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Neo Vernacular Architectural Philosophy on the Facade of the Bank Sulutgo Building in Gorontalo

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ABSTRACT

The influence of colonialism on architecture in Indonesia, focusing on the concept of neo-vernacular architecture implemented in the facade of the Bank Sulutgo building in Gorontalo. Since the arrival of European nations, particularly the Dutch, Indonesian architecture has undergone a transformation that reflects a blend of local culture and foreign influences. Colonial architecture not only demonstrates adaptation to local conditions but also creates a dialogue between tradition and modernity. This research employs an interdisciplinary approach, including historical analysis, case studies, and field observations, to understand the characteristics and cultural context of the building. The transformation of form indicates that the design of this building integrates traditional elements with modernity, creating a strong identity that is relevant to the local context. In addition to functioning as a financial service center, the Bank Sulutgo building also reflects a commitment to cultural and environmental preservation, as well as promoting public awareness of the importance of preserving cultural values in development. It emphasizes the importance of collaboration between architects, the government, and the community in creating public spaces that are not only functional but also rich in meaning and identity. With a deeper understanding of the values embedded in architecture, it is hoped that more effective preservation efforts will emerge. This research not only provides insights into neo-vernacular architecture but also contributes to a broader discussion on cultural preservation and sustainability in the context of development in Indonesia. The neo-vernacular architecture of the Bank Sulutgo building serves as a symbol of synergy between innovation and tradition, which can inspire future generations to appreciate and preserve their cultural heritage.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is a country rich in cultural and traditional diversity. Each region possesses its own unique characteristics, particularly in architectural styles, which are imbued with philosophical and functional meaning. Since the arrival of Europeans, particularly the Dutch, in the 16th century, Indonesian architecture has undergone changes reflecting a blend of local elements and foreign influences. The colonial era had a significant impact on various aspects of life in Indonesia, including architecture. These changes included architectural styles, the use of new materials, and changes in the function of spaces. However, colonial architecture also demonstrated adaptations to local conditions.

Colonial architects often took Indonesia's tropical climate into consideration when designing buildings. For example, high ceilings and good ventilation systems were crucial for maintaining indoor comfort. Furthermore, many buildings utilized local materials such as wood and stone, further harmonizing with their surroundings.

The colonial period in Indonesia, particularly that carried out by the Dutch and their allies, was a crucial chapter in the country's history. This period successfully transformed the architectural mindset in the Dutch East Indies into a more modern one, in line with the progress occurring in Western countries. The influx of modernist influence in Indonesian architecture cannot be separated from the evolution of Western thought. This mindset is rooted in their perspective on humans and nature, which is based on an analogy and categorization approach. This change had a significant impact on the architectural landscape in Indonesia, creating a unique blend of traditional and modern elements that reflects the meeting of two distinct cultures. [\(Wihardyanto & Sudaryono, 2020\)](#)

Beyond being silent witnesses to history, colonial architecture also reflects Indonesia's identity and cultural heritage. These buildings not only represent foreign influences but also demonstrate how local communities adapted and integrated new elements into their culture. This creates a dialogue between local traditions and external influences, enriching Indonesia's cultural diversity.

By understanding the influence of colonialism on architecture, we can better appreciate the diversity of our homeland. Awareness of this architectural heritage also encourages preservation efforts, so that future generations can continue to learn and appreciate the history inscribed within these structures. Through this preservation, we not only preserve historic buildings but also preserve the values inherent in their history and culture, so they can serve as a source of inspiration for the future.

1.1. Definition of Neo Vernacular Architecture

During the Postmodern era, one of the architectural concepts that became a trend was Neo-Vernacular Architecture. The Postmodern architectural style began to emerge around the mid-1960s. Its emergence was sparked by a movement for change spearheaded by a group of architects, including Charles Jencks. This movement aimed to critique modern architecture, which was considered too rigid. [\(Della Rose & Subiyantoro, 2023\)](#). Basically, neo-vernacular architecture is an idea that re-elevates the value of local wisdom as the main identity in a building concept by combining elements of modernity but without abandoning the principles of local culture.

1.2. History of Neo Vernacular Architecture

As time goes by, the world continues to evolve toward the modern era. This also applies to buildings, which undergo changes and developments in form, materials, and meaning. These changes are termed the process of adaptation to the environment and the changing times [\(Widi & Prayogi, 2020\)](#). Neo-vernacular architecture is a representation of traditional

and vernacular architecture that has undergone modernization without abandoning its local identity. Traditional architecture itself was born from the concepts of indigenous communities and the local culture that inhabited a region. With the local climate and environment, traditional architecture is able to adapt to its surroundings and incorporate philosophical values into a building.

