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THE DYNAMICS OF TRADITIONAL BUGIS ARCHITECTURE: A STUDY OF SAORAJA SENG IN REGENCY OF SOPPENG

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Abstract

This research analyzes the evolution of Saoraja Seng in Soppeng Regency as a traditional Bugis noble residence that has assimilated colonial and contemporary elements. Notwithstanding alterations in roof design, fenestration, and structural elements, the edifice persists in embodying fundamental Bugis cultural principles through its spatial arrangement and emblematic attributes. The study employs a qualitative methodology that includes field observation, architectural documentation, interviews with local stakeholders, and historical analysis. The data were examined via visual interpretation and juxtaposed with conventional Bugis dwellings. The findings indicate that although colonial features, such the hipped roof and Malay-style windows, were included, symbolic elements—such as the employment of uneven numbers and decorative motifs—persist unchanged. The findings suggest that Saoraja Seng exemplifies a synthesis of adaptation and cultural continuity, demonstrating the endurance of Bugis vernacular architecture in the face of evolving socio-cultural circumstances.

Keywords: symbolism, transformation, saoraja seng

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INTRODUCTION

Traditional Bugis architecture in South Sulawesi provides unique cultural evidence due to its historical and symbolic relevance. The Saoraja, as a Bugis community traditional aristocratic house, serves not only as a residence but also as a status symbol and identity for the whole Bugis community.

In Soppeng Regency, Saoraja Seng presents a compelling case for architectural reform and a rejection of the traditional Bugis home shape. This discrepancy is primarily due to the architectural influences of the Dutch colonial era, which significantly altered both the exterior design and spatial organization of the structure. The alterations reflect the tension and complexity of native Bugis architectural traditions and foreign, particularly colonial, features that characterize and continue to affect the area's built environment.

Saoraja Seng's study demonstrates how the form, structure, and symbolism of traditional Bugis houses reflect changing socio-cultural values. This demonstrates the development of vernacular architecture. Furthermore, this research demonstrates how local traditions change according to context while maintaining their architectural identity, enhancing our understanding of cultural adaptation in Southeast Asia.

This research looks at the process of transformation in the traditional Bugis house, the Saoraja Seng, in Soppeng Regency. The paper's examination of architectural form changes aims to provide insight on the extent to which the historical social, cultural, and political context has affected the route of development for Bugis building practices.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Vernacular architecture embodies cultural identity, shaped by many social, environmental, and material influences (Rapoport, 1969; Oliver, 1997b). (Claude Levi Strauss, 1963) posits that it operates as a system of signals conveying social and cosmic concepts, whereas (Waterson, 1997) highlights its dual role in practical adaptation and symbolic significance. These perspectives highlight vernacular architecture as a dynamic expression of cultural continuity and evolution.

(Rudolfsky, 1964) asserts that colonial influences transform vernacular architecture, leading to hybrid designs that integrate native and foreign elements. (Giddens, 1984) highlights the use of novel materials and designs in colonial architecture, creating an architectural language that persists beyond the colonial era. (Tuan, 1977) and (Relph, 1976) examine how modernization and globalization result in "placelessness," detaching artificial surroundings from their cultural and historical contexts. In contrast, (Fathy, 1986) advocates for sustainable vernacular architecture that integrates tradition with modern needs, thereby preserving cultural identity.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study utilizes a diverse analytical framework to investigate the evolution of traditional Bugis architecture, focusing specifically on Saoraja Seng in Soppeng Regency. The study starts with an exhaustive literature review that scrutinizes historical documents, scholarly articles, and prior investigations into Bugis architecture, the effects of colonialism, and architectural evolution across time. Fieldwork include direct observations, architectural assessments, and photographic documentation to examine design aspects and spatial arrangements. Additionally, qualitative insights are garnered through interviews with local politicians, architects, and members of the Bugis community to understand the historical and cultural significance of Saoraja Seng and its progression throughout time.

