



The Hybrid Architecture of Gereja Lengko Ajang in Manggarai, Nusa Tenggara Timur

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Abstract. Lengko Ajang Church, located in Lengko Ajang Hamlet, Golo Wangkung Village, Congkar District, East Manggarai Regency, East Nusa Tenggara (NTT) Province, is one of the oldest churches in the Manggarai Raya area. The church was built by Fr. Wihelmus Janssen, SVD, in the 1930s using wooden materials. The architectural style of this church was thought to be a combination of mbaru gendang (Manggarai vernacular architecture) and European church architecture at that time. The purpose of this research is to examine the architectural elements of Lengko Ajang church based on literature sources of traditional Manggarai architecture and European church architecture that developed in the 1930s. By using the literature method, the results show that this church not only functions as a place of worship, but also as a symbol of identity for the Manggarai people. The architectural change of Lengko Ajang Church is an in-tegration between the local tradition of mbaru gendang architecture and colo-nial influence, which illustrates the dynamic nature of cultural identity in architecture.

Keywords: Lengko Ajang Church, Mbaru Gendang, European Church Architecture.

1 Introduction

Lengko Ajang Church is located in Lengko Ajang hamlet, Golo Wangkung vil-lage, Congkar sub-district, East Manggarai district, East Nusa Tenggara (NTT) province. Based on satellite maps from Google Earth, the church is located near the Golo Wangkung village office (to the west) (see Fig. 1). To the north are the Lengko Ajang Community Health Center, Lengko Ajang Field, and St. Theresia Church. To the northeast is the Papang cemetery (“boa”). To the east are several gardens (“lodoks”), such as Wae Ara, Lodok Lengko Paku, Lodok Cedeng 1, and Lodok Cedeng 2. The place can be accessed from Ruteng city (the capital of Manggarai Regency) by 40 kilometers and from Borong (the capital of East Manggarai Regency) by 70 kilometers.



Fig. 1. Satellite Map of Gereja Lengko Ajang [1]

The first time the Manggarai people embraced Catholicism was in 1912. However, efforts to spread Catholicism systematically were only made from 1915-1920 (Prior, 1988 in [2]). The systematic mission was initially carried out by the Missionaries of the Society of the Word of God (SVD-Societas Verbum Divini) [2].

The significant development of the Catholic Church made Manggarai, which initially had the status of a mission area, grow into a local Church. Five years after the beginning of the systematic spread of religion in Manggarai (1920), Ruteng was established as a new mission center with the status of a station. Two new stations were also established in 1926 in Rekas, Labuan Bajo for the western region and in Lengko Ajang in the eastern region of Manggarai [2].

The construction of Lengko Ajang Church in East Manggarai, is an important example of the mission and development activities of the Catholic Church in the area. Since its establishment, this geteja has played an important role in transforming the local community [3]. The church is known as the oldest Catholic church in East Manggarai Regency and was founded by Fr. Wihelmus Janssen, SVD and became the center of religious activities for the surrounding community [4].

Based on photo documentation about the life of the Lengko Ajang community as well as documentation of the construction of the Church of Santa Theresia Lengko Ajang, Lon & Widayawati [2] said the church was built in 1930-1935. Meanwhile, Durus [5] describes the church as having been built in 1935-1937. The Dutch-language documentation begins with a photo of men on their way to bring wood from the forest to the sawmill, then after sawing, they transported the sawn wood for the construction of the Roman Catholic mission church in Lengko Ajang. The next documentation is of the initial construction and installation of the roof from leaves (see Fig. 2). Finally, there is a photograph of the finished facade of the Lengko Ajang church. Another source is Indonesian Overseas History II which documents the facade of the Lengko Ajang church around 1937 [6].

