

Chinese Acculturation of the Regent's Residence, Keraton Sumenep, Indonesia

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Abstract

Keraton Pajagalan, also known as Keraton Songennep or Keraton Sumenep, was built on private land owned by Panembahan Somala, the ruler of Sumenep XXXI, according to the Keraton's history (Ahmad, 2021). Keraton Sumenep, a significant government structure on the Indonesian island of Madura, was founded in 1781 by Lauw Pia Ngo, an architect of Chinese descent. The infiltration of Chinese culture has an effect on the interior of Keraton Sumenep, which is represented by the Chinese ornaments. This issue is the focus of this study.

The study adopted a qualitative approach. Data was collected through in-depth interviews with Keraton Sumenep guards, observations, and documentations. According to the findings of this study, Keraton Sumenep has been influenced by the Chinese culture, as evidenced by the architecture and ornaments in the Keraton's interiors. Keraton Sumenep was a central government where a government administration was operated, thus it played a significant role indirectly. The architect's insights have also had a significant impact on Chinese culture acculturation in Keraton Sumenep. In general, this study provides an overview and understanding of the Chinese Acculturation in Keraton Sumenep's Architecture and Interior.

Keywords: acculturation, chinese, culture, interior, *Keraton Sumenep*, ornaments

Introduction

The Kingdom of Sumenep consisted of several Palaces (Keraton), one of which is *Keraton Pajagalan* or *Keraton Sumenep*. This palace was built by Raden Mohammad Saod or Bindara Saod or Tumenggung Ario Tirtonegoro and their descendants, Panembahan Somala Asirudin Pakunataningrat and Sri Sultan Abdurrahman Pakunataningrat I or Raden Ario Pakutaningrat. It is the only palace that has survived until the present day (Abdullah & LIANA, 2018).

Keraton Sumenep was built on Panembahan Somala's private land. Panembahan Somala, also known as R. Asirudin, is the son of Raden Mohammad Saod, also known as "Bendara Saod," and Queen R. Ayu Rasmana Tirtanegara. Panembahan Somala succeeded his father, Raden Mohammad Saod, who had died as a ruler. In accordance with his mother's will, R. Ayu Rasmana Tirtanegara. R. Asirudin was crowned Duke of Sumenep (Zulkarnain et. al, 2003, 125).



Fig. 1: The Front Gate of *Keraton Sumenep*

Source: <https://mamira.id/gerbang-keraton-sumenep-mengapa-disebut-labang-mesem/>

Keraton Sumenep was designed in 1778 (1198 H) and completed in 1780 (1200 H) by a Chinese architect named Lauw Piango, who is the grandson of Lauw Khun Thing. Lauw Khun Thing was one of six Chinese people who visited Sumenep. Lauw Khun Thing was a fugitive from Semarang who fled during the 1740 AD "Chinese Riot" war. *Keraton Sumenep* is located to the East of Panembahan Somala's parents' palace. Historically, *Keraton Sumenep* was built from generation to generation, beginning with Bindara Saod's building, then *Panembahan Somala's* building, and then continued by his descendants (Zulkarnain et al., 2003, p. 128).

Acculturation took place as a result of contact between the Madurese and the Chinese when the Tartar army from China arrived in Majapahit (± in 1229) with the intention of fighting Kertanegara. There was a Chinese rebellion in the 18th century, resulting in the fourth contact in Sumenep. Many Chinese people settled and married the Madurese. Lauw Pia Ngo is a well-known architect who designed *Keraton Sumenep* during the *Panembahan Sumolo* government in the 18th century. Therefore, Chinese influences could be seen in the palace; the roof style, as well as the carving ornaments on the palace's doors and windows are all in full Chinese style. The palace gate, which resembles a Chinese wall. The roof shape of the prince's residence was also similar to that of a traditional Chinese house. Aside from being influenced by the Chinese style artists, many of *Keraton Sumenep's* architecture and interiors were discovered as a result of the craft exchange system that existed at the time between the Chinese immigrants and the Sumenep people (Nunuk Giari Murwandani, 2007). The influence of Chinese culture on the architecture and interior design of the *Keraton Sumenep* can also be seen in the ornaments on furniture, on the windows and doors with carvings in the shape of dragons, phoenix birds, and some Chinese flowers, and the use of the gold color.

