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## *An Ethnographic Study of Preservation Strategies of the Kun Traditional House in Sarmi, Papua*

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### A B S T R A C T

This study presents an ethnographic exploration of the Kun House, the traditional dwelling of the Armati community in Sarmi Regency, Papua. The Kun Households have profound symbolic and spiritual significance, reflecting social relations and human-environment interactions within traditional settlements. However, modernization, through changes in livelihoods, the introduction of new materials, and the expansion of infrastructure, has transformed settlement patterns and diminished the socio-spatial role of the Kun House. Fieldwork conducted in Binyer Village, East Sarmi District, employed a qualitative approach grounded in architectural anthropology, combining interviews with community leaders, participant observation, spatial documentation, and archival analysis. The findings reveal community-based and policy-supported strategies for safeguarding the Kun House as part of sustainable settlement planning. This study highlights the importance of integrating cultural heritage values into contemporary development to preserve the Armati community's identity amid socio-economic transitions.

### A. INTRODUCTION

The Sarmi Regency is one of the administrative areas on the northern coast of Papua which borders directly on the Pacific Ocean. This area has high cultural diversity, with a population consisting of various indigenous Papuan tribes. Sarmi Regency includes 10 districts, 84 villages, and 2 sub-districts spread along the coastal and interior areas (Mambraku, 2018). Sarmi Regency's cultural diversity is evident in its 87 regional languages, representing 87 distinct ethnic groups (Mambraku, 2018). Among them, the Armati community continues to preserve its cultural identity.

As part of cultural heritage, traditional houses express a community's values, norms, and belief systems. The elements in a traditional house not only function structurally but also reflect symbolic meanings that strengthen the cultural identity of the community (Huda, 2024). One of the traditional houses that is rich in

symbolism is the Kun Traditional House, which represents the relationship between humans, the

environment, and ancestral beliefs in the life of the Armati community. The Kun Traditional House, also known as the Umbrella House (*amari*), is a traditional building used as a center for traditional activities, including initiation ceremonies, traditional deliberations, and storage of cultural and spiritual values. It is a ceremonial, non-residential structure that serves as the community's ritual and communal hub. Its distinctive architectural structure, with a stage shape, main material made of wood, and ornaments with symbolic meaning, makes it a cultural icon that has survived the changing times. The Kun Traditional House is not located in the center of the village but is located in the southwest part of the village, slightly separated from the community's houses. This indicates that the placement of traditional houses follows certain rules in the traditional spatial planning of the Armati community, as found in traditional settlement patterns in several other communities in Indonesia, such as Kampung

Naga in West Java and To Kajang in Bulukumba (Fairuzahira et al., 2020 ; Erawati, 2016).

The Armati community settlement has a linear structure following the main road, with houses scattered along the route. The presence of public facilities, such as schools, places of worship, and fields, reveals a combination of traditional and modern patterns in the settlement's spatial layout. Several studies have examined traditional settlement patterns in various regions, including those on Kampung Naga (Fairuzahira et al., 2020), the To Kajang settlement in Bulukumba (Erawati, 2016), and the Sasak Tribe in East Lombok (Sabrina et al., 2009). These studies demonstrate that many indigenous communities locate traditional houses in specific zones that hold social, spiritual, or symbolic significance. Therefore, understanding the settlement patterns of the Armati community and the placement of the Kun Traditional House in the village structure can help in efforts to preserve traditional settlements.

Change has been gradual over the past decade as access to infrastructure and the economy has improved; the impact has been most noticeable among the younger generation, while elders have maintained the rituals. Many traditional houses have undergone shifts in function, structural modifications, and changes in building materials, which have also impacted the sustainability of traditional settlements, both in terms of the functionality of traditional houses and in the spatial patterns of the community, ultimately threatening their preservation.

The challenges in preserving traditional houses are becoming increasingly complex due to the combined effects of social, economic, and environmental influences (Wibowo, 2021). Zhou et al., 2022 emphasized that efforts to preserve traditional houses must be based on social and ecological sustainability so that cultural values can still be inherited amidst changing times.

