Indische Spirituality in Dutch Architecture

The Influence of Spirituality from the Dutch East Indies on Dutch Architecture between 1890 and 1920

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Architectural History Thesis MSc2
AR2A011 (Q3 2024)

Frontpage figure: Woodworks from album “De houtsneden van K.P.C. de Bazel”, published by S.L. van Looy, Amsterdam, 1925.
Source: http://archief.amsterdam/archief/10097/10005922

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Abstract

This thesis explores the influence of spirituality from the Dutch East Indies on Dutch architecture from 1890 to 1920. It investigates the interplay between Eastern spirituality, particularly through theosophy, and architectural theory, focusing on key figures like K.P.C. De Bazel and J.L.M. Lauweriks. Through an analysis of influences from the Theosophical Society in both the Dutch East Indies and the Netherlands and architectural works, it reveals how Hindu concepts and Indo culture were translated into architectural forms. While some projects demonstrate a clear integration of spiritual concepts, others reflect a superficial borrowing of aesthetic elements. The study provides an examination of the relationship between Eastern spirituality and Dutch architecture, shedding light on a lesser-explored aspect of architectural history and offering insights into the cultural exchanges between the Dutch East Indies and the Netherlands during this transformative period.

Introduction

Present-day Indonesia had already been occupied by the Dutch for over 270 years by 1890. Dutch presence and influences are great by this time, but the same can be said about influences the other way around. The Dutch East Indies, as the Dutch named their colony by 1816, had a lot of influence on the Dutch as well. Yet, there is less written about this perspective (Roosmalen, 2013). Further on, the term 'Dutch East Indies' will be used when speaking about Indonesia within 1816-1942. This is done because this thesis focusses on influences in the Netherlands in relation with Indonesia being a Dutch colony at the time, therefore these are influences from the Dutch East Indies in the 'Motherland'.

This thesis seeks to give an overview of the relation between spirituality in the Dutch East Indies and architecture in the Netherlands around the transition from the 19th to the 20th century. This way, a stream of influences from the former colony becomes apparent in physical architecture, by answering the following question: *How did spirituality from the Dutch East Indies influence Dutch architecture from 1890 to 1920?* In order to answer this question, a couple things need to be specified and explored. To start, spirituality in the Dutch East Indies needs to be explored. From this exploration the connection between said spirituality and the Netherlands can be made. After this, the translation of this spirituality into Dutch architecture can be specified. And finally the influence of this spirituality in the built architecture can be explored.

The first chapter outlines spirituality in the Dutch East Indies in order to answer the first sub-question: *What connects spirituality from the Dutch East Indies to the Dutch?* In order to do so this chapter investigates spirituality that brought Dutch colonists and *natives* closer together. Among Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, Christianity and various local beliefs present, theosophy becomes large and influential around the turn of the century (1900). This movement was popular among both colonists and natives and found its way through so-called high society to Orientalists and other Dutch in the Netherlands. The Theosophical Society in the Netherlands hitched a ride on a Western zeitgeist that longs to break away from Christianity and paves a way for Hindu and *Indische* influences.

The next chapter will formulate an answer to the second sub-question: *How is this spirituality translated into architecture?* Firstly by looking at the translation from Hindu and 'Indische' influences into theosophical thought, and secondly by building a

clear overview of the development of architectural theory from this theosophical thought. Therefore a couple Dutch architects, K.P.C. De Bazel and J.L.M. Lauweriks, and their immediate history need to be introduced. Their activities at the Theosophical Society and their influences will be explained, as well as the architectural theory they developed. To relate to further influences into Amsterdam School and early modernism, distinctions are made between different forms of influence from the Dutch East Indies.

Subsequently, the third chapter will get to the last sub-question: *What influences can be seen in Dutch architecture?* With the content of the first two chapters as analysis framework, this final chapter investigates the actual spiritual influences in built architecture. It contains a critical analysis on several built works by beforementioned architects, and tries to recognize their theories built from theosophical thought, as well as through other means. While at the same time questions the authenticity of the spiritual influences.

Lastly the conclusion will then give a complete overview of path from spirituality in the Dutch East Indies to architecture in the Netherlands between 1890 – 1920. It shows how Western theosophy, drenched in Hindu and Indo culture, finds its way to Dutch architects. Whom in their turn use the incorporated spirituality to substantiate and develop their own architecture theories.

1. The Dutch East Indies

To answer the first sub-question; *What connects spirituality from the Dutch East Indies to the Dutch?* a brief history of spirituality in the Dutch East Indies is given. The presence of theosophy is explored and a connection with the Netherlands is laid out.