According to Kupier (2011), the Han dynasty is the most influential in shaping the Chinese culture in Indonesia, and the "Han" tribe is the largest ethnic group in China, with the exception of Tibet and Xinjiang provinces. The most fundamental aspect of ethnic Chinese culture is that they truly interpret their ancestors' teachings. During the Doism period, the concept of Yin and Yang teachings emerged and was applied to almost all aspects of life, even the most basic. For a long time, the spread of Chinese ethnicity has been observed in various countries around the world, both in terms of trade and architecture (Wade, 2007).

Objectives

The purpose of this study is to provide an overview of Indonesian vernacular interior and architecture with an emphasis on the influence of Chinese culture. This paper will use literature study from Patricia's book, *Chinese Art Guide to Motifs and Visual Imagery*, which is a book devoted to discussing Chinese Cultural Motifs and Visual Imagery, to help us understand how vernacular architecture of the Regent's Residence, *Keraton Sumenep*, Indonesia was heavily influenced by Chinese culture.

Review of Literature : Studies about acculturation Regent's Residence, Keraton Sumenep

Various research on the acculturation of Western, Chinese, and Madurese cultures on Keraton Sumenep ornaments have been conducted in Indonesia. The majority of the studies have concentrated on the decorations of Keraton Sumenep as a palace rather than the regent's residence, as described in the article *Ornaments in the Sumenep Palace*, which has a philosophy affected by numerous cultures (Indriyati & Safeyah, 2021). The spatial arrangement and building style of the Keraton Sumenep, which employs Madurese neo-vernacular architecture, are described in this article. As described in the article entitled *Study of Aesthetic Carving Motif of Keraton Sumenep Madura Results of Chinese Acculture*, the aesthetic value of carving ornaments is realized through the *Janggoleng* pattern from orchid plants and the *Hong* bird, which is a Chinese motif mixed with the *Burneh* plant motif, the typical Sumenep Madura motif (Ahmad, 2021).

Taufan et. al. have specifically investigated the aesthetic value of dragon decorations by concluding the effect of Chinese acculturation, started with the downfall of the Tartar army, which subsequently settled in Sumenep, and continued with the escape of the Chinese. The dragon decoration in Keraton Sumenep is influenced by Keraton Sumenep's architecture, which is of Chinese descent. In addition to the Chinese dragon, dragon decorations in Keraton Sumenep include Javanese dragons and European dragons (Taufan & Sulbi, 2017).

Many researchers have been interested in the ornamentation on Keraton Sumenep. Handayani (2018) discovered 21 signs classified into seven types of icons, seven types of symbols, and seven types of indices. The embellishments in Keraton Sumenep are a symbol of Chinese culture. Acculturation at Keraton Sumenep has often been explored from a religious standpoint, resulting in cultural variations before and after the arrival of Islam in Keraton Sumenep, as well as in shifting factors in cultural acculturation in the Madurese community (Handayani, 2018).

There are, however, multiple studies that explore the Sumenep Palace from diverse scientific sectors, such as tourism. Tourism growth requires collaboration between the government, the palace, and travel businesses; nonetheless, the Madurese community plays a crucial role (Utami et al., 2019). Based on the findings of acculturation research, it is reasonable to say:

- 1) Acculturation of Chinese culture can be discovered in carved embellishments on Keraton Sumenep entrances in the form of a Dragon, Hong Bird.
- 2). Keraton Sumenep's cultural acculturation appears to be rich with the combination of two cultural aspects such as the Hong bird and Madurese vegetation.
- 3). The ornaments of Keraton Sumenep contain indications that depict Chinese culture, which are examined using the semiotic approach.

While there have been numerous studies with Keraton Sumenep as objects on acculturation studies, there have been few studies that discuss acculturation of Chinese culture in detail using Patricia's *Chinese Art Guide to Motifs and Visual Imagery*, a book devoted to discussing Chinese Cultural Motifs and Visual Imagery. There are also few studies that analyze Keraton Sumenep's purpose as the Regent's office. The combination of the two approaches is thought to result in more thorough research. This research is vital to conduct to produce practical knowledge on the early types of acculturations of Chinese culture and their portrayal in the ornaments of the regent's residence.

