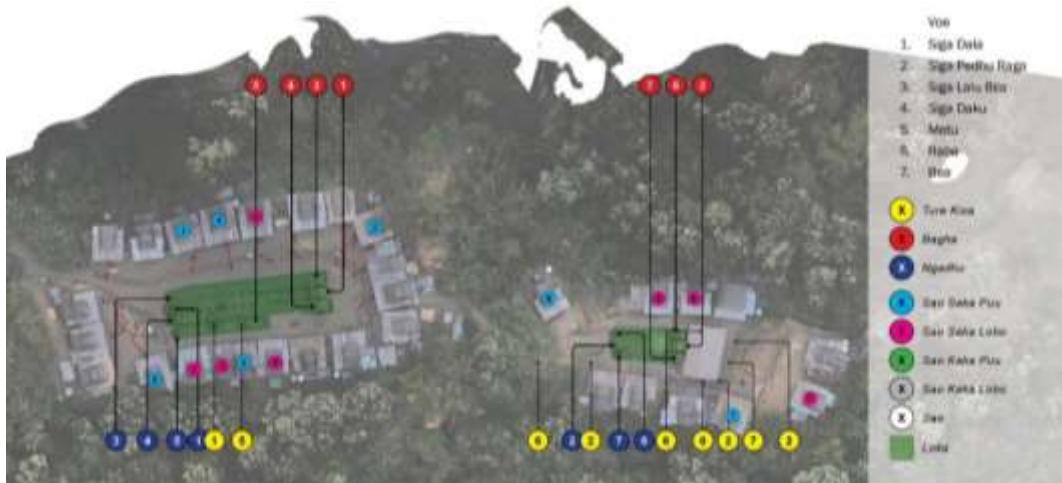
*Nua* is a hamlet in a physical sense and the home for several matrilineal lineages/extended families (*dii sa'o*) from various branches of *voe*. At the beginning of a *nua* formation, a group of ancestors, representing several matrilineal clans or *voe*, or families, or *dii sa'o*, agreed to dwell together in a specific location and create a hamlet, called *nua*. A *nua* is established through a process, where several *dii sa'o* belonging to certain *voe* agreed to cohabit in a coherent place as a hamlet. In this way, spatially, a *nua* forms the domestic space of the respective people. Members of a *voe* can live within a particular *nua* or be distributed across the Jerebu'u landscape. When a *nua* is 'full,' the extended family provides new *sa'o* outside the *nua*. However, all *nua* kin-members, within or outside the *nua*, would recall their *nua* of origin as home. It is evident during the rituals, where they would assemble in the *nua*. Analyzing the distribution of families we learn that *Nua Tololela* and *Nua Bena* are bound to many other villages nearby, and the west side of the Jerebu'u valleys.

A *nua* is prescribed to form an encircling formation with a communal yard in the center or *loka-nata* that functions daily as a shared space. Spiritually, it embodies many ancestral grounds, each belonging to a *voe*. The arrangement of stones recognizes each ancestral ground, believed to mark ancestors' graves, called *ture kisa*, (Fig. 6 – left), a pair of totems of a female ancestor (*bhaga*) and male ancestor (*ngadhu*). *Bhaga* has a form of a down-sized *one* (Fig. 6 – center), while *ngadhu* has a form of umbrella-like structure (Fig. 6 – right). *Voe* members can be distributed in various places, but *ture kisa* identifies the spot of origin. This stone installation has become a tourist attraction of the Ngadha villages, especially Nua Bena. If *ture kisa* marks the ancestral origin, *bhaga-ngadhu* symbolizes a *voe* presence in a *nua*. Like *sa'o saka*, *ture kisa nata*, and the gendered pair of *ngadhu-bhaga* totems constituted the anchor of the respective *voe* in a place.



