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Ornamentation of Mojokerto City Government Buildings in Majapahit Architectural Style: Authenticity or Modernization

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A B S T R A C T

Ornamental carvings from the Majapahit kingdom have distinctive characteristics with symbolism and high aesthetic value. The application of Majapahit ornaments has become a style that is in great demand in construction with a more modern approach to today. The purpose of this study is to identify and explain how the traditional ornaments of Majapahit can be integrated into the design of modern buildings. This study analyzes the autensitation or modernization of the ornaments of the Mojokerto city government building using descriptive methods through documentation, surveys, photography, interviews, and descriptions of ornamental aspects. The analysis showed that Majapahit ornamentation on Mojokerto City Government Buildings not only maintain Majapahit cultural ornaments, but there is a mixture of Central Java ornamental culture, especially Jepara ornamental carvings. In addition, this study reveals that the use of complex and symbolic Majapahit carving motifs on Mojokerto City Government Buildings successfully creates harmony between traditional heritage and application of modern buildings.

A R T I C L E   I N F O

1. INTRODUCTION

The wide variety of decorative ornaments throughout history has led to the development of modern forms. The use of decorative ornaments can be traced back to prehistoric times and around 150 AD, appearing in various cultures across the world. These ornaments evolved from simple designs on stones to more complex forms used in fashion, crafts, religious rituals, and architecture (Mandiri, 2017). In architecture, decorative ornaments have been an important element since prehistoric times. They not only enhance aesthetic appeal but also provide a unique cultural identity for each historical period, with their various forms and motifs reflecting the cultural values embedded in the architecture (Lestari et al., 2023).

To this day, architecture remains inseparable from various ornamental motifs. Many architects reinterpret traditional ornaments into more modern forms, a practice known as neo-vernacular design (Aprilia Dewata et al., 2023). Neo-vernacular ornamentation is often used to give buildings character and uniqueness while maintaining relevance to contemporary trends, styles, and technologies. Neo-vernacular architecture seeks to incorporate modern designs with a contemporary perspective while upholding historical principles (Aprilia Dewata et al., 2023).

Several cities in Indonesia feature buildings with neo-vernacular architecture or modern structures that are preserved as national monuments. The construction of city government buildings, the DPR building, formal and non-formal educational facilities, places of worship, and other structures deliberately designed to imitate modern architectural forms with traditional local elements represents an effort to modernize traditional architecture (Erdiono, 2011). One example is the Mojokerto City Government building, which combines modern architectural styles with traditional Majapahit influences. The incorporation of Majapahit ornaments is an effective method for integrating local cultural wisdom into architectural design (Iqbal et al., 2024). These ornaments include various flora and fauna motifs commonly found in Indonesian nature, such as the lotus, plant tendrils, lions, and the Garuda, each carrying symbolic meaning in Majapahit culture (Bawono & Zuraidah, 2016). Floral motifs, for example, often symbolize fertility, growth, and harmony with nature, while fauna motifs represent strength, courage, and protection (Bawono & Zuraidah, 2016).

The Mojokerto City Government building, commonly known as the Sabha Mandala Tama, has distinctive characteristics rooted in Majapahit architecture, evident in its exterior, interior, and landscape ornaments. The modernization of ornaments in the Sabha Mandala Tama aims to preserve the cultural identity of Majapahit while adapting to the needs and demands of contemporary architecture. Majapahit ornamental carvings are incorporated into the building to showcase high-value craftsmanship, and their adaptation into modern art highlights the enduring relevance of ancestral cultural heritage. The harmonious integration of tradition and innovation in the Sabha Mandala Tama's design demonstrates how modern traditional architecture can embody the depth of Majapahit design while remaining relevant to contemporary architectural practices.

Figure 1. Exterior of the Sabha Mandala Tama Building
(Source: Author's Documentation, 2022)

Figure 2. Interior of the Sabha Mandala Tama Building
(Source: Author's Documentation, 2022)

This study focuses on four elements of the Sabha Mandala Tama building: (1) the entrance gate, (2) the ornament of Sang Surya Majapahit (the Majapahit sun ornament), (3) the Majapahit carving ornament, and (4) the Ukel ridge roof ornament. After analyzing these decorative elements, the next step is to examine whether they maintain the authentic characteristics of Majapahit ornaments while incorporating modern elements. The purpose of this study is to identify and explain how traditional Majapahit ornaments can be integrated into modern building designs and to determine which traditional Majapahit symbols are present in the Sabha Mandala Tama building. The analysis in this research is conducted using a descriptive method, specifically employing descriptive criticism parameters on static aspects to provide a general description and explanation of the research object.

