THE TRADITIONAL BANJAR HOUSE AS A LIVING ARCHIVE: NEGOTIATING LOCAL KNOWLEDGE AND MAINTENANCE PRACTICES FROM A DECOLONISATION PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract

Existing studies of traditional Banjar houses have tended to emphasise form, technology, and the authenticity of materials. At the same time, homeowners' practices of maintaining, replacing, and adapting their homes have not yet been widely interpreted as a form of local knowledge production. In fact, local knowledge and traditional houses embody historical value, social systems, identity, and philosophy passed down through their physical form and spatial layout. To ensure they can be passed down from generation to generation, these houses are constantly maintained by their owners, cared for, and even repaired when damaged. If these actions subsequently result in changes, they should not be viewed as a loss of authenticity, but rather as a negotiation in the preservation and adaptation of local knowledge. This paper aims to analyse changes in the form, materials, and maintenance practices of traditional Banjar houses as a process of knowledge negotiation from a decolonial perspective. This study was conducted in Banjarmasin using qualitative methods with a multiple-case design and oral history. Data were collected through observation, interviews, and documents. The data were analysed by categorising changes in materials, facades, spatial layout, and maintenance practices, then interpreted by linking those changes to the family's collective memory, the occupants' needs, and the owners' authority in determining the house's sustainability. The research findings indicate that 17 traditional houses (comprising 5 palimasan-type houses, 3 palimasan baanjung, 1 bubungan tinggi, 3 balai bini, 1 gajah menyusu, and 4 transitional types) that underwent repairs due to damage were restored through material adaptation, form transformation, spatial modernisation, and the continuation of maintenance practices. It can be concluded that traditional Banjar houses are living archives whose sustainability is determined not only by the integrity of their forms and materials but also by the continuity of values, practices, memories, and agency. In this regard, the decolonial perspective positions homeowners in the practice of house maintenance as producers of knowledge while simultaneously expanding the scope of this practice—from the authenticity of form and materials to the sustainability of local values, practices, and memories. Thus, this perspective emphasises adaptability, dialogue, and the autonomy of the homeowners.

Keywords: traditional house; living archive; local knowledge; maintenance practices; decolonisation; authenticity

INTRODUCTION

The study of traditional Banjar houses is related to the importance of architectural heritage and social memory (knowledge about how to build, use, maintain, repair, and pass on a house between generations). Currently, some traditional houses are still inhabited, and to maintain this function, this heritage is potentially subject to material damage (Mustaqima & Humaenib, 2025; Oktaviana et al., 2023), changes in family needs, limited original materials, maintenance

costs, pressures of modernisation, and changes in the urban environment. Related to this, studies on the physical changes in traditional Banjar houses show that changes in floor plan and spatial arrangement are dominant symptoms, accompanied by degradation or loss of building elements such as the house body, walls, roof, ornaments, and architectural details (Oktaviana et al., 2023). This situation highlights the urgency of documenting material traces, family memories, and ongoing maintenance practices. If the knowledge and experiences of the owners are not promptly recorded, research will only leave data on the final form of the building, while the process of change, reasons for repairs, and local decisions that shaped the house are at risk of being lost.

Previous studies on traditional Banjar houses have provided an understanding of their form, materials, technology, historical value, and management strategies (Wasita, 2022). Based on the Cultural Heritage Law (Anonymous, 2010), research on preserving and sustaining traditional Banjar houses tends to focus on authenticity for instance, the authenticity of form and materials. Studies of physical changes in Banjar houses between the inventory data conditions of the 2006–2009 period and the conditions in 2022 show changes in floor plans, a decline in the quality of building elements, and a tendency to layer or replace elements with other materials (Oktaviana et al., 2023). Still related to the floor plan, from an archaeological perspective, it is stated that the Banjar house is shaped like a bird's-eye symbol (Wasita, 2017). Other studies show that traditional Banjar houses are vulnerable to damage due to the use of wood materials and uncoordinated management by the government and community (Hartatik, 2016). At the regional scale, such as in Teluk Selong Ulu, this emphasises the importance of management involving the government, community, and various stakeholders by considering heritage zoning and local knowledge (Hartatik, 2016). Recent studies have explored the integration of Bubungan Tinggi facade elements with modern design as a form of sustainable architectural adaptation (Agusniansyah & Sarbini, 2024). Outside the Banjar context, studies on living heritage have shown that heritage sustainability depends on functional continuity, community relationships with place,

maintenance practices, and the heritage's ability to adapt to change (Chen & Wang, 2024). However, these studies have not adequately explained how homeowners interpret changes, select replacement materials, alter facades or spatial layouts, and produce knowledge through daily maintenance practices. The most crucial gap lies in the failure to interpret changes in traditional Banjar houses as a process of negotiating local knowledge and owner authority from a decolonising perspective. This paper focuses on this novelty by positioning traditional Banjar houses as living archives that record the relationship between materials, memory, maintenance practices, and local authority.

