



Jurnal Arsitektur Zonasi

Journal homepage:
<https://ejournal.upi.edu/index.php/jaz>



Philosophy of the Colonial Building of the Bandung City History Museum

Jati Wirahma Sakti

Dinas Cipta Karya Bina Konstruksi dan Tata Ruang Kota Bandung, Bandung, Indonesia

*Correspondence: E-mail: jatiwirahmasakti@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

The Indonesian History Museum, located on Jalan Aceh in Bandung, features an architectural design in the Indisch Style, characteristic of Dutch colonial buildings. Over time, this building has experienced several changes in function. Initially, it was constructed as a Freemason building for a Kindergarten School. However, the main Freemason building was located at the intersection of Jalan Aceh and Jalan Wastukencana, where a large mosque now stands. This mosque, which was once the heart of the Freemason movement, was later destroyed and transformed into the mosque we see today. The building of the museum later became the Yahja School before being taken over by the Indonesian government and repurposed as the provincial office, eventually serving as the Dispora Office. It was later transformed into the Bandung City History Museum. The orientation of this building reflects the ancient philosophy of Bandung, influenced by local wisdom. The early residents of the city held deep respect for the surrounding mountains, and as a sign of reverence, many buildings, including the ITB building, Gedung Sate, City Hall, and the Bandung Museum, were positioned to face the North and South, in alignment with the natural landscape.

ARTICLE INFO

Article History:

Submitted/Received 24 Nov 2024

First Revised 20 December 2024

Accepted 4 January 2025

First Available online 1 Feb 2025

Publication Date 5 1 Feb 2025

Keyword:

colonial architecture;

bandung;

house design

1. INTRODUCTION

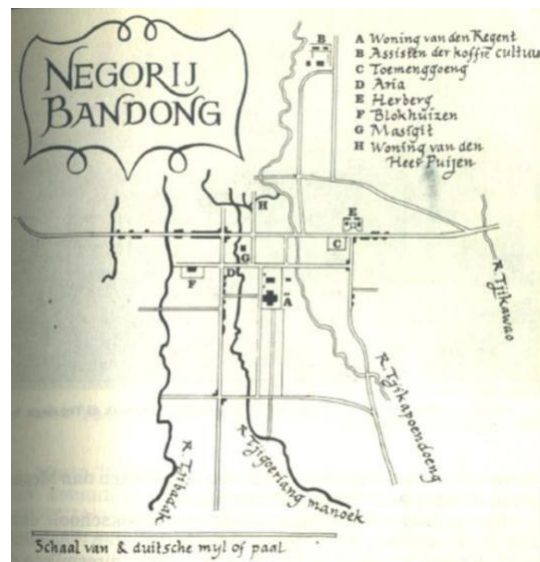
The word "philos" in Ancient Greek means love or pleasure, while "sophia" means truth or wisdom. Therefore, philosophy can be interpreted as the human process of pursuing wisdom or discovering truth. Conceptually, philosophy reflects a deep love or interest in wisdom and truth (Nila and Susanto, 2018). The relationship between architectural science and cultural philosophy is an interesting topic to study. Architecture, as a cultural product, emerges from a combination of art and technology based on knowledge, taking into account symbolic and functional aspects. This symbolic aspect is always related to beliefs that include mythology and cosmology that exist in society. In Sundanese culture, natural phenomena serve as a source of metaphysical and theological inspiration, which are then translated into meaning and symbols. In everyday life, the Sundanese people are very familiar with various fairy tales, both humorous and mystical. These stories convey moral values, such as the importance of preserving nature and living in harmony.

The philosophy of life and culture passed down through generations has had a significant influence on the development of architecture in the Sundanese community. One belief closely related to the environment is the mythology of mountains. The Sundanese people view mountains as protectors that protect humans from various disasters. The geography of Bandung, surrounded by volcanoes, rivers, hills, and other mountains, is the main reason why this region holds many mythologies and stories closely related to its natural conditions (Johari, 2016). Kabuyutan, a place considered sacred by the ancient Sundanese people, is closely related to the understanding of the landscape or geographical conditions of the earth, such as ridges or mountains, as explained by Perdana and Wahyudi (2020). Furthermore, according to Dudley (in Dahlan, 2017), people in the past paid respect to the landscape by viewing it through spiritual, cultural, and social values. These places were then sacred as a form of respect for God. The south-north axis is inspired by traditional beliefs passed down from generation to generation since the Kingdom era. Geographically, the Bandung highlands are surrounded by mountains and hills, so the south-north axis orientation of the city of Bandung naturally points towards the mountain peaks (Izzati, Andiyan, and Darwin 2023).