A comparative analysis is performed to differentiate Saoraja Seng from other traditional Bugis dwellings, situating its unique characteristics within the broader context of Bugis architecture. Additionally, a historical analysis of colonial archives investigates the influence of Dutch colonial administration on architectural methodologies and their expression in Saoraja Seng. An evaluation of the structure's preservation status assesses its current condition and explores conservation strategies in light of modern influences. This scientific method facilitates a thorough comprehension of the architectural development of Saoraja Seng and its wider significance for the conservation of traditional Bugis architecture.

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Saoraja Seng, located in Galung Village in the Liliraja District of Soppeng Regency, exemplifies Bugis aristocratic architecture influenced by colonialism. This home is historically linked to the royal family of the Pattojo Kingdom, as its proprietor, Datu Pallawarukka, was the sibling of the twelfth King of Pattojo. Constructed during the Dutch colonial period, Saoraja Seng functioned as both a residence and a symbol of aristocratic heritage and political authority within Bugis culture. The architectural style and arrangement reflect the socio-political dynamics of that age, strengthening the hierarchical systems characteristic of old Bugis aristocracy.

The creation of Saoraja Seng during the colonial era represents a significant transformation in the traditional Bugis architectural style, integrating European influences with native design components. The integration of colonial architectural elements, encompassing modifications in spatial configuration and ornamental details, illustrates the adaptation of indigenous architecture to the foreign influences of Dutch rule. These modifications signify extensive alterations in the social and political landscape of Soppeng, where colonial governance influenced conventional power structures. Thus, Saoraja Seng

operates as both an aristocratic residence and a tangible representation of the cultural and architectural transformations resulting from colonial encounters.

Table 1. The picture of form, elemen and ornament Saoraja Seng

Image		
Description	Position of <i>tamping</i> in the front of main house	View of Saoraja Pattojo from the right side
Image		
Description	The roof of Saoraja Seng did not apply timpalaja (symbol of noble house)	View of Saoraja Pattojo from the right side
Image		
Description	Sistem <i>konstruction</i> and Interior of Saoraja Seng	Sisiten construction and <i>nterior</i> Saoraja Seng
Image		
Description	Different <i>level</i> between main house and <i>tamping</i> .	Stairs use <i>parinawang</i> (beam that divides the two stairs)

Table 2. The picture Saoraja Seng view from side to side and ornament

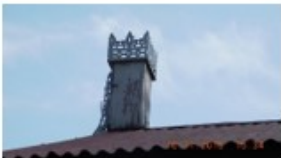
Image		
Description	Applying <i>parenreng</i> flower Ornamet in the attic construction	Blooming flower in the end of roof
Image		
Description	<i>Anjong</i> like crown, usually just noble house applied anjong in the past time.	Applying ornamentasi in the end of roof, the ornamen applying <i>parenreng</i> and bamboo shoot.
Image		
Description	The roof did not apply saddle roof model like original bugis house	Full Ornament at the end of the roof of the stairs
Image		
Description	Pict. 15. Transformation of roof form in teh saoraja seng. Follow of Europe roof	The view of Saoraja pattojo from the left side.



Figure 1. Bugis-Makassar Traditional House form in South Sulawesi (Gowa Palace)
1883 source: Tropenmuseum, part of the national museum of world culture.

The traditional architecture of the Bugis people is an essential element of cultural heritage, distinguished by its historical importance and profound symbolic implications in South Sulawesi. The Saoraja, a traditional noble dwelling of the Bugis, serves as both a domicile and a symbol of social status and ethnic identity within Bugis culture.

In the Soppeng Regency, the Saoraja Seng exemplifies a remarkable instance of architectural progression, signifying a distinct departure from conventional Bugis home patterns. This modification is mostly ascribed to architectural influences from the Dutch colonial period, which significantly transformed both the outward aesthetics and the interior configuration of the structure. These adjustments underscore the complex interplay between the indigenous architectural traditions of the Bugis and the foreign influences, notably colonial ones, that have shaped the region's built environment.