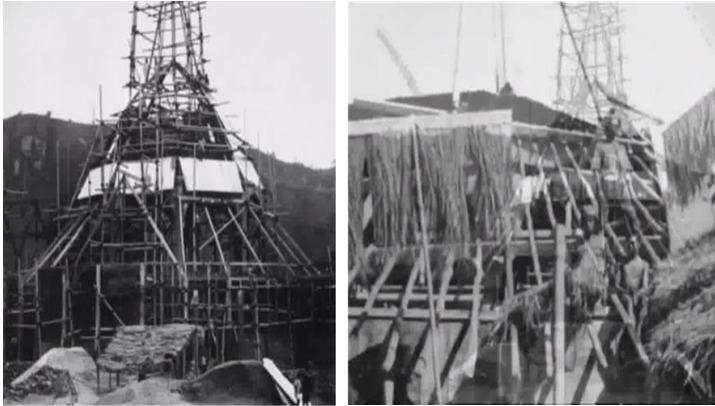


Fig. 2. Initial construction and roof installation [5]



Fig. 3. Facade of Lengko Ajang Church, Left: Lengko Ajang (1930-1935) [2], Right: Lengko Ajang (1935-1937) [5]



Fig. 4. Facade of Lengko Ajang Church (1937) [6]

Based on figures 3 and 4, it can be seen that this church has changed its shape, this can be seen in the first construction (1930-1935) where the church was made with a circular plan and there is one main door. This stage I church has a high cone roof made of straw/tassel in the main part, while at the entrance it also has a point-ed cone roof as a tower in the church. Entering 1935, based on Figures 2 and 3 this church underwent

changes with changes and additions to its shape and materials, in principle this church still maintains a plan form with a round pattern, while previously there was only one entrance then underwent changes with the addition of entrances, with one main door and there are four terraces as entrances from the side. Another change is in the roof which previously tended to be in the form of a pointed cone experiencing changes in the use of materials from straw/tassel and zinc on the dome or dome, then there is also one main tower at the main entrance with a dominant size than the three that are on the left, right and rear sides.

Lon & Widyawati [2] mention that some old buildings including the Lengko Ajang church mimic a bit of mbaru gendang architecture. Meanwhile, several media sources discuss that this church is a hybrid between mbaru gendang architecture and European church architecture. Therefore, this research aims to examine the architectural elements of Lengko Ajang church based on literature sources from traditional Manggarai architecture and European church architecture that developed in the 1930s.

2 Research Method

The literature review method is an important aspect of research to assist in synthesizing findings, identifying gaps for further exploration, and informing policy and practice [7], [8]. The researcher conducted a comprehensive review of existing literature regarding the architectural elements of Lengko Ajang Church, including traditional Manggarai architecture and European church architecture. This would involve analyzing academic journals, books, credible online resources and satellite maps from Google Map. Data analysis is done by comparative analysis, by comparing the architectural features of Gereja Lengko Ajang with other churches in Indonesia and Europe at the time that show similar hybrid features. This will help identify unique elements and influences in its design. The collected data was analyzed and developed to identify related patterns and themes. SketchUp 2017 Software was also used as a tool in this research.

3 Results and Discussions

3.1 Mbaru Gendang Architecture

For the Manggarai people, the beo is a place of residence that is occupied by its inhabitants for eternity. This village can be said to be the land of choice because since ancient times it has been chosen and even sacred by the ancestors [9]. In every beo, there are generally five elements: mbaru gendang (drum house), lodok (garden), natas (field), compang (offering place) and wae teku (water source).

Lodok is agricultural land or gardens owned by the Manggarai people around the beo. Lodok is the main source of livelihood for residents, where they grow various types of food crops and plantations. Lodok is generally in the shape of a spider's web (lingko). Natas are open fields located in the center of the beo. It serves as a place to conduct various communal activities, such as traditional ceremonies, art performances and community meetings. Natas are the center of social and cultural interaction for the

Manggarai people. Compang is a place of worship or an altar used to perform religious rituals and traditional ceremonies. Compang is usually located inside the natas, becoming the spiritual center for the Manggarai people. Compang is a place to offer offerings and perform traditional rituals. Wae tekui is a water source located near the beo. Water from wae tekui is used to fulfill the daily needs of the community, as well as for traditional rituals. The availability of clean water is an important element in the lives of the Manggarai people [10].