2. RESEARCH METHODS

The use of descriptive criticism method is an important point in data collection in this study. Descriptive criticism of the Sabha Mandala Tama building describes or explains existing facts related to the process of the building's formation. The purpose of this study is to provide an accurate and sequential explanation so that the author delivers objective and honest criticism of the Sabha Mandala Tama building. The parameters used in the discussion of descriptive criticism are depictive criticism. The depictive criticism method views, explains, and describes architectural works in a static aspect (Romis & Amiuza, 2018). The static aspect of descriptive criticism can be done through various methods such as direct surveys,

interviews, photography, measurements, and explanatory descriptions (Romis & Amiuza, 2018).

3. RESULTS AND DISSCUSSION

The Sabha Mandala Tama building was designed by Yustian Suhandinata and his team from the PUPR Department of Mojokerto City. The building, owned by Mayor Ika Puspitasari, measures 18.75 m × 32.77 m, with a total floor area of 614.45 m². The primary function of the Sabha Mandala Tama is to serve as a meeting and gathering hall. The building consists of two floors: the first floor follows an outdoor concept and serves as a meeting space, while the second floor has an indoor concept and functions as an employee office. The ornaments of the Sabha Mandala Tama building reflect Majapahit architectural influences that have been modernized through a neo-vernacular concept. The following section describes these ornaments and examines whether they retain authentic Majapahit characteristics or have undergone modernization:

1. Gapura (Entrance Gate) Ornament

    A gate functions as the main entrance to a region and marks its boundaries. The Majapahit gate has undergone a process of modernization; originally, it served solely as the gateway to the Majapahit Kingdom. Today, as a way of honoring Majapahit culture, both the government and the community construct gates at the entrances of houses and Majapahit-themed villages, including the Sabha Mandala Tama City Government building.
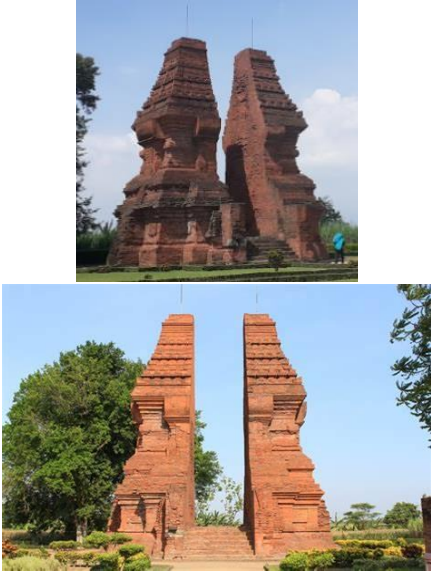
    Practically, a gapura (gate) serves as both an entrance and an exit point to a city center or region. With the advancement of innovation and technology, the use of gates has become prominent in various government offices. One example is the gate at the entrance of the Mojokerto Regency office, which stands as a welcoming symbol and represents the identity of Mojokerto Regency as the land of Majapahit, where many historic temples are located (Muyasyaroh, 2015). The function of entrance gates such as Candi Bentar can be traced back to the Majapahit era in the 15th century, as seen in the Wringin Lawang Temple, which according to local tradition served as the entrance to the residence of Prime Minister Gajah Mada (Muyasyaroh, 2015). Beyond their practical use, Majapahit gates also carry a philosophical meaning. The gradually narrowing shape of the gate represents a concept of human creation. I Wayan Watra defines humans as dynamic beings characterized by three core dynamics: cipta (creativity), rasa (feeling), and karsa (will). In tasawuf teachings, as explained by Ranggawarsita in Serat Wirid Hidayat Jati, there is a concept of unity between humans and God. This perspective emphasizes that humans originate from God and must strive to return to oneness with Him, forming the basis for the architectural concept of manunggaling kawula Gusti (Nurfaiza, 2020).

