

## *Austronesian Houses: The Architectural Characteristics Linkage Between Batanghari Hulu Traditional Houses with Tanah Datar's Rumah Gadang*

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**Abstract:** *The region of Central Sumatra (West Sumatra, Eastcoast of Sumatra, Bengkulu, and Jambi) has shared history from the kingdom periods of Kantoli (Akhandalapura), Sriwijaya, Dharmasraya, Malayupura, Pagaruyung, Johor-Riau, and Jambi-Palembang. The houses in the Batang Hulu region seem to have similarities with the Rumah Gadang in the Rantau and Darekof Tanah Datar areas. There is no research that has tried to study the linkage among them. Therefore, this study tried to investigate their architectural characteristics linkage. The qualitative method is used by the houses characteristics comparing from the data collected in the field. The study resulted a strong indication of characteristics linkage between the houses, in term of space, shape-form, and style.*

**Keywords:** *architectural characteristic; traditional architecture; minangkabau; rumah gadang; jambi*

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## **Rumah Austronesia: Karakteristik Keterkaitan Arsitektur Rumah Adat Batanghari Hulu dengan Rumah Gadang Tanah Datar**

**Abstrak:** Wilayah Sumatera Tengah (Sumatera Barat, Pantai Timur Sumatera, Bengkulu, dan Jambi) berbagi sejarah yang sama dari jaman kerajaan Kantoli (Akhandalapura), Sriwijaya, Dharmasraya, Malayupura, Pagaruyung, Johor-Riau, and Jambi-Palembang. Rumah-rumah di wilayah Batanghari Hulu tampak memiliki kemiripan dengan Rumah Gadang di wilayah Rantau dan Darek di Tanah Datar. Belum ada penelitian yang berusaha mendiskusikan keterkaitan antara rumah-rumah tersebut. Maka, penelitian ini berusaha untuk menyelidikiketerkaitan karakteristik arsitektur antara rumah-rumahitu. Metode kualitatif digunakan dengan membandingkan karakter rumah-rumahitu dari data yang diterima di lapangan. Studi ini menghasilkan adanya indikasi keterkaitan karakteristik yang kuat antara rumah-rumah itu, baik secara spasial, wujud-bentuk, dan gaya.

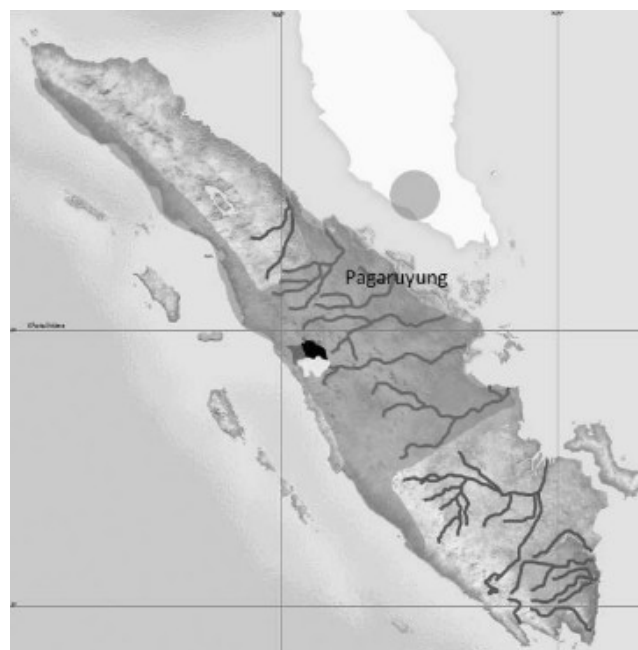
**Kata Kunci:** karakteristik arsitektur; arsitektur tradisional; minangkabau; rumah gadang; jambi

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## 1. Introduction

The region of Central Sumatra had experienced a history of many old kingdoms. This area has also been generally inhabited by Old Malays, such as: Minangkabau, Kampar, Kuantan, Rokan, Talang Mamak, Sakai, *Suku Anak Dalam* (*Orang Uluor Orang Rimba* or *Suku Kubu*), Penghulu, Batin and Kerinci. They have the same character in language and culture, such the leadership system called *Kedatuan* or *Panghulu* (an Old Malay system) and *Perbatinan* (an Islamic Malay system from Johor-Riau or *Orang Laut*), and the matrilineal kinship system.