In addition to being an architectural heritage, traditional houses also serve as a means of cultural communication, depicting the relationship between society and its traditions and environment. Architectural semiotic studies reveal that carvings, ornaments, and spatial arrangements in traditional houses carry profound philosophical meanings. Several studies have examined the symbolism in traditional houses in various regions, such as the Lontiok Traditional House in Riau (Jamil et al., 2023), the Bantayo Poboide House in Gorontalo (Muhammad et al., 2023), and the Limas Palembang House (Zamhari et al., 2023) which show that symbolic elements in traditional architecture are an important tool in maintaining cultural identity. In addition, Poon (2020) highlights how symbolism-based design can support the preservation of cultural heritage in the context of modernization, while Chatzigrigoriou et al. (2021) emphasize that intangible cultural heritage plays an important role in shaping traditional architectural identity and its sustainability in the era of globalization.

The strategy for preserving traditional houses must also consider the impacts of social and environmental changes, including shifts in settlement patterns of the Armati ethnic community. Zhou et al. (2022) stated that a

social and ecological sustainability approach is the key to maintaining the cultural values of traditional houses, ensuring they remain relevant for future generations. Several studies have highlighted how traditional houses not only function as a place to live but also as a center for social interaction and cultural expression of the community in the settlement.

Although various studies have discussed the symbolic meaning in traditional architecture, there are still few studies that specifically examine the preservation strategy of the Kun Traditional House in relation to the settlement pattern of the Armati community amid social change and modernization. The traditional settlement of the Armati community, which was previously centered on the traditional house as the central point of social and cultural life, is now experiencing changes in spatial patterns due to modernization. Therefore, this study aims to re-examine the symbolic meaning of the Kun Traditional House and formulate a preservation strategy that ensures its relevance amidst social and cultural dynamics and changes in settlement patterns.

To our knowledge, no prior study has explicitly connected the ceremonial (non-residential) Kun House to modernization-induced shifts in Armati settlement patterns and derived community-based preservation strategies; this study fills that gap. Integrating architectural anthropology with traditional settlement analysis, this Armati case demonstrates how modernization reconfigures the socio-spatial centrality of the ceremonial (non-residential) Kun House and reshapes Armati's settlement patterns. It translates these insights into community-based preservation strategies aligned with contemporary planning.

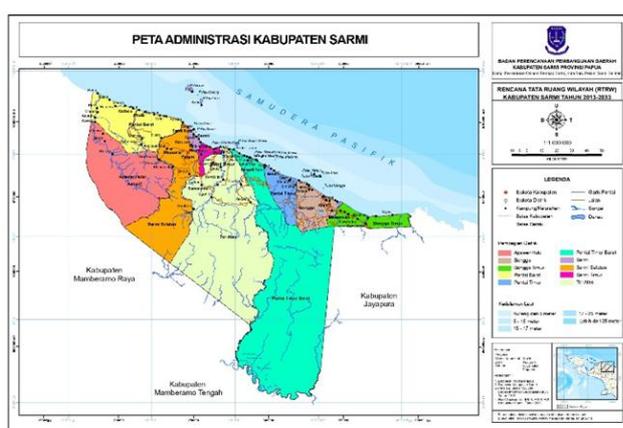
## B. METHOD

This study employs a descriptive qualitative design within the framework of architectural anthropology, viewing architecture as a cultural artifact that embodies the relationship between form, symbolic and ceremonial meaning, and socio-cultural context. The theoretical foundation integrates Geertz's symbolic interpretive perspective, which conceptualizes the Kun House as both a "model of" the Acau Yawe cosmology and a "model for" social practice encompassing ritual prescriptions, gendered roles, and spatial hierarchies (Geertz, 1973). Complementing this, Rapoport's notion of house form as a cultural system elucidates how spatial configurations, orientations, and thresholds encode communal values and norms (Rapoport, 1969). Although Rapoport's theory was developed in domestic contexts, its focus on culturally coded space makes it equally relevant to the ceremonial and non-residential nature of the Kun House, where the boundaries between sacred and profane domains are spatially inscribed. The analytical lens is further enriched by Low and Lawrence Zúñiga's anthropology of space and place, emphasizing how spatial organization mediates social relations, identity, and power (Low & Lawrence-Zúñiga, 2003). Collectively, these perspectives guide the interpretation of form, meaning, and practice in the Armati community and inform strategies for preserving

the socio-spatial significance of the Kun House amid modernization.