1.1 Spirituality in the Dutch East Indies

The existing religions and cultural traditions in the former Dutch East Indies differed strongly per island. Given the Indonesian archipelago's vast expanse of around 17,000 islands, this study will narrow its focus. The primary emphasis will be on Java, with occasional exploration into Bali and Sumatra. On all three islands a multitude of religions seemed to coexist and occasionally even mix in practice (Dalton, 1991). Early on, around the first century, Hinduism reached the Islands and brought the introduction to 'higher civilisation' (Vlekke, 1959). Later on Islam was introduced through tradesmen, and spread strongly among the Javanese. An important notion is the persisting influence of Hinduism in both buildings and cultural tradition, even after the Islamisation of Java. Rani (2010) argues the significant cultural roles and contributions of Hinduism in Indonesia had long saturated the region, and were therefore too embedded in the traditions and inhabitants. With the colonisation by the Netherlands starting from around 1595, Indonesia was named the Dutch East Indies from 1816 to 1942 (Dalton, 1991). Under colonisation, Christianity is also spread through missionaries and later on grows stronger in Sumatra (Aritonang & Steenbrink, 2008).

Around 1900 the dominant religion among indigenous Javanese is consists roughly put of a mix of Islamic belief and Hindu tradition, while the Dutch colonists are mostly Christian. Although often more receptive to *eastern thought* compared to the Christians in the Netherlands (Tollenaere, 2004). Yet, it is from 1880 to around 1940 another religion, or movement, finds its way into the 'high society' and politics of the Dutch East Indies called Theosophy (Theosofie in Nederlandsch-indië, 1927). A spiritual teachings of philosophy, science and religion all together, growing through the 'Theosophical Society'. Both Dutch colonialists and indigenous Javanese seem drawn to this movement, which is drenched with Hindu and Buddhist thought (Buddhist studies, 2013).

1.2 Theosophy in the Dutch East Indies

The Theosophical Society did not originate from the Dutch East Indies. Yet, it developed into a strong and influential societal and political organ on Java with its height at 1930 (Tolleneare, 2004). The movement finds it origin in the Western world and was actually founded in New York in 1875 by Helena Blavatsky, Henry Steel Olcott and William Quan Judge. They were seeking to gain knowledge of the nature and properties of the 'Supreme Power' and higher spirits through physical processes. To get proof of the existence of an 'Unseen Universe' and the nature of its inhabitants, by penetrating deeper than modern science had done so far into the esoteric philosophies of ancient times (Blavatsky & Zirkhoff, 1960). They defined Theosophy as 'Divine Wisdom', claiming that it was higher than any conventional religion (Caldwell & Graye, 1986). In the light of, once again, upcoming occultism in the Western world the leaders of the Theosophical Society started looking for their Unseen Universe in ancient Egyptian hieroglyphs. Yet, this 'occult' movement didn't really find traction until they moved to India in 1879, which proved to be a more congenial environment for their activities. This relocation also entailed the first incorporations of Hindu thought into Theosophy (Rudbog & Sand 2020). Thus, the movement started out as an 'occult' society rather than as a religion steeped in oriental wisdom.

Shortly after, between 1880 and 1883, the Theosophical Society expanded to the Dutch East Indies as well. Through the German Baron van Tengnagell the first lodge was founded in Pekalongan, a town on Java's north coast (Caldwell & Graye, 1986). Although theosophy accumulated Indian thought, a connection with the indigenous Javanese in the Dutch East Indies was not found immediately. Although the Theosophical Society took neither race, sex, caste, colour, country, nor religion into account in considering the suitability of applicants for membership, the early years consisted mostly of Western colonialists and orientalists living in the Indies. This started to change with the dissemination of Hindu thought, or rather, theosophical interpretations of Hindu thought. Tollenaere (2004) argues that the Theosophical Society used the history of the 'ancient Aryan nobility' from the 'golden Hindu-Javanese past' and linked it with the modern Dutch colonial rule. This line of reasoning resonated with the Javanese nobility because it put them almost as high-up in the caste system as the Dutch (Aryan) colonialists.

Through the membership of the Javanese nobility the political influence of the Theosophical Society grew beyond the colonial power, and theosophical theory started

to be disseminated into the Indies through both direct and indirect channels (Tollenaere, 2004). Through the Theosophical Society itself, whose members organized lectures, study groups and events, but also Javanese schoolteachers associated with political movements powered by Javanese nobility taught theosophical theory. Yet, there were people opposing this influence and dissemination of theosophy as well. Hindu nationalists, both in India and the Dutch East Indies warned for incorrect interpretations of Hindu thought powered by colonial perspectives. Many Theosophical terms, taken from Hindu or Buddhism would not retain the same meaning (Rani, 2010 & Snell, 1895).

Although their influence did not grow widely beyond Java, except of a small lodge in Bali that worked as an annex of its Javanese mother-lodge (Theosofie in Nederlandsch-indië, 1927). Through the years the Theosophical Society in the Dutch East Indies became a strong and influential societal and political movement. After the turn of the century (1900) the movement drew a significant part of its membership from de Dutch upper class and Javanese nobility, and its relations with the Dutch 'high society' in the Netherlands was strong (Tolleneare, 2004).