On the Karang Brahi Inscription in Merangin, which is one of the Srivijaya inscriptions (Coedes, 2014), shows that the Batanghari Hulu has already inhabitants. After Dharmasraya was defeated by Kandis, this region had a double ruler, namely the Jambi and Malayapura. King *Aur Kuning*, who was the king of Dharmasraya fled and moved his power to downstream of Batanghari region, while *Datuk Ketumanggungan* (*Akarendrawarman*) and *Datuk Parpatih Nan Sabatang* (*Adityawarman*) moved to the Saruaso (*Surawasa*) region and established the Malayapura Kingdom. Based on the contents of the *Kitab Undang-Undang Tanjung Tanah, Kozok* (2006) discovered that in the 14th century the Batanghari Hulu region was a subordinate area of the Minangkabau. In *Tambo Alam Kerinci* (Zakaria, 1984), it is also told about the dual power in this region. One of Jambi's customary law is "*Sendi Undang yang Disebut Teliti*", which means the law came from Minangkabau (*Adat Perpatih*), that adapted to the Jambi Realm. In the period of Islamic Sultanates in Sumatra, both also made agreement for the second time based on "*Adat Bersendi Syarak, Syarak Bersendi Kitabullah*" law (Margono et al., 1984).



**Figure 1.** Pagaruyung Center and its Territories  
Source: Cortesão 2018 and Navis 1984

Tomé Pires has noted (1,512 - 1,515 AD), that Jambi and Palembang are led by a Javanese Moor where the interior was Minangkabau region (Corteseo, 2018). Thomas Dias (1,683 AD) made a travel mission to Central Sumatra whereat that time was commonly recognized as the regions of West Sumatra, Jambi, Riau, Tapanuli, and Bengkulu that belongs to Pagaruyung region (Reid, 2014). According to Locher-Scholten (2003), migrants from Minangkabau then moved to this area to find a source of gold, which they later called the Panghulu People. This migration continued until the era of Dutch rule (VOC), in which the region was included in the West Coast Residency of Sumatra (Hadler, 2010). During that time, the customs in this region were influenced by Minangkabau customs.

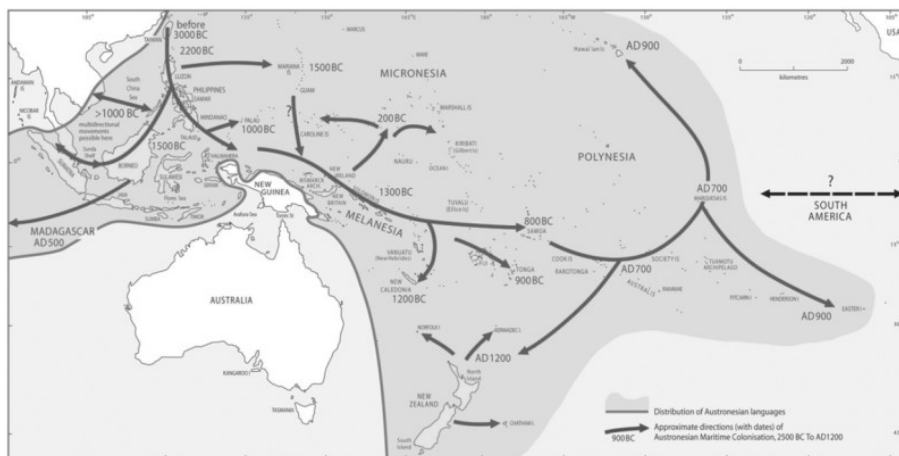


Figure 2. Austronesian Migration, adapted from Bellwood et al. 2011  
Source: Benton 2012

Austronesian houses have a sharing of cultural traditions by a borrowing process among and around neighboring groups that share an usual linguistic ancestry (Fox, 2006). The relationship between the Minangkabau and Batanghari Hulu regions is very close in history and culture, especially in linguistics (see Tabel 1) – Malayic branch of Malayo-Polynesian subgroup in Austronesian family, that came from Greater North Borneo (Nothofer, 1985 and Anderbeck, 2008). Batanghari Hulu is directly close to the Luhak Tanah Datar (*Darek-Rantau* or *Hulu-Hilir*). Both traditional houses at a glance have similarities, but on the other hand there are also differences. How is the characteristics linkage amongst the traditional houses in Batanghari Hulu with the Tanah Datar’s *Rumah Gadang*?

