

Symbolism and Spiritual Wisdom: Bridging Nature, Culture, and Identity in Dayak Architectural Heritage

Mujiyono¹, Ni Nyoman Rahmawati², Putri R.N. Hakim³, Asyifa Nadia Jasmine⁴, I. Made Kastama⁵, Derson⁶, I. Made Suyasa⁷, I Wayan Salendra⁸ and Muhammad Abdillah⁹

Abstract

Traditional Dayak architecture has persisted despite numerous challenges to the continuity and cultural identity embodied in both the physical structures and their symbolic ornamentation. These buildings incorporate spiritual symbols transmitted through linguistic codes and symbolic forms, which are learned and communicated in everyday life. This paper maps the symbolic complexities found in physical structures rooted in cosmological foundations, which continue to be practiced and preserved. Data gathered through observation and secondary sources reveal the profound spirituality embedded within these architectural forms. Four primary expressions of spirituality in traditional Dayak buildings are identified: the connection between structure and nature, the utilization of spiritual symbols, the presence of sacred spaces, and the concept of balance. These traditional structures serve as conduits for the transmission of values integral to tribal identity. This study underscores the necessity for more comprehensive research to examine the symbolism of traditional buildings within a broader context of physical and social relationships.

Keywords: *Spirituality, Traditional Heritage, Cultural Buildings, Traditional Houses, Ethnic Culture, Dayak.*

INTRODUCTION

The spirituality inherent in traditional Dayak buildings represents a critical yet understudied facet of Dayak culture in Kalimantan, Indonesia. Structures such as *rumah panjang* (literally: longhouses) and *lumbung padi* (rice barns) transcend their utilitarian functions, embodying a profound spiritual relationship between humans and nature (Rong & Bahauddin, 2023). This interconnectedness is fundamental to maintaining ecological and spiritual equilibrium, which in turn supports environmental sustainability and human well-being. However, insufficient understanding and appreciation of the spiritual significance of these traditional buildings threatens their preservation. This neglect jeopardizes not only the physical structures but also risks the loss of invaluable cultural heritage and spiritual wisdom, integral to the identity and social fabric of Dayak communities (Zain et al., 2021). Thus, studying and raising awareness about the spirituality of traditional buildings is crucial for preserving the cultural legacy of the Dayak peoples for future generations.

Research on the spirituality of traditional Dayak buildings, encompassing both functional and symbolic aspects, has been conducted but reveals significant gaps. Previous studies can be categorized into three main areas: (1) the symbolism of spiritual meanings in the architecture and design of traditional Dayak buildings (Ningrum & Soebijantoro, 2023; Sumiatie, 2021); (2) religious practices and rituals associated with these structures (Kurniawati et al., 2024; Lestari et al., 2022; Nugraha & Wardani, 2021); and (3) the function of traditional Dayak buildings as conduits for communication with the spiritual realm and ancestral spirits (Affrilyno, 2020;

¹ Tampung Penyang State Hindu Institute, Palangkaraya, Indonesia, Email: mujiono5745@gmail.com, (Corresponding Author)

² Tampung Penyang State Hindu Institute, Palangkaraya, Indonesia

³ IA Scholar Foundation, Yogyakarta, Indonesia

⁴ Universitas Gadjah Mada, Yogyakarta, Indonesia

⁵ Tampung Penyang State Hindu Institute, Palangkaraya, Indonesia

⁶ Tampung Penyang State Hindu Institute, Palangkaraya, Indonesia

⁷ Tampung Penyang State Hindu Institute, Palangkaraya, Indonesia

⁸ Tampung Penyang State Hindu Institute, Palangkaraya, Indonesia

⁹ Universitas Islam Negeri (UIN) Raden Fatah, Palembang, Indonesia

Agustin et al., 2021). These studies highlight that the cultural symbolism concerning concepts of balance and harmony with nature in traditional Dayak buildings still requires specific attention. These aspects are crucial as they reflect the deep ecological and spiritual relationships inherent in Dayak identity and environmental stewardship. Consequently, there is an urgent need to analyze how these traditional buildings embody and facilitate Dayak communities' connection to their origins and how they maintain their spiritual values for the continuity of their cultural identity.

This study posits that traditional buildings embody value, history, and architectural richness that reflect values and spiritual existence transcending the material dimension. Spirituality manifests when these edifices serve as nexus points between generations and their ancestors, symbolizing life's continuity. This research addresses gaps in extant literature by examining how the spiritual values embedded in traditional Dayak buildings reflect a harmonious relationship between humans and nature. Each architectural element, including ornaments, carvings, and spatial arrangements, potentially encapsulates spiritual messages that elucidate human existence, our relationship with nature, and the supernatural realm (Hendri et al., 2024). This study focuses not only on the preservation of traditional buildings but also on the comprehension and appreciation of their spiritual significance.