Theory on Acculturation

Acculturation occurs when groups with different cultures interact directly and intensively, resulting in a change in the cultural paradigm in one or both groups. According to Nur (2005), acculturation can be defined as a method of enriching a culture without changing its original characteristics. Changes in the past, present, and future can be used to identify changes over time (Rapoport, 1990).

Acculturation is defined in the book *Manusia dan Kebudayaan Indonesia* (Human and Culture in Indonesia) by Koentjaraningrat (2010) as the process of changing artifacts, customs, and beliefs as a result of the interaction of two or more cultures. There are two types of acculturations: incorporation and directed change, which can be distinguished based on the circumstances under which cultural contact and cultural change occur. Migration is one of the acculturation processes. According to Berry (2011), acculturation is a process that results from the interaction of the environment, culture, and behavior. Each acculturation process affects traditional culture and traditional individual behavior respectively by transforming it into the development of a new culture.

Chinese Ornaments

Ornamental variety is a feature of Chinese Architecture that serves as an ornamental element of the aesthetic details of each building in the form of wood carvings, ornate pictures, and colored porcelain plates and vases that are applied to the interior and exterior of the building. Wood carvings can be found on the roof support structure, balustrade stairs, balcony railings, parts of window door frames, *bovenlicht*, wall or wood consoles, and the ends of the building blocks. Chinese ornaments add details to the wall, ceiling, and column details. Calligraphy on the wall above the door is also common in Chinese-influenced buildings. Chinese ornaments are generally divided into several categories, the first of which is Flora Ornaments, which include trees, flowers, and fruits. The second is a fantasy Fauna with gods as symbols (dragons, chilins, phoenixes, lions, and others), as well as animals in general (fish, storks, deer, elephants, and so on). Chinese Ornaments were made with a specific meaning for the interior and exterior of a building. However, Chinese architectural buildings in Indonesia have been profoundly influenced by several colonial and Javanese styles or others. Therefore, most buildings are no longer meaningful but are more influenced by the owner's desire to demonstrate the social status of the building owner (Naniek Widayati, 2004)

Motif and Style

Special characteristics of the Chinese architectural style can be found on the roof of the building by emphasizing the top part of the roof, which is enlarged at the end of the roof due to the wooden structure, as well as in the formation of the *sopi-sopi* (supporting structure for) roof. Similarly, carvings or paintings depicting animals or flowers on the ridges are added to the interior to give the building a distinct character. There are five types of Chinese architectural roof forms, namely: (1). Overhanging gable roof or gable roof with a hanging roof supporting structure (2). Flush gable roof or gable roof with *sopi-sopi* walls (3). Hip roof or Shield roof (cut a corner) (4). Combination of gable and shield roofs, or gable and hip roofs (5). Pyramidal roof. Therefore, most buildings that are influenced by Chinese culture have one of the above characteristics (Naniek Widayati, 2004).

Research Methodology

Research is a systematic activity that collects, records, and analyzes data in order to obtain facts or principles (either for discovery, testing, or development) of knowledge (scientific method). The method used to conduct the research serves as the foundation for the development of the research design and is an elaboration of the scientific method in general.

Type of the Research

This research is qualitative descriptive and employs a cultural studies approach. This research, as a descriptive study, only describes the situation or discourse; it does not look for relationships, test hypotheses, or make predictions. This study's data is qualitative, so the data are substantive categories that are then interpreted with references, recommendations, and scientific references. The researcher employed cultural studies theory in order to aid and facilitate the discovery of meanings in the interior of the *Keraton Sumenep* in Madura, East Java.

Types of Data

The data collection process began with observations at the research site, located in Sumenep, Madura, East Java. The exploratory literature method was used to obtain secondary data from a variety of sources, both printed and electronic. Secondary sources were useful in the study because they provide insight into the object of study.