This study stems from the tension between two perspectives on the sustainability of traditional houses. On the one hand, preservation tends to be measured based on the integrity of form, the authenticity of materials, and architectural elements deemed authentic (Anonymous, 2010). On the other hand, the view is that a house that is still occupied will continue to be maintained and adapted to the family's needs, the condition of the materials, economic capabilities, and the demands of contemporary life. In this context, replacing materials, cutting certain parts, altering the facade, adding buildings to the rear, creating partitions or rooms, and using modern materials cannot be understood solely as a loss of authenticity. Rather, these changes also represent traces of the owner's decisions, knowledge, and experience in maintaining the house's sustainability. This perspective is relevant to the living heritage approach, which emphasises that conservation must reconcile heritage protection with the sustainability of the community's use and relationship to the place (Haselberger & Krist, 2022; Sun & Nakajima, 2023). However, this study goes beyond its relevance to the living heritage approach and instead incorporates a decolonising perspective. This perspective demands a further step, questioning who has the right to determine the meaning of authenticity, the value of heritage, and the forms of maintenance considered legitimate. This demonstrates that integrating local knowledge into a decolonisation perspective is not simply achieved by gathering information from the community, as power relations can still place expert or institutional knowledge as the primary measure (Yanou et al., 2023). Based on this issue, this paper

poses the following questions: How do changes in the materials, form, spatial layout, and maintenance practices of traditional Banjar houses reflect the negotiation of local knowledge? And how do homeowners act as knowledge producers in determining the sustainability of this heritage?

This paper is based on the argument that traditional Banjar houses need to be understood as living archives, not frozen artefacts from the past. This statement aligns with Isnaeni (2025) that local histories in Banda Neira are living archives. Their existence as living archives is realised through the continuity of use, maintenance, family memories, and the owners' decisions to maintain or adapt parts of the house. From a decolonising perspective, changes in material and form can be read as epistemic practices, namely how local communities produce, test, and transmit knowledge about their houses (Motala et al., 2021). This perspective shifts the measure of authenticity from physical integrity to the continuity of community values, practices, memories, and authority. This argument is important because focusing on the physical documentation of buildings risks erasing the history of change and ignoring the owners as the caretakers of the houses. According to Seman and Irhamna (2011), Banjar traditional houses comprise 11 types: Bubungan Tinggi, Gajah Baliku, Gajah Manyusu, Balai Bini, Balai Laki, Palimbangan, Palimasan, Tadah Alas, Cacak Burung, Joglo, and Lanting. Therefore, documentation of four of the eleven types of Banjar traditional houses, the Bubungan Tinggi, Gajah Manyusu, Balai Bini, Palimasan, added Palimasan Baanjung, and transitional houses (hybrid type) (Figs. 1-7) in Banjarmasin serves not only to record architectural changes but also to recognize the owners' knowledge as part of a heritage that needs to be relayed, studied, and considered in future preservation practices.



Fig. 1. Balai Bini House



Fig. 2. Bubungan Tinggi House



Fig. 3. Gajah Manyusu house



Fig. 4. Resembling a Palimansan House

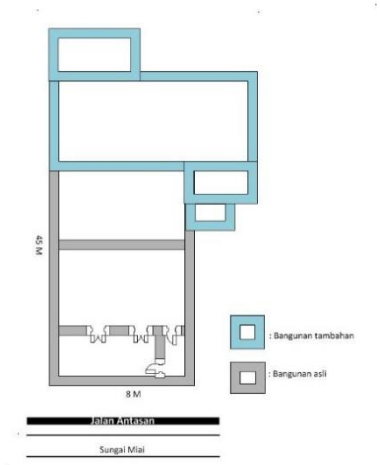


Fig. 5. Traditional house floor Plan



Fig. 6. Palimasan Baanjung house



Fig.7. House of Type

Research Method

This research employed a qualitative design with a multiple case study approach and oral history. The research was conducted in Banjarmasin, South Kalimantan, with the unit of analysis being a traditional Banjar house and its owner's knowledge of its history, changes, and maintenance practices. The research cases included Bubungan Tinggi, Palimasan, Balai Bini, and transitional houses that are still inhabited or still exhibit architectural characteristics Banjar. Cases and informants were selected purposively based on ownership criteria, maintenance history, and willingness to provide information. Informants included owners, residents, heirs, craftsmen, and community leaders.