**Fig. 4:** Nua Bena map with distributions of *voe*-owned features

Source: A. Zuhdi Allam

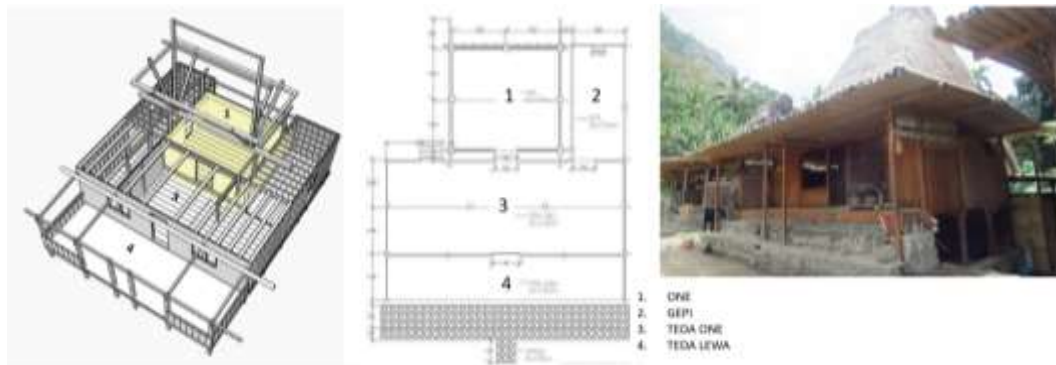


**Fig. 5:** Nua Tololela map with distributions of *voe*-owned features  
Source: A. Zuhdi Allam



**Fig. 6:** *Ture kisa* (left), *bagha* (center), and *ngadhu* (right).  
Source: A. Zuhdi Allam

Physically, a *sa'o* is a *domus*, with a core in an ancestral room, or *one*. The *sa'o saka*, *sa'o kaka*, and *sa'o* have the same architectural expression. The scale identifies the difference, and most importantly, the names of the house, representing *dii sa'o*; the ornaments on the roof-ridge, the presence of buffalo horns installations on the front poles, and ornate symbolic ornaments. Typically, *sa'o* is a residential structure standing on a stilt. It has three areas: *one*, *tedha one*, and *tedha lewa* (Fig. 7). First, *one*, an enclosed room that initially was the center of all domestic activities: it is the core of *sa'o*. Only *dii sa'o* members can enter *one*. In *sa'o saka* and *sa'o kaka*, *one* is a storage of a *voe* ancestors' relic (e.g., sword, spears, or flask). *One* is also important because it manifest hub of ancestral networks. It connect the *sa'o saka*, to *sa'o kaka*, and other *sa'o* outside the *nua* over Jerebu'u enclave. Due to its importance, *one* is celebrated and maintained as ritual centre of the clan, families and other kin members. Structurally, *one* is a knock-down structure that has been made in another place by a respected traditional builder, disassembled, and reassembled in the site of *sa'o*. Second, *tedha one* is an enclosed room in front of *one* that functions as an extension space for domestic activities. Third, *tedha lewa*, a verandah that has a social function for welcoming guests or neighbors.



**Fig. 7:** Structure, plan, and photo of a *sa'o* in Nua Tololela.  
Source: Nita Dwi Estika and Oky Dewantara

## Re-domestication in the vernacular settlement and architecture of Ngadha

The Ngadha and most indigenous societies in Flores Island in Indonesia currently depend their livelihood on tourism. Tourism has become their survival strategy in modern life. Indeed, strategically it preserves the indigenous architecture, yet inevitably shift the livelihood and meaning of a *sa'o* from the pure residence of *dii sa'o* into homestay care taken by the *dii sa'o* family members. Tourism and the "homestay" concept have shifted the house-society domesticity and domestic space. To better understand the domestication-re-domestication process, the following are phases of transformation of the vernacular settlement and architecture of the Ngadha through explorations of the Bena and Tololela Hamlet.

### Phase 1: Introduction of the Catholic religion in the early 20th century

Under the Dutch-Indies' authority in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Ngadha community encountered the introduction of the Catholic religion and transformed their spiritual life of indigenous faith to Catholic religion by missionaries. Today, nearly 100 percent of the population is Catholic while keep preserving their ancestral traditions. Schröter (2005) considered the practice syncretic. The Ngadha has their own annual harvesting, Reba. It was adjusted and fixed on 26 December, after Christmas up to February.