1.3. Research Objectives

This research is based on the building object owned by a banking company, namely Bank SULUTGO (North Sulawesi and Gorontalo), where the form of the building is a neo-vernacular architectural identity that has a philosophical value that can be studied to become a source of knowledge in the future.

2. RESEARCH METHODS

This research method uses an interdisciplinary approach that combines historical analysis, case studies, and field observations to understand the characteristics and cultural context of buildings inspired by local traditions. This research typically begins with data collection through interviews with architects, residents, and the local community to gain a deeper perspective on the values embodied in the architecture. Next, a visual analysis is conducted of the design elements, materials, and construction techniques used, as well as how these elements adapt to the surrounding environment. This method also includes a review of relevant literature to identify the underlying theories and principles of neovernacular architecture, as well as comparisons with other architectural styles. With this approach, the research aims to reveal how neovernacular architecture not only reflects cultural identity but also contributes to sustainability and responsiveness to social and environmental change.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Overview

North Sulawesi and Gorontalo are two provinces located on the Indonesian island of Sulawesi, with close historical and cultural ties. North Sulawesi, with its capital Manado, is known for its natural beauty, including beaches, mountains, and abundant biodiversity. Meanwhile, Gorontalo, with its capital in Gorontalo, boasts a rich culture and unique traditions, as well as significant natural resource potential. The two provinces complement each other in terms of tourism and economy, making them attractive destinations for tourists.

Historically, the relationship between North Sulawesi and Gorontalo has been long-standing, primarily through trade and migration. The people of Gorontalo and North Sulawesi share several cultural similarities, such as language and customs. This creates strong social ties between the two regions, where they influence each other's cultural development and traditions. This cultural exchange is also evident in the various festivals and events held in both provinces.

The economies of the two provinces are also closely interconnected, particularly in the fisheries and agriculture sectors. North Sulawesi is known as one of Indonesia's largest producers of fish and seafood, while Gorontalo has significant agricultural potential, particularly in rice and other commodity production. This economic cooperation can improve the well-being of the people in both provinces and stimulate regional economic growth.

Besides its economic potential, other ethnic groups also exist, including Javanese, Bugis, Balinese, and Sumatran. According to the map issued by the Ministry of Education and Culture, the western region of Gorontalo Province includes Pohuwato Regency. In this region, the people speak the Bajo language. To the east, Boalemo Regency and Gorontalo Regency

speak the Gorontalo language. This language is also spoken in eastern Gorontalo, namely North Gorontalo Regency and Bone Bolango Regency. (Prinada & Ramadhani, 2023).



Figure 1. Map of Gorontalo
(Source: tirto.id)

3.2. Location Overview

Bank Sulutgo, Gorontalo City, is located in the city center, making it easily accessible to residents and businesses. This strategic location is in a densely populated area, surrounded by various public facilities such as markets, shopping centers, and government offices. With good transportation access, Bank Sulutgo is a prime choice for customers seeking banking services. The modern and environmentally friendly building design reflects the bank's commitment to providing the best service.

Bank Sulutgo's presence in Gorontalo City also plays a role in local economic development, supporting various business activities and investments in the area. Furthermore, the bank offers a variety of banking products and services tailored to the community's needs, from savings and loans to digital services. With fast and professional service, Bank Sulutgo strives to build customer trust and improve financial literacy in the region. Through social programs and partnerships with local communities, the bank is also committed to contributing to the overall welfare of the Gorontalo community. The observation location is located at Jalan D.I. Panjaitan No. 32, South Kota, Gorontalo City.

In today's modern era, Bank Sulutgo is adapting to technological advances to make things easier for its customers. By offering digital banking services, customers can conduct transactions anytime and anywhere without the need to visit a branch. This innovation not only increases efficiency but also provides convenience for highly mobile customers. Bank Sulutgo is committed to continuously developing technology and services that meet the needs of modern society.

With all these efforts, Bank Sulutgo, Gorontalo City, is committed to becoming a trusted financial institution and contributing to regional economic growth. Through quality services, a diverse product offering, and a commitment to social responsibility, the bank hopes to improve community welfare and encourage sustainable economic growth. With its strategic location and diverse service offerings, Bank Sulutgo is poised to become a reliable partner for the community and businesses in Gorontalo City.