Fieldwork was conducted in Binyer Village, East Sarmi District, Sarmi Regency, Papua. Two principal informants, an ondoafi (K1) and an elder (K2), were selected through purposive and snowball sampling to represent customary authority and intergenerational knowledge. These in-depth interviews were supplemented by extended conversational engagements with community members during participant observation, which were recorded as fieldnotes (FL1 to FLn). Participation was voluntary, and informed consent was obtained from all contributors. Pseudonyms were assigned to ensure anonymity.

**Figure 1.** Map of Sarmi Regency



Source: Sarmi Regency RTRW 2013-2023

Data collection involved a combination of participant observation, in-depth interviews, and document analysis. Preliminary settlement mapping was undertaken to contextualize the spatial logic of the Kun House within the wider settlement pattern. Data analysis employed an inductive thematic approach, utilizing open and axial coding to identify recurring themes related to symbolic meaning, ceremonial function, settlement organization, and socio-economic transformation (Braun & Clarke, 2006). These themes were subsequently integrated to formulate community-based preservation strategies compatible with sustainable settlement planning. Credibility and trustworthiness were maintained through methodological and source triangulation, peer debriefing, audit trails of the coding process, and selective member checking to validate interpretations. All research activities adhered to ethical standards of qualitative inquiry, ensuring confidentiality and respect for cultural protocols (Creswell, 2023).

## C. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### 1. Layout, Construction, Philosophical Values of Kun Houses and Armati Community Settlements

In general, the Armati people divide their settlement areas into four main zones, namely the Core Zone, the Tree Zone, the Hunting Zone, and the Settlement Zone. The Core Zone is a sacred area that cannot be touched by humans, believed to be the abode of the gods. Geertz's symbolic-interpretive lens frames the Core Zone as both a "model of" the sacred order and a "model for" spatial governance, while Bourdieu's concept of the field shows how *doxa* and legitimate practice set the limits of permissible action in each zone (Geertz, 1973; Bourdieu, 1977, 1990). The Tree Zone serves as a conservation area and is strictly protected by the community to maintain the balance of the ecosystem.

The Settlement Zone is designed to accommodate residential use and is selected based on historical considerations, accessibility, and proximity to sources of livelihood. Within this settlement structure, the Kun House is located in the settlement zone but on a site considered sacred and chosen through customary deliberation. This placement indicates that the Kun House is not merely a physical building but a node within the Armati belief system, social balance, and settlement structure. As an adaptive socio-spatial planning mechanism, zoning negotiates resource use, risk, and ritual obligations, maintaining sustainability under contemporary development pressures. The layout of this traditional house is similar to settlement patterns in Papua and other Indonesian regions that prioritize harmony between humans, nature, and ancestors.

Compared to the pre-modern conception that positioned the Kun Traditional House as the symbolic axis of the residential area, the expansion of the road network and public services strengthened the logic of accessibility in settlement decisions. Consequently, the functional weight of the "residential zone" shifted to access points (roads/markets), while the "sacred zone" was maintained as a domain of episodic rituals. This explains why the centrality of the Kun House outside of ceremonial moments weakened without diminishing its sacred value.

These dynamics are made visible in everyday ritual governance of the Kun House, exemplified by prohibitions regarding interior lighting (Interview K1; Fieldnote FL1). One ritual regulation that illustrates this cosmological order concerns lighting inside the Kun House. During on-site documentation, community members explained: "It is not permitted to bring electric lamps into the Kun House because they make the interior too bright, which will anger Acau and Yawe." Fieldnote (researcher observation): During interior filming on the first and second floors, the team brought in electric lamps after obtaining permission from a customary elder. Shortly after filming ended, heavy rain began, followed by thunder and lightning; residents interpreted this as the anger of *Acau* and *Yawe* (Fieldnote FL1). "This is nothing; if he is truly angry, he can uproot this Kun House and move it to another place." (Interview K2).