The paper aims to map the spiritual dimensions of traditional buildings that serve as central symbols in Dayak society. Several dimensions are explored: *First*, the harmonious relationship between the building and nature, evidenced through the use of natural materials and arrangements that consider ecological balance. *Second*, symbols that honor Dayak traditions, where each element carries spiritual meaning. *Third*, sacred spaces utilized for worship ceremonies as mediums of communication with ancestors. *Fourth*, the concept of balance in the structure and layout of buildings that reflects the sustainable philosophy of Dayak society. These four objectives form the foundation of this study, facilitating a deeper exploration of traditional Dayak buildings' concepts, focusing on their function and symbolism in terms of spirituality and cultural identity.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The culture and spirituality of the Dayak ethnic group are intricately intertwined with their traditional architecture, exemplifying the continuity of cultural heritage in Kalimantan. A *rumah panjang* (literally: longhouse) or *rumah betang* (sacred house) transcends its function as mere shelter (Zain et al., 2021), serving as a physical embodiment of Dayak spiritual beliefs and social structure (Mario & Widagdo, 2020). Every element of these traditional buildings, from orientation to intricate carvings, carries symbolic meanings that reflect the harmony between humans, nature, and the divine (Dove, 2017; Salleh et al., 2024; Montasir et al., 2024). Preserving these structures is not solely about maintaining historical artifacts but about sustaining living traditions and spiritual practices that define Dayak identity (Eilenberg, 2004). This integration of spiritual and physical realms underscores the Dayak worldview, where all aspects of life are interconnected.

While extensive research has been conducted on traditional buildings, primarily focusing on mapping their distribution and function, these studies often emphasize physical and utilitarian aspects, such as the communal dwelling function of longhouses (Beynon, 2013). However, insufficient attention to the symbolism and spirituality embedded in the architecture has led to an incomplete understanding of Dayak cultural values. Symbolism and spirituality are fundamental to Dayak culture, with buildings serving not only as residences but as mediums for expressing beliefs and spiritual practices (Zain & Andi, 2020). A holistic comprehension of Dayak cultural values requires a thorough investigation into the intrinsic symbolism and spiritual dimensions embodied within their traditional architecture, highlighting these structures' significance as profound expressions.

Previous studies indicate that traditional buildings, such as longhouses, are beginning to deteriorate. Distribution maps of longhouses in Kalimantan illustrate their spread and physical conditions (Russell, 2014). Many centuries-old structures now face threats from neglect and environmental changes. While documentation of these buildings is crucial for tracking their physical existence, it often fails to address the spiritual and symbolic aspects that form their essence (King, 2017; Fernando et al., 2023; Muassomah, 2023; Hidayat, 2024). Therefore, preserving the essence of traditional Dayak buildings requires documentation and appreciation of both their physical presence and their spiritual and symbolic dimensions.

This research also examines the functionality and dysfunctionality of traditional buildings as cultural heritage. Waterson (1996) identifies how some longhouses continue to function as community and ceremonial centers, while others experience dysfunction due to social and economic changes. The longhouse's role as a center of social and cultural life underscores the importance of traditional buildings in maintaining Dayak cultural identity (Hendri et al., 2024). Conversely, when these buildings no longer serve their original purposes, broader societal changes and dysfunctions may occur. Strengthening the original functions of traditional buildings is crucial for preserving the cultural identity and cohesion of Dayak communities.

The impact of modernity on the existence and continuity of cultural heritage has been a significant research focus. Modernization often negatively affects the preservation of traditional buildings (King, 2017; Santoso et al., 2023). King's study demonstrates that modernity frequently leads to the destruction and neglect of traditional structures, replacing them with new buildings lacking equivalent cultural value. This transformation threatens the sustainability of cultural heritage and severs the connection between younger generations and their ancestral traditions. Addressing the challenges posed by modernity is essential to ensuring the preservation and continuity of cultural heritage embodied in traditional Dayak buildings.

Despite extensive research, there remains insufficient attention to spirituality and how traditional buildings encapsulate ideas about human relationships with each other, nature, and the divine (Abdullah & Afriadi, 2024; Airlangga PH et al., 2024; Hakim et al., 2024). Helliwell (2001) emphasizes that spirituality is crucial in understanding the significance of traditional buildings. However, many studies do not deeply integrate this aspect. Traditional Dayak buildings serve not only as residences or community centers but as physical manifestations of complex spiritual relationships. Ignoring this aspect results in a significant loss in understanding Dayak culture holistically.

METHODOLOGY

This research investigates the spirituality of traditional buildings within Dayak communities in Kalimantan. In the context of traditional architecture, spirituality is a crucial element reflecting the relationship between humans, culture, and the surrounding environment. The spirituality of traditional buildings not only expresses the community's beliefs and values but also serves as a symbol of cultural identity and continuity. The issue of continuity and discontinuity in the spirituality of traditional buildings is significant as it illustrates how spiritual values are preserved or may evolve over time. Continuity can indicate the sustainability of traditions and cultural identity, while discontinuity can reflect social, political, and economic changes impacting a community.