    Gapura is regarded as a form of architectural expression associated with social status within a society (Nurfaiza, 2020). In terms of visual characteristics, gates are defined by traditional Javanese ornaments and other decorative elements. As an architectural artifact, the gapura embodies and reflects the cultural values of the community that produced it. Two primary types of gates are derived from Hindu temple architecture: (1) gates with a closed top and a tiered roof structure, exemplified by the paduraksa gate in Balinese temples or the korigung in Java; and (2) gates with an open top resembling a split temple, commonly referred to as a split gate (candi bentar) (Nurfaiza, 2020).

    In detail, the authentic ornamentation of the Wringin Lawang Gate is constructed from original red bricks and features a tiered pattern known as *bajang ratu*. The gate is shaped like a stacked pyramid with a square peak and has a base measuring 13 m × 11 m

and a height of 15.5 m. The steps of the gate are made from sedimentary stone formed through the processes of petrification and lithification as a result of weathering and erosion.

The modernized gate ornamentation at Sabha Mandala Tama is less detailed than the original but retains key features such as the distinctive red brick pattern, the tiered pyramid form with a square top, and a height proportionate to that of the building. The purpose of this design is to preserve the cultural heritage of the Majapahit era.

Authenticity	Modernization
 Figure 3. Wringin Lawang Trowulan Gate (Source: Author's Documentation, 2022)	 Figure 4. Entrance Gate Sabha Mandala Tama Building (Source: Author's Documentation, 2022)

2. Sang Surya Majapahit Ornament

Surya Majapahit is a representation of the greatness of the Majapahit Kingdom, consisting of arranged lines in a tumpal pattern resembling the shape of the sun with surrounding rays (Bawono & Zuraidah, 2016). In Hindu philosophy, Navasanga describes nine gods who guard the eight cardinal directions and one deity at the center, which forms the basis for the creation of the Surya Majapahit ornament (Mia Fitria Nisa'Q & I Wayan Arsana, 2023). Throughout its history, the Surya Majapahit ornament has undergone various modifications; however, the eight sun rays surrounding the center remain its defining characteristic (Bawono & Zuraidah, 2016).

The Surya Majapahit symbol represents a synthesis of two belief systems, namely Hinduism and the indigenous traditions of the Indonesian archipelago, and served as an emblem of the Majapahit Kingdom during its era. The influence of indigenous beliefs is reflected in the sun's form with multiple rays, symbolizing the eight cardinal directions (Habib, 2021). In contrast, the Hindu elements are evident in the depiction of the deities within the solar disk, known as Dewata Nawasanga, who are revered as the guardians of the cardinal directions (Habib, 2021). The guardian deity Lokapala also plays a role as the protector of these directions. Structurally, the Surya Majapahit is characterized by eight deities of equal status governing each direction, all pivoting around Shiva as the central and supreme figure. The sun's rays are stylized into eight points aligned with the cardinal directions. The deities depicted in the Surya Majapahit are collectively referred to as Dewata Nawasanga, who embody the nine aspects of Hyang Widhi ("One in Many") with

Shiva as the unifying presence permeating all directions. The eight directional deities include: Iswara (east), Maheswara (southeast), Brahma (south), Rudra (southwest), Mahadeva (west), Sangkara (northwest), Vishnu (north), and Sambhu (northeast). These deities originate from the Hindu pantheon, a religious system established in the archipelago prior to the advent of Islam (Habib, 2021). These deities originate from the Hindu pantheon, a religious system established in the archipelago prior to the advent of Islam (Habib, 2021). Within Hinduism, the guardians of the eight cardinal points are referred to as Hastadikpalaka or Dewata Nawasanga. Symbolic meanings within the Surya Majapahit derive from the deities' associated colors, weapons, and spatial placement, each of which conveys specific attributes and divine characteristics (Habib, 2021).

The authenticity of the Sang Surya ornamental form can still be observed in the ruins of Majapahit temples. In contrast, the modernization of the Sabha Mandala Tama building is evident in the ornamental carvings on the façade walls, the building's floors, and even the ceiling. The Majapahit Sang Surya carving in the Sabha Mandala Tama has been modernized through a fusion of Majapahit motifs and Central Javanese carvings, specifically Jepara-style elements, which are combined into a single Sang Surya-themed composition.