This research aims to examine the evolution of traditional Bugis architecture through an in-depth investigation of Saoraja Seng in Soppeng Regency. This research seeks to elucidate how historical social, cultural, and political influences have affected the evolution of Bugis architectural traditions through an analysis of design modifications. This research is essential for formulating measures to protect this architectural heritage against the challenges posed by modernity and evolving social contexts.

Architectural Form of Saoraja Seng

The architectural design of Saoraja Seng in Soppeng Regency, built during the Dutch colonial period, exemplifies a notable evolution of traditional Bugis architecture. This progression reflects the impact of colonial aesthetics as well as the wider socio-cultural and political transformations of the era. Understanding these changes necessitates an examination of the structure through the lenses of architectural theory and cultural study.

Acculturation, stemming from multicultural interaction, frequently yields novel architectural forms. In the instance of Saoraja Seng, this transpired through the incorporation of European characteristics into Bugis vernacular forms. As (Oliver, 2006) notes, such transitions generally emerge from interactions with prevailing external influences, leading to alterations in architectural form, materials, and methodologies. This is seen in Saoraja Seng, where the transition from a traditional gable roof to a hipped roof, together with the incorporation of brick and cement, indicates European influence.

Architecture transcends mere physical structure; it embodies social significance and symbolic worth. Saoraja Seng, associated with the Pattojo Dynasty, possesses profound cultural importance. (Amos, 1969) posits that spatial order and structure frequently reflect social hierarchy and cultural identity. The Saoraja Seng remodel exemplifies the adaptation of Bugis nobility's architectural surroundings to preserve symbolic significance throughout colonial governance. The incorporation of Western architectural features signifies cultural resilience and strategic adaptation to existing political conditions.

Modernization throughout the colonial era introduced technological advancements alongside transformations in cultural views of tradition and identity. Saoraja Seng exemplifies this dichotomy by utilizing resilient materials and methods to create a hybrid design that integrates indigenous principles with exterior aesthetics. Instead of obliterating tradition, these modifications redefined it, highlighting an ongoing confrontation between heritage and transformation.

Façade

The architecture of saoraja seng exemplifies a synthesis of native Bugis features and colonial influences, particularly evident in the substitution of the gable roof with a hipped configuration. The integration of indigenous and foreign characteristics exemplifies architectural acculturation, when unique cultural aspects coalesce into a cohesive entity (Oliver, 1997b). The hipped roof, indicative of European influence, serves both aesthetic and functional purposes, according to colonial architectural preferences, while improving airflow facilitated by the ventilation system situated between the roof and the main structure, thus accommodating tropical climatic conditions. These modifications underscore the versatility of Bugis architecture in assimilating foreign influences while maintaining cultural identity via structural innovation.

The architectural design of Saoraja Seng of modular modules, each equipped with windows that facilitate natural illumination and ventilation essential elements for tropical comfort. One module functions as the primary entry, guaranteeing operational access and spatial harmony. This configuration corresponds with (Rapoport, 1979) notion that architectural form and layout react to environmental requirements and cultural standards. also underscores that features like windows and doors have dual functions, practical and symbolic, illustrating how cultures shape their constructed surroundings in alignment with both climatic conditions and cultural principles. The intentional arrangement of these elements in Saoraja Seng not only improves thermal efficiency but also embodies Bugis principles of transparency and environmental connectivity.

The use of Malay-style windows exemplifies cultural convergence in architecture. According to (Gordon Jr., 1996) Architectural elements function within extensive cultural frameworks and communicate complex meanings. These windows represent historical contacts between Bugis and Malay civilizations, transcending their utilitarian purpose. According to (Lévi-Strauss 1963) that structuralist perspective, this is a sort of cultural appropriation wherein external elements are assimilated without obliterating local identity. The incorporation of three window modules and one entry exemplifies the Bugis traditional preference for odd numbers, which are seen as emblems of spiritual equilibrium and safeguarding (Abidah, 2016). These design choices highlight the persistence of cultural values after architectural modification.