Data Collection Techniques

Observations

Keraton Sumenep in Madura, East Java, was surveyed during the observation process. The effect of acculturation was observed on the spatial system, the processed floors, walls, ceilings, and ornaments in the interior of the *Keraton* Sumenep. Diagram 1 illustrates the method of collecting observation data as the primary data.

Documentation

The interior elements to be researched were documented in the form of photos and sketches, which were then translated into written form so that they were clear both visually and in writing. Oral documentation, including interviews with local communities and traditional leaders, was conducted to validate the written and visual data.

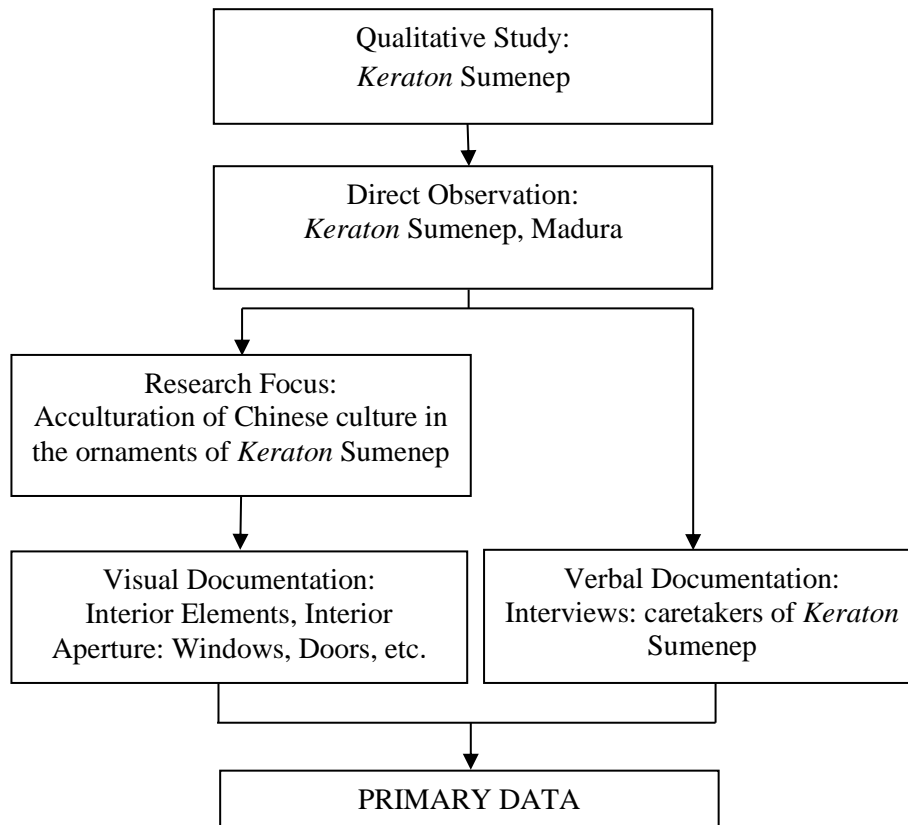


Diagram 1: Primary Data Collection Process in the Study of Acculturation of Chinese, Dutch and Javanese cultures in the interior of *Keraton* Sumenep

Source: Author

Czarniawska, (2011) explains the need for interviews, stating that in-depth interviews will help provide data on historical and cultural facts that apply in specific environments. As a result, in-depth interviews can provide detailed information and individual perspectives.

Documentary Study

A documentary study was conducted as an attempt to search for literature from several supporting books related to the palace's layout, acculturation in interior and architecture, and cultural studies. Furthermore, data sources were obtained from articles in journals, seminar proceedings, dictionaries, the internet, and other sources that can support the precise relevance of this research.

Data Analysis Techniques

The data analysis technique used in this research was a cultural study approach aided by interactive model theory. According to Miles & Huberman (2014), this approach has three components. The first component is the reduction of data obtained by editing, ordering and making summaries, compiling notes and ideas, and composing explanations related to the research object, namely spatial planning, processed floors, walls, ceilings, and interior ornaments of *Keraton* Sumenep. The second component is data presentation that aims at organizing all information into groups or categories. The third component is testing the conclusions, which means re-testing the conclusions achieved in the first component in order to arrive at the study's final conclusions.