Figure 2. Image Map of the BSG Location
(Source: ArcGIS Online)

3.3. Building Characteristics

This building has a special characteristic that combines 2 localities as its architectural indestia, namely combining the traditional architecture of North Sulawesi and Gorontalo. These two regions have a close relationship where Gorontalo is included in the North Sulawesi region and in 2000 officially became the province of Gorontalo. The combination of two cultures in one building is a very interesting combination where North Sulawesi has its characteristics on the roof of the building and Gorontalo on the side of the batik ornament is Karawo batik originating from Gorontalo, not to forget the colonial architecture also dominates the building which is found in the window and door frames which still maintain the colonial architectural style. One of human culture is Architecture. In the historical traces of Architecture, there are great works as markers of the era of human culture. Architectural works are related to 'signs' and 'icons' that can be used as the identity of a place, environment and region. (Rahadian et al., 2013). As shown in the image below.

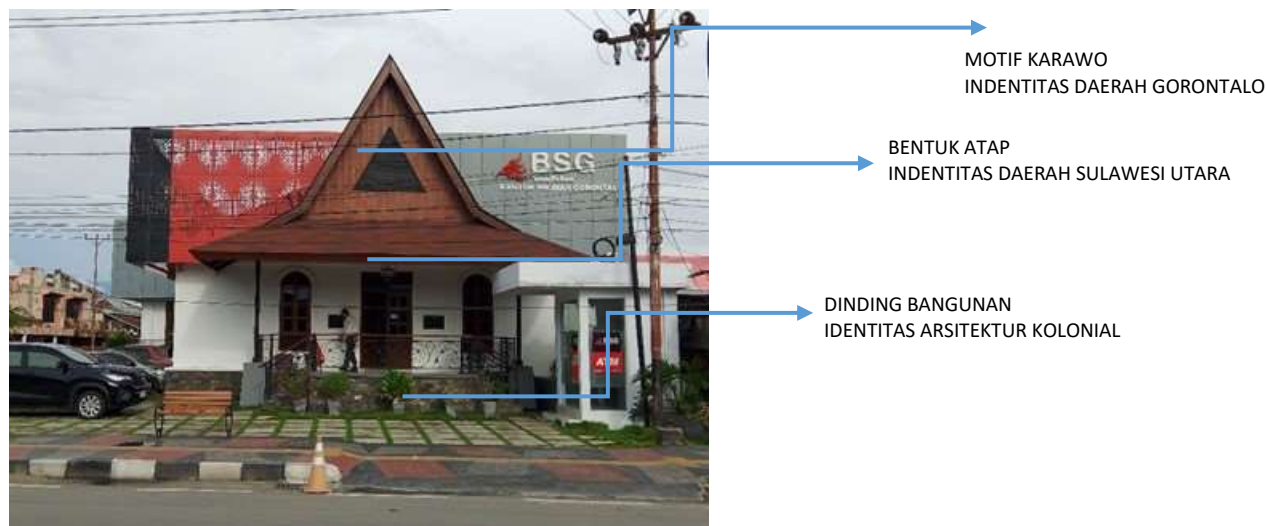


Figure 3. BSG Building, Gorontalo City
(Source: Personal Documentation, 2024)

3.4. Transformation Process

In the transformation process, the architect must understand the visual form of the building to be transformed, collect supporting data so that he can create new ideas in his design. (Susilo, 2015). According to Anthony C. Antoniades, traditional transformation can be carried out in four steps, namely:

1. Visual observation with a conceptual approach using three-dimensional images.
2. Assess the visual data results and select ideas that form the basis for transformation.
3. Perform transformations through the methods of pulling, shifting, mirroring, scaling, and rotating.
4. Conveying information to external parties so that it is accepted so that it can be built and enjoyed.

3.5. Transformation of Form on Building Facades

In the world of architecture, transformation is nothing new. Every architectural form and design is part of the transformation of a previous form. Architecture often transforms buildings from their original form to have a meaning that contains philosophical value. (Najooan & Mandey, 2011). Etymologically, transformation is a change in appearance (form, nature, function, etc.).

The roof of the building adopts a roof shape that depicts the characteristics of North Sulawesi architecture with a pyramid-shaped roof structure and uses ventilation on the triangular side of the roof cover, and is transformed with a combination of a pyramid roof and a tajug roof. In its designation, this roof only functions as a cover for the terrace of the building but has another meaning in raising the identity of the locality, so that the roof on the facade of this building has an important role as a sign of the locality of traditional architecture and also as a vocal point in the aesthetics of the building itself.