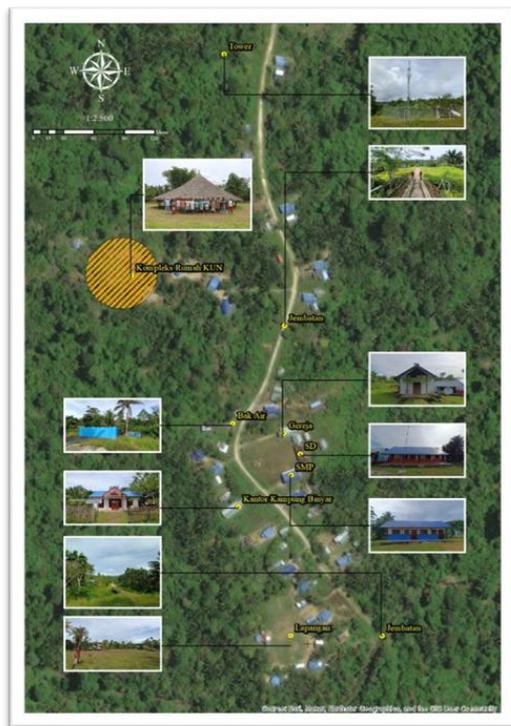
Here are some of the main criteria in determining the location for building a Kun House:

- Sacredness of Location. The Kun House must be built on land that is considered sacred, often in the center of the village or near a place of ancestral worship. The determination of this location is done through

customary deliberation involving traditional elders and community leaders.

- Building Direction. Kun houses are generally built facing east or west. The east direction is chosen because it symbolizes blessings and new life, while the west direction represents the passage of time and the cycle of life.
- Land Stability. The selected location must have a stable land contour to support the structure of the Kun House stage, ensuring it can withstand extreme natural conditions for an extended period.
- Distance from Water Sources and Vegetation. Kun houses must be built in places that are not too close to water sources to avoid excess moisture that can damage the wooden structure. In addition, the presence of large trees around the traditional house is also considered to protect from wind and extreme weather.
- Prohibitions and Rituals. Before construction begins, a traditional ceremony is held to ask permission from ancestral spirits and ensure that the chosen location does not violate customary rules. This process reflects the Armati people's belief that every place has spiritual energy and meaning that must be respected.

**Figure 2.** Location of the Kun House in Binyer Village, East Sarmi District, Sarmi Regency



Source: Satellite image of Sarmi Regency, Papua, 2022

During the construction of the Kun House, several customary rules must be observed. One of the most sacred rules is the prohibition for women to see the *acau* pole (king's pole) before it is planted in the ground. The *acau* Pole has a very high spiritual value because it is believed to be the center of power of this traditional house. According to the beliefs of the Armati people, if a woman accidentally sees the *acau* pole before the planting process, she can become seriously ill, even leading to death. To avoid violating this rule, the *acau* pole is not immediately

taken to the village after being cut down but is hidden in the forest or a certain place until the time for installation arrives. The storage location is notified to the women so that they do not accidentally see it while doing activities around the forest. The planting of the *acau* pole is carried out at midnight, accompanied by a customary ritual that aims to ask for blessings from the ancestors and ensure spiritual balance in the traditional house. This prohibition reflects how the Armati people imbue sacred values in every stage of the Kun House's construction and how their belief system is still maintained to this day.

The Kun House is a traditional house typical of the Armati ethnic community, characterized by a unique shape with a stage structure supported by large wooden pillars and a layout that adheres to customary rules. This house is not used as a residence but as a center for traditional activities, such as traditional dances and community deliberations. The layout of the Kun House in Binyer Village indicates that this building was constructed facing east, which, according to the Armati community's beliefs, symbolizes blessings and hopes for a better life. Additionally, this house features a multi-story structure with various floors serving different functions. The ground floor is often used as a storage room, the main floor is a place to carry out traditional rituals, and the upper floor has a sacred meaning that is often not accessible to the general public.

The Kun House is not just a house for carrying out traditional dance activities for the Armati ethnic community, but it is a cultural heritage, a process of human adaptation to nature, a symbol of spirituality that describes the relationship between humans and nature, ancestral spirits, especially *acau* and *yawe*, and God as the owner of life. This is reflected in various aspects of construction, the interior structure, and the stories that accompany the process of establishing the Kun House. The three-story structure of the Kun House reflects the concept of three worlds believed in by the Armati community:

- The upper floor depicts the relationship between humans and God, as the highest place in the structure of the house that reflects spiritual aspirations.
- The middle floor depicts the relationship between humans and ancestral spirits, especially *Yawe*, and is considered a sacred area.
- The ground floor symbolizes the relationship between humans and the natural environment and social interactions with others.

