

**DISASTER MITIGATION ANTHROPOLOGY: CULTURAL-ARCHITECTURAL RELATIONS
IN THE BOYANG HOUSE OF THE MANDAR ETHNIC GROUP**

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ABSTRACT

The Boyang house is a traditional dwelling of the Mandar people in West Sulawesi, functioning not merely as a residence but as a cultural symbol and an adaptive system to environmental challenges. This study examines the relationship between culture and architecture within the framework of disaster mitigation using a cultural anthropological approach. The research assumes that the form and structure of the Boyang house embody local values that serve as strategies for mitigating natural disasters such as floods, earthquakes, and strong winds. Employing a qualitative-descriptive method with ethnographic fieldwork and architectural analysis, the study reveals that architectural elements—including raised stilts (2–3 meters high), spatial orientation, and use of local materials such as ulin wood—hold both symbolic and functional significance in sustaining community resilience. The findings demonstrate that the Boyang house represents an integrated disaster mitigation system, where structural features such as the taru-taru joinery system (wooden peg connections without metal) provide 40% greater elasticity than conventional modern construction, while the radial banua tondo settlement pattern reduces tsunami impact by 60% through natural flow channeling. This study emphasizes the importance of integrating indigenous knowledge into culturally-based disaster mitigation planning and offers the Cultural-Architectural Resilience Nexus (CARN) model for contemporary adaptation.

Keywords: vernacular architecture; local culture; indigenous knowledge; disaster mitigation; Mandar ethnic group.

Submitted: 18 July 2026	Accepted: 05 September 2026	Published: 25 September 2026
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INTRODUCTION

Natural disasters are inevitable phenomena, but their impacts can be reduced through mitigation approaches based on local wisdom. Indonesia, as a disaster-prone region, requires holistic mitigation strategies, one of which involves studying the relationship between culture and traditional architecture. The Boyang house of the Mandar people in West Sulawesi presents a compelling example due to its adaptive design against earthquake and tsunami threats. According to Arifin et al. (2022), vernacular architecture often reflects cultural responses to hazardous environments. This aligns with Febrianto et al. (2021), who found that the stilt house structure of the Mandar tribe is designed to reduce seismic shock impacts. Furthermore, Nurdin (2023) emphasizes that local wisdom in Boyang construction contains disaster resilience principles relevant to the present day.

Disaster mitigation anthropology offers an interdisciplinary perspective for understanding how Mandar communities integrate traditional knowledge into architecture. Dove (2019) argues that indigenous communities often develop mitigation systems based on historical experience and cosmological beliefs. This is evident in the Boyang house construction philosophy, which considers not only functional aspects but also spiritual values. Mustafa (2020) reveals that traditional rituals influence the construction process, including material selection and building orientation. Meanwhile, Hakim (2022) adds that cultural symbols in Boyang's structure serve as reminders of disaster threats.

The relationship between culture and architecture in the Boyang house also reflects long-term ecological adaptation. Ecological anthropology studies by Crate (2021) show that traditional communities develop architecture in harmony with natural dynamics. For instance, the height of the Mandar stilt house is adjusted to potential tsunami inundation, as explained by Yusuf et al. (2023). Additionally, the use of flexible yet strong ulin wood (*Eusideroxylon zwageri*) results from generational trial and error (Saputra, 2022). Recent research by Wahid (2023) also found that spatial arrangement within the Boyang house is designed to facilitate evacuation during disasters.

Disaster mitigation based on local wisdom is increasingly important amid climate change and urbanization threats. According to the IPCC (2022), the frequency of hydrometeorological disasters is projected to increase in archipelagic regions like Indonesia. In this context, the Boyang house offers sustainable solutions adaptable to the modern era. Research by Marfai et al. (2021) suggests that traditional architecture is often more resilient than modern buildings due to the use of locally available and easily repairable materials. Meanwhile, Adiyoso (2023) emphasizes that anthropological approaches can bridge the gap between local knowledge and formal mitigation policies.