In the Manggarai language, the word gendang means drum, which is a traditional musical instrument of the Manggarai people played by beating [11]. The mbaru gendang or drum house is also the center of life in the beo. This house has a distinctive architecture with a high conical roof and walls made of wood or bamboo. The mbaru gendang serves as a residence for families within the beo [10].



Fig. 5. Mbaru Gendang Consists of Three Levels [12]

Based on structure, the mbaru gendang consists of three main levels: the lower level (ngaung), the middle level (lutur), and the upper level (lobo) (see Fig. 5). These three levels are related to the social structure and religious life of the Manggarai people. The lowest level is usually associated with the world of darkness, the world of evil spirits, demons/poti and animals [13]. The middle level/lutur (the world of light) is the world where humans live; related to the concrete daily life of the community. Riwok (middle room) is the place where all matters related to customs or village meetings take place [13]. The upper level relates to the world of ancestors, good spirits, Rulers and Creators. This is symbolized by a painting of a human face made of wood. On the painting of the human face is attached buffalo horns, the top of the human head is mounted with a mangka (spinning top) which symbolizes Mori Keraeng or Ultimate Reality [14].

In a mbaru gendang, each kilo (living room) in the house is part of (connected to) a center, namely siri bongkok (the main pillar of the house) [15]. Taking wood from the forest for the siri bongkok as the beginning of the construction phase of the mbaru gendang is generally a ceremony called Roko Molas Poco [16].

The roof of mbaru gendang is made of wood and finished in the traditional way (see Fig. 6). The wood is selected based on its quality and color to suit the needs. This roof has a unique shape with pointed and conical arches [13]. When viewed from inside the house, the mbaru gendang roof is shaped like a spider's web, which is also similar to the shape of a garden (lodok). This is in accordance with the philosophy of gendang one lingko pe'ang (house inside, field outside) emphasized in every aspect of the Manggarai people's social life. In this way, they express a close attachment to the inseparable elements of their culture [17].

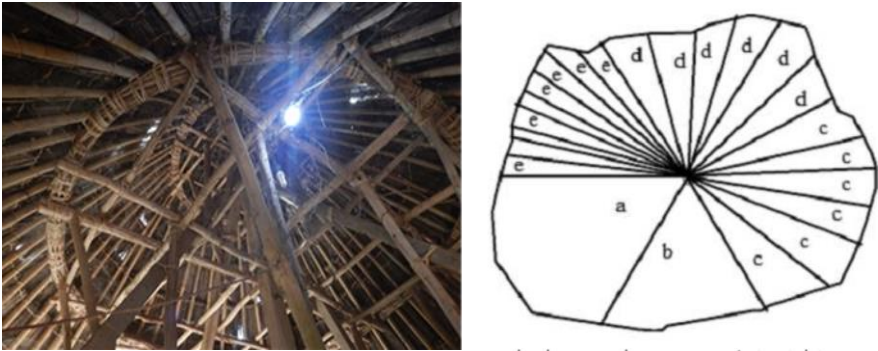


Fig. 6. Spiderweb shape on the roof of mbaru gendang and garden (lodok) [18], [19]

The walls of mbaru gendang are made of bricks that are finished in the traditional way. The bricks are selected based on their quality and color to suit the needs. The walls have a unique shape with pointed and conical arches that show the traditional architectural skills of the Manggarai people. The floor of the mbaru gendang is made of wood and finished in the traditional way [13].

3.2 Mbaru Gendang Architecture

In the 1930s, church architecture in Europe underwent a significant shift. After a century, the Gothic and Baroque architectural styles, which were dominated by elaborate ornamentation and decoration, began to be replaced by a simpler and more functional approach [20]. Modern architects such as Le Corbusier and Ludwig Mies van der Rohe began to introduce the concept of “less is more”, which emphasized basic forms, natural materials, and natural lighting [21].

