
The Influence of Dutch Colonial Architecture: A Case Study of Dutch Heritage Buildings in Langsa City

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ABSTRACT

In addition to leaving behind deep trauma, the Dutch also left their influence on the architecture of buildings. The development of Dutch colonial architecture in Indonesia was a complex process and reflected historical, social, and cultural dynamics during the colonial period. The periodization of Dutch colonial architecture in Indonesia can be divided into three phases, namely the VOC architectural phase, the transition and empire phase, and the modern colonial phase. This study uses a literature study research method using a descriptive analysis approach that involves the process of collecting, evaluating, and interpreting data or literature sources relevant to the topic being studied. This approach emphasizes critical analysis of the information obtained from these sources, with the aim of identifying significant patterns, trends and relationships. Colonial buildings are a reflection of the power relations and adaptation of Dutch architecture with the archipelago. Elements of colonial architecture are characterized by several main characteristics, such as: the use of high and wide gable roofs as an adaptation to prevent high rainfall and create good air circulation, wide porticoes (galleries) used as transitional spaces between interiors and exteriors, ventilation and wide openings Dutch colonial architecture in Indonesia is a complex heritage that goes beyond just the physical expression of buildings, rather, it is an in-depth representation of cultural interactions, power dynamics, and ongoing processes of social transformation. During the colonial period, architecture not only served as a container of human activity, but also served as a sophisticated medium of communication that recorded complex historical narratives.

Keywords: Colonial Architecture, Historic Buildings, Cultural Acculturation, Indonesia, Architectural Design

INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is one of the countries that experienced colonization of other nations, such as the British, Portuguese, Dutch, and Japanese. The Netherlands is the longest colonized country in Indonesia. The presence of the Dutch in Indonesia began with the establishment of the *Vereenigde Oostindische Compagnie* (VOC) or the East Indies Trading Company in 1602. The Dutch government granted the right to conduct trading activities in the Asian region, including the archipelago, to the VOC. At the beginning of its arrival, the VOC focused more on expanding its trade network, but as time went by and the international trade rivals became more fierce, the VOC

began to expand its territory with various policies and agreements with regional rulers. The VOC has been in decline since 1780 due to increased costs and declining sales resulting in large losses, this is due to rampant corruption, collusion and nepotism committed by VOC employees in Southeast Asia. After the destruction of the VOC, the Dutch government officially took over the territory of the VOC and the politics of imperialism officially began.

During the Dutch occupation, the people experienced cruel suffering and oppression. Inhumane policies, so as to cause anger among the people of the archipelago. This then continued to be a movement to fight for independence and expel the Dutch from the archipelago. The Dutch colonization ended when the Japanese succeeded in defeating the Dutch, this handover of power was carried out on March 9, 1942 in Kalijati. In addition to leaving behind deep trauma, the Dutch also left their influences, especially on the architecture of buildings. The development of Dutch colonial architecture in Indonesia was a complex process and reflected historical, social, and cultural dynamics during the colonial period.

The periodization of Dutch colonial architecture in Indonesia can be divided into three phases, namely the main phase, namely the VOC architectural phase, the transition and empire phase, and the modern colonial phase, where each phase describes the transformation of style, function and design approach. Buildings relict from Dutch colonialism spread throughout Indonesia, including in the city of Langsa, Aceh, have their own characteristics. The city of Langsa, which during the colonial period was the center of the Dutch colonial government in the Eastern region of Aceh, so the city of Langsa has several buildings that reflect Dutch colonial architecture. The study of the influence of Dutch colonial architecture in Langsa City is very important to understand the development of the city and the local architectural identity of the region.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study uses a literature study research method using a descriptive analysis approach that involves the process of collecting, evaluating, and interpreting data or literature sources relevant to the topic being studied. This approach emphasizes critical analysis of the information obtained from these sources, with the aim of identifying significant patterns, trends and relationships.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

To display the architectural identity of a nation, the value of locality is the most important thing that must be maintained. Emphasis on considerations in responding to environmental conditions and emphasis on local potential (locality) that provides special characteristics in architectural identity. The variety of architecture that developed in Indonesia, namely: 1. Traditional architecture, is a work that has been recognized from generation to generation for a very long period of time. Traditional architecture develops over a long process and time is a form of adaptation to the environment. 2. Vernacular architecture, which is a preparation of models with individual variations that are more diverse than primitive buildings that tend to be *Open-Ended*, where the possibility of variation is according to the wishes of individuals or communities. 3. Modern Indonesian architecture, where it has been said that the end of the 19th century was a year of change in which architecture was realized in search of a new style that reflected the characteristics of aristocratic culture.

The colonization carried out by the Dutch for some time, has left many influences on Indonesia. One of the influences of colonialism that can be seen is from the architecture of buildings. Buildings in Indonesia have adopted many of the influences of colonialism. The periodization of Dutch colonial architecture can be divided into three main phases in which each phase describes the transformation of style, function, and design approaches as the colonial context changes. Each phase has its own uniqueness, which is influenced by several factors such as technology, administrative needs, climate and cultural interaction between colonialists and local populations.