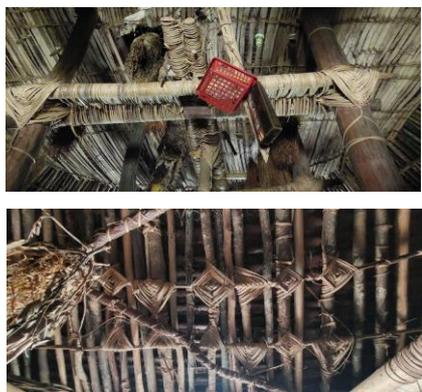
**Figure 3.** Monochrome shape and cut of Rumah Kun



Source: Primary Data, 2022

In addition, the philosophy of the three worlds also describes their beliefs about the existence of the underworld, where ancestral spirits and supernatural beings reside; the middle world, where humans live their lives; and the upper world, which is the ultimate destination in the spiritual journey of humans. This layout demonstrates that the Kun House not only possesses functional value but is also rich in cosmological and spiritual significance, shaping the mindset and social life of the Armati people. The Kun House uses various types of rattan joints and weaves as the main elements in its building construction. In addition to serving as a binder to maintain the structure's strength and flexibility in response to natural conditions, rattan also holds a deep symbolic meaning for the Armati people. In the construction of the Kun House, rattan weaving also serves as an ornament with strong aesthetic and symbolic value. Several types of rattan weaving in the culture of the Armati people, based on literature, are shaped like animals (totems), namely rattan weaving made like the lower jaw of a pig's mouth (*turatim kibic kuoanyona*), used in the construction of the interior of the house. Bat-chest-shaped weaving (*maksurs*), this weaving shape resembles an open bat's chest and is used in the main joints of the house as well as grasshopper-chest-shaped weaving (*martcmak*).

**Figure 4. Rattan woven animal-shaped images at Rumah Kun**



Source: Primary Data, 2022

Humans naturally adapt to their living environment, including traditional architecture influenced by topography, climate, natural resources, and disaster risk. In coastal areas, stilt houses are a common solution to mitigate tidal flooding, extreme weather, and soil moisture, while construction techniques based on local wisdom continue to evolve to adapt to changing environmental conditions. In addition to environmental factors, the form of traditional houses is also influenced by social and economic systems. Modernization has encouraged people to replace traditional wooden houses with concrete buildings that are more durable and easy to maintain, showing that architectural adaptation is not static but continues to evolve (Murtiono et al., 2023). This shift creates a preservation dilemma: the ecological logics of stilted timber houses—with raised floors and flexible rattan joints suited to tides and earthquakes—

contrast with low-maintenance concrete houses that improve durability yet disrupt hydrological flows, increase heat, and erode craft knowledge.

However, stilt houses remain superior in disaster mitigation, with natural ventilation and the use of materials such as wood and bamboo that are better at regulating temperature than concrete (Angkasa Wazir, 2019). At the same time, modernization has also resulted in gaps in traditional house-building practices, with many communities turning to uniform designs made of cheaper industrial materials, risking the elimination of local wisdom that has developed over centuries (Andriansyah et al., 2024). Therefore, a balance is needed between modern innovation and the principles of traditional architectural sustainability so that cultural heritage and ecological adaptation are maintained in coastal areas (Zain, 2020).

## 2. Social Structure of Armati Society

Ffe Sarmi Regency, located on the northern coast of Papua and directly bordering the Pacific Ocean, is an area with high interaction with the outside world through sea and land routes. Having a long coastline and diverse topography, this area is rich in economic potential, especially in the fisheries, agriculture, and forestry sectors. The growing modernization in recent decades has encouraged local communities to adapt to industrial sectors such as commercial fisheries and tourism, which has gradually changed their social and cultural structure (BPS Sarmi Regency, 2023).

One of the main districts in the region is the East Sarmi District, which is the center of settlement for the Armati people, one of the largest indigenous groups in the area. The Armati people still maintain a social system based on kinship and customary leadership, which is reflected in their community structure. Customary elders or *ondoafi* play a central role in decision-making regarding customary law, regional governance, and the construction of traditional houses. Important decisions in the community are made through customary deliberations, which serve as the main mechanism for maintaining social stability and the continuity of cultural values.

