

Local Elements at Colonial Buildings in Bantaeng

H Hasrianti¹, M. Irfan Mahmud^{1,2}
{hasr003@brin.go.id¹, mirf001@brin.go.id²}

¹Research Center for Prehistoric and Historic Archaeology, Badan Riset dan Inovasi Nasional, Cibinong, Indonesia

²Collaboration Research Center for Archaeology of Sulawesi, Indonesia

Abstract. Bantaeng city contains many buildings that are remnants of the Dutch colonial period. Some of them are former residences of Dutch officials and government offices. The strong colonial architectural features are known to be integrated with traditional elements, reflecting the resilience of local culture. This research provides additional knowledge about evidence of cultural acculturation as a form of local cultural resilience in the archipelago. The data were obtained using desk study methods, qualitative reasoning, and a multidisciplinary approach. The study results showed local cultural elements in the roof, decoration, and building space formation. The use of traditional architectural elements is an effort to adapt to local geographic, climate, and cultural conditions, making buildings more resistant to tropical weather, providing thermal comfort to their occupants, and symbolising power.

Keywords: Architecture; local genius; adaptation; cultural resilience

1. Introduction

Traditional architectural elements in colonial buildings are a legacy that symbolizes the identity and resilience of Indonesian culture during the colonial period. Local cultures persisted and interacted with foreign influences across different regions, creating unique forms of cultural fusion. One form of this acculturation can be seen in colonial buildings at the Bantaeng, where the blend of colonial architecture and local elements shows the resilience of local culture to foreign influences.

Bantaeng, a historic town with a tropical climate on the southern coast of South Sulawesi, has many colonial-era buildings that still stand today. These buildings, in addition to being historical artifacts, also reflect the ability of local culture to survive and adapt to external influences. Adaptation can be seen in the elements of local culture in architecture despite the dominance of colonial architectural styles. This shows that local culture has a high adaptive ability to external influences without losing the essence of its identity [1]. The legacy of colonial buildings in Bantaeng is an interesting reflection of the process of cultural acculturation, where the acculturation process does not always result in cultural uniformity but often creates a unique new cultural form, so that local and foreign elements blend harmoniously without eliminating their original characteristics [2].

This study examines the resilience of local cultures against colonial influences in Indonesia, emphasizing the importance of preserving local architectural styles amidst modern design. Focusing on colonial architecture in Bantaeng, South Sulawesi, it explores the integration of local elements in Dutch residential buildings, official residences, and government offices, contributing to a deeper appreciation of the unique Bantaeng cultural identity in Dutch colonial buildings.

2. Methods

The research data was obtained using the desk study method, a multidisciplinary approach, and qualitative reasoning. The desk study method collects and analyses secondary data from various written sources, such as journal articles, books, research reports, and historical documents accessed through libraries, academic databases, online journal platforms, and digital archives. The search for data sources focuses on scientific works that provide direct or indirect information on archaeology, colonial architecture, the history of Dutch rule in Bantaeng, and relevant theories in architecture and anthropology. The validity of the research data is ensured through data triangulation by comparing various literature sources that discuss the same topic from different perspectives. The reasoning is qualitative, with an approach to historical archaeology, architecture, and cultural studies (anthropology). Data analysis involved external and internal source criticism to verify historical sources, along with form analysis to identify local elements in colonial building architecture.

3. Results and Discussions

Bantaeng city is located in the lowlands near the coast. As in South Sulawesi in general, it has a tropical climate with quite high rainfall, especially during the rainy season, and tends to be dry and hot during the dry season. Most of its population is Makassarese, and a few are of Bugis descent [3]. The relationship between Bantaeng and the Bugis region can be traced from the history of the entry of Islam preached by La Tenri Ruwa (the 11th King of Bone) [4]. In addition, many Wajo people who initially only came to trade eventually settled and became residents of Bantaeng [5]. This historical relationship makes the architecture of the traditional houses of the Bantaeng people also reflect the ethnic identity of the Bugis and Makassar.