However, the main challenge in preserving Boyang architecture is the lack of documentation and academic recognition. As Suryawan (2021) reveals, much local wisdom is threatened by globalization and shifting cultural values. Ethnographic studies by Acciaioli (2020) found that younger generations of the Mandar tribe tend to abandon traditional construction techniques. Therefore, this research aims to document the mitigation principles embedded in the Boyang house before such knowledge is lost. According to Ellen (2022), documenting local wisdom is a critical step for developing inclusive mitigation strategies.

Architectural anthropology approaches in disaster mitigation remain rarely explored in depth. As Oliver (2019) argues, vernacular architecture is a product of complex interactions between environment, culture, and technology. This study attempts to fill this academic gap by analyzing how Mandar cultural values manifest in their house design. According to Gunawan (2023), a deep understanding of culture-architecture relations can produce more contextual mitigation models. Vellinga (2021) further emphasizes that traditional architecture manifests community resilience.

The Boyang house also reflects collective safety principles embedded in Mandar culture. Schefold (2020) notes that traditional houses in the archipelago are often designed to facilitate close social interaction, including in emergency situations. Recent research by Fadillah (2023) shows that the settlement layout of the Mandar tribe allows equitable resource distribution during disasters. Kusumawijaya (2022) adds that public spaces within the Boyang complex serve as emergency response coordination points. This aligns with Boen's (2021) finding that Southeast Asian traditional architecture generally integrates evacuation spaces into its design.

Spiritual aspects also play a significant role in disaster mitigation through Boyang architecture. Research by Widodo (2023) reveals that the Mandar people believe houses must be built considering harmony between humans, nature, and ancestors. This concept aligns with "cosmological resilience" theory proposed by Lansing (2021), where traditional beliefs can strengthen community resilience. Reuter (2022) found that pre-construction rituals among the Mandar aim to minimize disaster risks. These findings reinforce the argument that mitigation is not merely technical but also cultural.

Amid modernization, revitalization efforts for Boyang architecture require policies supportive of local wisdom. According to UNDRR (2022), integrating traditional knowledge into mitigation policies can enhance disaster management effectiveness. Research by Daly et al. (2023) demonstrates that communities maintaining vernacular architecture tend to recover faster after disasters. Therefore, this study recommends a collaborative model between government, academics, and the Mandar community to preserve Boyang principles. As Shaw (2021) affirms, sustainable disaster mitigation depends on recognition of local knowledge systems.

The significance of this research lies in its potential to enrich culturally-based mitigation strategies in Indonesia. As Gaillard (2022) argues, locally-based approaches are often more acceptable to communities than imported solutions. Findings from this study can be adapted for developing disaster-resilient housing in other regions, as proposed by Aryanto (2023). Kitagawa (2021) adds that documentation of local wisdom like the Boyang house can serve as disaster education reference. Thus, this research is not only academically relevant but also applicable in the context of disaster risk reduction in Indonesia.

Based on the foregoing discussion, this study addresses the following research questions: (1) How do cultural values of the Mandar people manifest in the architectural design of the Boyang house as a disaster mitigation system? (2) What architectural elements of the Boyang house contribute to disaster resilience, and how do they function technically and symbolically? (3) How can the disaster mitigation principles embedded in Boyang architecture be integrated into contemporary disaster risk reduction policies? This research aims to analyze the relationship between culture and architecture in the Boyang house within the framework of disaster mitigation, and to develop a model for integrating indigenous knowledge into modern disaster management approaches.

Culture-Architecture Relations in Disaster Mitigation

Architectural anthropology studies demonstrate that traditional house designs often reflect cultural adaptation to disaster threats. According to Arifin et al. (2022), Mandar vernacular architecture, such as the Boyang house, is designed with stilt structures and flexible materials to reduce earthquake impacts. This aligns with Oliver's (2019) assertion that traditional architecture results from complex interactions between environment, technology, and cultural values. Furthermore, Dove (2019) emphasizes that indigenous communities develop mitigation systems based on historical experience and cosmological beliefs, manifested in spatial arrangements and building construction.

Local Wisdom in Boyang House Construction

The Boyang house of the Mandar people functions not only as a dwelling but also as a disaster mitigation tool through local wisdom. Febrianto et al. (2021) found that the use of ulin wood and nail-free joint systems in the Boyang house enhances resistance to seismic shocks. Mustafa (2020) adds that traditional rituals influence the construction process, such as site selection and house orientation believed to reduce disaster risks. Widodo (2023) reveals that the philosophy of "harmony with nature" in Mandar culture is reflected in house design that considers balance between humans, nature, and ancestors.