Tabel 1. Numbers in Minangkabau, Suku Anak Dalam (SAD), Batin, Jambi

English	Minangkabau	Suku Anak Dalam	Batin	Jambi
<i>One</i>	(Sa-)Ciek = sebiji = one seed <i>Old and High:</i>	Slai = sehelai = one sheet	(Sa-)Ciek = sebiji = one seed	Sikok = seekor = one tail

English	Minangkabau	Suku Anak Dalam	Batin	Jambi
	Aso	(Sa-)Ciek Sikuk	<i>Old and High</i> :Eso	<i>Old: Eso High:</i> Satu(-nggal)
<i>Two</i>	Duo	Duo	Duo	Duo
<i>Three</i>	Tigo	Tigo	Tigo	Tigo
<i>Four</i>	(A-)mpek	Mpat	(E-)mpek	Empat
<i>Five</i>	Limo	Limo	Limo	Limo
<i>Six</i>	(A-)nam	Nom	(E-)nam	Enam
<i>Seven</i>	Tujuhah	Tujuh	Tujuhah	Tojo
<i>Eight</i>	(Sa-)Lapan	Delapan	Lapan	Lapan
<i>Nine</i>	Sambilan	Sembilan	Sambilan	Sembilan
<i>Ten</i>	Sapuluah	Spuluh	Sapuluah	Sepolo

Source: Khamdevi, 2021

## 2. Research Method

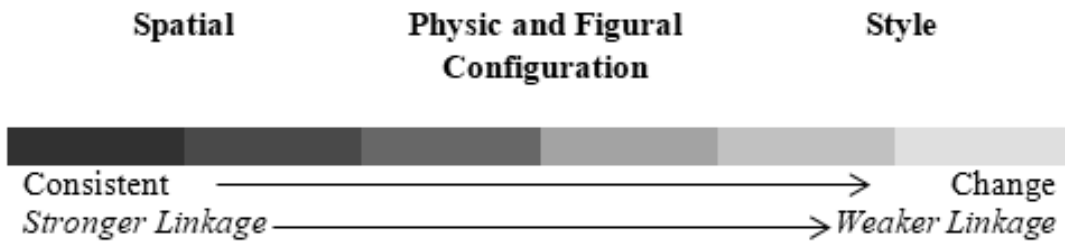
The research is conducted in several location, such as Abai in Dharmsraya, Kampung Baruh and Tanah Periuk in Batanghari Hulu, and Siulak Gedang and Sungai Penuh in Kerinci, see Figure 1. The Tanah Datar’s *Rumah Gadang* roled as the main reference to compare other houses. Collected data will be analyzed into three architectural characteristics systems; spatial, physical and figural quality, and stylistic (Habraken, 1988).



**Figure 3.** Reserch Location  
Source: Google Maps, 2021

A dwelling, or in this case a traditional house, is a 'social construction' or 'cultural artifact' by a people collectively in that time that described their social pattern, lifestyle, and cultural context. In the 'space syntax' study, the 'genotype' of a building is the space, the 'phenotype' of a building is the shape-form, and

the common complex semantics productions in phenotype groups of a building is the style. The space tends to be unchanging, the shape-form may be unchanging or relatively changing, meanwhile styles could change, vary, or evolve (Khamdevi, 2020a, and 2020b), see Figure 2.



**Figure 4.** The Degrees of The Architectural Characteristics Linkage  
Source: Khamdevi, 2020a and 2020b

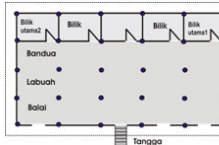
The types of Rumah Gadang style are at least divided into three, each of which indicates its Luhak area (Luhak Nan Tigo). The Gajah Maharam style is more identified with Luhak Tanah Datar, the Surambi Papek or Ayahserek style is more identified with Luhak Rather, while the Rajo Babandieng style is more identified with Luhak Limopuluh Koto (Couto, 2008).





**Figure 5.** Tanah Datar's Style, Agam Style, and Limopuluh Koto Style (left to right)  
Source: Couto, 2008

Here are the *Rumah Gadang's* characteristics in Tanah Datar in Table 2.