Until now, Bugis merchant houses can still be found on the coast of Letta Village, known as *balla temboka* and *balla bassia*. In Kalimbaung and Lantebung, there is also still remains the *balla lompoa*, the palace of the local ruler of Bantaeng. All of that buildings are prototypes of traditional houses in Bantaeng. The social hierarchy determines the size and type of house decorations used [6]. Like most Bugis and Makassar traditional houses, is built on stilts and vertically consists of the roof (*pammakkang*), body (*kale balla*), and underneath (*siring*). The roof cover is gable-shaped. The body usually consists of a front room (*paddaserang ri dallekang*), middle room (*paddaserang ri tangnga*), and back room (*paddaserang ri boko*). The staircase as an entrance is placed right in front of the door of the house. In the houses of kings, nobles and wealthy

merchants, the stairs are equipped with a roof and handrails made of wooden planks, which are also used on the floor (*dapara*). This is in contrast to the floors and stairs in people's houses, which are mostly made of bamboo slats without handrails [6], [7]. Documentary archives from the 20th century show that roof coverings used thatch or *nipa* leaves, while walls were made of horizontally mounted wooden planks or woven bamboo (*gamacca*). Decorations are generally floral vines and stylized fauna, usually placed on the roof ridge tops, stairs, doors, windows and front walls.

Around the second decade of the 20th century, Bantaeng had developed into a colonial city with infrastructure for health, education, telecommunications, military, sports fields, and other public buildings [8], [9]. The highway and market infrastructure was improved. The Dutch, also built houses and office buildings in the European architectural style, especially in the center of government, whose traces can still be found in the coastal areas of Bantaeng, across Pallantikang and Tappanjeng Sub-districts, Bantaeng District. From 1870 until the end of the 19th century, the Dutch East Indies government designed, owned, and used almost all the main buildings. It functioned as government offices, military barracks, warehouses, opium factories, pawnshops, official residences, and rest houses [10]. The Department of Public Works carried out the design in a Neo-Classical style to show the grandeur and greatness of an empire. The Neo-Classical or Indisch Empire architectural style was adopted from the Empire Style that developed in France [11]. At that time, building construction was designed to adapt to the Dutch East Indies region's climate, technology, and materials [12]. After the birth of the Agrarian Law and the new law on buildings in 1870, the appearance of city centers also changed. Various styles emerged, including modernism, Art Nouveau, Art Deco, expressionism, and the freer New Indies style [10].

The Dutch East Indies government established landed house-type buildings, which were built directly on the ground. Its shape is greatly different from the traditional Bantaeng house. These buildings show colonial modernity, using veranda elements or additional roofs above side or rear windows, tiled roof coverings, brick walls sometimes combined with natural stone, glass windows, and iron supports or *kerbil* [13]. However, adaptation efforts are seen in several elements, such as utilizing traditional architectural elements on the roof, decorations, ceilings, and walls.