Data were collected through architectural observation, semi-structured interviews based on oral history, focus group discussion (FGD), visual documentation, and document searches. Observations covered form, facade, structure, materials, spatial layout, damaged and replaced parts, and room additions. Interviews and FGD were used to reconstruct the construction history, inheritance, changes, reasons for repairs, material selection, and the meaning of the house according to the owner. Data were analysed thematically and descriptively-interpretively through case profiling, coding, grouping themes, and comparisons between cases. Referring to the thinking of Elliott and Timulak (2021), descriptive-interpretive understanding aims to represent the meaning of observations, both at the surface (descriptive) level and at a deeper, interpretive level. Furthermore, Siga et al. (2025) state that the main idea of descriptive-interpretive is to understand and explain in depth the subjective and contextual dynamics of cultural phenomena. In the context of this paper, the analysis includes material adaptation, form transformation, spatial negotiation, family memory, maintenance practices, and owner authority. Interpretation is conducted through a decolonising perspective to examine how owner knowledge plays a role in determining the authenticity and sustainability of the house. The data's validity was checked through two triangulation approaches. Source triangulation gathered information on the house's form by interviewing the owner/occupant, the builder, and community figures (Figs. 8, 9, 10, and 11). In contrast,

method triangulation combined interviews and observations to gather information about the house's condition.



Fig. 8. Interview with the owner (house type resembling a Palimasan)



Fig. 9. Builder house



Fig. 10. FGD with owner and resident of traditional house



Fig. 11. Banjar traditional house community sticker

Results And Discussion

Overall, field findings indicate the presence of 17 traditional houses, which are then used as data in this paper. The 17 houses and their descriptions can be

seen in Tables 1-5, which include traditional houses in Banjarmasin, physical change patterns, material patterns, form and spatial patterns, ownership and maintenance patterns, Mr Hal's house as a key case, and the themes of the cross-case analysis.

Table 1. Traditional houses in Banjarmasin

Code	House	Location	Main history	Mastery status	Character form	Main changes	Core Orientation
R1	Mr Sar	Kuin Utara	House purchased Abdul Samad, then inherited	Multi-heir; Mr. Sar as residents	Approach palimasan; one lost pier	The left platform was dismantled, Room dividers and warehouse, kitchen torn down, shingles zinc coated	Adaptation due to Economic needs, damage, and limited materials
R2	Mrs Muf	Kuin Utara	Built 1932 by Datu H. Junaid	Mastery family; Mrs Muf strive ownership	Palimasan baanjung	Room divider on pavilion, shingle roof replaced with zinc, partly floors and walls replaced	Maintaining shape as a tribute towards the family
R3	Mrs Mah	Kuin Utara	Purchased 1931 by Hajah Kamsiah	Family heir; used as a shared house	Palimasan baanjung	Separate kitchen, window, changed since 1930. The roof becomes	Defending the house As a gathering space and family identity

						zinc/galvalum, walls and the floor is repaired	
R4	Mrs Mur	Kuin Utara	Built 1942; reno-vated 1946 based on document colonial	Mastery the fa-mily that centra-lized through purchase of rights Inheritance	Similary palimasan	Left corner cut in 1946, the roof and girders replaced	Treatment is affected family will and cross-utilization generation
R5	Mr Bus	Pangeran Subdistrict	House inherited from H. Nasrun	Multi-heir	Palimasan baanjung	The kitchen was demolished, room divider, part damaged roof and floor or replaced	Repair pen-ding due to conflict interests and cost limitations
R6	Mr. Muj	Pangeran Street	House inherited from Datu H. Dahlan	Multi-heir; division not yet finished	Bubungan Tinggi	The kitchen collapsed, part of the courtyard affected by road widening, room divider, roof replaced	Changes accepted because of need; the form of survival between limitations and inherited knowledge
R7	Mrs Hiek	Pangeran Subdistrict	Bought by Grandpa	Still in the name	Palimasan baanjung	Room divider on the	Maintains shape