<b>Characteristics Systems</b>		
<b>Spatial</b>	Space	<i>Balai&gt;Labuah&gt;Bandua&gt;Bilik</i>
	Pattern	River or Qibla
	Orientation	Publik > Semi Publik > Semi Privat > Privat
	Hierarchy	Gable roof
<b>Physical&amp; Figural Quality</b>	Physical form	Bamboes, Woods, Palm Fibers
	Materials	



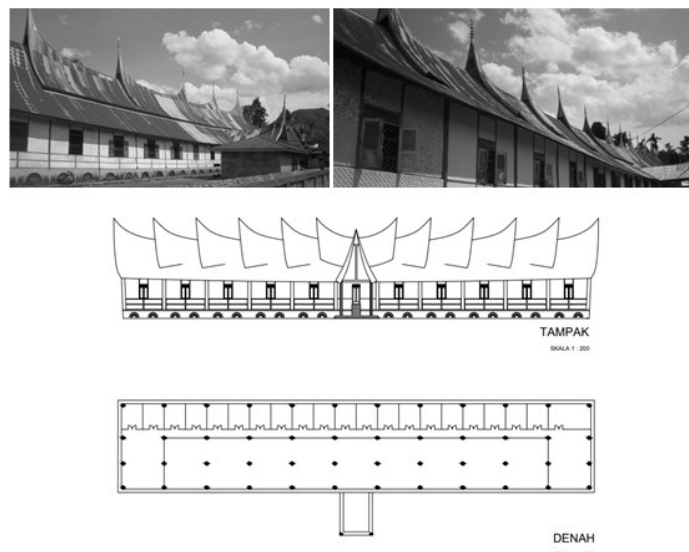
	Space Barrier	Bamboes and Woods
<b>Stylistic</b> 	Roof	<i>Lancharaor Lancang</i> Boat Buffalo Horn
	Column	1 <i>Tonggak Tuo</i> (Main Post)
	Openings	Woods
	Stairs	7-11 steps (Odd Number of Steps)

Source: Khamdevi, 2021

### 3. Result and Discussion

#### 3.1. Abai, Dharmasraya

*Rumah Gadang* in Abai is a longhouse type, a community house of a clan (*suku* or *kaum*), that is different from the ordinary houses in the Minangkabau area which are multi-family houses (*samande*). Vellinga in Schefold et al. (2003), argued that the houses in Abai had only appeared since the 1950s. However, the reality is different from what happens in the field. These houses have existed for a long time. They are also found in Tanah Datar, Solok, and South Solok, especially the house in Sulit Air which was recorded to have been renovated around the 1870s AD (Dhavida, 2005). The longhouse is identical to the clan group from Old Malay, especially the Dharmasraya Kingdom before it was split into two powers. This building shows the linkage with traditional houses in Borneo, which is evidence of Bornean traits in Sumatra.



**Figure 6.** *Rumah Gadang* in Abai  
Source: Khamdevi, 2021

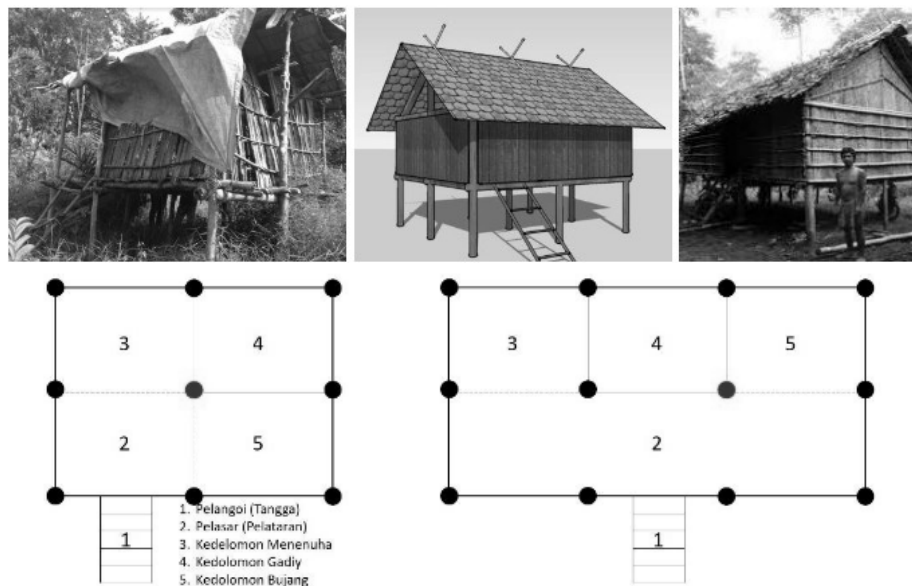
The *Rumah Gadang* in Abai has the most numbers of *Biliks* (bedrooms), which reaches up to twentyone rooms. This building develops organically based on the addition of family members from right to left. Spatially, the room division of this house is the same as the *Rumah Gadang* in general. The first room from the front is called *Balai* as deliberation and ceremonial room, then next there is *Labuah* as a living room, then behind it are *Biliks* with a front space called *Bandua*. The bedroom on the far right is for the oldest family member. Between the rooms other than the *Biliks* there is a *Bandul* wood to separate the space. The orientation of the building follows the direction of the river and is sometimes adjusted to the Qibla direction.