The selection process for traditional buildings within Dayak communities involved three stages: (1) identification of Dayak communities still utilizing traditional buildings; (2) determination of buildings to be studied based on age, function, and spiritual value; and (3) consultation with traditional leaders and community members to ensure the relevance and validity of the selected buildings. These steps were taken to ensure that the chosen buildings are truly representative and relevant to the research objectives.

This study employs a descriptive qualitative research method, utilizing data triangulation techniques including field observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. The qualitative approach was chosen for its capacity to provide deep insights into the spiritual function and meaning of the traditional buildings, and its relevance in understanding the importance of preserving old buildings for the cultural identity of Dayak communities. Field observations were conducted to map the existence of old buildings, their usage, functions, and meanings attributed by the local communities. Interviews with traditional leaders and Dayak community members were subsequently conducted to understand the spiritual significance of these traditional buildings. Documentation involved photography and field notes. This method captures the nuances and complexities of spirituality that might not be revealed through quantitative methods.

Data were categorized into three areas: the distribution of traditional buildings, their function, and their spirituality. Observational data collection techniques provided direct evidence of how buildings are used and interpreted by the community. The stages of observational data collection included direct observation of the traditional buildings and their environments. In-depth interviews with key informants, including traditional leaders, building caretakers, and community members, were conducted to gain perspectives on the spiritual

significance and function of the buildings. The interview process involved identifying key informants with deep knowledge of the buildings and traditions, preparing an interview guide that covers questions about the history, function, and spiritual significance of the buildings, and conducting face-to-face interviews to obtain rich and detailed data.

Data analysis was conducted using an interpretive model involving three stages: restatement, description, and interpretation (Hakim et al., 2024). This model was chosen to gain a deeper and more comprehensive understanding of the spirituality of traditional buildings, allowing exploration of the Dayak communities' cosmology behind their spiritual practices. Restatement involved representing and summarizing the data to ensure accurate understanding; description involved identifying patterns and themes in the data, such as continuity and discontinuity of spirituality in the use of the buildings; and interpretation involved giving meaning to the data by linking it to the cultural and social context of the Dayak communities. This analysis is critical for identifying patterns of continuity and discontinuity in the use and meaning of the buildings.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The traditional Dayak buildings in Kalimantan transcend mere architectural structures; they are profound embodiments of spiritual beliefs, cultural heritage, and communal life of the Dayak peoples. The Dayak tribes and indigenous communities, primarily inhabiting the interior regions of Kalimantan, have deeply integrated spiritual traditions into various aspects of their daily lives, including their architectural practices. Table 1 delineates four manifestations of spirituality in traditional buildings as cultural heritage of Dayak communities. These manifestations are intrinsically linked to two fundamental elements of human existence: the surrounding natural environment, which engenders a responsibility for stewardship, and the divine realm, which serves as the source and spirit of strength for the tribal communities to persevere in a challenging environment. These four spiritual dimensions are detailed in the following exposition.

Table 1. Spirituality of Traditional Dayak Buildings

Relationship with Nature	Spiritual Symbols	Sacred Spaces	Concept of Balance
Natural materials	Sacred totems/animals	Prayer rooms or altars	Symmetrical placement of windows and doors
Sun orientation	Circles/spirals	Meditation rooms	Use of symmetry in carvings
Building temperature	Small statues	Storage spaces for sacred objects	Use of entrances
Natural colors	Rising sun/crescent moon	Storage spaces for harvest	Use of wood or stone
Ecosystem balance	Leaves, flowers, or birds	Central spaces in longhouses	Placement of statues or carvings on both sides of the space

Buildings as Manifestations of the Relationship with Nature

Figure 1 illustrates traditional Dayak buildings that exemplify the intimate relationship between humans and nature. The architecture is designed to integrate seamlessly with the environment, utilizing natural materials such as wood and bamboo. The positioning and orientation of these structures are meticulously considered to maintain ecological equilibrium. These edifices maximize air circulation and natural light, embodying harmony and wisdom in environmental interaction. Several traditional Dayak buildings demonstrate a thoughtful approach to harmonious relationships with their surroundings.





Figure 1. Dayak Houses Utilizing Natural Materials

Source: Authors' documentation

Figure 1 reveals that the use of building materials sourced from the local environment, such as *ulin* (*Eusideroxylon zwageri*) wood, bamboo, or *ijuk* (*Arenga pinnata* fibers), is intrinsically connected to the natural habitat of the Dayak communities. *Firstly*, the construction of traditional Dayak buildings prioritizes strength, particularly through the use of *ulin* wood. This choice is predicated on its durability and resistance to local environmental conditions such as humidity and heavy precipitation. *Ulin* wood, known as *kayu besi* (literally: ironwood) within Dayak communities, is dense and hard, rendering it resistant to temperature fluctuations, humidity, and xylophagous insects, enabling it to endure for centuries. The utilization of these natural materials demonstrates the intergenerational preservation of knowledge within Dayak communities as a symbol of cultural identity and customs (Rico et al., 2022).