The concept of “less is more” in architecture was first introduced by architect Ludwig Mies van der Rohe in 1947 [22]. Mies van der Rohe, who was one of the important figures in the modern architectural movement, believed that simplicity and minimization of form could result in a more functional and aesthetically pleasing design [23].

The idea of “less is more” was a reaction to Beaux-Arts architecture and earlier historical styles that tended to be rich in ornamentation and elaborate decoration [22]. Mies van der Rohe argued that architecture should focus on honest function, structure and materials, without adding unnecessary elements [23]. This concept later became one of

the main principles in the modern architectural movement, which emphasized simplicity, purity of form, and efficiency.

One prominent example of church architecture of the time is the Notre-Dame du Raincy Church in France, designed by architect Auguste Perret in 1923. The church features an exposed concrete structure, with large windows that give the impression of lightness and openness [20]. A similar approach can also be found in St. Anthony of Padua Church in Vienna, Austria, which was built in 1932-1933 with a functional and minimalist design [21]. The shift in church architecture in Europe in the 1930s reflected a paradigm shift in the world of architecture as a whole, where function and efficiency became top priorities, replacing the more decorative and ornamental approaches of earlier times.



Fig. 7. Notre-Dame Church and St. Anthony of Padua Church [24], [25]

During the colonial rule in Indonesia, church architecture built by the Dutch and Portuguese had characteristics that reflected the architectural styles of their home countries [26]. Churches built in the 1930s showed adaptation to Indonesia's tropical climate, but still retained some traditional elements from the European countries.

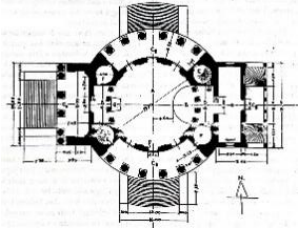
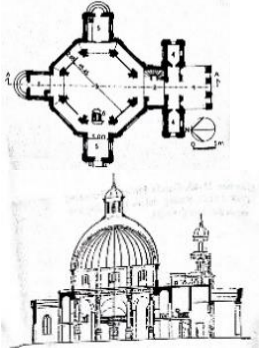
Churches built by the Dutch colonial government generally adopted a typical Dutch architectural style, with pyramid roofs, thick walls, and large windows [27]. An example is the Blenduk Church in Semarang, which was built in 1929 using bricks and wood [26]. Meanwhile, churches built by the Portuguese tend to have a Baroque architectural style, with more elaborate and ornamental decorations. One example is the Cathedral Church in Flores, which was built in 1936 and features tall spires and sacred statues [28] (see Fig. 7).

However, colonial church architecture in Indonesia also shows adaptations to the tropical climate, such as the use of natural ventilation, terraces and open spaces around buildings [27]. This indicates an attempt to adapt European architectural styles to local Indonesian conditions.

The period of colonialism that developed in Indonesia from the XVII century to the middle of the XX century, the position of the Dutch began to stabilize and stabilize with

development that was still influenced by European characteristics purely or already influenced by elements of local culture and tropical climate. European characteristics that strongly influence are Neo-Classical or Eclecticism styles for the main building, one of which is a church building [29]. The Neo-Classical or Eclectic character of churches in Indonesia is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Three Churches in Indonesia with Neo-Classical and Eclectic Styles [30]