The roof and building are in the form of a *Lancang* boat with *Gonjong* decorations on the top of the roof. The building is built with woods and bamboes material. The roof is now made of zinc, but in the past palm fibers were used. The main post (*Tunggak Tuo*) is located on the far right-front side.

### 3.2. Suku Anak Dalam (SAD)

The *Suku Anak Dalam* live nomadic life (Khamdevi, 2021). Their house is called *Rumah Godong*, a single family house type. We enter the house through stair with five to seven steps (*Pelangoi*). We arrived at front room (*Pelasar*) as a living room. Behind it there is *Biliks* or *Gelubughs* (bedrooms). The rooms divided by *Bendul* woods. The orientation of the building followed the river direction or sunrise.

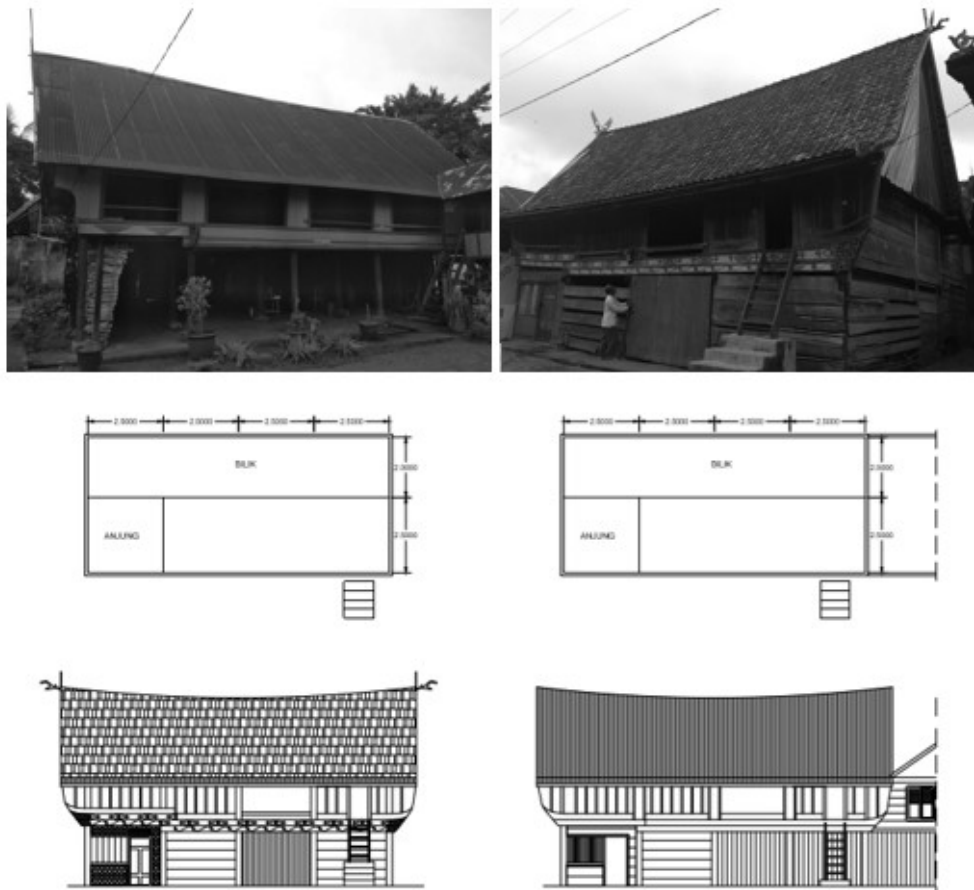
The main post (*Tiang Tuo*) is located at right-front of the house. The building made by woods, bamboes, tree bark, and rattan bonds. The roof made by *Benal* or *Serdang* leaves. The roof is gable type roof that is called *Lipat Kajang*. On the top of the roof there are several wooden crosses to hold the roof cover. There is only one door and no windows.