Secondly, the architectural design considers solar orientation to maximize natural illumination, a crucial aspect of house construction. Lighting in traditional Dayak houses is engineered to effectively utilize natural light, ensuring adequate air circulation and illumination. The strategic placement of doors and windows in relation to the sun's trajectory accommodates illumination needs. The construction of high roofs with apical ventilation allows for uniform sunlight penetration throughout the dwelling. The use of wooden and bamboo walls facilitates air circulation and sunlight ingress (Amin et al., 2021).

Thirdly, the use of *rumbia* (*Metroxylon sagu*) leaves and *sirap* or shingles (thin slices of *ulin* wood) for roofing aids in maintaining the building's internal temperature. *Rumbia* leaves are advantageous due to their local availability. The application of *rumbia* leaves and shingles in traditional Dayak house construction optimizes heat absorption and mitigates solar heat gain (Manurung, 2017). These materials are easily installable and possess high artistic value. *Rumbia* leaves exhibit excellent *diurnal* heat absorption and nocturnal discharge, ensuring stable room temperatures. Similarly, roofs constructed from *ulin* wood shingles demonstrate superior heat absorption properties, maintaining cool interiors during daytime. Shingles are lightweight, available in diverse shapes, possess high artistic value, and are exceptionally durable, lasting for decades or even centuries (Dove, 2017).

Spiritual Symbols

Traditional Dayak buildings are often imbued with spiritual symbols, reflecting the continuity and evolution of ancestral values. Each architectural element, from form to ornamentation, encapsulates profound meanings related to a community's beliefs and rituals. These symbols function as conduits between the physical and spiritual realms, creating sanctified spaces that venerate ancestors and the cosmos. While certain aspects of tradition may evolve over time, the core spirituality is preserved through judicious adaptation. Consequently, these edifices stand as testaments to a spiritual journey spanning generations. The following shows some of the spiritual symbols still prevalent in these structures.



Figure 2. Spiritual Symbols Used in Buildings

Figure 2 demonstrates that the Dayak communities place high value on carvings depicting sacred animals or totems, often engraved on wooden structures such as traditional houses. These carvings frequently feature the hornbill bird, believed to possess supernatural powers. The profound spiritual significance of these carvings is thought to confer fortune, protection, and success upon the Dayak peoples. Sacred animal carvings on traditional houses are considered to ward off malevolent spirits and provide protection for the inhabitants. These carvings not only embody aesthetic values but also hold spiritual significance that reflects authentic Dayak cultural values.

Symbolic Motifs

Geometric motifs are integral elements in Dayak life, transcending mere aesthetic art to function as visual symbols. These motifs reflect the Dayak peoples' cosmological understanding and signify their strong social status in relation to their beliefs in cosmic forces, as illustrated in Figure 3.



Figure 3. Symbolic Motifs of Dayak Life

Figure 3 demonstrates that the spiral geometric motif symbolizes human beliefs about the spiritual journey of individuals and their ancestors, as well as the relationship between humans and nature within the framework of *Tri Hita Karana* (literally: three causes of well-being). The spiral motif also represents growth, the evolution of consciousness, and the journey towards enlightenment, concepts that have been transmitted through generations in Dayak communities. Beyond their spiritual significance, these symbolic boundaries serve social functions, such as demarcating entranceways and territories, which help maintain order and structure within the community (Nabela et al., 2023). The use of symbolic boundaries in traditional Dayak buildings reflects the profound relationship between humans and the spiritual realm (Wardani et al., 2019). These boundaries function not only as physical elements but also as symbols of protection, balance, and cultural identity. Through adherence to these boundaries, the Dayak peoples maintain harmony between the physical and spiritual worlds, preserving their cultural heritage for future generations.

Symbolic boundaries extend beyond the physical structure of buildings to the spatial arrangement within traditional houses. Hartanto (2023) notes that the main room used for traditional ceremonies or family gatherings is often delineated from private spaces by special markers. The use of symbolic boundaries is further exemplified in traditional Dayak ceremonies. For instance, purification rituals or requests for permission from ancestral spirits often precede entry into sacred spaces. These rituals aim to ensure respect for the symbolic boundary between the physical and spiritual realms. Symbolic boundaries are also manifested in the form of markers or statues placed around buildings (Rico et al., 2022), often depicting mythological figures or deities revered by the Dayak peoples.

Sacred Spaces

Traditional Dayak buildings incorporate sacred spaces that reflect both the continuity and evolution of ancestral spirituality. Each space serves a specific function in rituals and beliefs, acting as venues for worship and traditional ceremonies. The structure and layout of these spaces are designed to bridge the physical and spiritual realms, fostering harmony between humans and nature. Despite temporal changes, the spiritual essence of these spaces remains preserved and transmitted through generations. Thus, traditional buildings serve as markers of an ongoing spiritual journey across generations, with the heirloom room, or *bilik betang*, being the most significant space.

