



## *The Philosophy of National Monument (Monas) in Jakarta, Indonesia*

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### **ABSTRACT**

*One of the most well-known buildings or landmarks in Jakarta, Indonesia, is Monas. In addition to representing Jakarta, Monas also represents the Indonesian people's fight for independence. Monas was founded to honor Indonesia's independence and struggle. Indonesia proclaimed its independence from Dutch colonial rule on August 17, 1945. In 1961, President Soekarno suggested building Monas to commemorate this momentous occasion. Friedrich Silaban, a well-known Indonesian architect, created the design for Monas, which was finished in 1975. Finding the philosophical significance of each side of the National Monument (Monas) is the aim of this study. This study's methodology is qualitative in nature. Since its shape is similar to that of a pestle and mortar, the outcomes obtained are the pestle and mortar's philosophical meaning. Betawi people consider the shape of Monas as a mortar used to pound rice, then there is a tongue of fire at the top of Monas which is coated in gold indicating the spirit of the Indonesian people's resistance against the invaders. The cup's courtyard is 17 meters high, representing the number 17. The area of the courtyard is 45 x 45 meters, representing the year 1945, and the height between the museum room and the cup's base is 8 meters, representing the month of August.*

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background

The National Monument, also known as the Monas, is the symbol of Jakarta. It also serves as a masterpiece and a source of national pride for the Republic of Indonesia, with numerous dioramas depicting the growth and victories of the Indonesian people's struggle. These days, Monas is a well known national and international symbol of Jakarta Tourism (Fandra 2022).

The National Monument serves as the author's source of inspiration for the building's aesthetics, enabling him to create a new piece of art by Sanaji that takes the shape of a spear. The new spear project aims to preserve historical values and honor the Indonesian people's long-standing fight by providing a spear crafted by the author.



Figure 1. National Monument (Monas)

Constructed in 1961, the National Monument (Monas) can be seen in Monas Square, Central Jakarta. Eighty hectares of land were used to construct the National Memorial Monument. President Soekarno dedicated the monument on August 17, 1961, after it was created by Soedarsono and Frederich Silaban with assistance from Ir. Rooseno. Construction on the monument started in August 1959. Monas opens to the public on July 12, 1975. The goal of the Monas Monument's creation is to honor and preserve the Indonesian people's fight during the country's 1945 independence revolution, igniting the nationalism that will inspire today's and tomorrow's youth (Susilo and Suryaningsih 2015).

The basic concept for the creation of Monas originated after nine years of independence was declared. Several days following the 9th anniversary of the Republic of Indonesia, the National Monument Committee was founded to work on the construction of the Monas Monument. Sarwoko Martokusumo led this committee, with S Suhud as author and Sumali Prawirosudirdjo as treasurer, with four members assisting him: Supeno, K K Wiloto, E F Wenas, and Sudiro.

The committee formed was tasked with planning everything connected to the construction of Monas, which would be located in the heart of Medan Merdeka Square in Jakarta. This includes the collection of construction expenditures from community self-help.

Following that, a Monas building group known as the "Yuri Team" was formed, chaired directly by Indonesian President Ir Soekarno. This team hosted the competition twice. The first competition took place on February 17, 1955, and the second on May 10, 1960, with the goal of generating the highest cultural work while reflecting the heart and symbolizing the grandeur of Indonesian culture.

With this competition, it is hoped that the form of the monument built will truly show the personality of the Indonesian nation in three dimensions, rather than flat, a monument that towers high into the sky, made of concrete, iron, and marble, earthquake resistant, resistant to criticism of the times for at least a thousand years, and capable of producing cultural works that arouse the spirit of heroism.

The Yuri Team used the message of hope as an assessment criterion, which was then detailed into five criteria, including having to meet the provisions of what is called National, depicting dynamics, containing Indonesian personality, and reflecting the nation's ideals, symbolizing and depicting the "blazing fire" in the chest of the Indonesian nation, depicting something that actually moves even though it is composed of inanimate objects, and the monument must be

However, two competitions were organized, and no design matched all of the committee's criteria. Finally, the head of the Yuri Team appointed numerous notable architects, including Soedarsono and Ir F Silaban, to design the Monas monument. The two architects agreed to create their own drawings, which were then submitted to the chairman of the Yuri Team (President Soekarno), who chose the drawing created by Soedarsono. In his design, Soedarsono proposed a framework for thinking that accommodated the committee's wishes.