			Aman, around 1950s	mother; inheritance rights not finished yet		promenade, bathroom and toilet made separately, shingles replaced with zinc	because ownership status and perception about preservation
R8	Mrs Mun	Pangeran Subdistrict	Built by H.M. Tahir during the colonial period	Complex inheritance rights; used as a kindergarten and business	Balai Bini	Kitchen section cut and connected with business building, partition class/room, roof and floor replacement	Changes are limited by joint ownership and needs utilization
R9	Mr Ham and Mr Mas	Kuin Utara	Bought by Datu Rotan, around 1950s	One house devided between two ownwers	Gajah Manyusu	Half of the house was demolished and integrated into the new house; the anjung was lost.	Conflicting decisions of the owners resulted in fragmentation of the heritage.
R10	Mrs Yah	Kuin Utara, Pangeran Street	Purchased by Habib Ali Al-Idrus	Family-controlled; Possibility passed on to son.	Balai bini	Business building connected to platform, roof, girder, and the	Care is understood as a way of maintaining the house is still in use

						floor is repaired	
R11	Mr. Thal Arab	Antasan Kecil Barat village	Built 1923 by the H. Salim Said Thalib	Owner by Mr. Thal Arab and family	Similary Palimasan with element Palimbangan	Boarding room in pali-dangan and kitchen, room bathroom/toilet added, roof zinc coated	Adaptation or function housing and economy
R12	Mr Ga	Antasan Keci Barat Village	The house has been around since the Japanese era; it was rented out.	Owner does not live on site; maintenance is entrusted to relative	Hybrid; Partly similary Palimasan	The beams and floors are replaced, Rooms are added, The layout does not fully follow the typology.	Livability-oriented improvements. Efforts are being made to preserve the form.
R13	Mrs Rah	Sungai Jingah Village	House purchased family; Early history is not well known	Family-controlled; Ever made restaurant	Roof there is of Gajah Manyusu element; Unidentified house floor plan	Room, bathroom, toilet, and kitchen have been extended; Ceramic tiles are used in the bathroom and toilet.	The house is utilized as identity and business attraction.
R14	Mr Ras	Sungai Jingah Village	Built 1925 by H.A. Ganikamar	Inheritance rights; Proposed to	House ancient/ build warehouse	Relatively intact form; Care through painting and	Conservation is encouraged heritage

				be cultural heritage		limited replacement	identity and possibility of recognition formal
R15	Mr Sha	Sungai Jingah Village	Built 1928; passed down to the family	Multi-heir family; Mr. Sha as guard and resident	Palimasan with variation Palimbangan	Relatively intact shape; Roof zinc coated; Limited cleaning	Restricted care status ownership and resident authority
R16	Mrs Fa	Sungai Jingah Village	The house bult around 1925 by Datuk Sahari	Multi-heir family	Balai bini	Room partition in the raised section; entire roof clad in corrugated iron; floor partially sloping.	Maintaining shape because of family inheritance and public attention
R17	Mr Hal	Across the Mosque street, Sungai Jingah Village	New house built 1933 after house baanjung previously damaged	Sole ownership in the name of Mr. Hal following the purchase of his siblings' rights.	Hybrid does not include the eleven standard types.	Relatively intact form; patchwork roof repairs and zinc sheeting along the ridge.	Low-cost maintenance to preserve assets intended for sale.

The table above does not show houses falling into two simple categories: sustainable and unsustainable. Rather, each house demonstrates continuity and change. The basic form may be maintained, but materials may be replaced; the

spatial layout may change, but the identity the house is maintained, or the ownership status prevents maintenance, but the occupants understand the house as an inheritance.

Physical Change Patterns

Physical changes to traditional Banjar houses are generally visible in the roof, wall panels, floorboards, facade, and layout. These changes can be seen in the following table.