No.	Church	Description
1	De Kathedral te Batavia C Church (Weltevreden) (1891 -1901) now Katedral Lapangan Banteng  [31]	The church has a cross-shaped plan, symmetrical, nave, nave arcade, main door with a compound arch typical of the Gothic style in the form of a compound arch and pointed cross above and above the main door there is a rose window, the window also has a typical Gothic. While the roof covering part uses the vault construction system.
2	Protestant Church Jakarta (Gereja Immanuel, Gambir) (1835) 	It has an eclectic style with an old classical form influenced by the Greco-Roman style with a rotunda shape in the main unit accompanied by a portico as the face of the building with six doric columns as pendiment support, and has three entrances. There is a porch at the side entrance. The top of the dome has a lantern.
3	Protestant Church Semarang (Gereja Blenduk) (1778 – 1814) 	Influenced by Renaissance, Italian and Romanesque eclecticism, it has four entrances with porches, a main door in the form of a portico, a roof in the form of a convex dome, a round plan with a nave shape, with Doric and Roman Corinthian columns. The hexagonal nave is surrounded by an octagonal nave arcade. The dome covering the nave is in Byzantine style. Corinthian columns and decoration support the Greek pendiment. There are two twin towers with smaller dimensions than the main dome.

3.3 Architecture of Lengko Ajang Church

Lengko Ajang Church is a worship building located in a community environment with a culture that is very well preserved until now. Based on the search for this church which was built by Fr. Wihelmus Janssen, SVD has unique architectural characteristics, this is because the form and style experience a combination of European architecture (Neo-classical or Eclectic) with local traditional buildings mbaru gendang, this blend of styles is seen in the utilization of space, facades, ornaments, and others.

This church seen from the plan form has the same neo-classical / eclectic form and mbaru gendang with a round shape although in reality it is not purely round but the core is formed from 8 hexagons, this is reflected in the 8 columns in the middle which in the Neo-classical style is known as the hexagonal nave, while in mbaru gendang the round part in the middle as the center but in this church does not apply the main pole / hump-back pole at the center (see Fig. 8).

The church has a mezzanine that sits above the ambulatory and is supported by columns and curved walls. To get to this mezzanine, you can go up the twin staircases that flank a small hallway-like space at the front/main door of the church.

The round shape with a dome roof applied to the Lengko Ajang church is similar to neo-classical or eclectic period forms that adopt as a whole or take a combination of classical architecture (Greek, Roman, Renaissance, Gothic, etc.) with the presence of central columns supporting the dome roof above, as well as the application of the mbaru gendang roof which has the peculiarity of a round cone-shaped dome roof, so that this form becomes a combination of synergy in terms of form and meaning where the center as a nave but not surrounded by a nave arcade and in the indigenous community functions for the gathering of citizens to conduct meetings. This center circle (nave) is surrounded by space if it is associated with the Early Christian era can be equated as an ambulatory that is limited and surrounded by plastered bricks and wood columns with a circular roof with half-horse construction forming a single sloping side and lower than the circular roof.

On the roof under the crown of the roof/dome there is a lantern as an ornament, and at the end of the crown in the form of a Cross, while in the mbaru gendang called wuwung usually decorated with Ngado (painting of human faces or buffalo horns made of wood). In addition to the main dome, four louvers are also made, characteristic of classical church architecture buildings in the form of a large tower at the top of the front door, and small towers on the left, right and rear sides of the dome roof.