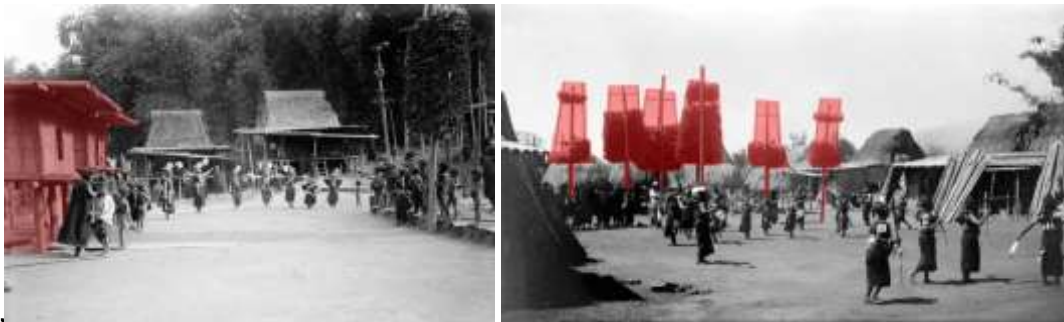
The domesticity did not change a lot. However, Catholic religions significantly led to the waning of the caste hierarchy, inherited in the social structure of *voe*. It promoted the universal practice of communal and egalitarian values. However, the trait of matrilineal kinship is sustained. It kept *sa'o* house-society work consistently, but more egalitarian in nature. Architecturally, religious ornaments, such as Christ's cross, prayer candles, and Jesus portrait, decorated *sa'o*. A chapel and Maria Cave were installed and became an integral part of the *nua* (Fig. 8). The ancestral memorial stone originally only appeared as a *ture* located in *kisa loka*, then developed into modern graves by placing crosses, candles, and flower vases to pray.



**Fig. 8:** Maria Cave in Nua Bena (left) and Nua Tololela (right)  
Source: Nita Dwi Estika

### Phase 2: National economic agenda post-independence in the 1980s

After the Indonesian Independence (1945), the Ngadha was politically transformed from a traditional sovereign into an administrative unit under a modern nation-state. Market economic and development agendas in the 1970s led to a drastic change of natural and human resources, as well as its redistribution. During this period, most of the paddy and cornfields in the Ngadha hamlets were converted into commercial crop fields—such as coffee and vanilla chocolate, candlenut, or clove. According to Mr. Sebo, this conversion of agriculture to commercial crops was conscious and pragmatic. The increased value of commercial crops over paddy led to the transformation of paddy-based domesticity to commercial agriculture. Modern infrastructure introduced ideas of living using modern technology, such as electronic devices, motor-cycle. As follow, this period observed the vanishing agricultural traditions that caused the extinction of some structures for storing crops and paddy. During his childhood, Mr. Sebo vividly remembers that *loka-nata* in Nua Bena was full of *bo* (rice barns) and *wedo sae* (corn granaries). His testimony aligns with the Dutch-produced photos of Ngadha hamlets from the early 20<sup>th</sup> century (Fig. 9). The house-society concept went well with agricultural life, anchored by the network of houses, coordinated from *sa'o* within the sphere of *voe*. Changes in agriculture naturally reshaped the network of houses and the nature of communal life.



**Fig. 9:** The past photograph depicting the presence of *bo* (left) and *wedo sae* (right) in the *loka-nata*  
Source: NMVW-collectie (1950)

Sanitations also heavily change the paradigm and expression of the hamlet. Mrs. Julia in Tololela Hamlet described that during her childhood, a hamlet was where humans and domestic animals lived together. Since the 1980s, the government began developing modern infrastructures in Jerebu'u Valley, such as roads, electricity, and modern-style houses (popularized as *rumah sehat*/ healthy house). According to Mr. Sebo, in 1982, a new road split Nua Bena at the expense of several *sa'o* displacements, forcing several families to move to other areas and form a new *nua*. A minor road was constructed along the rear side of the *sa'o* in Nua Bena, making a new entrance for the inhabitants of *sa'o* and changing their habitual orientation (Fig. 10 - left). Some families in Nua Bena build *rumah sehat* behind their *sa'o* – if they have enough land in their backyard (Fig. 10 - right). Today, the Ngadha community has two domestic dimensions in their house: *sa'o* as the ritual house and *rumah sehat* as their modern functional houses. Mrs. Julia admitted that she enjoyed the current hamlet more than earlier.