Table 2. Patterns of physical changes in traditional houses

Dimensions change	Field data form	Analytical meaning
Roofing material	Shingles coated or replaced with corrugated zinc/galvalum	Availability, cost, durability, and technical requirements defeating the demands of material authenticity
Walls and floor	Old boards covered with new boards, thinner boards, girders replaced, the floor is given new material	Treatment takes place through substitution, not recovery of original materials
Façade and form	The platform is cut, the building is connected, the roof developed, certain part are removed	The shape of the house is negotiated with land awnership, economic functions, and security needs
Spatial	Room dividers in the pavilion or palidangan, werehouse, class,	Traditional spaces are geared towards privacy, education, business, and domestic needs

	room kost, bathroom/toilet	
Part behind	Kitchens were torn down, cut, enlarged, or replaced new building	The most adaptive part because it is related to home service and expansion functions
Function of the house	Residence, gathering room, warehouse, kindergarten, restaurant, boarding house, aand businesses	The house remains alive because it continues to be used, even though its social function change
Passive maintenance	Postponing repairs, partial cleaning, temporary sealing of leaks	Cost, access, and ownership limitations impact maintenance capacity
Maintenance strategic	Purchasing inheritance rights, maintaining shape, painting, coating the roof, avoiding structural changes	Owners develop local strategics to maintain benefits and sustainability of the house

Material Pattern

The most consistent finding concerns changes to the roof. Shingles are the most frequently damaged part due to exposure to heat and rain. In some cases, the shingles are coated with zinc; in others, the entire roof is replaced with corrugated iron or galvalume. These replacements cannot be interpreted simply as an inability to maintain the original structure. The data suggests that original materials are difficult to obtain, more expensive, or no longer adequate to keep the home safe and habitable.

Material changes are also evident in the floors, beams, walls, and partitions. In Mrs Mah's house, for example, the original, thicker, sturdier floorboards sit alongside thinner replacement boards. In Mr Sar and Mrs Mah's house, new wallboards are used to cover the old, decayed sections. Materially, these replacements reduce material continuity; but socially, they demonstrate the owners' efforts to maintain the home's function.

Form and Spatial Patterns

The most obvious changes in form are seen in the houses of Mr Sar, Mrs Mah, Mrs Mur, and Mr Ham–Mr Mas. In Mr Sar's house, the left porch was lost because part of the land was sold and then used by the new owner. In Mrs Mur's house, a 1946 document shows that the removal of the left porch had been planned through a renovation permit. In the Mr Ham–Mr Mas house, the division of ownership resulted in half of the old house being demolished and integrated with the new building. Spatial changes are generally more flexible than changes to the main structure. Plank or plywood partitions are used to create rooms in the anjung and palidangan. Similar changes are found in the homes of Mrs Muf, Mrs Mah, Mrs Mun, Mr Thal Arab, Mrs Fa, and Mr Sar. Because the partitions can be dismantled, the owners appear to distinguish between the primary form, which they consider essential, and the interior spaces, which can be adapted.

This pattern suggests that owners don't always maintain the entire house. They make choices: the roof and main form are retained as long as they can afford it, while the interior and rear spaces can be modified to suit their living needs.

Ownership and Maintenance Patterns

Table 3 shows the conditions and strategies of traditional house owners and residents in carrying out maintenance.

Table 3. Patterns of ownership and maintenance of traditional houses in Banjarmasin

Mastery pattern	Main case	Impact on care

Sole proprietorship or centralized control	Mr. Hal; Some of it is in Mrs Mun's case.	Decisions are faster, but the orientation of care depends on owner's goals
Multi-heir by agreement	Mrs Mah, Mrs Fa, Mrs Yah	The shape tends to be maintaindes, but major repairs are required agreement
Multi-heir without agreement	Mr Bus, Mr Muj, Mr Sha	Repaairs are delayed or only done minimally
Physically fragmented ownership	Mr Ham-Mr Mas	House can be split, dismantled, or integrated with new building
The occupant is not the full owner	Mr Sar, Mrs Hiek, Mr Ras	Residents care within the limits of mandate, ability and certainty of rights
Owner does not reside or live in the house converted	Mr Ga, Mrs Mun, Mrs Rah	Maintenance follows the needs of new functions, not merely integrity of form

Ownership status is one of the most important findings because it determines who can make decisions regarding the house. Homes with multiple heirs are not always better protected. In Mr Bus's house, uncertainty about the division of rights caused each party to delay repairs, fearing that the costs would not be commensurate with the benefits received. In the house of Mr Ham and Mr Mas, divided ownership resulted in two different decisions: one party kept the old house, while the other built a new one.

Conversely, sole ownership does not automatically result in culturally valuable preservation. Mr Hal's house is relatively well-maintained through the use of sturdy wood materials and limited repairs, but the primary motive for his maintenance is to maintain its asset value due to its potential sale. This is crucial from a decolonisation perspective: actions that physically appear to be

preservation are not always driven by heritage awareness, while actions that appear to diminish authenticity may be undertaken precisely to maintain continued use.