1. First Phase: VOC Architecture

In the first phase, it is characterized by a pragmatic and defensive approach focused on basic trade and defense needs. This is because the purpose of the VOC to sail far to the archipelago was initially only to trade and find merchandise. Thus, colonial buildings in this phase are still very simple and prioritize function and prioritize the sturdiness of the building structure. In this phase, the VOC preferred to build defensive fortifications to prevent the enemy from entering their territory, trading offices, and simple settlements. Such as the Rotterdam fortress in Makkasar and the Batavia fortress, which was built to maintain the VOC's power. In the fort building, the VOC adapted European defense technology by modifying it so that it was in accordance with the geographical and climatic conditions in the archipelago. In this early phase, the VOC experienced a shortage of local materials and construction as well as limited resources. This forced the VOC to take action using local materials such as coral, bricks, and wood.

2. Second Phase: Empire Architecture and Transition

After the VOC was declared bankrupt, the Dutch government took over all the power of the VOC. Entering this second phase, Dutch architecture has a more formal, representative and complex style. This phase is also a monumentality and representation of the power of government buildings, churches, and colonial settlements designed to show the grandeur and power of colonialism. The Blenduk Church and Javasche Bank buildings are examples of buildings in this phase. Material experimentation also occurred in this phase, which was followed by technological advancements that allowed the use of new materials such as iron and concrete. The birth of Indische Architecture in this phase introduced the concept of Indies architecture, which is a response to the tropical climatic conditions of the archipelago.

3. Third Phase: Modern Colonial Architecture

In this third phase, the development of Dutch architecture was marked by the emergence of the New Indies which represented the most sophisticated synthesis between European modernism and local wisdom of Indonesian architecture. The Indies style of architecture has characteristics such as the use of reinforced concrete, adaptation of design to traditional architectural principles, more emphasis on energy efficiency, and the interaction of local decoration with modern aesthetics. The Sate Building in Bandung is one of the representatives of this phase.

Colonial buildings are a reflection of the power relations and adaptation of Dutch architecture with the archipelago. The elements of colonial architecture are characterized by several main characteristics, such as: *first*, the use of high and wide gable roofs which are adaptations to prevent high rainfall from being intersected and create good air circulation in summer. *Second*, a wide porch (gallery) is used as a transition space between the interior and exterior, thereby reducing the scorching heat of the sun. *Third*, ventilation and wide openings to cope with hot and humid climates.

In the city of Langsa itself, Dutch heritage buildings are a representation of historical traces that are very important in the development of architecture in Aceh, especially Langsa City. The historical buildings in the city of Langsa are not only a silent witness to the history of Dutch colonialism but also reflect the adaptation of European architecture to the tropical climate conditions of Indonesia.



Picture 1



Figure 2



Figure 3

The picture above is some of the historical buildings in the city of Langsa that can still be seen and well preserved. It can be seen in the first and second picture buildings which are the buildings of a historical house located in the Old Garden, Langsa City. Where it shows the

building structure that has air vents above the windows. This is because the Netherlands designed buildings in Indonesia taking into account the tropical climate that tends to be hot and humid. As can be seen in the picture, the building has a high floor, this is done to avoid flooding. The image also shows how the building has very thick walls, this is an adaptation to the tropical climate that serves to reduce the heat that enters the room. While in figure 3, it shows a building called the Stone Dormitory. The building uses a gable roof structure, where this roof is the Dutch adaptation to extreme hot weather and rain in Indonesia.

Dutch colonial architecture has changed Indonesian architecture a lot, such as in residential areas where it creates a spatial model that is very different from the traditional settlement patterns of the archipelago. The concept of urban planning carried out in the colonial period introduced very strict division of territory, with a clear special segregation between European settlements and indigenous settlements. This urban transformation was marked by the introduction of grid systems in urban planning, the development of modern infrastructure, the creation of new public spaces in the European aesthetic style, and the construction of administrative centers that asserted power. In addition to influencing the pattern of community settlements, Dutch colonial architecture also acted as a medium of complex cultural interaction between Dutch culture and the traditional culture of the archipelago. The manifestation of cultural interaction in architecture includes the adaptation of European design to local architectural elements, the use of mixed construction materials and techniques, the establishment of new social spaces to allow for intercultural encounters, and the transformation of traditional architectural practices through colonial influences.

CONCLUSION

Dutch colonial architecture in Indonesia is a complex heritage that goes beyond just the physical expression of buildings, but rather a profound representation of cultural interactions, power dynamics, and processes of sustained social transformation. During the colonial period, architecture not only served as a container of human activity, but also served as a sophisticated medium of communication that recorded complex historical narratives. From the perspective of power, colonial buildings act as symbolic instruments that affirm colonial dominance through design, spatial planning, and architecture. Each column, ornament, and grid of the city was designed to communicate the social hierarchy and authority of colonial power. However, ironically, in the same process, architecture also becomes a space where cultural resistance and transformation can occur.

The preservation of colonial buildings today is not just an effort at physical conservation, but a process of collective memory reconstruction and negotiation of national identity. These buildings have been transformed from a symbol of colonial power to a cultural heritage that reflects the complexity of Indonesia's history. They serve as a space for dialogue between the past and the present, inviting contemporary generations to understand and interpret historical heritage critically. In the end, Dutch colonial architecture in Indonesia cannot be understood as a single or linear phenomenon. It is a complex space in which various narratives—power, resistance, adaptation, and transformation—interact and shape each other. Each building is a silent witness to the long journey of intercultural interaction, which continues to resonate in Indonesia's contemporary architectural landscape.

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