In principle, modernity had brought different domesticity, following changes in the ecology and social integrity, shifting from the traditional community into citizens of an independent modern state. Modernity and Catholic religion reframed the indigenous domestic space. The new *sa'o* were becoming more open to new material and lifestyles, while *bo* and *wedo sae* became absent from *loka-nata*. Currently, *loka-nata* is a public space that accommodates various activities of the Ngadha community. Re-domestication in this phase was identified by the shifts of the traditional society into modern people, retaining their traditions in an environment becoming more urbanized. At a glance, Ngadha traditional house's architecture, *sa'o*, remain authentic; factually, they are accompanied by one or more modern houses, *rumah sehat*, behind or near the *sa'o*.





**Fig. 10:** Road (left) and *rumah sehat* (right) behind *sa'o*.  
Source: Nita Dwi Estika

### Phase 3: Introduction of tourism and globalization in 2010

At the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the Indonesian government and its local governments aimed to make tourism a significant income source. Nua Bena, which is more popular than Tololela, has more facilities and distinctive spots of the origin or ancestral, *ture kisa*. Meanwhile, Tololela has a charm for its quietness and has a more organized tourism plan. Both hamlets provide cultural events open for visitors and make them part of the Ngada tourism agenda.

However, with regards to domesticity, another development occurred in 2010 when the practices of homestay were upscaled into a global scale in the tourism industry. It does not apply to Ngadha villages—but most indigenous hamlets in Flores Island. Nua Bena and Tololela are advanced in arranging tour packages wherein they offer *sa'o* as homestay facilities. The non-governmental organization volunteering in the village became a program facilitator. Soon they become part of the domestic life of the community. Nua Bena is facilitated by Swisscontact, while Nua Tololela by Indecon (Indonesian Ecotourism Network). The NGOs trained the community about hospitality, business, and management, especially for homestay services. Accordingly, the community should adjust their traditions, and such changes were not accessible at the start.

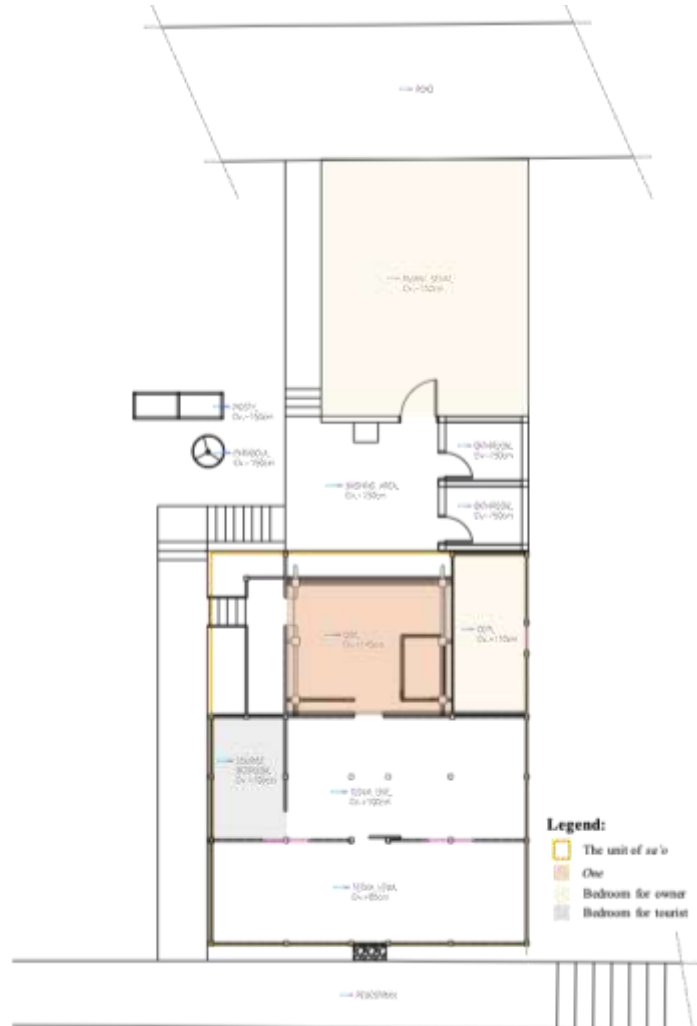
People, led by the traditional leaders - *mosalaki* (family representations) - assembled and discussed the new situations and anticipations for maintaining the continuity of their customs and traditions. They sought opinions from priests, nuns, academics, and reliable parties outside their community to discuss ongoing trends. It was the moment they became more realized that the Catholic religion had become the bounding value, accompanying *voe*, that enabled them to assemble and negotiate to traditional and modern life. Later, they agreed to create a hamlet regarding tourists' new rules to accommodate tourism, such as ways of welcoming Muslim visitors, parking spaces, managing traditional performances, and rules of taking pictures/photos/films.