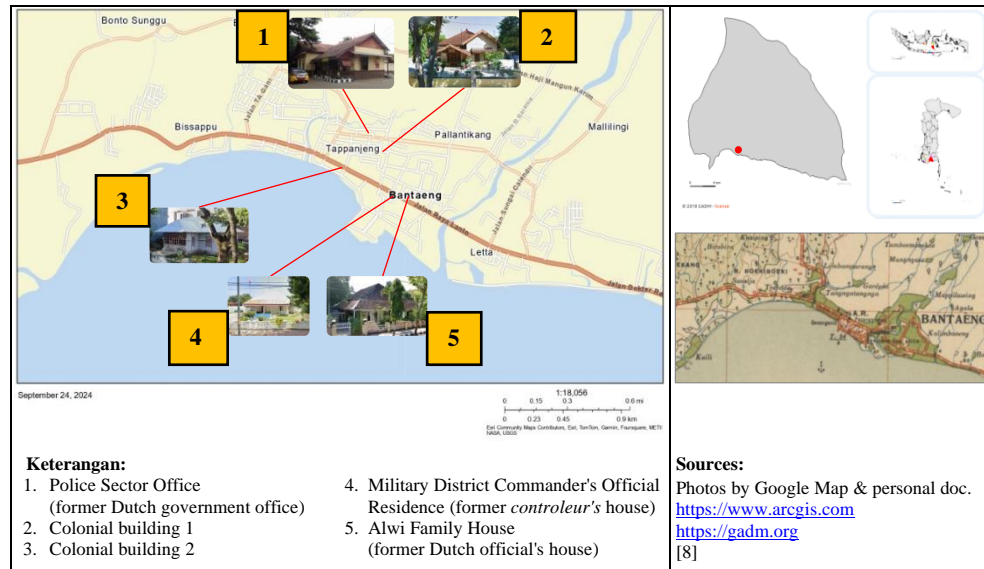


Fig 1. Map of colonial building site locations

3.1 Roof Elements and Decorations

The application of traditional architectural elements on the roof can be seen in the steep saddle shape with a fairly wide overhang or roof extension, such as at the Police Sector Office. Although traditional house roof elements have been adopted, the building design appears more modern in the form of a *kopel*, following the T-shaped building plan. The roof extension (jettying) is characteristic of traditional houses throughout the archipelago and applies to the pyramid-shaped roof. Applying the traditional roof shape to colonial-era buildings is an effort to adapt to the tropical climate. Besides blocking the glare of the sun, the jettying can reduce heat, especially in the dry season, and protect the walls from rainwater in the rainy season [14], [15]. Different in the Netherlands, although the house has a saddle roof, the inclination angle is 30° without jettying, adjusting to the subtropical climate conditions. Netherlands buildings usually have a protruding gable with windows in the front (*gevelvent*) and decorations at the top (*geveltoppen*), dormers, and chimneys.

Other traditional architectural elements in the Dutch East Indies buildings in Bantaeng are seen in the decorations at the top of the front gable (*geveltoppen*). The peak decorations show modified forms of buffalo horns (*tanru tedong*) and dragon heads (*ulu naga*). Modified *tanru tedong* are found at the top of the gable of the Police Sector Office (Fig. 2–A), while the *ulu naga* is found in Colonial Building 2 (Fig. 2–B) [16]. According to Yunus [17], *tanru tedong* and *ulu naga* motif decorations are commonly found at the top of the ridge (*anjong*) of traditional Bugis and Makassar houses, such as the top of the *balla bassia* roof (Fig. 2–C). *Tanru tedong* symbolizes wealth and high social status, while *ulu naga* symbolizes strength. The application of these decorative motifs in colonial buildings reflects the symbolism of power and social status as an upper class.



Fig 2. *Geveltoppen* at the Police Sector Office and Colonial Building 2 (fig. A and B). The comparison with the decoration at the top of the *balla bassia* ridge (fig. C). Doc. Hasrianti, 2017.

3.2 Space-forming Elements

Ceiling. Traditional architectural elements are also seen in the ceiling, namely in the Alwi Family House, which uses wooden planks (Fig. 3–A), and the additional building of Colonial Building 1, which is made of woven bamboo or *gamacca* (Fig. 3–B). Wooden plank ceilings were commonly used in colonial buildings until the end of the 19th century [18]. This material is inspired by local traditional houses that also using wooden planks as attic partitions [19]. Likewise, bamboo ceilings are used on the walls in traditional Bugis or Makassar houses [20].

Walls. Local elements that appear on the walls are full wooden planks in the Official Residence of the Military District Commander, a combination of wooden planks and natural stone in the Colonial Building 1 (Fig. 3–C), and the Police Sector Office (Fig. 3–D). Wooden walls in traditional Bantaeng houses are installed longitudinally, while in colonial buildings, they are installed transversely. Wood and natural stone use reflects the recognition of local genius that is adaptive to climate conditions and material availability. As in Colonial Building 1, the wall typology is a composite wall commonly used in colonial buildings in tropical areas. Natural stone at the bottom protects the structure from soil moisture, making it more weather-resistant. Like wood, natural stone keeps the room cool during the day and warmer at night. Aesthetically, it gives a strong, sturdy, and natural impression.



Fig 3. The ceiling of the Alwi Family House and the Colonial Building 1 (fig. A and B). The walls of the Military District Commander's House and the Sector Police Office (fig. C and D). Doc. Hasrianti, 2017 and N. Anggraini, 2020 [21].

4. Conclusion

The application of traditional Bugis-Makassar architectural elements to the Dutch official residences and government offices in Bantaeng is found in the shape and decoration of the roof ceiling and wall materials. Although the quantity of traditional architectural elements is very

small, they reflect the resilience of local culture as a form of local genius, appreciated by Dutch East Indies architects for their ability to adapt to local geographical, climatic, and cultural conditions. The integration of local elements into the architecture of colonial buildings in Bantaeng resulted in changes in architectural patterns as a reflection of the dynamics of interaction between modernity and traditionalism. This architectural style results from creativity in dealing with cultural differences and the natural environment. The adaptation of Dutch East Indies design aims to improve the function of the building and reflect a local genius context. Integrating traditional architectural elements into colonial buildings in Bantaeng provides an understanding that local culture is a dynamic entity that can withstand foreign elements. Colonial architecture in Bantaeng is archaeological evidence of the resilience and strength of local cultural identity from the influence of colonial culture. This process of cultural acculturation also reflects cultural resilience and recognition of local identity.

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