**Figure 7.** *Rumah Godong* of *Suku Anak Dalam*  
Source: Khamdevi, 2021

### 3.3. Batin People: Kampung Baruh and Tanah Periuk

The Orang Batin are thought to have come from Kerinci who had a strong Minangkabau cultural influence that brought by *Suku Penghulu* in Jambi (Margono, 1984). Their house is called *Rumah Gedang* (*Rumah Kajang Lako*). Their houses in Kampung Baruh and Tanah Periuk (see Figure 3) began with a stair with seven steps. It located to the right of the building into the *Pelamban* that functions as a receiving room or terrace or porch. After opened the door, we entered to *Gaho* which functions as a transition room to the inner house, where there is a storage room for farming equipment, household appliances, and a kitchen. In the inner house, there are several spaces which are divided as follows: *Masinding* which functions as a guest room or public, *Tongah* for the host room, and *Balik Menalam* (*Bilik*) for the bedrooms for women. Between the *Masinding* and the *Tongah*, there is a low barrier that called *Bendul Jati*. To the left of the inner house, there is *Balik Melintang* (*Anjung*) for *Datuks* (tribel chiefs). Above the house, there is a room for storing valuables that called *Penteh*, while the lower room for storing wooden blocks and livestock is called *Bauman*.



**Figure 8.** *Rumah Gedang* in Kampung Baruh and Tanah Periuk  
Source: Khamdevi, 2021



The house tends to face the northwest (*Qibla*). This stilt house has the shape of a transversal rectangular. The roof has so many names, such as *Lipat Kajang*, *Kajang Padati*, *Potong Jerambah*. Its shape came from *Kajang* roof of canoes, where the ridge is slightly curved with both ends with carved crossbars. The material used on the roof was once a palm fiber with two folds, but now only a zinc roof. While the use of material on the wall is a wooden board, but its position is rather tilted like a boat wall. The bedroom walls are woods. The doors and windows are woods. The posts (columns) of the house stand on pedestal stones. There is one main post that called *Tiang Tuo*; a first post on the right from the center. There are four column rows to the back and six column rows to the side.

### 3.4. Kerinci People: Siulak Gedang and Sungai Penuh

The *Rumah Gedang* in Siulak Gedang and the *Rumah Larik*(rowhouses) in Sungai Penuh begins with a stair with seven steps that located on the right or left side of the building, see Figure 4. After that, there is a reception room before entering the house. Inside the house, there are front room called *Umah Luwo* (Lah Lue) or outer room (*Luar*) which functions as a living room or public. To his left there is *Panganjon* (*Anjuang*) for the *Datuks*. Behind the front room, there is *Umah Dalea* (*Lah Lumer*) or Inner room (*Dalam*) as the host room and bedrooms. At the back, there is an additional room that called *Dapeu* (kitchen). However there is also a kitchen inside *Umah Dalea*. Above the house there is a room for storing valuables that called *Ateh* (*Atas*) or upper room.