(Mount Tangkuban Parahu)

Administratively, the end of the kingdom era in the Priangan Plains region occurred when the Sunda Kingdom was conquered by the Mataram Kingdom. Afterward, Mataram established the Bandung Regency with its administrative center in Krapyak, located at the confluence of the Cikapundung and Citarum Rivers.



(Bandung Map)

Later, the Priangan region was handed over by Mataram to the Dutch East India Company (VOC), marking the beginning of the colonial era. During the colonial period, the city of Bandung experienced rapid development and earned the nickname "paradise in exile." Initially, Bandung was the capital of Bandung Regency, which was moved by Regent R.A. Wiranatakusumah II from Krapyak to a new location in the city center, which is now Bandung Square. When the Square was built, its design was based on Sundanese philosophy, where the Square is considered a sacred location. Therefore, the Square and its surrounding buildings were designed to face north, to the north of which is Mount Tangkuban Parahu (Pratama 2015).

In the early development of Bandung, the focus of development was on the northern part. The master plan for North Bandung began in 1917 with the aim of expanding the city and preparing for the relocation of the capital of the Dutch East Indies to Bandung. The garden city concept was implemented in this development, where the government area was complemented by residential areas and city parks (Budiman, 2015; Falah, 2019). The development of the northern part of Bandung became a major indicator of the city's progress at that time, involving architects imported directly from Europe. The buildings constructed later became landmarks of Bandung, with some of them not only representing the new Indo-European architectural style but also having a south-north axis orientation. (Nila and Susanto 2018)



(Picture of the North-South Axis of the History Museum Building with Mount Tangkuban Parahu)

Cultural heritage preservation plays a crucial role in preserving the historical value of buildings. One effective way to preserve historic buildings is through the concept of Adaptive Reuse, which involves giving existing buildings new functions. As Cantell (2005) points out, implementing this concept can be a solution for preserving old buildings without losing their historical value. The Adaptive Reuse process must be carried out carefully to avoid damaging the building's original characteristics, while still providing new value that suits the needs of the times. With this approach, historic buildings are not only preserved but can also provide economic benefits and support funding for their maintenance and upkeep, as explained by Saputra & Purwantiasning (2013).

According to Bandung City Regulation No. 7 of 2018, there are 254 Class A cultural heritage buildings throughout the city. Given this significant number, appropriate preservation measures are essential to ensure the continued existence and cultural value of these buildings, which can be achieved through wise protection, development, and utilization. The Bandung City History Museum is an example of a class A cultural heritage building that has successfully implemented the Adaptive Reuse concept in its preservation efforts (Misirolsoy dan Günçe, 2016).