(Claude Levi Strauss, 1963) posits that architecture, like other cultural products, operates as a symbolic system that mirrors society's structures and ideas. The repeated utilisation of uneven numbers in saoraja seng reinforces this view since it encapsulates the Bugis cosmological principles of harmony and equilibrium. The existence of three windows and one entry is intentional—it signifies the profound conviction that spatial arrangement embodies social significance and identity.

(Rapoport, 1969) contends that vernacular architecture directly reflects cultural values, but (Oliver, 1997a) emphasizes the significance of spirituality and cultural context in influencing traditional designs. (Pelras, 1996) observes that the inclination towards odd numbers pervades several facets of Bugis life, reflecting their cosmological perspective. Consequently, Saoraja Seng amalgamates utilitarian aspects with symbolic significance, where each architectural element enhances a larger cultural story.

In Bugis cosmology, the home reflects the human body, with each component possessing distinct symbolic significance. The roof represents the "head," linked to knowledge and power; the central living area, or *ale bola*, functions as the "body," where everyday activities occur; and the *kolong*, or elevated understructure, depicts the "feet," providing support for the dwelling while serving as a social area. At Saoraja Seng, the *kolong* (ground) serves as a

dynamic environment for social and ceremonial activities, functioning not as an absence but as an essential platform for engagement. The stairway connecting this area to the *ale bola* (body of house) above functions as a geographical and metaphorical transition between public and private domains.

(Lévi-Strauss, 1963) views the divisions of head, body, and feet as symbols of social hierarchy and cosmic order. Rapoport's vernacular theory elucidates how these spatial patterns fulfill cultural values and environmental requirements. The integration of these viewpoints reveals that Bugis architecture, as demonstrated by Saoraja Seng, is a cohesive amalgamation of physical form and cultural significance.

Architectural Elements of Saoraja Seng: Symbolism and Functionality

The roof, windows, and stairway of Saoraja Seng effortlessly integrate functionality and symbolism. The hipped roof, inspired by colonial architecture, improves ventilation appropriate for tropical regions. Simultaneously, windows integrated into structural modules enhance ventilation and embody the Bugis affinity for odd numbers, which signify balance and safety. The stairway, connecting the *kolong* (ground) with *ale bola* (main living area), enhances spatial hierarchy and cultural stratification. These traits collectively illustrate the dual role of architectural elements as functional components and cultural symbols.

A significant divergence from conventional Bugis homes is the lack of *timpalaja* decorative roof features commonly seen at the periphery of aristocratic dwellings. In Bugis tradition, *timpalaja* denote social standing and are organized in odd numbers (1, 3, 5, etc.) to physically convey hierarchical disparities. Their existence typically signifies the social status of the inhabitants, therefore strengthening existing socioeconomic hierarchies.

The exclusion of *timpalaja* in Saoraja Seng, a structure constructed during the Dutch colonial era, signifies changes in social dynamics and architectural standards. The retention of several traditional elements, along with the lack of these decorations, indicates an adaptation to the colonial aesthetic that frequently omitted indigenous marks. This omission highlights a negotiated equilibrium—preserving Bugis architectural integrity while conforming to enforced standards.

Although devoid of *timpalaja*, Saoraja Seng persists in exemplifying fundamental Bugis architectural tenets. The modified roof structure and specific design alterations illustrate a process of cultural adaptation, wherein external influences are incorporated without obliterating historic significance. This architectural progression demonstrates how cultural identity may endure via reinterpretation, even throughout periods of transition.