Mr Hal's House as a Key Case

Mr Hal's house deserves to be included as a distinct case from houses that can be directly classified into the Banjar typology. The specifics of Mr Hal's house can be seen in Table 4.

Table 4. Continuity of Form and Conservation Dynamics

Aspect	Mr Hal's house data	Interpretation
Time development	The current house was built in 1933 after the previous house the previous baanjung was damaged	Indicates the existence of a rebuilding cycle, not the existence of a building that always remains unchanged
History ownership	Passed down through his grandfather and father, Mr. Hal purchased his siblings' shares.	Sole control is obtained through negotiation and the consolidation of rights.
Form	Does not conform to the eleven standard types (Seman & Irhamna., 2011); features a combination of a gabled roof, an L-shaped layout, and the Gajah Manyusu element.	Shows the limitations of the fixed typological classification of Syamsiar Seman
Change construction	No major structural changes in shape; Just patchwork.	Continuity of form takes place through limited maintenance
Material	The majority use ironwood; Some shingles are replaced and zinc coated ridge	The owner maintains the building's performance through minimal intervention
Care motive	Maintaining assets at low cost because the is possibility of sale	Conservation takes place through economic considerations, not just cultural awareness

Epistemic value	Homes cannot be forced into one standard type	Local knowledge and hybrid forms are challenging rigid architectural classification

Mr Hal's house holds a crucial position in the article's argument because it demonstrates that non-conformity to typology does not equate to a lack of heritage value. This house does not fully resemble a palimasan, palimbangan, or gajah manyusu. However, its form captures the local process of combining roof, space, and construction elements. If judged solely on standard typology, this house would easily be dismissed as "not traditional." When read as a living archive, this non-conformity becomes data on the creativity, adaptation, and historical changes in Banjar architectural knowledge.

Mr Hal's house case also expands the meaning of decolonisation. Decolonisation not only means giving the owner space to speak, but also reexamining the scientific categories used to recognize or reject a house as heritage. In this context, Mr Hal's house can be described as an old house or a hybrid traditional house, without necessarily forcing it into one fixed type (Fig. 7).

Cross-Case Analysis Theme

The following table illustrates the synthesis of physical and non-physical adaptations within the standard typology of traditional Banjar houses.

Table 5. Taxonomy in local knowledge formation and architectural policy

Theme	Case evidence	Analytical findings
Authenticity is negotiated	Shingles replaced with zinc, old boards covered with new boards	Material authenticity is not always a top priority compared to safety and function.
The main form is maintained selectively.	Mrs Muf. Mrs Fa, Mr Sha, Mr Hal	The owner distinguishes between the parts that are considered important and changeable parts.

The interior space is adaptive	Room divider on the pavilion/palidangan	Traditional house are kept alive through adaptation towards domestic needs
Ownership influences action	Mr Bus, Mr Muj, Mr Ham-Mr Mas	The relationship between rights and responsibilities determines physical sustainability of the house
Family memories beco-me source of legitimacy	Mrs Mah, Mrs Mur, Mrs Fa	Homes are cares for as a testament, a source of pride, an identity, or gathering function
Local knowledge is not always formal	Family stories, residents' experiences, craftsmen, treatment decisions	Knowledge is passed down through practice, not just document
New function extends home life	Kindergarten, restaurant, buseness, boarding house, warehouse	Conservation can be a sustainability strategy, despite changing space
Formal classification has limits	Mr Hal, Mr Ras	Hybrid forms require more reading open than standard typology

Discussion

The study results show that the pattern of change in traditional Banjar houses is not uniform, but rather shows a spectrum of adaptations, such as covering the roof with corrugated iron shingles, replacing floorboards with different sizes or thicknesses, dividing the anjung and palidangan into rooms, adding bathrooms and toilets, cutting the kitchen, and even demolishing parts of the house and combining them with new buildings. These changes are influenced by damage from heat, rain, humidity, moss, mould, material age, availability, cost, functional needs, ownership status, and family decisions. In some cases, such as Mrs Yah's house, the basic form and spatial divisions remain relatively intact, but the new building is

connected to the anjung to facilitate access to the shop; in the cases of Mr Ham and Mr Mas, differences in decisions between owners led to part of the old house being demolished and replaced by a concrete structure; while the houses of Mr Ras and Mr Sha demonstrate that the house's status as a collectively owned heritage actually limits constructive change. These findings demonstrate that maintenance goes beyond simply preserving objects, but also creates new layers of history through owner decisions, family memories, economic functions, and usage practices. These findings align with the living heritage approach, which views heritage sustainability as a dynamic relationship between place, materials, use, and community, rather than as the preservation of objects isolated from life (Chen & Wang, 2024; Fogarasi et al., 2026; Sun & Nakajima, 2023). However, unlike previous studies of Banjar houses that primarily mapped physical changes, the authenticity of materials, or management strategies, this study demonstrates that these changes also involve the production of local knowledge and the negotiation of the owner's authority in determining what to retain, replace, or alter.