President Sukarno was the main supporter of the construction of the National Monument. This figure also initiated the construction of a history museum in the form of a diorama placed inside the National Monument. Sukarno wanted the history museum to be built inside the National Monument with the aim that the public could understand the journey of their nation's history well. The journey of the nation's history can be understood much more deeply when presented together with other national symbols of Indonesia found in the National Monument (Kanumoyoso 2020).



Figure 2. President Soekarno  
(Source : Google, 2024)

The significance of the National Monument to the Indonesian people can be understood from its placement in the heart of Jakarta. The demand for a monument that could capture the essence of the Indonesian people emerged as soon as Indonesia gained its independence. As the capital of the country, Jakarta, up until the late 1950s, lacked a single monument that could adequately capture the grandeur of the country. Sukarno so quickly endorsed the concept to create the National Monument, which was borne out by a number of Jakartans. Sukarno continued to play a significant role in the construction of the National Monument (Kanumoyoso 2020).

From the background discussion above, the purpose of writing this research is to find out the philosophy behind National Monument (Monas) in Jakarta, Indonesia.

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1 Monument**

Monuments are public spaces whose facilities can be enjoyed by the public. Public spaces themselves are a basic need for city dwellers so that social interaction can be established in the city itself. The meaning of the word monument comes from the Latin “monumenal” which literally means to increase. This word then developed into “mnemon”, mnemonikos which in English becomes mnemonic, meaning something to help remember. The definition of a monument in Architecture means the high design nature that can be achieved by designers to be able to evoke memories or impressions that are easily forgotten (Sumarandak, Tungka, and Egam 2021).

A monument is a structure that has the main purpose as a reminder of something. A monument is a sign to commemorate a person or several people involved in an event or a special type of idea about a work of art, a grave marker and mausoleum, a stone or metal plate related to a social statement, a statue and a victory pole, a statue of honor, an inauguration building, a sign to glorify someone, an explanation by stating the artist’s commemorative intent. Another opinion says, a lasting evidence or reminder of something no table. It is a lasting evidence to remind you of someone or something (Mirwa et al. 2023).

Monuments can also be called one of the various charms/faces of a particular city that has visual language texts that tell the blend of related cultural icons. As a collective work, monument statues in the city of Bandung are a sign that can trace the background of their creators through a system of signs built by the visual form of each statue. Thus, it can be said that the phenomenon of monument statues does reflect a certain value reference from the cultural system of the society that gave birth to it, so what is interesting to study from the form of the statue is that it presents a text that can be intrinsically studied in a semantic-aesthetic context (Rachmadi, Hendriyana, and Falah 2023).

This monument has a very important historical meaning, because it is able to convey valuable messages to the present and future generations about the struggles and sacrifices made by the heroes. The monument also functions as an effective means of historical education. By visiting this monument, students and the general public can gain a deeper understanding of historical events that occurred in the past (Sartika, Ardilah, and Sholeh 2024).

### **2.2 National Monument (Monas)**

The National Monument (Monas) is a representation of Jakarta, the capital city of the Indonesian Republic. As a capital city landmark and public open space, Monas should ideally develop into an organization that can sustainably govern itself and uphold its reputation,

allowing for a variety of public activities in addition to serving as a symbol of the city (Hantono, Sidabutar, and Hanafiah 2018).

One of the many amenities offered by Monas is a special small train that is meant to take guests from the parking lot to the Monas entrance, saving them the exhausting walking distance. Free passenger service is provided by the tiny train. Enjoying the splendor and elegance of the architecture, this miniature train transports passengers or tourists throughout Monas. The park area in the Monas region is more comfortable and beautiful thanks to family-friendly recreational amenities like the Monas park, which features a dancing fountain spectacular, as well as free sports fields like futsal and basketball courts and a park full of beautifully shaded trees. With the intention of restoring Monas to its original purpose, it is currently undergoing revitalization. But because over 190 trees in Monas have been relocated, particularly in the southern section, this regeneration has drawn attention from the general public (Purnamasari, Septiawan, and Hantono 2022).