The *bilik betang* plays a crucial role in preserving the cultural and spiritual heritage of the ancestors. According to the Encyclopedia of Dayak Tribes, it is the most significant part of a Dayak traditional house, serving as a repository for heirlooms, traditional relics, and historical artifacts of high spiritual and cultural value. These heirlooms, passed down through generations, are considered guardians of the particular community's survival and prosperity. The *bilik betang* is typically located in the central or sacred part of the traditional house, as this

area is considered the locus of energy and spiritual strength. Consequently, the heirlooms stored here are believed to receive protection from ancestral spirits and deities revered by the community.

Examples of heirlooms stored in the Bilik Betang include traditional weapons such as *keris* daggers, spears, and *mandau* swords, symbolizing ancestral strength and bravery; jewelry like necklaces, bracelets, and earrings made of precious metals and stones, representing wealth and social status; ancestral statues crafted from wood or stone, symbolizing reverence for ancestors and animist beliefs; and ancient manuscripts containing historical records, ancestral genealogies, and traditional rituals inscribed in the unique Dayak script. Beyond its storage function, this room also serves as a venue for traditional ceremonies and religious rituals performed to seek protection and blessings from ancestral spirits (Rico et al., 2022).

Hans Schärer's research reveals that the *bilik betang* acts as a conduit between the human world and the spirit realm. Here, community elders offer prayers and seek ancestral protection for the safety and well-being of the community. The existence of the *bilik betang* demonstrates the Dayak communities' commitment to preserving their ancestral cultural and spiritual heritage, serving as a reminder of their identity and origins, and as a source of strength and inspiration for future generations. The importance of the *bilik betang* in Dayak culture underscores the inseparability of tradition and spirituality, highlighting the profound significance of these sacred spaces in maintaining the cultural continuity and spiritual vitality of the Dayak tribes.

Manifestation of the Concept of Balance

The manifestation of balance in traditional Dayak buildings reflects both the continuity and discontinuity of ancestral spirituality. Each architectural element, from structure to layout, is designed to create equilibrium among humans, nature, and the spiritual realm. The use of natural materials and harmonious spatial arrangements embodies this principle of balance. While some aspects of these buildings have evolved over time, the core concept of balance remains intact, rendering traditional buildings tangible representations of a living and evolving philosophy of equilibrium. Key manifestations of balance in these buildings include:

Symmetrical placement of windows and doors, creating visual harmony in the design.

Symmetrical carvings and decorations.

Utilization of symbolic boundaries (e.g., entrances, fences) to delineate physical and spiritual realms.

Symmetrical spatial layouts fostering internal harmony.

Balanced use of materials, combining hard (e.g., wood, stone) and soft (e.g., woven bamboo) elements.

Symmetrical arrangement of furniture and decorations, such as statues or carvings.

Incorporation of symbols depicting duality (e.g., sun and moon), representing the balance between life and death.

Strategic planting of trees to create ecological balance and harmony with nature.

The aforementioned elements demonstrate the manifestation of balance in traditional Dayak buildings, reflecting both the continuity and discontinuity of ancestral spirituality. Each architectural component, from structure to layout, is meticulously designed to create equilibrium among humans, nature, and the spiritual realm. The symmetrical placement of windows and doors establishes visual harmony, while the use of symmetry in carvings and decorations reinforces this principle. Symbolic boundaries, such as entrances and fences, delineate the physical and spiritual worlds, creating spiritually balanced spaces. Symmetrical spatial layouts foster a sense of harmony, complemented by a balanced use of materials, juxtaposing hard elements like wood or stone with softer materials such as woven bamboo in the building's construction.

The arrangement of furniture and decorations adheres to the principle of balance, exemplified by the strategic placement of statues or carvings on opposing sides of a room. Symbols depicting duality, such as the sun and moon, represent the equilibrium between life and death (Zain et al., 2021). The strategic planting of trees around the building creates ecological balance and conveys harmony with the surrounding environment (Wardani et al., 2019). Although certain aspects of these buildings have evolved over time, the core concept of balance

remains preserved, rendering traditional Dayak buildings tangible representations of a living and evolving philosophy of equilibrium. In conclusion, traditional Dayak buildings transcend their function as mere dwellings, serving as manifestations of a complex and enduring spiritual relationship among humans, nature, and the spiritual world. They embody a profound philosophy of balance that continues to evolve while maintaining its fundamental principles, thus preserving the cultural heritage and spiritual legacy of the Dayak peoples.

Visual Balance in Dayak Building Design

The traditional buildings depicted in Figure 4 serve as venues for diverse ritual ceremonies that encompass all stages of Dayak life. These structures host a range of spiritual practices, including purification and blessing rituals for new dwellings prior to occupancy, welcoming ceremonies for guests, invocations for ancestral protection, and celebrations of significant life events such as weddings, births, and career milestones. Consequently, the traditional Dayak house transcends its role as a mere profane space, assuming the status of a sacred domain imbued with profound spiritual elements.