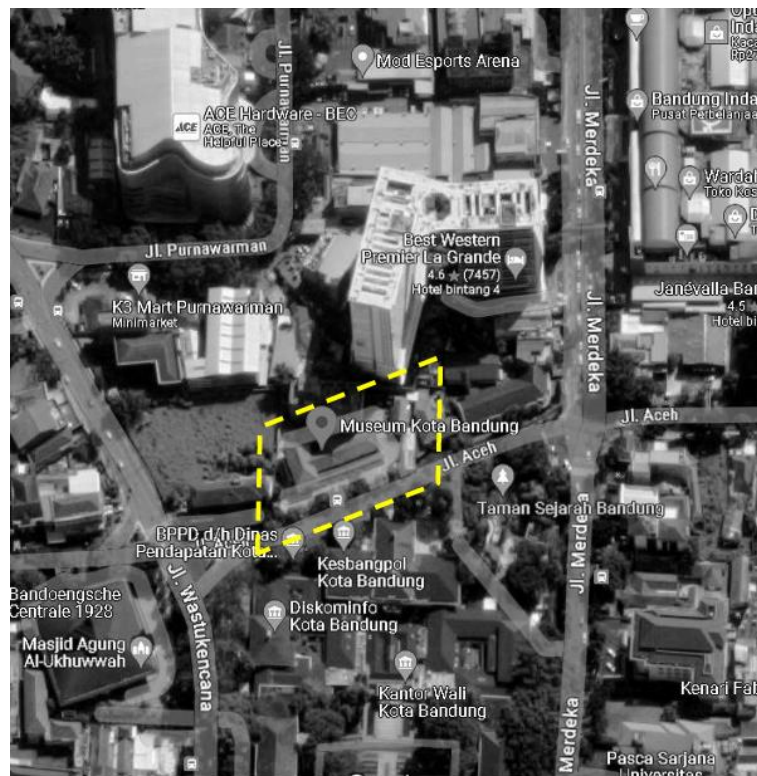


Data Image of Type A Building, Cultural Heritage of Bandung City

The Bandung City History Museum building was designated as a Class A cultural heritage site in accordance with Bandung City Regulation No. 19 of 2009, as stipulated in the Bandung City PPID decree. Founded by the Freemasonry organization in 1925, the building features Indische Empire architectural style and originally served as the Froebel School (kindergarten). After being taken over by the Indonesian government in 1962, the building underwent several changes in function. It was not until 2019 that it was officially used as the Bandung City History Museum. The process of changing the building's function can be seen in the following periods.



The Bandung City History Museum is located at Jalan Aceh No. 47, Babakan Ciamis Village, Sumur Bandung District.



Location Image of Bandung City History Museum

Initially, this building served as the Froebel School, an early childhood education institution with classrooms separated by walls and a communal area located near the main entrance. However, to adapt to the needs of a museum, a more open and interconnected exhibition space was required to allow for the smooth flow of exhibitions. In the process of implementing the Adaptive Reuse concept to transform the Froebel School into the Bandung City History Museum, one adjustment was to remove the dividing walls between rooms.

Over time, the Bandung City History Museum has undergone various functional changes, making it part of the community's collective memory with sentimental value in the heart of this historically rich city. The building's history illustrates how a building can continue to be used while maintaining its sustainability. Furthermore, this building provides guidance on the appropriate steps in preserving cultural heritage sustainably through the application of the adaptive reuse concept, which also takes into account the existing building typology. (Misirollsoy and Günçe 2016)



Pictures Now and Then

The Bandung City History Museum, based on the 2011-2031 Bandung City Spatial Plan, is located in an area designated as a cultural heritage site. This building holds historical significance due to its direct connection to the activities of the Freemasonry group in Bandung. The group founded the former Froebel School, which now houses the museum. Freemasonry, which espouses occult teachings, operated freely in Bandung during the colonial period and left a significant impact. In his book, *The Free Masonic Order and Society in the Dutch East Indies and Indonesia 1764-1962* (Sinar Harapan, 2004), T.H. Stevens states that the Freemasonry movement had a far-reaching impact on Indonesian history. One of their legacies in Bandung is the application of the Empire Style architectural style, later known as the Indische Empire Style. This style is an adaptation of the Empire Style adapted to local climate conditions, technology, and materials, as explained by Handinoto (2010). The use of the Indische Empire style demonstrates the building's architectural significance.



Picture of Bandung City History Museum

The Indische Empire architectural style, which developed during the Dutch East Indies era, was an adaptation of the grandiose architecture of the French Empire, characterized by its Greek columns. Due to Indonesia's hot and humid tropical conditions, this style underwent adjustments, such as the addition of shield roofs and windows under the eaves to improve ventilation (Handinoto, 2010). The main characteristics of the Indische Empire architectural style are seen in the use of wood and brick materials and the symmetrical building design. (Soekiman and Purwanto 2018)



Main Door of Building Image

2. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Colonial Building Philosophy

KEPALA

BADAN

KAKI



Head

A building's roof typically refers to the part of the roof that serves as the primary protection from the weather. In colonial architecture, roofs often have distinctive shapes, such as:

Shield and Gable Roofs: These roof shapes are designed to drain rainwater effectively, which is crucial in tropical regions with high rainfall. Shield roofs are often found in Indisch Style buildings, where the roof is designed with a sufficient slope to prevent water pooling.