During his first term as Jakarta Governor, Ali Sadikin cleaned up Medan Merdeka Park, which had previously been filthy. Medan Merdeka Park at the time was overgrown with weeds, iron pipes, and rubble from collapsed houses. This made investors wary of investing in Jakarta because they perceived the situation of Medan Merdeka Park, which was positioned in front of the Great Hall and the situation Palace, as chaotic. As a result, Ali Sadikin cleaned Medan Merdeka Park to make it more visually appealing and attractive to investors. Indeed, Medan Merdeka Park has served as the focal point of Jakarta's growth since the colonial era (Susilo and Suryaningsih 2015).

Medan Merdeka Garden has served as Jakarta's development hub ever since the colonial era. This occurred when the Koningsplein Square (Taman Medan Merdeka), the hub of Batavia, was approved by the colonial government's master plan in 1937. The Taman Medan Merdeka neighborhood in Central Jakarta is home to the majority of significant government structures. The office sector occupies about 75% of the space in Central Jakarta, with the remaining 25% being made up of highways and housing.



Figure 3. Medan Merdeka Garden Earlier  
(Source : Google, 2024)

In order to continue inspiring patriotism and enthusiasm in both the present and the future generations, the Monas monument was developed and the Indonesian independence struggle during the 1945 revolution was preserved. Since every region of Indonesia has gone

through some type of colonialism and has had to fight off invaders, it is crucial to submit and disseminate information about the monument to the general population. The public's and Indonesian citizens' goal in disseminating this information is to instill in them a perpetual memory of the history of the country's independence movement (Kane, Mishra, and Dutta 2016).

Nationalism and patriotism also served as the foundation for Monas' construction. Indonesia was still recuperating from World War II and working to conclude the Independence Conflict at the time. The goal of Monas' building was to honor the spirit of nationalism and patriotism while honoring the brutal battle the Indonesian people endured to free themselves from colonial rule.

### 2.3 National Monument (Monas) Architecture

The architecture and physical layout of Jakarta provide the impression of a modern metropolis. Changes were made to Jakarta to "obliterate" remnants of colonial history following the declaration of Indonesian independence. At least seven monuments that were constructed in Jakarta during the 1960s, transforming the city from a colonial outpost to the nation's capital and serving as a testament to Indonesia's triumph in development, were established thanks in great part to Soekarno's influence in the city's growth (Susilo and Suryaningsih 2015).

Soekarno thought that an ideal society could be established through city planning and architecture, one in which the infrastructure and facility demands of the community were satisfied by the built environment.

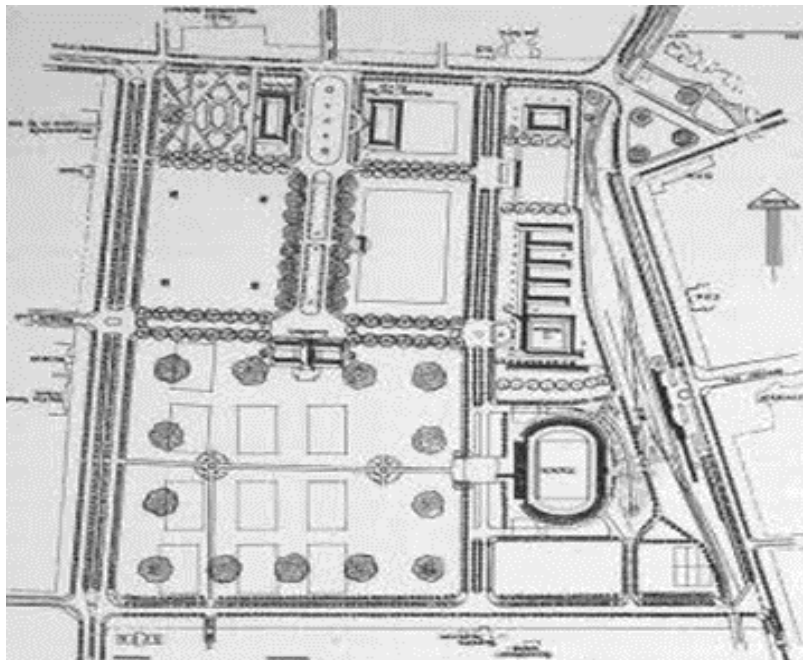


Figure 4. Site Plan of Medan Merdeka Garden  
(Source : Google, 2024)

One may argue that Dutch architecture played a decisive part in shaping Batavia's appearance and was highly influential in the developments of Koningsplein (Monas). It went on like this until the early 20th century. Thomas Karsten used all of Koningsplein's available area in the second half of the 20th century to construct structures that were significant to the Dutch East Indies' civilian population. According to Karsten's pattern for the city layout, racial distinctions persist in the plan, preventing the mixing of various building types and making class-based segregation inevitable.