Figure 4. Concept of Building Balance

Figure 4 illustrates the traditional designs of Dayak buildings, such as *rumah betang*, *rumah panjang*, and *rumah bubungan* (high-roofed house), renowned for their aesthetic appeal and uniqueness. A distinctive feature of Dayak architecture is the symmetrical placement of windows and doors. This design philosophy not only considers functional aspects but also aesthetics, reflected in the symmetrical arrangement of architectural elements. This symmetry is crucial for creating visual balance, which carries deep philosophical and spiritual significance beyond its aesthetic appeal. Traditional Dayak houses function not only as family dwellings but as sanctuaries for perpetuating lineage, traditions, culture, art, and ancestral teachings. Consequently, meticulous calculation is essential in the construction and spatial arrangement of these houses.

The cosmological basis of nature, reflecting the balance and harmony of natural elements such as solar rotation, river flow, and symmetrical room layout according to familial lineage from eldest to youngest facing east, also called *pambelum*, is fundamental in house construction (Zain & Andi, 2020). The Dayak communities' local wisdom in house construction is steadfastly upheld to ensure environmental balance and family safety, blessed by the ancestors (*tatek tatum*). Different building materials are integrated into a structure and system that signify an interconnected unity in every building, mirroring the interconnectedness in social and religious life, despite their differences (Darmadi, 2017; Hakim et al., 2023). This practice realizes balance and harmony in life.

The implication of cultural heritage continuity among the Dayak peoples is that their architecture not only reflects cultural identity but also contributes to community cohesion and resilience. The spiritual and symbolic elements embedded in the architecture play a critical role in maintaining cultural continuity and resisting external pressures. This interpretation aligns with literature emphasizing the role of traditional architecture in fostering cultural resilience and identity among indigenous communities worldwide. This study enriches understanding

by focusing on the spiritual and symbolic dimensions of Dayak architecture, complementing existing research that often emphasizes functional and aesthetic aspects. Unlike previous studies that may overlook deeper cultural meanings, this research underscores the importance of spiritual and symbolic dimensions in architectural studies.

To sustain the tradition of Dayak architecture, future research should adopt an interdisciplinary approach combining anthropological, architectural, and environmental perspectives. Methodologically, comprehensive data collection should integrate qualitative insights with quantitative measures of cultural impact and sustainability. Conceptually, policies should prioritize community-led conservation efforts and educational initiatives to empower the Dayak community in preserving their architectural heritage amidst contemporary challenges.

CONCLUSION

The significant findings of this study reveal that the traditional Dayak buildings in Kalimantan are profound manifestations of the communities' spiritual beliefs, cultural heritage, and communal life. These structures are designed not only to meet physical needs but also spiritual ones, utilizing natural materials that harmonize with the environment and designs that consider air circulation and natural lighting. The spiritual symbols, sacred spaces, and balance concepts embedded in the architecture demonstrate how the Dayak peoples preserve their ancestral values. Every architectural element, from materials to layout, reflects a philosophy of living in harmony with nature and the spiritual world, ensuring the continuity and adaptation of ancestral values amidst changing times.

Conceptually, this study makes a significant contribution to understanding how traditional architecture can serve as a medium for preserving and transmitting spiritual and cultural values. Methodologically, it emphasizes the importance of a holistic approach that integrates architectural analysis with anthropological and sociocultural perspectives. Theoretically, it enriches the literature on vernacular architecture by highlighting the often-overlooked spiritual dimension in modern architectural studies. By identifying elements that reflect balance, symbolism, and sacredness, this study opens new insights into how traditional buildings play a role in maintaining cultural identity and spirituality among indigenous communities.

However, this study has several limitations that future research should address. *Firstly*, it focuses solely on traditional Dayak buildings in Kalimantan, without considering the regional variations that might exist among Dayak subgroups. *Secondly*, while the qualitative approach provides deep insights, quantitative data is needed to support these findings. *Thirdly*, the impacts of modernization and socio-economic changes on traditional Dayak architecture and spiritual practices are not thoroughly explored. Future studies should consider these aspects to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the dynamics of change and the sustainability of Dayak architectural traditions in a broader context.