The Malay-style windows, including 11 ventilation slats and 9 horizontal bars, emphasize a deliberate adherence to Bugis numerological symbolism. These odd-numbered configurations—esteemed for their spiritual

significance—embody harmony, protection, and cosmic equilibrium. According to (Abidah, 2016), these patterns are fundamentally embedded in Bugis cosmology and fulfill roles that extend beyond mere functionality, incorporating spiritual meaning and environmental balance.

(Oliver, 1997a) underscores the significance of symbolic numerical usage in vernacular architecture, highlighting how constructed forms include belief systems. Saoraja Seng's window design serves as a medium for conveying cultural values through spatial arrangement. (G Roger, 1992) contends that architecture ought to enhance cultural identity. Saoraja Seng's symbolic portrayal of these entrances illustrates the intersection of practical necessities and lasting traditions.

Staircases in Bugis architecture serve not just as connections but also as symbols of transitions between public and private domains, reflecting social hierarchy. (Abidah, 2016) indicates that wealthy residences often had 13 stairs as a symbol of nobility, but Saoraja Seng is made of nine steps and added *parinawang* beam to divide the stairs into two parts so that it does not resemble ordinary people's houses, which use nine steps. The preservation of the culturally significant uneven number, alongside the diminished count, suggests a contextual modification potentially attributable to evolving societal values or colonial impact.

At Saoraja Seng, the staircase maintains its symbolic significance despite this diminishment. Status-indicating blocks remain positioned, maintaining the visual hierarchy. (Claude Levi Strauss, 1963) characterizes these aspects as components of an overarching cultural code, whilst (Rapoport, 1969) and (Oliver, 1997b) underscore the manner in which architectural transformations mirror changing social structures. The altered staircase exemplifies selective continuity, respecting history while adapting to contemporary surroundings.

(Turner et al., 1969) elucidate that architectural elements, such as stairs, represent transitions and social functions. The staircase, along with its status-indicating beam, delineates a sharp separation between public and private areas, so cementing class divisions into the physical arrangement. The steps of Saoraja Seng illustrate a synthesis of adaptation and continuity. Although the quantity of steps has diminished, symbolic markers persist, preserving the Bugis cultural framework. This corroborates (Alexander Christopher et al., 1977), who promote designs that embody both social ideals and functionality, and (Sahlins, 1972), who associates structural forms with socio-economic processes. (Relph, 1976) and (Bloch, 1992) emphasize the significance of vernacular architecture in preserving identity and belief systems. Consequently, even in the face of transformation, conventional symbols persist inside the architectural structure.

(Lefebvre, 1991) asserts that architectural space is influenced by cultural dynamics, power systems, and historical transformations. The staircase in Saoraja Seng, modified to comply with contemporary space norms while

preserving symbolic elements, exemplifies how architecture may embody persistent social hierarchies across changing constructed landscapes. Beyond serving as a method of vertical circulation, it embodies cultural hierarchy and reinforces the enduring nature of Bugis spatial values over time.

Ornamental Elements in Saoraja Seng: Symbolism and Cultural Significance

The architectural characteristics of Saoraja Seng include decorative elements that provide both aesthetic and symbolic functions, reflecting the cultural, ethical, and spiritual qualities inherent in Bugis history. These components are not only ornamental; they articulate the Bugis worldview and identity, serving as essential connections between traditional beliefs and modern architectural expression.

(Waterson, 1997) emphasizes the significance of the *anjong* in Bugis architecture, a decorative feature frequently adorned with floral and animal patterns. Traditionally, the *anjong* serves as a spiritual protector against malevolent powers (*antidoti*), underscoring the notion that architectural shapes are profoundly connected to metaphysical significance and ceremonial importance.