Analysis of Chinese's Ornaments in *Keraton* Sumenep

Keraton Sumenep's ornaments influenced by Chinese culture were studied using a literature study from Patricia's book, *Chinese Art Guide to Motifs and Visual Imagery*, which is a book devoted to discussing Chinese Cultural Motifs and Visual Imagery. The following is an analysis of the ornaments on *Keraton* Sumenep's interior:

1. Phoenix (*fenghuang* 凤凰)



Fig. 2: Phoenix covered in clouds (Illustration on a Tapestry)

Source: Chinese Art Book, 2008

The Phoenix is a mythical animal most commonly seen in Chinese works. In China, the Phoenix is known as the "*King of Birds*" because it is a combination of several types of birds, including the Golden Pheasant Chicken, the body part of the Mandarin Duck, the tail comes from a peacock, the neck comes from a crane (crane), the mouth is shaped from a parrot's beak, and the wings are that of the wallet bird ("*Chinese Art: A Guide to Motifs and Visual Imagery*," 2008) pg.82).



Fig. 3: Phoenix Ornament at a house in Yunnan
Source: Chinese Art Book, 2008

In China, phoenix engraving is one of the most commonly used figures in architecture and other works of art. The structure is placed beneath the ceiling (see Fig. 3), which represents honor, prosperity, and truth, and it is also profitable due to the phoenix's placement on a high point in the house.



Fig. 4: Phoenix Bird Ornament at the console and railing of a Gazebo in *Taman Sare*
Source: Author

Based on the description above, we can see that there is a similar relationship in the ornaments found in *Keraton Sumenep*, as seen in the use of the mythical figure, namely the Phoenix at the *Pendopo* in *Taman Sare* (see picture 4). Additionally, similarities are also found on the sides that are placed at the top (below the ceiling) of the *Pendopo* Building, which represents good fortune. Another section of the pavilion contains two Phoenix ornaments with Peony flowers, which represent royalty, rank, wealth, and honor. This Peony Flower (in yellow circle) is measured in color (White and Red) and bold size according to the Chinese way of depiction ("Chinese Art: A Guide to Motifs and Visual Imagery," 2008).

2. Flower, plants and birds



Fig. 5: Ornament of Flower, Plants dan Birds
Source: Chinese Art Book,2008

Flowers, Plants, and Birds are special figures used in ornamental objects in Chinese buildings and works of art because they have strong philosophical and medical attribute. Flowers and plants became very popular in motifs from the Tang Dynasty (CE 618-907) to the Ming Dynasty (CE 1368-1644), rich in color, fragrance, and a symbol of good morals. Furthermore, flowers and plants are related to the Chinese figure of Birds known as *huaniao* 花鸟. Flowers, Plants, and Birds that appear in the ornaments include Bamboo, Apricot Blossoms, Camellia, Chrysanthemum, and Lotus, to name a few.



Fig. 6: Lotus Ornament
Source: Chinese Art Book,2008

Lotus is a symbol of Buddhism that represents Purity and Harmony. It is also thought to bring Longevity, Nobility, and Elegance (Patricia, Chinese Art Guide to Motifs and Visual Imagery p. 27).

Similarly, there are types of birds in Chinese belief that have philosophical meanings.



Fig. 7: Stork Ornament
Source: Chinese Art Book,2008

According to Patricia in the book *Chinese Art Guide to Motifs and Visual Imagery*, pg. 69 Crane or stork is in the first order for real birds used as figures in building ornaments. Storks are a symbol of *Longevity* and they are always depicted together with Flora and Plants of the lotus type.

In *Keraton Sumenep*, just at the *Pendopo* in *Taman Sare*, 2 ornaments were found depicting Lotus (in yellow circle) and Stork (in red circle) side by side with Flowers and Plants, as shown below.