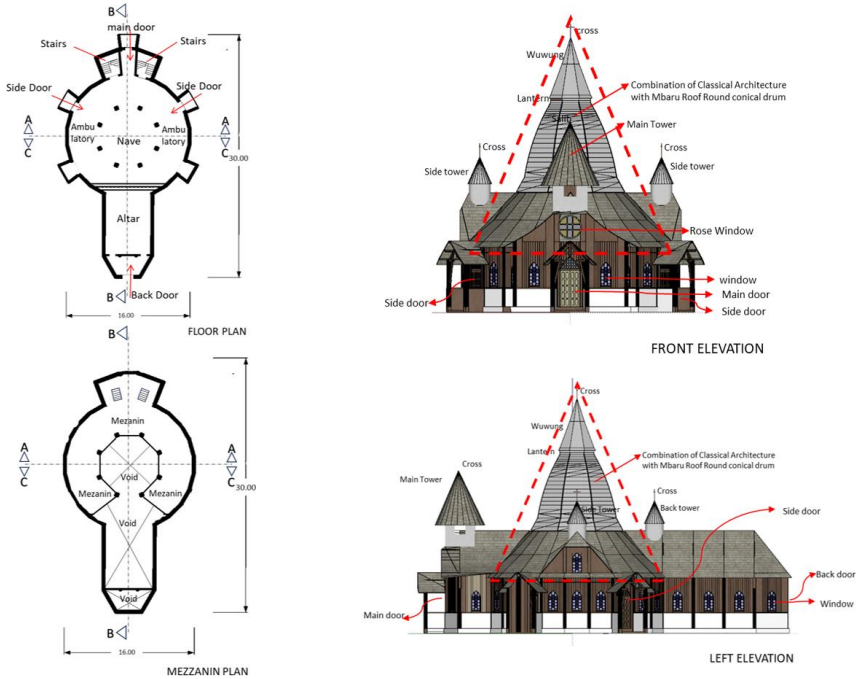


Fig. 8. Floor Plan and Elevation of Lengko Ajang Church (Source: Authors, 2024)

There are four entrances to the church in the form of porches as an inside-in transition, one as the main front door, two gable-roofed side doors supported by horses and wooden columns and one back door. The shape of the doors and windows has a simple Gothic Arch form where at the top it is curved tapered, with mosaic color glass. There is also a circular window without ornamentation, with mosaic color glass which in Classical architectural style is known as rose window which is at the top of the front door of the church. This circular rose window is also found on the upper wall of the Altar with a different mosaic motif and color from the upper part of the front door of the church.

The columns as the support of the dome and roof have the peculiarity of mbaru genggang, where at the corners of the columns are made profiles / ornaments from bottom to top, between the columns in the nave are made wooden arch construction with jagged ornaments, this arch construction is a very typical construction of Roman architecture (see Fig. 9 and Fig. 10).

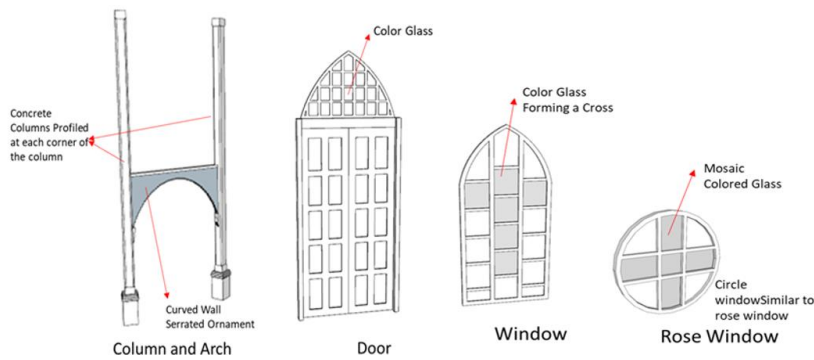


Fig. 9. Columns, Doors and Windows of Lengko Ajang Church (Source: Authors, 2024)

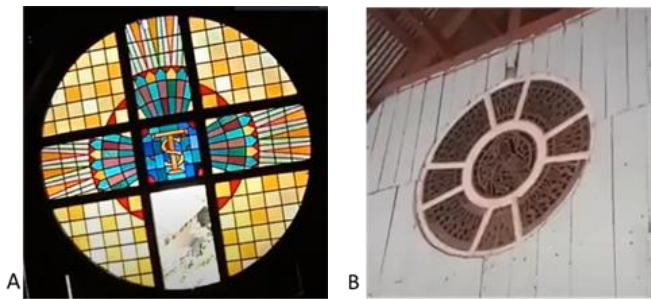


Fig. 10. Rose window: A. Rose window above the front door [32], B. Rose window at the top of the altar wall [33]

The main structure of the Lengko Ajang church uses wooden columns and horses, from a round pattern with 8 hexagonal columns in the center and surrounded by 20 columns forming a circular pattern on the outer wall, which should consist of 24 columns, because at the front there is a porch so that 2 columns are removed while at the back there is an altar also removed 2 columns. The nave is surrounded by 8 columns and above it there is a dome formed from octagonal modules forming a pointed dome above using wood as construction as a stance, this dome shape is an adoption of gothic architecture combined with the construction of mbaru gendang which resembles a spider's nest, which is also similar to the shape of the garden (lodok) (see Fig. 11).