Based on the data presented above, four main patterns are evident: first, maintenance occurs as a material adaptation. The replacement and addition of different house materials is a response to damage, cost, availability, and technical needs. These actions may seem like a degradation of authenticity, but as a social practice, they represent the owner's knowledge of how to maintain a safe and habitable home.

Second, changes in form and spatial layout are selective. The objects retained are usually primary forms that hold identity, aesthetic, memory, or public recognition value. Conversely, interior and rear spaces are more easily transformed to create bedrooms, storage rooms, classrooms, bathrooms, toilets, business spaces, or boarding rooms. This pattern demonstrates that a house's sustainability is not determined by its complete unchanging state, but by its ability to adapt without losing its entire identity.

Third, ownership is the social infrastructure of preservation. Shared ownership of homes faces coordination issues, delays, and conflicts of interest. Single ownership allows for faster decisions, but those decisions can be driven by

economic motives, such as Mr Hal's planned sale. Therefore, ownership status needs to be analysed not as administrative information, but as a factor shaping maintenance practices.

Fourth, the homeowner is the producer of knowledge about the house. This knowledge includes when the roof should be replaced, what materials are available, which parts can be modified, which rooms need to be added, and how the house continues to be used by the family. From a decolonising perspective, these decisions should be read as authoritative local knowledge, not simply deviations from external conservation standards.

Furthermore, interpretatively, changes to traditional Banjar houses are interpreted as pragmatic, affective, and social sustainability strategies. Replacing shingles with corrugated iron, for example, not only marks the loss of the original material but also demonstrates the occupants' responses to leaks, cost, availability of materials, and the need to maintain the house's livability. Similarly, dividing anjung or palidangan into rooms does not merely alter the traditional spatial layout but demonstrates the house's adaptation to needs for privacy, family expansion, room rentals, or economic functions. The meaning of change is also determined by the owner's social position: houses whose ownership is divided among heirs tend to experience limited repairs because decisions must be negotiated, while a single owner can make decisions more quickly, including maintaining the house as an asset for sale. This interpretation broadens the understanding of living heritage: sustainability does not necessarily mean retaining all physical elements, but can also mean maintaining the house's ability to continue to be used, maintained, and given meaning by its community (van Knippenberg et al., 2022). Within a decolonising framework, homeowners are not simply implementers of preservation policies, but rather knowledge holders who assess material conditions, choose repair technologies, and define the boundaries between acceptable changes and those deemed to diminish the house's character. Thus, authenticity cannot be understood solely through a comparison between the current condition and the ideal form of a Banjar house, but also through the history of decisions and the meanings that accompany each change.

When compared with previous studies, these findings have both similarities and important differences. Research on the physical changes to traditional Banjar houses has shown that floor plan changes, element damage, material replacement, and the loss of building parts pose threats to their existence (Oktaviana et al., 2023). Studies on the existence of Banjar traditional houses also highlight the vulnerability of wood materials and the need for management involving various stakeholders (Hartatik, 2016), while the management model in Teluk Selong Ulu emphasises the importance of zoning, institutional strategies, and community involvement (Hartatik, 2016). The findings of this study confirm these issues, particularly roof damage, limited original materials, conflict or unclear inheritance, and the need for spatial adjustments. However, this study differs in that it does not stop at classifying the level of authenticity or assessing that changes do not necessarily conflict with the building's sustainability as heritage (Djabarouti, 2022). Fieldwork suggests that houses that are materially no longer fully original can still retain continuity in value, function, memory, and maintenance practices. This aligns with studies of traditional houses that place community customs and sustainable practices as crucial factors in house sustainability (Susanti et al., 2022), studies of social mapping of traditional Javanese houses that link documentation to community knowledge (Suprapti et al., 2022), and conservation studies that critique expert-driven approaches and emphasise local understanding of heritage (Labadi, 2024). This is where the novelty of this research lies: houses Banjar traditional architecture is read as a living archive that brings together material changes, family memories, care practices, ownership status, and owner authority in a decolonial analysis. This research does not deny the importance of material authenticity, but rather demonstrates that authenticity is one layer of value, not the sole basis for determining a house's sustainability.