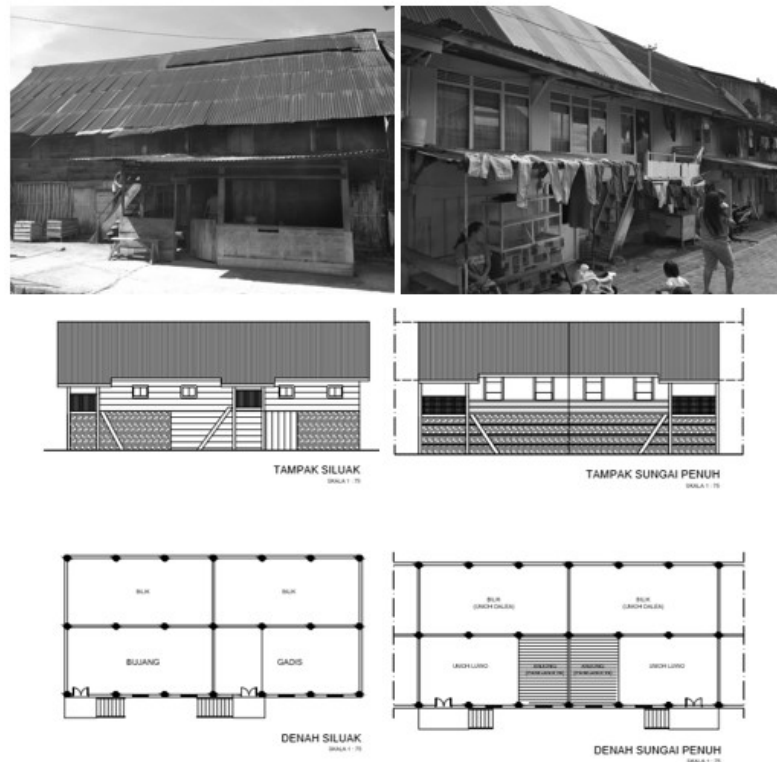


Figure 9. *Rumah Gedang* in Siulak Gedang and *Rumah Larik* in Sungai Penuh  
Source: Khamdevi, 2021

The house tends to face the northwest (*Qibla*). This stilt house has the shape of a transversal rectangular. The roof has so many names, such as *Lipat Pandan* and *Lipat Kajang*. Even so, there was once *Rumah Larik* with Minangkabau's *Bagonjong* roof in Pulau Tengah, Kerinci, see Figure 5. The material used on the roof was once a palm fiber with two folds, but now only a zinc roof. While the use of material on the wall is a wooden board, but its position is rather tilted like a boat wall. The bedroom walls are woods. The doors and windows are woods. The posts (columns) of the house stand on pedestal stones. There is one main post that called *Tiang Tuo*; a first post on the right from the center.



**Figure 10.** Pulau Tengah, Kerinci  
Source: KITLV, 2018

#### 4. Conclusion

The study results showed a common linkage characteristics amongst the traditional houses in Batanghari Hulu and *Rumah Gadang* in Tanah Datar, see Tabel 3. Among them, they share strong linkage in genotype (spatial). Their phenotype (shape-form) show slightly differences, especially the materials. The style of their roof have distinction, but showed cultural development among them.

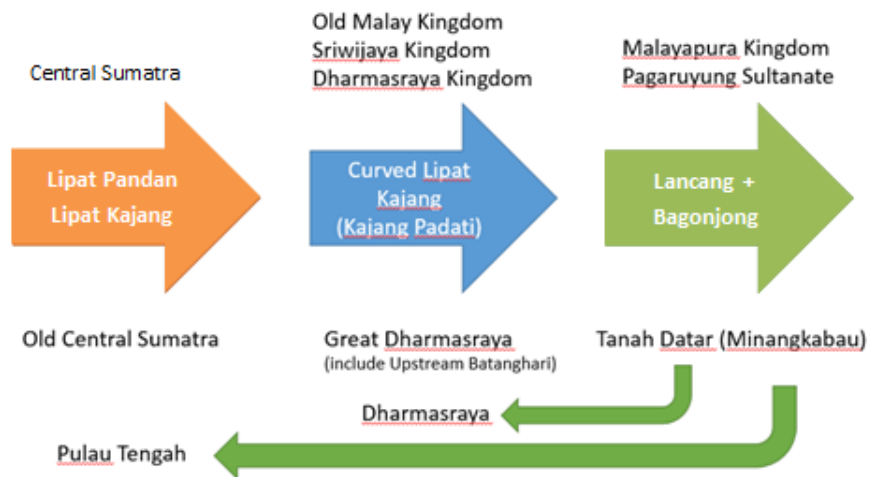
**Table 3.** The Characteristics Linkage amongst traditional houses in Hulu Batanghari with Tanah Datar's house

Characteristics Systems		Abai	SAD	Batin	Kerinci
Spatial	Space Pattern	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Orientation	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Hierarchy	✓	✓	✓	✓
Physical & Figural Quality	Physical Form	✓	✓	✓	✓
		✓	✓**	✓*	✓*
	Materials				

	Space Barrier	✓	✓	✓	✓
Stylistic	Roof	✓	✓**	✓*	✓**
	Column	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Openings	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Stairs	✓	✓	✓	✓

Source: Khamdevi, 2021

By relating them to their history, the study resulted a building developmental relationship. The *Lipat Pandan* and *Lipat Kajang* are the initial roof type of Central Sumatra, then developed into curved *Lipat Kajang* (*Kajang Padati*). Then it developed again into *Lancang* roof, see Figure 6.



**Figure 11.** Temporary Hypothesis of the evolution of houses in region of Central Sumatra: Batanghari Hulu and Tanah Datar

Source: Khamdevi, 2021

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