Numerous symbols common to Indonesian culture can be seen in Monas' construction and size. For example, the base of the monument represents the yoni (mortar), while the soaring shape represents the lingga (pestle/antan). Nearly every indigenous home has a mortar and pestle as standard household items. The courtyard and the eternal flame atop the monument are two of Monas' most well-known symbols. The sign represents the Indonesian people's unwavering desire to fight.

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### 3. RESEARCH METHODS

The research strategy that was employed is a qualitative strategy using a descriptive study design. The descriptive qualitative research method is a philosophy-based study that examines the conditions of natural objects with the researcher serving as the primary instrument. The methodology used in this study was chosen since the researcher's goal was to provide an overview and description of the national monument's concept, which is situated in Jakarta, Indonesia.

### 4. CONCLUSION

#### 4.1 Philosophy of the National Monument (Monas)

##### 4.1.1 Tongue of Flame at the Peak of the National Monument (Monas)

A flaming tongue of fire made of pure gold adorns the peak. This refers to the enthusiastic struggle of the Indonesian people against colonialism. This golden tongue of fire is situated within what is known as a cup.



Figure 5. Golden Flaming Tongue  
(Source : Google, 2024)

This cup's height, measured from the base, is seventeen meters. Not only does the seventeen meter size provide a harmonious appearance, but it also symbolizes the

significance of the seventeenth birthday of the Indonesian people. The gold used to coat the fire decoration's tongue weighed thirty-five kg when it was first constructed. However, this layer was added once more till the weight of the gold reached fifty kilograms in 1995, the year of the Indonesian people's golden anniversary and 50 years of independence. Additionally, the number fifty represents Indonesia's independence, which at the time had passed half a century.

There is an elevator engine room in the tongue of fire cavity, which is shielded by a hood to keep rainwater splashes from getting inside through the tongue of fire gap. It is estimated that the tongue of fire is 132 meters high from the Monas memorial yard. In contrast, the height reaches 17 meters when measured from the top of the courtyard to the top of the tongue of fire. Additionally, a lightning rod pole is positioned at the very top of the tongue of fire. This attempts to keep the tongue of fire safe from lightning strikes. The Monas monument's body represents the honorable conflict and grandeur of the Indonesian Revolution for Independence.

#### **4.1.2 The Shape of the National Monument (Monas) Monument**

Monas is a meaningful symbol in addition to being a massive structure. Its iconic design features "Yoni" as a feminine symbol and "Lingga" as a male (fertility) symbol. In addition, this concept features the traditional rice-pounding tools of a pestle and mortar, which symbolize President Soekarno himself. The year, month, and date of Indonesia's independence are likewise reflected in Monas's dimensions. Monas is a meaningful symbol in addition to being a massive structure. Its iconic design features "Yoni" as a feminine symbol and "Lingga" as a male (fertility) symbol.

In addition, this concept features the traditional rice-pounding tools of a pestle and mortar, which symbolize President Soekarno himself. The year, month, and date of Indonesia's independence are likewise reflected in Monas's dimensions. Overall, the Monas monument's overall shape resembles a pestle and mortar, namely equipment for pounding rice, a design idea that was directly put forward by Ir. Soekarno, the first president of the Republic of Indonesia. The principles of the Indonesian people, who always seek prosperity and a high level of living for the community through cooperation, are thus symbolized by the Monas design.