Both hamlets started to limit the appearance of pets and livestock in public display for tourists' comfort, which initially freely moved around. In Bena, tourists' "safe" visiting hours are between 11 a.m. and 2 p.m., during which domestic dogs are encaged or kept in the field. Meanwhile, pigs are always in the pig pens, located in the back of *sa'o* (Fig. 11 - left) or the field (Fig. 11 - right).



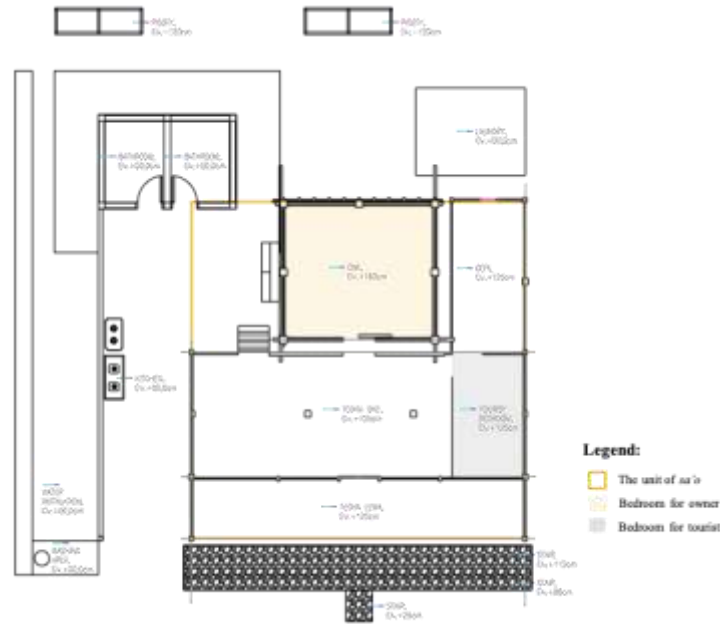
**Fig. 11:** Pig pens behind the *sa'o* (left) and in the field (right) in Bena  
Source: Achmad Syaiful Lathif

The homestay scheme rearranges positions of the native dwellers in *sa'o*. Indeed, the community accepted it well, but it influenced transformation in domestic space. A *nua* offering their *sa'o* as homestay usually has the family members living in adjacent hamlets belong to their close kin relatives. These other hamlets are mostly modern villages, where most of the kin members are accepted by kin relations and live, either as *dii sa'o* and *voe*.



**Fig. 12:** The domesticity of Maria Mole's *sa'o* facing tourism in *Nua Bena*  
Source: Oky Dewantara and Nita Dwi Estika

Ancestral spot inside *sa'o* is *one*. It is of an element of domesticity of the Ngadha community, the anchor of *voe* in a house and its extended family (*dii sa'o*). With subsequent developments, other spaces inside *sa'o* are a living space in front of *one* (*tedha one*), room (*gepi*), and terrace (*tedha lewa*). Insertion of homestay activity transforms the arrangements of domestic space. Ms. Mole's *sa'o* is inhabited by two nuclear families – her immediate family and her married daughter's family. They made the living space in front of *one* (*tedha one*) as a sleeping space for tourists, which is usually allocated for their family members. Even Ms. Mole, the owner of *sa'o*, lives in *rumah sehat* behind her *sa'o*. Ms. Mole's *sa'o* is also equipped with a detached bath-shed located between the *sa'o* and her *rumah sehat*. *Rumah sehat* becomes the front side of the house, facing the road on the backside. Ms. Mole's house has two faces, facing the *loka-nata* and the back road (Fig. 12).