REFERENCES

- Abdullah, I., & Afriadi, D. (2024). Beyond Cultural Disruption: Art and Creativity in the Technological Era. *Elegentia: Journal of Arts, Media, and Technology*, 1(1), 2–7. <https://doi.org/10.62033/elegentia.v1i1.63>
- Affrilyno, A. (2020). Rumah Panjang: Nilai Edukasi dan Sosial dalam Sebuah Bangunan Vernakular Suku Dayak di Kalimantan Barat. *Jurnal Arsitektur Pendapa*, 3(1), 1–12. <https://doi.org/10.37631/pendapa.v3i1.102>
- Agustin, D., M, M. H., Nabila, R. T., & Z, A. I. (2021). Tipologi Ruang dalam Rumah Lamin Berdasarkan Sistem Adat pada Masyarakat Suku Dayak. *Jurnal Arsitektur*, 11(1), 33–40. <https://doi.org/10.36448/ja.v11i1.1634>
- Airlangga PH, A. R., Saputri, W. A., & Nurhakim, P. R. (2024). Socio-religious behavior on consumption pattern during Israel and Palestine conflict in Muslim society. *IAS Journal of Localities*. <https://doi.org/10.62033/iasjol.v1i2.22>
- Amin, B., Fitrawansyah, F., & Bunawardi, R. S. (2021). Optimalisasi Pencahayaan dan Penghawaan Alami pada Rumah Adat Mandar. *TIMPALAJA: Architecture Student Journals*, 3(1), 30–36. <https://doi.org/10.24252/timpalaja.v3i1a4>
- Beynon, D. (2013). The Contemporary Iban Longhouse: The Sustenance and Applicability of a Socio-Spatial Culture. *International Journal of Sustainability in Economic, Social, and Cultural Context*, 9(1), 87–99. <https://doi.org/10.18848/2325-1115/cgp/v09i01/55216>
- Darmadi, H. (2017). Dayak and Their Daily Life. *JETL (Journal Of Education, Teaching and Learning)*, 2(1), 42–46. <https://doi.org/10.26737/jetl.v2i1.145>

- Dove, M. R. (2017). *The Banana Tree at the Gate*. Yale University Press.
- Eilenberg, M. (2004). Paradoxical outcomes of national schooling in the borderland of West Kalimantan, Indonesia: The case of the Iban. *Borneo Research Bulletin*, 36, 163–184.
- Fernando, H., Galuh Larasati, Y., & Cahyani, N. (2023). Being #wanitalihah: Representations of salihah women on TikTok. *IAS Journal of Localities*, 1(1), 1–15. <https://doi.org/10.62033/iasjol.v1i1.8>
- Hakim, P. R. N., Asyifa, N., Saputra, H., Adli, M., Al Fajri, M., & Maulina, W. (2024). Mediatization of Clothing Consumption Among Muslim Teenagers. *IAS Journal of Localities*, 2(1), 52–68. <https://doi.org/10.62033/iasjol.v2i1.41>
- Hakim, P. R. N., Rodiah, I., & Fernando, H. (2023). Diskriminasi Upah Terhadap Perempuan Yang Bekerja: a Perspective of Gender Work Place. *Jurnal Ilmiah Kajian Antropologi*, 7(1), 16–31.
- Hartanto, C. K., Praptantya, D. B., Darmawan, D. R., Lusia, I., & Fridayanti, D. (2023). Tattoos: Art, Symbol, and History in Dayak Salako. *Mudra Jurnal Seni Budaya*, 38(3), 269–276. <https://doi.org/10.31091/mudra.v38i3.2293>
- Hendri, M., Mustikawati, R., Amal, H., Syarifudin, S., & Maulana, M. (2024). Exhibition "Manusia dan Ruang": Reflection of Aceh Conflict Era Stories in the Creation of the Short Film "Aneuk Beude". *Elegentia: Journal of Arts, Media, and Technology*, 1(1), 12–29. <https://doi.org/10.62033/elegentia.v1i1.50>
- Hidayat, M. M. (2024). The 2024 General Elections in Indonesia: Issues of Political Dynasties, Electoral Fraud, and The Emergence of A National Protest Movements. *IAS Journal of Localities*, 2(1), 33–51. <https://doi.org/10.62033/iasjol.v2i1.51>
- Janowski, M., & Waterson, R. (1996). The Living House: An Anthropology of Architecture in South-East Asia. *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, 2(2), 357–358. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3034107>
- King, V. T. (2017). Borneo and Beyond: Reflections on Borneo Studies, Anthropology and the Social Sciences. In King, V., Ibrahim, Z., Hassan, N. (Eds.), *Borneo Studies in History, Society and Culture* (pp. 79–124). Asia in Transition.
- Kurniawati, D. P. M., Hastjarjo, S., & Slamet, Y. (2024). Communication of Rituals and Traditional Ceremonies Dayak Ngaju Community in Central Kalimantan. *Formosa Journal of Science and Technology*, 5(1), 103–118. <https://doi.org/10.55927/fjst.v3i1.7533>
- Lestari, A. D., Saragih, H. M., & Lestari, D. (2022). Komodifikasi Ritual Tiwah Suku Dayak Ngaju Kabupaten Kotawaringin Timur. *Himmah: Jurnal Kajian Islam Kontemporer*, 6(1), 444–468. <https://doi.org/10.47313/jkik.v6i1.1780>
- Mario, M., & Widagdo, W. (2020). Space Structure of Rumah Panjang (Radakng) of Dayak Kanayatn People in West Kalimantan. *ARTic*, 3(1), 249–258. <https://doi.org/10.34010/artic.v3i1.3625>
- Manurung, P. (2017). Daylighting and architectural concept of traditional architecture: The Tongkonan in Toraja, Indonesia. *A/Z ITU Journal of Faculty of Architecture*, 14(1), 111–126. <http://dx.doi.org/10.5505/itujsfa.2017.65487>
- Montasir, L. O., Salzabil, A. Z. A., Rafiun, N. A. S., Kasih, M., & Marsaban, A. (2023). The utilization of medicinal plants in Kolaka local community: An ethnobotanical study. *IAS Journal of Localities*, 1(2), 81–92. <https://doi.org/10.62033/iasjol.v1i2.19>
- Muassomah. (2023). From global language use to local meanings: Arabic to Indonesian absorption. *IAS Journal of Localities*, 1(1), 16–29. <https://doi.org/10.62033/iasjol.v1i1.10>
- Nabela, S. M., Titisari, E. Y., & Utami, S. (2023). Morphology of Settlement of the Dayak Kenyah Tribe, Budaya Pampang Village, Samarinda City in a Socio-Cultural Context. *Local Wisdom : Local Wisdom Scientific Online Journal*, 15(1), 12–24. <https://doi.org/10.26905/lw.v15i1.7881>
- Ningrum, D. A. M., & Soebijantoro, S. (2023). Makna Simbolik Ritual Tiwah Suku Dayak Ngaju sebagai Sumber Belajar Sejarah Lokal di Kalimantan Tengah. *AGASTYA: Jurnal Sejarah dan Pembelajarannya*, 13(1), 90–99. <https://doi.org/10.25273/ajsp.v13i1.14959>
- Nugraha, S., & Wardani, T. D. (2021). Penerapan Pali dalam Ritual Tiwah Dayak Ngaju. *Anterior Jurnal*, 20(2), 102–112. <https://doi.org/10.33084/anterior.v20i2.2175>
- Rico, R., Hayat, M. A., Khuzaini, K., Sanusi, S., & Susanto, D. (2022). Huma Betang's Philosophical Values in the Character of Dayak Cultural Communication. *JPPi (Jurnal Penelitian Pendidikan Indonesia)*, 8(3), 640–653. <https://doi.org/10.29210/020221510>
- Rong, W., & Bahauddin, A. (2023). Hutongs and Vernacular Courtyard Houses under the Influence of Confucianism: Identity and Values in Linqing, China. *ISVS E-Journal*.
- Russell, S. (2014). The Christianity of Culture: Conversion, Ethnic Citizenship, and the Matter of Religion in Malaysian Borneo by Liana Chua. *American Anthropologist*, 116(4), 866–867. https://doi.org/10.1111/aman.12162_5
- Salleh, A. M. M., Hulwati, Wira, A., Rozalinda, Helmalia, & Indriani, N. (2024). Survival Strategy of Conventional Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) Based on "Toto Kromo" Values in the Digital Age. *IAS Journal of Localities*, 2(1), 1–18. <https://doi.org/10.62033/iasjol.v2i1.53>
- Santoso, T. R., Rahayu, R., & Setiana, A. R. S. (2023). Political interest of religious ritual: The Sundanese Nyangku ritual in Indonesia. *IAS Journal of Localities*. <https://doi.org/10.62033/iasjol.v1i2.16>
- Sopa, M. (2018). Local Wisdom in the Cultural Symbol of Indonesian Traditional House. *KnE Social Sciences*, 3, 524–531. <https://dx.doi.org/10.18502/kss.v3i4.1962>
- Sumiatie, S. (2021). Makna Ritual Manajah Antang bagi Kehidupan Masyarakat Dayak Katingan di Kasongan. *Anterior Jurnal*, 20(2), 64–75. <https://doi.org/10.33084/anterior.v20i2.1669>