Figure 4. Walewangko Traditional House, North Sulawesi
(Source: Google)



Figure 5. Building Roof Shape
(Source: Personal Documentation 2024)

The top of the BSG building features aluminum composite panels, a sign of innovation in the use of modern materials. This characteristic signifies an era of architectural advancement with a neo-vernacular approach. This material is printed with a Karawo motif, representing the identity of the Gorontalo region.



Batik Karawo

Figure 6. Karawo Batik Motif, Typical of Gorontalo
(Source: Google)



Figure 7. Karawo Batik Ornaments on the Building Facade
(Source: Personal Documentation. 2024)

3.6. Building Facade Philosophy

Like other traditional houses, the Walewangko traditional house also consists of several rooms that have different functions, but in this case it only re-elevates the philosophical meaning of the Walewangko traditional house building which is found in the roof of the traditional house and the location of the stairs adopted by the architect into the design of the Bank Sulutgo building, namely as follows.

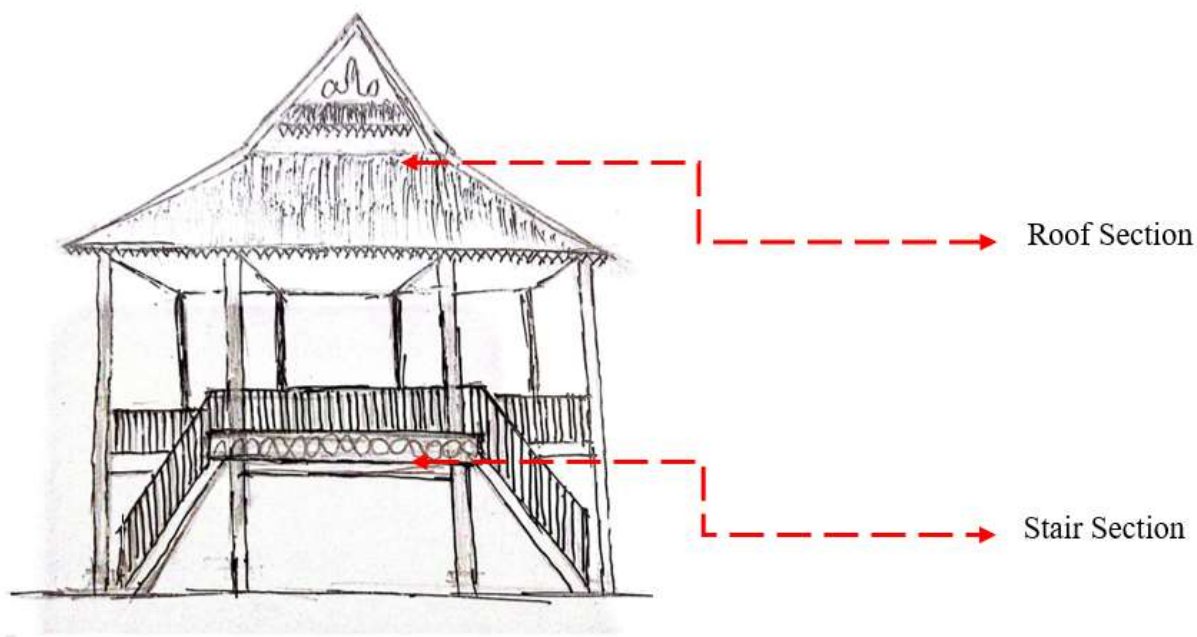


Figure 8. Distribution of Philosophical Meanings in Traditional Houses
(Source: Google)

• Roof Shape Philosophy

In various beliefs, the towering shape of a roof holds profound significance, symbolizing the connection between the human world and the spiritual realm. A high roof is believed to reach the heavens, creating a closer connection with higher powers. This reflects the belief that the space beneath the roof is a sacred place where interaction between humans and spiritual entities can occur.

The space created by this towering roof serves not only as a dwelling but also as a revered and sacred area. In this context, the community often holds rituals or important gatherings under the roof, making it a meaningful location. Thus, the high roof shape not only serves an architectural function but also plays a vital role in the spiritual and social life of the community.