**Fig. 13:** The domesticity of Lien's *sa'o* facing tourism in Nua Tololela  
Source: Oky Dewantara and Nita Dwi Estika

In the case of Ms. Lien's *sa'o* in Tololela, changes in domestic space due to homestay affect the use of living and private spaces. Ms. Lien's *sa'o* becomes the reception and service area for guests who will stay at Tololela. They have access to the private sleeping area (*gepi*), the living room (*tedha one*), or terrace (*tedha lewa*), but not the ancestral room (*one*). The sleeping space allocated for guests in the *tedha one* is equipped with a mosquito net, and the *one* becomes Ms. Lien's bedroom (Fig. 13). Currently, most *sa'o* in Tololela has dedicated clean bath sheds for visitors located behind every *sa'o*.

In Bena, since 2019, a café and tourist information center has also been built to facilitate visitors. In Bena and Tololela, some *rumah sehat* have other functions, such as a shop. The demand for *sa'o* to appear authentic is also increasing, but there is an extreme change behind this original form. Interaction between the native community and tourists started using English. It is evident that the Bena and Tololela architecture keeps its original form, but changes took place. The original function of a house, which emphasized privacy turned into a commodified space; the only part of *sa'o* that does not change and remains sacred is *one*. The *sa'o* in Bena and Tololela symbiotically live a dual function. *Sa'o* symbolically a house-society for its *dii sa'o* or *voe* and economically as homestays. It follows the fact that tourism has become an integrated part of their domesticity. Indigenous society became more accustomed to values that paid attention to cleanliness and hygiene. The blessing of tourism is that the Ngadha community can maintain their *domus* as authentic architecture.

It is important to note that the consistent practices of *voe* made the domesticity retain its social-spatial frame of distribution. Moreover, the preservation of local ecology is beneficial for tourism. Tourism in Ngada Regency took Mount Inerie as the icon of attraction, mainly for tracking or hiking activities. According to Mr. Sebo and Mr. Valentinus, homestays caretaker, tracking, and tour guides appear as a new social role in their domesticity. Mr. Sebo and Mr. Valentinus also have a role as tourism managers in their respective hamlets, responsible for visitors' registrations, mediating discussions between the hamlet community and the government, and ensuring that the village areas remain clean. Today, women in Nua Bena and Tololela are doing handloom crafts as their primary income source. Bena and Tololela now have a tourist reception office.

The practice of matrilineal kinship and inheritance with its communal characters makes all decision-making in the village vested in the joint agreement of the community. In this way, the present architecture of Ngadha, despite its extreme transformation of domesticity and

domestic space, able to retain *domus* due to tourism affairs, still keeps its vernacularity. In other words, the *Ngadha* manage to retain their vernacularity in contemporary situations. Vernacularity is a condition of architecture to remain a vernacular architecture, confirmed by Widiastuti and Kurniati (2019) a characterized by people's acceptance and willingness to adapt and possible sustainability.

*What happened in Ngadha villages during the current COVID-19 pandemic?*

Indeed, according to Mr. Valentinus and Mr. Emanuel, the tourists dropped significantly, especially foreign tourists, both in Bena and Tololela Village. Therefore, most villagers' are going back to the field these days. The 'new normal' is unavoidable. The Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy has launched a program under the slogan "BISA (*Bersih, Indah, Sehat, dan Aman* – Clean, Beautiful, Healthy, and Safe) " to promote 'a new normal' norms in tourism destinations, such as regular disinfectant spraying and to insist that the interactions between the tourists/villagers should be following the health protocol (Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy, 2020). So far, people assume that this pandemic eventually will be over and hope the tourists will be back faster and energize the economic force there. However, it is too early to say that this pandemic scores a re-domestication in *Ngadha* villages and whether the villagers could yield a new adaptation strategy with a "new normal" policy. The long-term effect of 'new normal' implementation and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on tourism should be an entry point to assess the possible re-domestication process in *Ngadha* villages.