The Armati people have a belief system closely tied to spirituality and respect for their ancestors. They believe that the spirits of their ancestors play a crucial role in maintaining the balance between human life and nature. This belief continues to influence various aspects of their social life, including customary rules and the observance of rituals. Traditional ceremonies are performed as a form of respect for ancestors and are often held to seek blessings for the harvest and protection from disasters (Maryone, 2021). The principle of cooperation or *mangar* remains an integral part of their lives, especially in the construction of public facilities, holding traditional ceremonies, and managing community resources. Among the villages in this district, Binyer Village still maintains the existence of the Kun House as part of its cultural identity. The social structure of the community in this village is based on patrilineal kinship, where leadership and decision-making are typically held by men, while

women play a significant role in preserving the culture and managing the household. Each extended family is responsible for one or more Kun Houses, which are designed to accommodate several generations under one roof, reflecting the strong value of collectivity in the community. Yet modernization also produces intergenerational tension: younger residents favor durable, low-maintenance concrete houses and flexible schedules, while elders prioritize Amari-based obligations and craft maintenance; this friction reduces participation in repairs and rites, complicating preservation.

In terms of architectural symbolism, Rumah Kun reflects the concept of gender balance, which is manifested in the existence of the Acau Pillar and Yawe Pillar as a symbol of the social duality of the Armati community. However, in customary practice, some rules regulate gender roles, including a prohibition on women from watching the installation of the Acau Pillar, because it is believed to disrupt spiritual balance and have a negative impact. This belief demonstrates the strength of the customary system that has been passed down through generations and remains highly respected by the local community. Overall, the social structure of the Armati community in Kampung Binyer remains rooted in community, customary leadership, and a strong kinship system. The existence of Rumah Kun as the center of social life holds deep symbolic value, reflecting the collectivity in decision-making and the balance of social roles within their community.

### 3. Social Impact of Modernization on Armati Society

Building on the ritual testimonies in the previous section, these accounts reveal an intergenerational tension around the sacred–profane boundary of the Kun House. Senior community members emphasize prohibitions (e.g., electric lighting) as expressions of respect for Acau–Yawe and interpret weather events as signs of ritual transgression. By contrast, younger members weigh documentation needs and everyday accessibility as part of contemporary settlement life, while still deferring to ceremonial rules during rituals. This tension justifies preservation strategies that segregate sacred domains (ritual interiors) from profane/educational domains (documentation, visitor orientation) under community governance.

Situated on Papua’s northern coast, Sarmi Regency has become increasingly integrated into fisheries and tourism circuits. This integration accelerates modernization—expanding roads, services, and markets—which helps explain the youth emphasis on accessibility noted above and reframes the socio-spatial role of the Kun House. At the same time, the region’s long coastline and diverse topography underpin economic potential (fisheries, agriculture, forestry), making Sarmi both connected to and vulnerable to wider social change. Modernization has brought various social changes that have had a significant impact on the lives of the Armati ethnic community, including the role and function of the Kun House. The shift in the mindset of the younger generation, who prioritize a modern lifestyle and technological advances, has led to a decline in interest in

traditional practices, including the maintenance of the Kun House and the organization of customary-based settlements. Studies show that modernization and globalization have accelerated the shift in cultural values in various indigenous communities in Indonesia. Anastasya (2024) and Polnaya et al. (2023) stated that the younger generation, who are more exposed to global culture, tend to adopt a more individualistic lifestyle, so the collective values contained in traditional houses begin to erode. In addition, social transformation triggered by the penetration of digital technology has contributed to changing patterns of social interaction and intergenerational relationships in Indigenous communities, where traditional communication practices are decreasing due to the increasing use of digital technology in everyday life.

In some cases, the existence of the Kun House in several villages has begun to be abandoned because it is no longer considered relevant to the needs of today's society. Changes in the economic system and the livelihoods of the community have also impacted the existence of the Kun House, as has been the case in various other indigenous communities in Indonesia. As a coastal area experiencing infrastructure and economic development, the community in Sarmi has begun to shift towards industrial sectors, such as commercial fisheries and tourism, resulting in a decrease in priority for maintaining traditional houses. Studies show that indigenous communities increasingly involved in the modern economic sector tend to focus more on developing practical and economical housing, rather than maintaining traditional houses with high maintenance costs. This phenomenon also occurs in other Indigenous communities, such as in Nias and South Sumatra, where socio-economic changes have encouraged people to abandon their traditional houses to build housing with modern materials that are more efficient and durable. Traditional architecture has undergone significant changes not only in its physical form but also in its function, thereby threatening the sustainability of local culture (Andriansyah et al., 2024; Indra, 2019).