Figure 6. National Monument (Monas)  
(Source : Google, 2024)

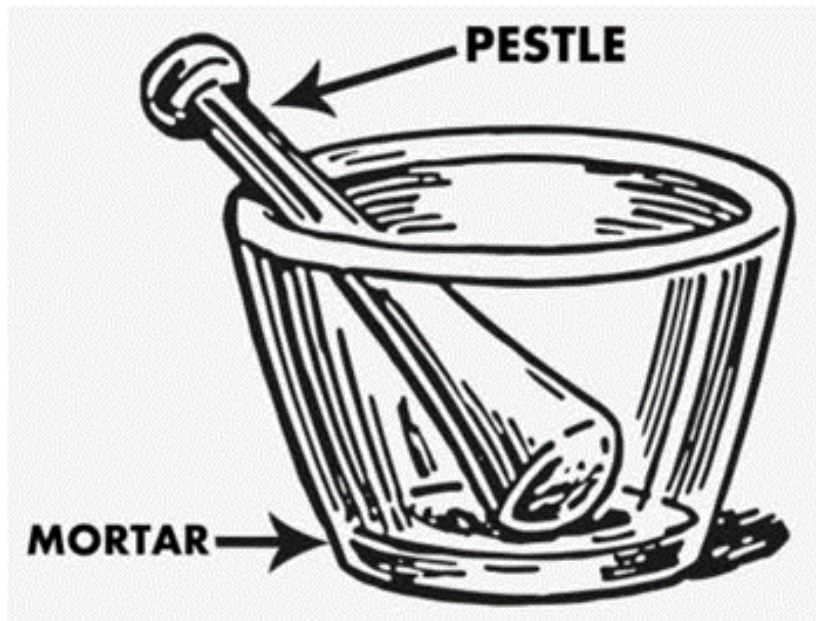


Figure 7. Pestle and Mortar  
(Source : Google, 2024)

#### 4.1.3 Courtyard of the National Monument (Monas)

The lower courtyard of the National Monument (Monas), also known as the cup courtyard, has philosophical significance as a symbol of fertility and vigor that supports the Indonesian nation. The cup courtyard also has other measurements, such as its height of 17 meters, which represents the date 17. The plaza is 45 by 45 meters and commemorates Indonesia's independence in 1945. The distance between the museum area at the bottom and the base of the cup is 8 meters, representing the month of August. The National History Museum is also located beneath the cup courtyard.



Figure 8. The Courtyard of National Monument (Monas)  
(Source : Google, 2024)

#### 4.1.4 Indonesian History Relief

A raised relief illustrating Indonesian history may be seen at each corner of the monument's exterior courtyard. This relief begins in the northeast quadrant, immortalizing the archipelago's ancient greatness and depicting the histories of Singhasari and Majapahit.

This relief extends roughly clockwise to the southeast, southwest, and northwest corners. Philosophically depicting the Dutch colonial period, Indonesian people's resistance and national heroes, the formation of modern organizations fighting for Indonesian independence in the early twentieth century, the Youth Pledge, the Japanese occupation and World War II, the proclamation of Indonesian independence, the Revolution and War of Independence of the Republic of Indonesia, and the era of modern Indonesian development. These reliefs and sculptures are built of cement with a pipe or metal frame; nonetheless, rain and tropical conditions have caused several statues to fall off and be destroyed (Susilo and Suryaningsih 2015).

Reliefs portraying Indonesian history may be seen in each corner of the enormous courtyard that surrounds the monument. These reliefs begin in the northeast corner and depict the archipelago's historical magnificence, as well as the history of Singasari and Majapahit.



Figure 9. The Indonesian History Relief  
(Source : Google, 2024)

## 5. CLOSING

### 5.1 Conclusion

Monas was intended to be a symbol of struggle and resistance to colonialism and injustice, as well as of national sovereignty. Monas was built to reflect the values of Pancasila, Indonesia's basic ideology that includes belief in one God, just and civilized humanity, unity, democracy led by deliberation/representation, and social justice for all Indonesians.

The National Monument is also a symbol of the Indonesian people's strength for independence and love for their homeland, is a true testament to the spirit of the Indonesian people's struggle for independence. As the main icon in the capital city, Monas is an interesting educational tourism destination for both local and foreign tourists. The long journey of its construction contains an inspiring story about the determination and togetherness of the Indonesian people. Let us preserve the National Monument as a valuable legacy.

Monas also depicts the entire archipelago, capturing the diversity of civilizations, tribes, and faiths found throughout Indonesia. This is an effort to unite the Indonesian country, which is made up of numerous tribes and ethnicities. Monas serves as not only a physical landmark, but also a historical and cultural icon of Indonesia's struggle toward freedom and togetherness. Monas is an icon of Indonesian nationality and identity.

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