Authenticity	Modernization
Figure 5. Surya Majapahit, stored in the Trowulan Museum (Source: budaya.indonesia.org, 2012)	Figure 7. Floor in the Meeting Room (Source: Author's Documentation, 2022)
Figure 6. Surya Majapahit, stored in the National Museum (Source: budaya.indonesia.org, 2012)	Figure 8. Center Ceiling in Meeting Room (Source: Author's Documentation, 2022)

Authenticity	Modernization
	 Figure 9. Wall Façade (Source: Author's Documentation, 2022)

3. Majapahit Carved Ornaments

The authenticity of Majapahit carved ornaments is reflected in their characteristic concave and convex carvings (Wati, 2018). The leaf, flower, and fruit motifs exhibit hybrid forms, incorporating a mixture of various decorative styles. A crest motif appears on the surface of the main leaf, with a trubus leaf carving emerging above it. The aesthetic value of Majapahit carved ornaments is further enhanced by the use of simbar (Wati, 2018). Fragments of Majapahit motifs are also found in the form of cawen pieces on patran leaf carvings, as well as tendrils on the main leaf (Wati, 2018).

The Sabha Mandala Tama building demonstrates a process of modernization, where the aesthetics of the façade are adapted through a blend of Majapahit and Jepara carvings from Central Java. Jepara influences are particularly visible in the wayang motifs and trubus leaf carvings found in the meeting room, on the façade of the supporting pillars, and on the exterior walls of the building. Additionally, the landscape boundary of the façade incorporates a Majapahit-style carved gebyok in the shape of a kali (x).

Authenticity	Modernization
 Figure 10. Majapahit Kali(x) Shape Carving (Source: gebyokukirjawamajapahit.blogspot, 2010) Figure 11. Majapahit Carving	 Figure 14. Landscape Wall Carving Motif (Source: Author's Documentation, 2022)

Authenticity	Modernization
(Source: gebyokukirjawamajapahit.blogspot, 2010) Figure 12. Majapahit Carving (Source: dewisundari.com) Figure 13. Majapahit Carving (Source: Nisa, M.F & Arsana Wayan, 2023)	 Figure 15. Exterior Wall Facade Carving Motif (Source: Author's Documentation, 2022) Figure 16. Interior Wall Facade Carving Motif of Meeting Room (Source: Author's Documentation, 2022) Figure 17. Facade Carving Motif of Supporting Pillar (Source: Author's Documentation, 2022)

4. Ukel Roof Ornament

The authentic ornamentation of the Majapahit ukel roof, created during the height of the Majapahit Kingdom, is believed to embody a philosophy rooted in moral principles derived from religious teachings, which later became the foundation of the empire's ideology (Mia Fitria Nisa'Q & I Wayan Arsana, 2023).

In the Sabha Mandala Tama building, the roof ridge is carved to closely replicate the original design. The ridge incorporates Majapahit carvings, although the concave or angkup section has been simplified.

Authenticity	Modernization
Figure 16. Majapahit Carving (Source: Author's Documentation, 2022)	Gambar 17. Wuwungan Roof Carving (Source: Author's Documentation, 2022)

4. CONCLUSION

The Mojokerto City Government Office, better known as the Sabha Mandala Tama building, serves as a venue for official meetings and other significant events. The building adopts a neo-vernacular concept that blends Nusantara elements, with each side of the ornamental carvings incorporating Majapahit motifs alongside Jepara carvings from Central Java. This combination creates a strong synthesis of modernity and tradition. Based on the research findings, it can be concluded that the ornamentation of the Sabha Mandala Tama building has undergone modernization in four key elements: 1) the Entrance Gate, 2) the Sang Surya Majapahit Ornament, 3) the Majapahit Carved Ornament, and 4) the Ukel Roof Ornament.

Upon completion, this study offers several recommendations expected to benefit various stakeholders. First, it is hoped that the Indonesian public will gain a better understanding of the modernized ornamental forms infused with traditional Majapahit elements in the Sabha Mandala Tama building. Second, it is recommended that the East Java Provincial Government and the Mojokerto Regency Government implement equitable development based on traditional Majapahit concepts throughout public buildings to foster cultural appreciation and ensure the continuity of Majapahit heritage for future generations.

depth information supporting the arguments presented herein. It is hoped that this article will offer meaningful benefits and insights to its readers.

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