The decorative elements along the roof edge of Saoraja Seng exhibit three principal symbols that signify fundamental components of Bugis cosmology: the *pucuk rebung* (bamboo shoot), *segi empat lawasoji* (*lawasoji* square), and *bunga parenrengi* (parenrengi flower). The bamboo shoot represents the cyclical essence of existence and the lasting impact of an individual's societal contributions. The *lawasoji* square, symbolizing the four cardinal directions, encapsulates fundamental ethical principles—integrity, equity, sagacity, and valor—integral to Bugis moral philosophy. The parenrengi flower, commonly shown as a climbing plant, symbolizes beauty, prosperity, and morality, implying a conviction in the honorable perpetuation of the Bugis bloodline through generations.

According to (Turner et al., 1969), these symbolic representations reinforce conventional Bugis ethics. This method aligns with (Baharuddin et al., 2022) promotion of risk-managed heritage conservation and (Wan Ali et al., 2023) focus on culturally attuned architectural solutions. Despite the architectural modifications imposed by colonial influence, the persistent presence of traditional motifs such as *pucuk rebung* and *bunga parenrengi* underscores the continued significance of these cultural icons. Their longevity underscores the significance of heritage protection, which preserves not just physical structures but also the intrinsic values associated with them.

(Oliver, 1997a) emphasizes that vernacular architecture conveys local traditions and spiritual beliefs through symbolic design. In Saoraja Seng, the incorporation of *pucuk rebung* and *segi empat lawasoji* illustrates how architectural elements go beyond utilitarian requirements to embody identity and

continuity. This multifaceted symbolism reinforces traditional norms in the face of current change.

From a phenomenological standpoint, architecture serves as a conduit for human feeling and significance. (Pallasmaa Juhani, 2024) contends that spatial and visual components communicate lived experiences. The symbolic elements of the Saoraja Seng project embody concepts of optimism, morality, and continuity, enhancing both psychological and spiritual ties between people and their constructed surroundings.

The ornamental combination of bamboo stalk, *lawasoji* rectangular, and parenrengi flower embodies fundamental Bugis principles: the life cycle, ethical integrity, and lasting prosperity. Although the overall roof design deviates from conventional Bugis typology due to colonial influences (Waterson, 1997; Oliver, 1997a; Abidah, 2016), these symbolic adornments maintain the structure's cultural integrity. (Bloch, 1992) posits that architectural components frequently mirror social structures and ideological constructs, whereas (Relph, 1976) contends that architecture is crucial in preserving identity throughout temporal spans. (Claude Levi Strauss, 1963) views these themes as components of an extensive cultural sign system, whereas (Sahlins, 1972) links them to socio-symbolic and economic frameworks. (Kalsum et al., 2024) assert that regional identity is influenced by roof designs and ornamental features. Saoraja Seng exemplifies a robust style of vernacular architecture, adept at conserving Bugis values in the face of changing historical and environmental conditions.

CONCLUSION

This research demonstrates that Saoraja Seng in Soppeng Regency exemplifies the evolution of traditional Bugis architecture, which maintains cultural values despite colonial and contemporary influences. The results indicate that architectural features, such the hipped roof, Malay-style windows, and stairs with an odd number of steps, continue to embody the social identity and symbolic values of the Bugis group. Despite the exclusion of specific traditional elements like as the timpalaja, the structure nonetheless embodies social hierarchy, cosmological equilibrium, and the relationship between physical space and cultural significance. The discourse confirms that Saoraja Seng serves both as an aristocratic dwelling and as a representation of Bugis cultural tenacity amid evolving circumstances.

A Bugis house built during the Dutch colonial period. The shape of this house exhibits significant differences compared to other Bugis houses. The Saoraja Seng house, for example, is a building type found only in Soppeng Regency and not in other Bugis regions. Its unique shape and structure make this house a distinctive representation of local architectural adaptations to colonial influences, while also enriching the treasury of vernacular architecture in the Asian region.

Therefore, conservation and documentation efforts for the Saoraja Seng house are necessary to maintain its authentic form and historical value. This preservation is crucial not only for preserving the cultural heritage of Bugis architecture but also as a source of knowledge and learning for future generations in understanding the dynamics of traditional architectural transformation in Indonesia.

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