Fig. 8: Flowers and Birds Ornament on the railing of *Pendopo*
Source: Author



Fig. 9: Figure of a lady and Peony flower
Source: Chinese Art Book,2008

The ornaments found in the *Keraton* Sumenep are interesting, especially the peony flower (in orange circle), which is a symbol of royalty, rank, wealth, and honor, and with which *Keraton* Sumenep rules the government with honor. As illustrated in the figure below:

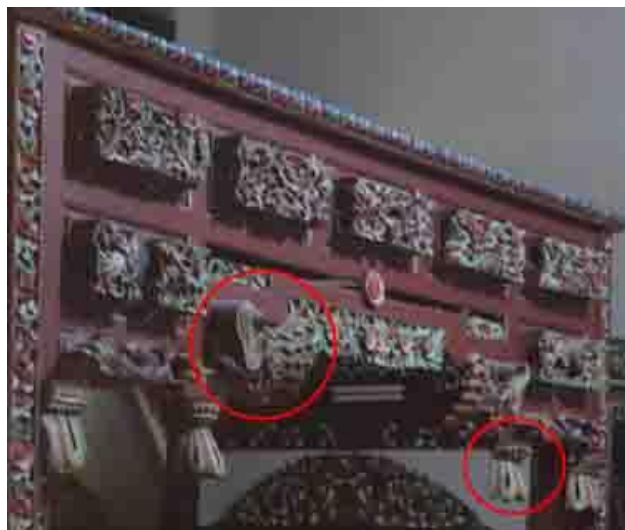


Fig. 10: Flora and Phoenix Ornaments on bed furniture in the Sultan's family room
Source: Author

The influence of China on *Keraton* Sumenep can be seen in the bed furniture used by the Sultan and his empress, such as the type of bed known as *Day Beds*, which is also known as *Oversized Bench* or *Big Bench* and is very popular in China and Peranakan Houses all over the world. They are usually more ornately decorated than the original Chinese beds.

Figure 8 illustrates the Flora and Plant ornaments that decorate almost all sides of the bed. There were difficulties collecting data in the field because it was forbidden to enter the sultan and his empress's bedroom, so we couldn't see in detail what types of flora and plants were carved on the bed. The Lotus is the most prominent Flora in the photograph (see pictures 12 and 13). This Lotus is unique in that it is carved upside down, as seen at the Vihara Welas Asih in Cirebon City.



Fig. 11: Flora and Phoenix Ornaments on bed furniture in the Sultan's family room
Source: Author



Fig. 12: Ornament of the Upside-down Lotus on *Vihara Welas Asih*, Cirebon City
Source: Author

3. Flower vase ornament

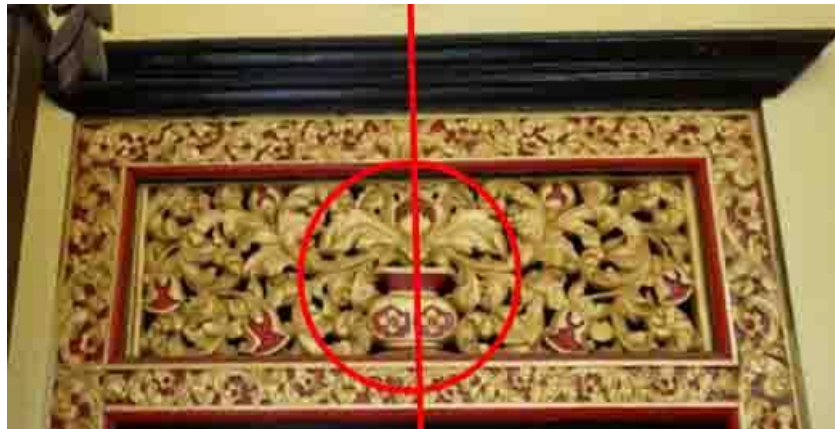


Fig. 13: Flower vase ornament on the upper threshold of the entrance to the library object storage room with a centralized and symmetrical system
Source: Author

Another special characteristic of Chinese ornaments can be seen in *Bouvenlicht* on the room's door in the form of a flower vase with flower decorations and wood carvings in the form of plant tendrils in the Madura carving style. This ornament is also made with a symmetrical

system (right and left are the same). Flower vases are one of the eight symbols of happiness in Chinese culture (eight treasures), often associated with shrines used to store Buddhist priests' ashes, and representing the 'belly' or center of divinity.