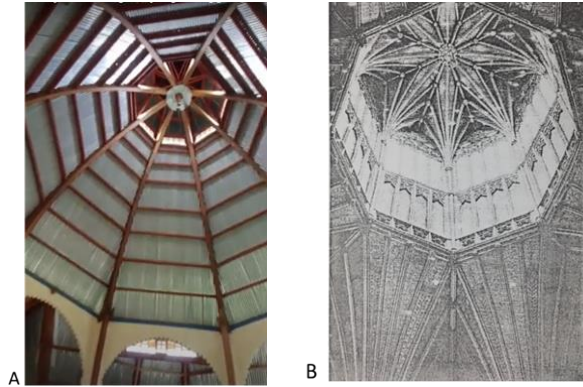


Fig. 11. A. Interior of the dome roof of Lengko Ajang Church [34], B. Ely Cathedral dome roof [30]

From the pattern of load/force distribution from the wuwung to the columns, it can be seen that this pattern adopts the style of churches during the classical architecture period which has been combined with local culture from the roof shape, materials and simplicity.

Churches with a dominant form of a circle both outside and inside in the classical architectural era are also known as rotunda which is a characteristic of circular-plan buildings that can be seen from the outside and inside, while the traditional mbaru gen-dang building is also very distinctive with a round shape from the out-side and inside. The church also has a second floor that is partly above the ambulatory with a balustrade made of metrial wood (see Fig. 12 and Fig. 13).

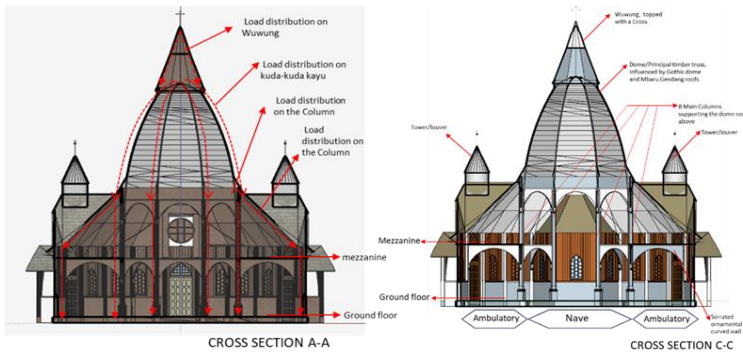


Fig. 12. Section A-A and C-C of Lengko Ajang Church (Source: Authors, 2024)



Fig. 13. Interior and exterior of Lengko Ajang Church (Source: Author, 2024)

4 Conclusions and Suggestions

Lengko Ajang Church exhibits a unique architectural fusion, combining traditional Manggarai elements with European styles from the 1930s. The design reflects a thoughtful integration of local cultural heritage and modern architectural practices, featuring the use of local materials and construction techniques. The church serves not only as a place of worship, but also as a cultural symbol that embodies the identity and history of the community.

It is imperative to initiate and support a preservation program for Lengko Ajang Church, with the aim of maintaining its structural integrity and historical significance. Collaboration with the local government and cultural heritage organizations can facilitate this process. Encouraging the involvement of the local community in the preservation and maintenance of the church is another important step. This can be achieved through workshops and educational programs that highlight the cultural importance and architectural uniqueness of the church. In addition, conducting comprehensive research on the architectural styles present in other churches in the region can help understand hybrid influences and their implications for local identity, thereby enhancing efforts to preserve and maintain Lengko Ajang Church more effectively.

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