In the context of Armati community settlements, the traditional spatial system generally follows a customary-based pattern, where the area is divided into several main zones: the core zone (sacred area), the tree zone (conservation), the hunting zone (economic area), and the settlement zone (main residence). The settlement zone is the main area for community houses and also the location of the Kun House as the center of social life and traditional rituals, although in some cases, the position of the Kun House can vary based on customary decisions in each village. This traditional zoning pattern is also found in various other traditional communities in Indonesia, such as the Kampung Naga settlement and the Sasak tribe settlement, where traditional houses are strategically placed to support the community's social and spiritual systems (Fairuzahira et al., 2020; Sabrina et al., 2009). Along with modernization, the settlement pattern of the Armati community has begun to undergo a transformation, where residential houses are now more spread out following the main infrastructure routes, as is also the case in Kampung Naga, where accessibility to the

main transportation routes is an important factor in settlement development (Fairuzahira et al., 2020).

Therefore, modernization in Sarmi Regency requires an adaptive, community-based conservation strategy that sustains the symbolic roles of the Kun House while integrating it into settlement development—operationalized through ritual-led maintenance days, rattan-lashing apprenticeships, school-based heritage education, and government support in the form of micro-grants, technical training, and zoning recognition with sacred buffer areas that link the house to spatial planning—and formalized through village regulations and inclusion in statutory spatial plans. Community-based conservation is one of the main approaches to preserving traditional houses and traditional settlements. Studies show that in various indigenous communities, community involvement in the restoration and utilization of traditional houses for cultural and tourism activities has been proven to maintain the existence of traditional houses in modern life (Ans et al., 2023). Additionally, educational programs and documentation of traditional architecture can help increase public awareness of the historical value of traditional houses and traditional settlement patterns (Muthmainah et al., 2019). In addition to community-based approaches, support from the government and academics is also a major factor in preserving the Kun House and the traditional settlement system of the Armati people. Conservation-based policies can be implemented by providing incentives for communities that maintain traditional houses, such as renovation subsidies or utilization of the Kun House as part of ecotourism (Taek et al., 2023). Revitalization efforts through the utilization of Rumah Kun in the culture-based tourism sector can also be an alternative to increase awareness and sustainability of traditional houses in modern settlements (Muthmainah et al., 2019).

In some cases, other indigenous communities in Indonesia have successfully adapted their traditional settlement systems to changing times, without losing cultural values. For example, in Kampung Naga and the Sasak settlements, the preservation of traditional houses is carried out by maintaining the traditional spatial planning system and limiting the use of modern materials that can change the character of the traditional environment (Fairuzahira et al., 2020). Following Kampung Naga and Sasak precedents, preservation should retain stilt typologies with selective material hybridity (e.g., concrete footings with timber superstructures); codify customary rules (e.g., *awig-awig*) into local spatial plans/zoning; and tie routine maintenance to ritual and *gotong-royong* cycles with earmarked funding (Fairuzahira et al., 2020; Erawati, 2016; Sabrina et al., 2012). With a community-based preservation strategy, supported by conservation policies, and considering integration into modern settlement spatial planning, the Kun House can remain part of the Armati community's identity.

#### D. CONCLUSIONS

This study concludes that the Kun House remains a vital cultural and spatial axis in the Armati community, embodying symbolic meanings of belief, hierarchy, and identity while mediating social cohesion through ritual practice. Modernization, however, has reshaped its centrality as settlements expand and livelihoods shift toward industrial and commercial

sectors. These transformations reveal that socio-economic dynamics increasingly influence spatial organization once governed by tradition. To sustain the Kun House's relevance, preservation must adopt a community-based and adaptive approach that integrates customary rules, ritual-linked maintenance, and local participation within modern settlement planning. Thus, the Kun House endures not merely as heritage architecture but as a living symbol of the Armati people's identity amid ongoing change.

#### E. ACKNOWLEDGMENT

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