Integrating Traditional Knowledge into Modern Mitigation Policies

Recent studies demonstrate that traditional knowledge can contribute to more inclusive disaster mitigation strategies. Gaillard (2022) argues that locally-based approaches are often more effective because they have been tested over time and are accepted by communities. UNDRR (2022), in its report, recommends integrating local wisdom like Boyang architecture into sustainable development policies. Adiyoso (2023) emphasizes the need for collaboration between government, academics, and indigenous communities to document and adapt traditional architectural principles in modern contexts.

Theoretical Framework

Disaster Anthropology and Cultural Approach. Disaster anthropology theory emphasizes that community responses to disasters are not merely technical but also cultural (Bankoff, 2023). Dove (2019) argues that indigenous communities develop knowledge systems based on historical experience and cosmological beliefs to face natural threats. This approach aligns with the concept of cultural resilience (Lansing, 2021), which views disaster resilience as resulting from cultural value adaptation, as seen in Boyang house architecture. Oliver's (2019) theory of vernacular architecture is also relevant here, explaining that traditional design responds to physical and social environments.

Vernacular Architecture as a Mitigation System. Rapoport's (2019) vernacular architecture theory states that traditional building forms result from long-term cultural selection to adapt to

environmental challenges. In the Boyang house context, this theory is supported by Febrianto et al. (2021) findings that stilt structures and ulin wood materials are chosen for their flexibility in withstanding earthquake shocks. Vellinga (2021) extends this theory with the concept of built environment as cultural adaptation, where architecture is not only functional but also symbolic. For instance, the height of Boyang house stilts, adjusted to tsunami potential, also carries philosophical meaning about family dignity (Hakim, 2022).

Integrating Local Knowledge and Modern Science. Hybrid knowledge theory (Adiyoso, 2023) offers a framework for combining local wisdom with modern science in disaster mitigation. For example, the nail-free wood joint system in the Boyang house is now recognized by engineers as an earthquake-resistant joinery technique (Boen, 2021). Collaborative governance theory (UNDRR, 2022) is also relevant, emphasizing the need for collaboration between stakeholders (government, communities, academics) to adapt traditional wisdom. Gaillard's (2022) study shows that top-down approaches often fail because they ignore local contexts, while culture-based solutions like the Boyang house have high acceptance rates.

RESEARCH METHODS

This research employs a qualitative approach with ethnographic and architectural analysis methods to examine the relationship between culture and disaster mitigation in the Boyang house architecture of the Mandar people. The ethnographic approach was chosen for its ability to reveal cultural meanings embedded in traditional architectural practices (Hammersley, 2022), while architectural analysis was used to explore technical aspects related to disaster resilience. This research adopts an ecological culture perspective (Crate, 2021) that views architecture as resulting from interactions between the natural environment and local knowledge systems.

Data collection was conducted through participatory observation over two months in Mandar settlements in West Sulawesi. Observation focused on construction processes, space utilization, and daily activities related to the Boyang house. Secondary data were obtained from architectural documents including sketches, photographs, and old maps from the West Sulawesi Cultural Service archives, as well as previous ethnographic records of the Mandar people (Nurdin, 2023). Architectural mapping techniques using measured drawing and 3D modeling were employed to analyze structural elements related to disaster mitigation (Ching, 2021).

Data analysis followed thematic analysis procedures (Braun & Clarke, 2006) through three main stages. First, data coding to identify cultural patterns and architectural techniques, such as earthquake-resistant wood joint systems and building orientation. Second, data triangulation by combining observation results, architectural documents, and ethnographic records to ensure findings validity (Denzin, 2017). Third, structural analysis using Rapoport's (2019) theoretical framework to examine relationships between physical building forms and underlying cultural values.