Roof Materials: Generally, local materials such as clay tiles are used, providing both an aesthetic and functional effect. (HanyPerwitasari 2008)

Building Agency

The body of a building is the main part, consisting of walls and openings (windows and doors). Characteristics of the body of a building in colonial architecture include:

Symmetry and Proportion: Colonial buildings often have symmetrical designs with balanced proportions. Windows and doors are usually placed regularly to create an interesting visual rhythm.

Material Use: Walls are usually made of sturdy materials, such as brick or concrete, with a simple yet elegant finish, often painted white for a clean and bright impression.

Building Feet

The footing refers to the base or foundation of a structure. This element has several important functions:

Strong Foundation: The footing must be strong enough to support the entire building's weight. Typically, the foundation is made of river stone or reinforced concrete.

Entrance: In many colonial buildings, steps lead to the main entrance, marking the transition from the exterior to the interior. This is not only practical but also aesthetically pleasing.

Implementation Example

Examples of the implementation of these elements in colonial architecture can be seen in buildings in the Old Town areas of Semarang or Bandung. There, we can find various types of facades with distinct characteristics:

Symmetrical Facade: With a central main door and tall windows on both sides, creating visual balance.

Ornamental Roof: Using traditional roof shapes suited to Indonesia's tropical climate, such as a pyramid-shaped or gable roof.

Local Materials: The use of local materials for both walls and roofs reflects adaptation to the environment.

Thus, the head, body, and foot elements in colonial architecture not only function structurally but also reflect the aesthetic and cultural values of the time. Colonial architecture is a blend of European influences and local Indonesian conditions, creating a unique and captivating style that continues to this day. (Savitri 2013)

Building Philosophy in Sundanese Culture

In Sundanese culture, the philosophy of architecture reflects the close relationship between humans and nature. In Sundanese, a house is called "bumi," which signifies a human dwelling in the middle world, not the upper or lower worlds. This concept is reflected in the structure of the traditional Kampung Naga house. The roof of this traditional house features a peak depicting the upper world, reflecting a higher realm. Furthermore, the "V"-shaped horn ornament attached to the roof symbolizes peace. Thus, the upper world in this philosophy is believed to be a peaceful place, symbolizing the afterlife or the afterlife (Riany et al., 2014).

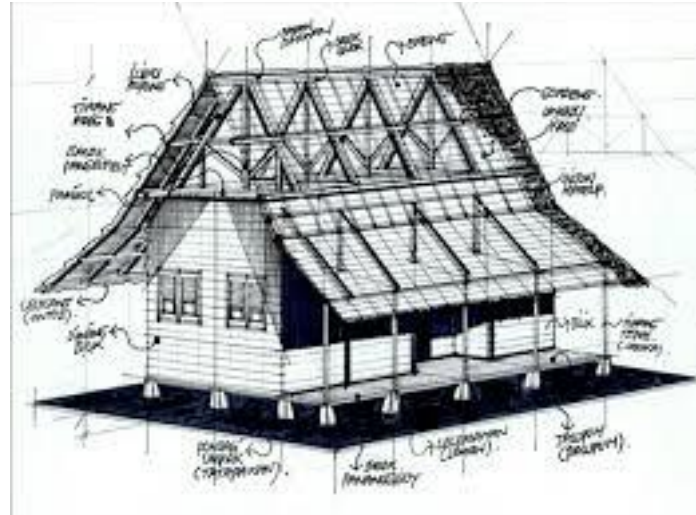


Picture of a Sundanese Traditional House Roof

Ijad (2018) explains that the lower part of the Kampung Naga traditional house, known as the "foot" or "underworld," serves as the building's main support. The empty space between the ground and the floor is often used as a chicken coop. Meanwhile, the middle part of the house, known as the body, or in cosmology as the middle world, is where humans conduct their daily lives. This area contains several rooms, such as the kitchen, bedrooms, and the main room, used for various activities, making it the primary place for humans to live and interact.