## Conclusion

The vernacular settlements and architectures of the *Ngadha* society are always bound by: 1) the superimposed layers of ancestral relics, secured in the ancestral room (*one*) within the house (*sa'o*), 2) the social organization of *voe* and its entanglements over the landscape of the sunrise facing part of *Jerebu'u* valley, 3) the network of lithic monuments (*ture kisa nata*) which mark traces of the ancestress. Our hypothesis is that this network was once established by agricultural estate, before then serial transformations followed changed the ecological and social cultural equilibrium. Re-reading the transformations of domesticity, domestic space and *domus*, three possible re-domestications phase are identified.

The first re-domestication we could identify took place before the 1970s when the people started to learn the modern lifestyle, introduced through western missionaries with their teaching on Catholic religions. Caste hierarchy was no longer relevant, altered by congregational life based on religion. The significant difference between *sa'o saka*, *sa'o kaka*, and ordinary *sa'o* might start to decrease its efficiency, except for ritual and festival. Chapel and Maria cave became part of the village monument, altering the lithic monuments around. Second re-domestication occurred between 1970 and 2000, were quite radicals, particularly with regards to ecology and staple. The national economic agenda caused the people to alter their rice farming tradition to commercial crops. They learn a new perspective that the vernacular house they built was unhealthy, therefore needed to be changed into a modern house they called *rumah sehat* or healthy house. The third re-domestication took place after 2000 when the tourism economy was introduced to the people. National and international NGOs supporting tourism began to assimilate into their socio-cultural institutions and introduced cultural awareness that revoked the importance of traditional living. In other words, tourism made many external parties becoming part of the domesticity. Despite the changes, mainly the domesticity is sustained by an indigenous solidarity rest in the practice of *voe*. It has been regulating social and cultural interactions among the people through times. The operation of the local house-society concept in the network of *sa'o* and *nua*, the acknowledged and celebrated totem, the *ngadhu* and *bhaga*, keep the cohesion of the *Jerebu'u* enclave and the attachment of the people.

Domestic space is also partly undergoing radical changes, partly sustained. Mount *Inerie* still hold her place in the *Ngadha's* people mind. Radical changes of domestic space take place in residential and village manners. Through time the people of *Ngadha* had been directed to perceive their home in a different manner. In the olden time, up to the colonial period, a house was a symbolic representation of the network of *voe* into dwelling space. In modern times,

during national development, their houses were considered unhealthy and should be altered by a modern healthy house. Currently, tourism necessitates the preservation of *sa'o*. The owner of *sa'o* now shares their house with tourists as a homestay.

Nevertheless, the consistent adherence to *voe* domesticity makes them sustain their house-society network of solidarity across the Jerebu'u enclave, thence their faith in the ethnic worldview. Regardless, its form, residential structures in even more modern villages in Ngadha still demonstrate roles as foci of the family corporation, a ritual house, and communal space. Two identified aspects that characterize the everyday life of the people that seems to help to maintain their resilience toward changes are: 1) communal solidarity that remains at the core of domesticity, therefore every change can be discussed and negotiated; and 2) feminine subjectivity, which leads to fluid management and is more open to participation. The embodiment of these aspects in the practices of *voe* would help maintain productive negotiations over future changes that may occur. Following it, we cannot neglect the role of peripheral villages – possibly in the form of modern villages- outside the *nua*, in accommodating the real domestic life of the people when their ancestral house (*sa'o*) becomes a homestay. Tourism redistributes the dwelling space of indigenous people. Tourists are accommodated in the authentic *sa'o*, and the people live with their families in more modern settlements outside their *nua*.

It is still arguable if the Covid-19 pandemic significantly transformed the domesticity of the Ngadha people. However, one interesting fact is that people of the village resumed their agricultural living during the tourism pandemic hiatus. It shows that land and agriculture-based domesticity are still significant. It opened our eyes to the fact that agriculture and tourism should be supported to strengthen one another in the frame of contemporary domesticity- for ecological conservation and substitutive living during the hardship of life.

Establishing new equilibrium in re-domestication sense does not mean eradicating the former one, but the creation of new equilibrium out of new domesticity, without denying traces of the older. It does not mean to separate the past and the present situation. Factually, the people of Ngadha live in both worlds, the old traditional life and present contemporary life. Despite the changes, the relatively preserved ecology enables the people to return to agricultural life during the pandemic. And the present *sa'o* architecture is ancient by form or *domus*, but contemporary by domestic space and transformed domesticity.

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