4. Tou kung ornament

A distinctive structure in Chinese buildings is a bracket system known as *Tou Kung* (see figure 11), which is a roof supporting construction above a column that aesthetically functions as a column head like *capital* in European buildings (Ionic column heads, Doric, Corinthian, etc.). This bracket system evolved from a simple support system that supported the extension of the truss's lowest horizontal beam (*Chia Liang*) and the dangling roof edge rafters (*Yen Ch'uan* and *Fei Ch'uan*). Through that, this simple support system grows into a more complex system.

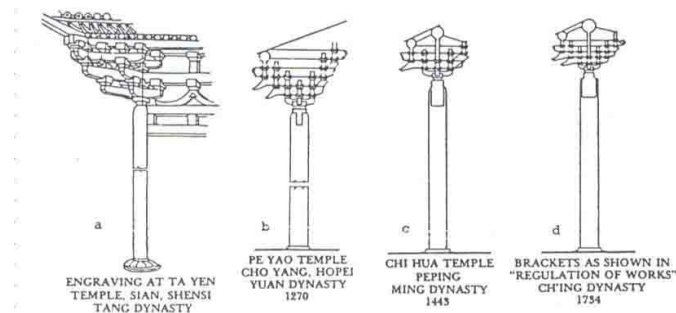


Fig. 14: Bracket System (*Tou Kung*) as Structural and Decorative Elements on Chinese Traditional Buildings

Source: Kohl, 1984

The bracket system is made up of two major components: the base (*Tou*) and the cantilever arms (*Kung*). *Tou* is a beam that is located above the column and is generally rectangular or circular in shape (as the head or column cap). This *tou* is used to support the cantilever arms (*Kung*) that are attached to it. Meanwhile, *Kung* is an arrangement of horizontal cantilever arms that form an inverted pyramid as you go higher. These cantilever arms are at right angles to each other and support each other. The cantilever arm at the top supports the extension of the truss's lowest horizontal beam (*Chia Liang*) and the protruding roof edge rafters (*Yen Ch'uan* and *Fei Ch'uan*). It was then supported by the cantilever arm beneath it, then by the lower cantilever arm, and so on until it reached the bottom cantilever arm. The lower cantilever arm is then positioned or rests on the base or *Tou* (Kohl, 1984).

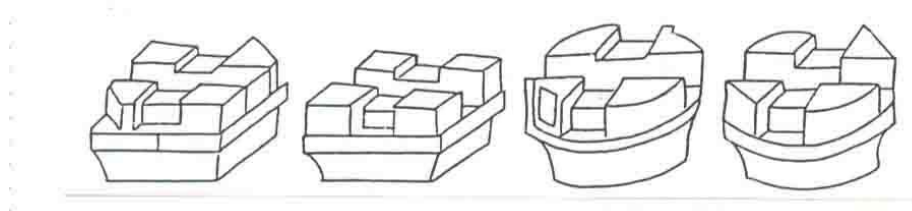


Fig. 15: Base (*Tou*) on the Cantilever System functioning to Support Cantilever Arms (*Kung*) above it

Source: Kohl, 1984

There are two kinds of bracket systems that are commonly used: the *Sung* type (shown in figure 16) and the *Fukien* type (see figure 17). There are two distinct physical differences between the two. The *Sung* type is distinguished by cantilever arms that extend in all four directions and support the base (*tou*). The *Sung* type's base (*tou*) has four slots for positioning

the cantilever arms in their respective directions. As a result, the cantilever arms and base arrangement on this *Sung* type form an inverted stacked pyramid. All existing cantilever arms support the base (*tou*) in this configuration.

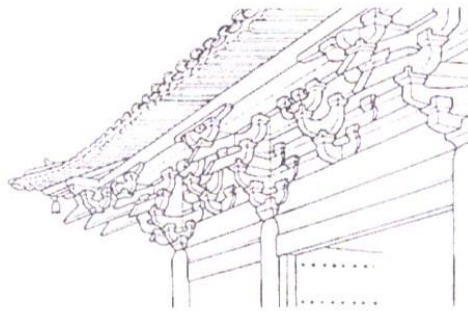


Fig. 16: Example of Using the *Sung*-Type Bracket System
Source: Stierlin, 1970

In contrast to the *Sung* type, the *Fukien* type has cantilever arms that are only oriented in one direction, resulting in the overall shape of an inverted triangular plane. The *Fukien* type cantilever arms not only support the base (*tou*), but also directly support the column by plugging the cantilever arms directly on the column.