- Wardani, L. K., Sitindjak, R. H. I., Nilasari, P. F., & Widjayadi, D. F. (2019). Form and Meaning of Dayak Traditional House in East Kalimantan, Indonesia (Case Study: Lou Pepas Eheng Dayak Benuaq's House). *Proceedings of the 3rd International Conference on Creative Media, Design and Technology*. <https://doi.org/10.2991/reka-18.2018.59>
- Wardani, L. K., Sitindjak, R. H. I., & Nilasari, P. F. (2020). Sustainability of Betang House's Cultural Wisdom in Central Kalimantan. *KnE Social Sciences*, 46–58. <https://dx.doi.org/10.18502/kss.v4i12.7582>
- Zain, Z., Nurhamsyah, M., & Kalsum, E. (2021). Traditional concepts of Dayaks in the longhouse of Nek Bindang Village of West Kalimantan. *A/Z ITU Journal of the Faculty of Architecture*, 18(3), 521–535. <https://doi.org/10.5505/itujfa.2021.26576>
- Zain, Z., & Andi, U. F. (2020). The intangible characteristics of the two indigenous traditional dwellings in West Kalimantan. *A/Z ITU Journal of the Faculty of Architecture*, 17(1), 25–36. <https://doi.org/10.5505/itujfa.2019.97720>.