Figure 9. Transformation of Form and Meaning on the BSG Facade
(Source: Personal Documentation, 2024)

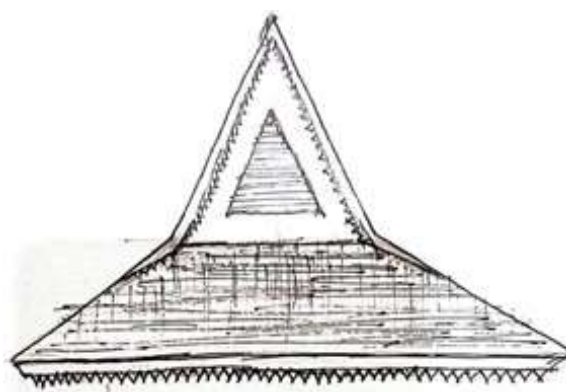


Figure 10. Sketch of Roof Shapes of Bank Sulutgo
(Source: Personal 2024)

- **The Meaning of the Placement of Stairs**

Because the Walewangko house is designed on stilts, there are stairs on the left and right sides of the front. The stairs at the front of the house are believed to have the power to ward off evil spirits. If an evil spirit ascends one of the stairs, it is believed to descend through the other.

This belief reflects the spiritual values held by the local community, where each architectural element has a specific meaning and purpose. Besides serving as a gateway, stairs are also considered intermediaries that maintain balance between the physical and spiritual worlds, thus creating a safe and harmonious environment for the occupants.

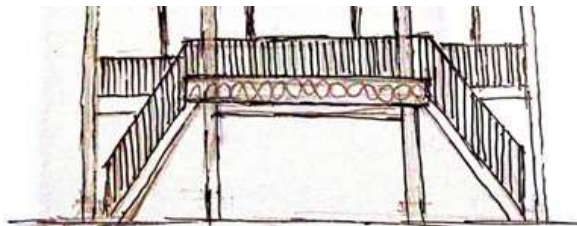


Figure 11. Stair Layout
(Source: Personal 2024)



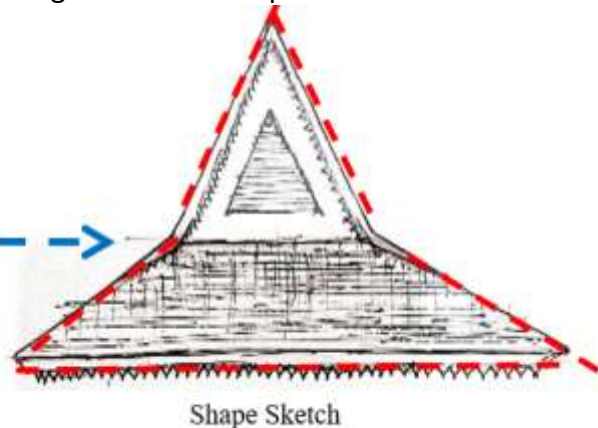
Figure 12. Perspective of the Stairs at Bank Sulutgo
(Source: Personal 2024)

3.7. Metaphor and Philosophy

The triangular roof shape at the top resembles the meeting of two palms when welcoming guests, a philosophical value that can be interpreted as a form of respect for guests. Therefore, this shape on the building's facade is a sign that the BSG institution truly serves and respects every guest who comes. The perspective on this shape is the author's personal argument, gathering information and representing it in another aspect.



Illustration I



Shape Sketch

Figure 13. Bank Officer Greeting Guests (Source: Google)
Sketch 2: Roof Transformation (Source: Personal Sketch. 2024)

4. CONCLUSION

The neo-vernacular architectural philosophy of the facade of the Bank Sulutgo Building in Gorontalo reflects an effort to integrate traditional elements with modern design, thus creating a strong identity relevant to the local context. This approach not only respects the region's cultural heritage but also addresses the functional and aesthetic needs of modern

buildings. By combining materials, forms, and ornaments inspired by local architecture, the building successfully creates a space that not only functions as a financial services center but also as a symbol of Gorontalo pride.

This philosophy demonstrates that architecture can bridge tradition and modernity, strengthening the relationship between communities and their built environment. Furthermore, the application of neo-vernacular design contributes to environmental sustainability by utilizing local resources and eco-friendly construction techniques. Thus, the Bank Sulutgo Building serves not only as a place for financial transactions but also as a reflection of a commitment to cultural and environmental preservation, making it an inspiring example for other architectural projects in the region.

Furthermore, the building's presence can raise public awareness of the importance of preserving cultural values in every aspect of development. This is expected to spark discussion and collaboration between architects, the government, and the community in creating public spaces that are not only functional but also rich in meaning and identity. Thus, the neo-vernacular architecture of the Bank Sulutgo Building represents the synergy between innovation and tradition, inspiring future generations to continue appreciating and preserving their cultural heritage.

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