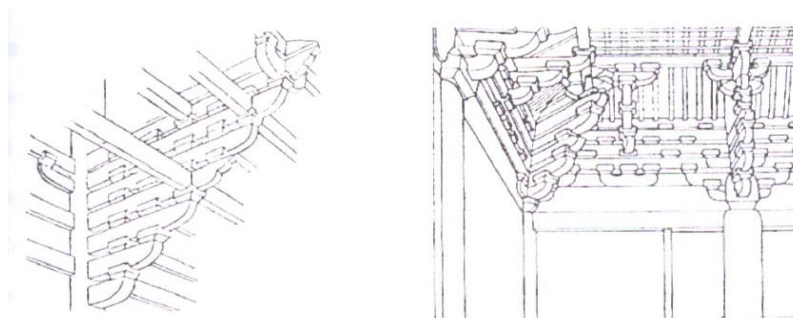


Fig. 17: Example of Using the *Fukien*-Type Bracket System
Source: Kohl, 1984



Fig. 18: Fukien type on the Roof Trellis on the Second Floor of *Keraton Sumenep's* Main Building
Source: Author



Fig. 19: Fukien type on the Roof Trellis of Heirloom Storage Building
Source: Author

It was discovered that a simple *Fukien* type *toukung* was used as a roof-trellis supporting construction at *Keraton Sumenep*. Meanwhile, on the roof trellis of the main *Toukung* building's second floor, only the arms can be seen because they are hidden by walls. On the other hand, the *tou kung* on the roof trellis of the *toukung* heirloom storage building has been acculturated, which is directly connected to the colonial-style column.

5. Swastika motifs



Fig. 20: Swastika Motif on the Entrance of Heirloom Storage Building
Source: Author

Swastika ornaments are said to be inspired by meandering motifs found in many cultures. Meandering motif ornaments are edge decorations in the form of winding lines. Meanders were known as the Greek "edge decoration" as a geometric ornament. It was brought to China from Greece, and from there it spread to Southeast Asia. The meandering motifs vary greatly in shape, beginning with the interlocking "u" and "n" shapes linked like the letter "J" and ending with the opposite "T" configuration, either broken or twisting. (Sunaryo, 2011:22) Swastika motifs are associated with Buddhist beliefs in Chinese culture. The swastika symbols are said to have come from heaven and are made up of ten thousand signs (*wan tzu*). It is also referred to as a collection of fortunate signs that provide tens of thousands of benefits (Williams, 1976).

This ornament is red and gold in color. According to the Chinese belief, red represents good fortune, while yellow or gold represents power and magnificence. This motif is used on the door to the heirloom storage room in *Keraton Sumenep* (see picture 17).

Conclusion

Keraton Sumenep is a tangible product of cultural acculturation, particularly Chinese culture, and serves as a historical site for Madurese and Indonesians. *Keraton Sumenep* is also a significant government activity center, where all important government activities from all sectors are carried out. As a result, *Keraton Sumenep* plays an important role in the Madurese community. *Keraton Sumenep* is a historical artifact of Chinese, Madurese, and colonial culture acculturation. *Keraton Sumenep's* Chinese cultural acculturation is prominently visible, particularly in the ornaments attached to the interior and exterior.

According to the findings of the research, there is a clear influence of Chinese culture in the application of ornaments in the *Keraton Sumenep* building. The use of lotus flower ornaments, peony flowers, and phoenixes on various interior elements such as fences, frames, and consoles are the most common. The figures above were selected on the basis of their meanings in relation to the symbols of power, harmony, and majesty. This is consistent with the role of the kingdom or palace, which is not only a symbol of power and majesty, but also strives to maintain harmony within the palace and with the community he leads. In addition, ornaments have been placed in positions that correspond to the meanings contained. This acculturation occurred concurrently with the influences of Javanese, Islamic, and colonial culture.

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