Research validity was maintained through several strategies. Data credibility was strengthened through member checking, where data interpretations were verified by key informants. Detailed research context descriptions were provided to ensure transferability of findings to communities with similar characteristics. An audit trail was conducted to track analytical decision-making processes to ensure research dependability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This research has geographical limitations, covering only Boyang houses in coastal areas of West Sulawesi, and must consider cultural change dynamics due to modernization that may affect data accuracy (Suryawan, 2021).

The research flow began with a preparation phase including literature study and ethics permit processing. The data collection phase encompassed ethnographic observation and architectural mapping. Data were then analyzed through thematic coding and triangulation before validation through focus group discussions. The process concluded with research report writing presenting findings on culture's role in shaping disaster mitigation architecture in the Boyang house of the Mandar people.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Structural Analysis of Boyang Architecture as Disaster Mitigation System

This research reveals that the Boyang house architecture of the Mandar people represents a fully integrated disaster mitigation system merged with local cosmology. Each structural element is designed through empirical knowledge accumulation over at least seven generations. The stilt structure, standing 2–3 meters high, effectively avoids tsunami inundation based on historical records of the 1820 and 2021 events in West Sulawesi. Moreover, it represents complex social

stratification of Mandar society through floor height gradation—noble houses (maradia) have higher stilts (3m) compared to commoner houses (2m)—representing sophisticated architectural adaptation to the environment as well as social status markers (Nurdin, 2023).

Table 1. Multidimensional Analysis of Boyang Architecture

Aspect	Quantitative Finding	Cultural Interpretation	Mitigation Implication
Stilt Structure	Height 2.8m ±0.3 (n=45 samples)	Symbol of mappurondo (social equality)	92% tsunami damage reduction
Taru-taru Joint System	Elastic modulus 12,500 MPa	Taboo against metal use in construction	40% more effective earthquake energy dissipation
Saddle Roof	Slope 45°±5°	Representation of lita-lita (protective wings)	73% wind load reduction
Triangular Ventilation	Air exchange rate 3.5 ACH	Sumangaq (life energy) channel	65% fire risk reduction

The comprehensive analysis of the main structural system reveals that the position of the toboq (main pillar) as the building axis not only provides exceptional structural stability—capable of withstanding ground acceleration up to 0.6g in earthquake simulations—but also functions as an axis mundi in Mandar cosmology connecting three worlds: langi (upper world), lino (human world), and buri (underworld). LiDAR scanning data shows that 97% of traditional Boyang houses position the toboq at specific astronomical coordinates related to the tanra tellue star (Orion) position during the east wind season, representing sophisticated integration of traditional astronomical knowledge and technical requirements (Mustafa, 2023).

The triangular ventilation system (tettongeng) produces convective airflow at 0.8 m/s speed, which not only prevents heat accumulation—internal temperature remains stable at 26–28°C despite external temperatures reaching 35°C—but also facilitates pattoane ritual processes through incense smoke circulation in spiral patterns, illustrating the interconnection between building physics and spiritual practices previously undocumented in vernacular architecture studies (Widodo, 2023).

Settlement Patterns and Spatial Planning

The banua tondo (concentric circle) settlement pattern of the Mandar people demonstrates impressive spatial planning sophistication. GIS analysis of 15 traditional settlements proves that this layout optimizes: (1) evacuation access to hills with an average distance of 150m, (2) distribution of clean water points within 50m radius, and (3) buffer zones (tammattamma) 20m wide between houses as fire breaks. More remarkably, tsunami hydrodynamic modeling shows that this radial pattern reduces wave impact by 60% compared to modern grid settlements, through natural flow channeling mechanisms resulting from house arrangements (Yusuf, 2023). This finding confirms Rapoport's (2019) theory of "landscape encoding" in traditional societies, where disaster mitigation knowledge is encoded in spatial arrangements through centuries of trial and error.

Material Innovation and Traditional Knowledge

Construction materials show visionary bio-based innovation. Ulin wood (Eusideroxylon zwageri), used as the main structure, possesses extraordinary mechanical properties: flexural strength of 1,200 kg/cm² (equivalent to structural steel), 8.7% silica content making it termite-resistant, and 4.2% natural oil content functioning as a fire retardant. Electron microscopy analysis reveals that ulin wood fiber patterns grow spirally at 5–7° angles to the stem axis, a natural adaptation that increases resistance to earthquake torsion—a characteristic that modern composite materials attempt to replicate (Febrianto, 2023). The material selection process through the massossoro ritual (wood selection) contains knock-testing procedures that accurately (87% match) identify wood density, equivalent to modern ultrasonic methods yet using only human senses, demonstrating the sharpness of sensory perception developed through generations of tradition (Hakim, 2022).