The traditional house in Kampung Naga not only serves as a place of shelter and rest, but also has a deeper meaning. In Sundanese, a house is known as "imah" or "bumi," which

translates to "world." This world is home to various creatures, including humans. (Suharjanto 2014)



Picture of a Sundanese Traditional House

The walls of the traditional Kampung Naga houses hold profound meaning. Made from woven bamboo called "bilang," these walls are strong when the bamboo is joined together. While not strong enough individually, when joined together, the bamboo is able to withstand heavy loads. This meaning reflects the value of mutual cooperation within the community, where people support one another, especially when a member experiences a disaster, such as illness or other events. (Nurjaman, Rusmana, and Witro 2021).

3. CONCLUSION

The Colonial Building of the Bandung City History Museum has a strong philosophy, namely from the character of the building, the typology of the building. This philosophy has certain meanings, which are divided into three parts, namely, the roof of the building, the body of the building, and the foot of the building. The meaning of the roof of the Dutch colonial building, namely the Indische Empire, is that the roof is made with a certain angle of inclination that is adjusted to the tropical climate of Indonesia, specifically in the city of Bandung, the roof functions to cover the building from rain and hot weather, the philosophy is also as a protective shade, as the head of a building that portrays a protector. The body part of the building is the wall space where it stands firmly as the main function of the building, the philosophy of the wall is as the main function of the building that supports all activities in the building, the Dutch deliberately made the walls of the building and columns with strong and sturdy specifications, even the thickness of the walls is more than the usual thickness of the walls of ordinary houses today, the philosophy is where the Dutch or the Aryans are famous for their tall, big, white and sturdy posture, that reflection is what they apply to their buildings, so that they look dashing, arrogant and have character like the Aryans. At the foot of the building, the floor of the building can be seen to be raised slightly so that it has steps that function as the floor of the building is not level with the road floor, its function is as an aesthetic where the building is more authoritative and looks more magnificent, in accordance with the character of the Dutch or Aryan nation, apart from that the foot of the building has a foundation column that is quite large to support the building as a whole, so it is clear that the building is magnificent.

REFERENCES

- Izzati, Husna, Andiyan Andiyan, and Wowo Adizar Darwin. 2023. "Filosofi Sunda Dalam Konsep Lanskap Bangunan Kolonial Di Kota Bandung." *Arsitektura* 21 (1): 107. <https://doi.org/10.20961/arst.v21i1.70709>.
- Nila, Fari, and bagus pratama Susanto. 2018. "Kedudukan Filsafat Dalam Ilmu Pengetahuan," 21.
- Savitri. 2013. "Estetika Fasad Pada Bangunan Kolonial 1920-1940." *Jurnal Seni Rupa* 1 (1): 11.
- Soekiman, Djoko, and Bambang Purwanto. 2018. "The Indis Style: The Transformation and Hybridization of Building Culture in Colonial Java Indonesia." *Paramita: Historical Studies Journal* 28 (2): 137–51.
- HanyPerwitasari. 2008. "Tipologi Wajah Bangunan Rumah Tinggal Kolonial Belanda Di Ngamarto, Lawang.," 51–64. <http://repository.ub.ac.id/id/eprint/139419/>.
- MIsIrIlsoy, Damla, and Kağan Günçe. 2016. "Adaptive Reuse Strategies for Heritage Buildings: A Holistic Approach." *Sustainable Cities and Society* 26:91–98. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.scs.2016.05.017>.
- Nurjaman, Andri, Dadan Rusmana, and Doli Witro. 2021. "Filosofi Dan Nilai-Nilai Islam Dalam Gaya Bangunan Rumah Adat Kampung Naga Tasikmalaya: Sebuah Analisis Terhadap Rumah Adat Dengan Pendekatan Studi Islam." *Jurnal Penelitian Sejarah Dan Budaya* 7 (2): 227–50. <https://doi.org/10.36424/jpsb.v7i2.258>.
- Pratama, Ferdy. 2015. "Dwi Fungsi Kota Bandung Sebagai Pusat Pemerintahan Sipil Dan Kemiliteran Hindia-." *Artikel Dalam Kegiatan Masa Pendidikan Karakter ...*, 1–13. https://www.academia.edu/download/49469438/Dwifungsi_Kota_Bandung.pdf.
- Suharjanto, Gatot. 2014. "Konsep Arsitektur Tradisional Sunda Masa Lalu Dan Masa Kini." *ComTech: Computer, Mathematics and Engineering Applications* 5 (1): 505. <https://doi.org/10.21512/comtech.v5i1.2644>.