The implication of this research is the need to shift the orientation of traditional Banjar house preservation from a purely object-centred approach to one that is based on the house, owner, and community. First, each house needs to be documented as a living archive by recording ownership history, material

changes, spatial changes, old photographs, family stories, and maintenance practices before damage or subsequent changes erase the data. Second, preservation programs need to distinguish between changes that diminish the house's core character and adaptations necessary to keep the house safe, healthy, and habitable. Third, the government and preservation agencies need to develop repair guidelines that allow for the controlled use of replacement materials, while still documenting the original materials, the reasons for replacement, the location of the changes, and their impact on the house's value. Fourth, owners, heirs, builders, community stakeholders, and the government need to be involved in preservation decisions through a dialogic process, especially for houses with dual ownership, such as the cases of Mr Ham and Mr Mas. This approach aligns with the concept of community co-creation, which shifts conservation from object-centred planning to community-centred planning (Sun & Nakajima, 2023), while also addressing criticisms of heritage management that remains top-down despite the pretence of community participation (Labadi, 2024). Therefore, the most urgent action is not to freeze all houses in one ideal form, but rather to build a system of documentation, adaptive maintenance, ownership mediation, and shared decision-making that recognizes homeowners as knowledge producers and holders of authority over the sustainability of their heritage.

Conclusion

The most important finding of this research is that changes to traditional Banjar houses do not always result in a loss of heritage. Replacing shingles with zinc, using alternative boards of different sizes or types, dividing the anjung and palidangan into rooms, adding bathrooms and toilets, cutting down the kitchen, and merging the old house with the new structure do reduce the integrity of the original form and materials. However, at the same time, these actions allow the house to continue to be occupied, used, maintained, and inherited. In other words, a house that is no longer materially entirely "authentic" can continue as a heritage through its value, memory, function, and ongoing maintenance practices. The most important finding is that the sustainability of traditional Banjar houses is not primarily determined by the ability to retain all original materials, but by the

owner's ability to negotiate changes without completely severing the house's connection to the family's history, identity, and memory. In some cases, shared ownership status is even more crucial than preservation awareness, as maintenance decisions must be negotiated among heirs; conversely, individual decisions can precipitate alterations or partial demolition of a house

Conceptually, this research contributes to the understanding that traditional Banjar houses can be treated as living archives, namely archives that not only store information in material form, but also record use, changes, owner decisions, family memories, and maintenance practices. This concept expands the understanding of authenticity from the integrity of form and material to the sustainability of local values, functions, practices, memories, and authority. From a decolonising perspective, this research positions homeowners as knowledge producers, not merely informants or recipients of preservation policies. Methodologically, this research demonstrates the importance of combining architectural observation, material documentation, oral history, ownership history, and interviews regarding maintenance decisions. This integration allows researchers to read physical changes as social and epistemic processes. Thus, this research's contribution lies in connecting studies of traditional architecture, living heritage, family history, maintenance practices, and decolonising knowledge within a single analytical framework. This approach aligns with a shift in research perspective that positions social mapping, community participation, and the co-production of knowledge as integral parts of living heritage conservation.

This study has several limitations. First, the case study was limited to traditional houses in Banjarmasin, so the findings cannot be generalised to all Banjar houses and communities in South Kalimantan. Second, some house histories rely on the memories of owners and occupants, while construction documents, old photographs, renovation records, and proof of ownership are not always fully available. Third, this study primarily emphasises the owner's experience and the condition of the building, so it does not fully examine the perspectives of builders, government agencies, community stakeholders, and conservation experts on the differences between preservation, restoration,

maintenance, and adaptation. Fourth, this study did not assess the long-term technical performance of replacement materials, such as corrugated iron, new boards, ceramics, or concrete, on building sustainability. Therefore, further research needs to expand the locations and number of cases, reconstruct building histories through digital archives and documentation, and develop participatory research involving owners, heirs, builders, government, and communities. Future research should also test adaptive preservation models that can combine material authenticity, building safety, occupant needs, economic sustainability, and owner authority. The development of community-based digital archives is also important so that home changes, care knowledge, and family memories can be documented and passed on.

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