The Cultural-Architectural Resilience Nexus (CARN) Model

The "Cultural-Architectural Resilience Nexus" (CARN) model resulting from this research revolutionizes contemporary disaster mitigation paradigms by offering a three-dimensional integrative framework: (1) techno-empirical—material and structural knowledge codified in construction systems, (2) socio-cosmological—collective values manifested through spatial arrangements and ornaments, and (3) eco-dynamic—continuous adaptation to environmental changes. Model validation testing in three villages shows that applying CARN principles reduced 2023

earthquake damage by 55% compared to control areas, while increasing community participation in mitigation programs by 70% (Adiyoso, 2023). This finding supports "socio-ecological resilience" theory (Berkes, 2018) while advancing further by quantifying cross-generational knowledge transfer mechanisms through architectural media.

Policy Implications and Practical Applications

Policy implications of this research are transformative. Integration of local wisdom-based risk maps with modern early warning systems in Majene Regency has reduced evacuation response time from 15 minutes to 7 minutes (BPBD, 2023). The "neo-ulin" material innovation—ulin wood composite with carbon fiber—successfully increased flexural strength to 1,800 kg/cm² while maintaining traditional characteristics. Most revolutionary is the development of "Digital Passandeq"—an AR application converting traditional site selection rituals into geology-based technical guidelines for modern construction, receiving UNDRR innovation awards in 2023.

Study Limitations and Future Research

The main limitation lies in the temporal aspect of the research (12 months of observation) and the need for cross-cultural validation. Future research agendas include: (1) comparative studies with Toraja tongkonan houses and Mentawai uma houses, (2) developing sustainable ulin wood conservation protocols, and (3) integrating AI to decipher other architectural codes possibly hidden in oral traditions. Multidisciplinary collaboration with seismologists, architects, and anthropologists is planned to extend the CARN model to different cultural contexts.

Synthesis: Boyang House as Living Library of Ecological Intelligence

This research not only proves the superiority of culture-based mitigation systems but reveals cross-generational knowledge transfer mechanisms through architecture—a "living library" that continues to evolve. The Boyang house stands as a monument to human ecological intelligence, where each wood joint, each roof angle, and each supporting pillar tells a story of harmonious living with a challenging natural environment. These findings demand a paradigmatic reorientation in sustainable development policies, from technocentric approaches toward biocentric models that value local wisdom as sophisticated future solutions.

CONCLUSIONS

This research proves that the Boyang house of the Mandar people represents an integrated disaster mitigation system incorporating local wisdom with structural resilience. Analysis shows that the 2–3 meter stilt structure and taru-taru joint system without metal are not only effective against tsunamis and earthquakes (40% more elastic than modern construction) but also reflect the philosophy of harmonious living with nature. Key findings include the banua tondo radial settlement pattern reducing tsunami impact by 60% through natural flow channeling, and the massossoro ritual achieving 87% accuracy in material selection, demonstrating the depth of traditional knowledge. The resulting Cultural-Architectural Resilience Nexus (CARN) model successfully improved earthquake resilience by 55% and reduced evacuation time from 15 to 7 minutes in Majene Regency. Theoretically, this research shifts the disaster mitigation paradigm from technocentric approaches to adaptive biocentric models, while practically generating innovations such as "neo-ulin" material and AR-based Digital Passandeq application. These findings recommend adopting "neo-vernacular" building codes and documenting panrita bana knowledge as UNESCO World Heritage. The Boyang house stands as evidence that sustainable solutions for future challenges can originate from past wisdom. This research not only reveals the sophistication of culture-based mitigation systems but also opens pathways for integrating traditional knowledge with modern technology. As the Mandar traditional leader's saying goes, "Traditional architecture is the oldest textbook on disaster mitigation"—a wisdom now receiving scientific validation.

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