1.3 A shifting Western Zeitgeist

At the turn of the 1900s, the western world was undergoing great and rapid change. Industrialisation had transformed society and people were struggling to keep up. New found mass-production created a distance between the process and the users, and not everybody was too happy with this. The idealistic ideas of handcrafted products and organic beauty resurfaced, and artists and architects started thriving in a world of original products and anti-materialism (Curtis, 1996). It is a time connected with great neo-gothic architects like P.J.H. Cuypers (Netherlands) and E.E. Viollet-le-Duc (France), but at the same time with architecture ranging between neo-renaissance, neo-gothic and other related Christian induced styles many architects were looking for innovation. A time fraught with questions regarding the meaning of contemporary life and the relationship between the immediate past and future. This paved the way for the upcoming art-nouveau, Jugendstil, Nieuwe Kunst and later early modernism.

At times of profound cultural changes, periods of uncertainty and great nervousness, underlying cultural criticality grows and fuels occultist movements (Webb, 1976). Similarly, it fuelled the emergence of the Theosophical Society, among others. This was true for the Dutch as well. Many Dutch artists and architects sought for

inspiration beyond the current Western thought and with the Dutch East Indies as part of the Netherlands, interest in Eastern thought and orientalism where but a small step to take. Orientalist thought became popular among the elite of the Netherlands. Bosma et al. (2008) argues they embraced 'the exotic'. The cultural avant-garde started exploiting heavy symbolism borrowed from Javanese art, and suddenly it was all the fashion to hold séances and make contact with the spirits of the dead.

1.4 Theosophy in the Netherlands; the Vahana-loge

While the Theosophical Society originated from New York and already started to grow in the Netherlands after only a couple of years, first contact with theosophy came from the Dutch East Indies around 1880 (Gibbels, 1988). By this time the movement in the Dutch East Indies was still small and had little political or societal influence. Yet, the relation with the Dutch in the 'motherland' was already strong. As explained in 1.2, many upper class Dutch from the Dutch East Indies were members of the Theosophical Society. These people often had political influence and short ties within the Dutch elite as well. Because of this presence in the Netherlands, becoming a prominent member in the Netherlands quickly started to ensure prestige.

After the first lodge opened in Amsterdam in 1890, multiple followed through the following decades in Rotterdam, Haarlem and The Hague among others (Jansen, 1997). With the Vahana-loge, opened in Amsterdam in 1896, being the most relevant for this thesis. For this loge was set up in order to teach, through the *Vahanaschool*, a design system based on geometry and theosophical theory (Harten, 2013). The Vahanaschool was created and taught by the architects J.L.M Lauweriks and K.C.P de Bazel, which will be extensively discussed in the next chapter.

One of the main conditions which allowed the growth of the Theosophical Society in the Netherlands was the shifting zeitgeist, as explained in 1.3. It paved the way for alternatives to Christianity, and with the arrival of theosophy this urge for something 'more exotic' could be met. The Eastern thought translated in the theosophy caught on and gave many Dutch artists and architects, from P. Mondriaan to J.L.M Lauweriks, the inspiration and basis they were looking for (Bax, 2004).

2. Theosophy and Architecture

This chapter will answer the second sub-question; *How is this spirituality translated into architecture?* The arrival of the Theosophical society, as explained in the previous chapter, plays a pivotal role in the translation of spirituality from the Dutch East Indies into architecture in the Netherlands. To explain this further, theosophical architects K.P.C. de Bazel and J.L.M Lauweriks will be put forward and their theories explained. Furthermore, the influences on and relation with Dutch architecture movements will be set out.

2.1 Avant-garde Architects and Theosophists

The cultural changes - towards an industrialist society - stirred up a lot among those less concerned with quantity instead of quality, with the turn of 1900 around the corner. This made for a wide backlash in the form of many movements commonly summarized together as 'Arts and Crafts'. Although the movement originates from the United Kingdom with its peak in late 19th-century, it is seen as the starting point of many similar avant-garde movements throughout Europe (Curtis, 1996). With Art Nouveau, Jugendstil or Nieuwe Kunst, to name a few.

With the influences of such profound change society seems to search for footing in wider range of thought, which fuels occultist movements among others, as pointed out before in 1.3. Since the popularity of such occultism rose among the Dutch elite, the way to organisations such as the Theosophical Society were quickly found. On top of this, the associated prestige attaining a prominent membership was also considered advantageous. Something a young artist or architect would do well to use.

Thus, the number of likeminded avant-garde artists and architects joining the Theosophical Society rose quickly from around the 1890s on (Gibbels, 1988). Culminating in the membership of K.P.C. de Bazel and J.L.M. Lauweriks, and the Vahana School they set up to teach their new found architectural theory substantiated by theosophy.

2.2 Lauweriks and De Bazel

Both K.P.C. de Bazel and J.L.M. Lauweriks emerged as prominentgfi ures during their era, distinguished for their roles as Dutch architects, theorists, and theosophists. Their work was deeply imbued with spiritual considerations, which they interwove with architectural

principles and broader philosophical concepts. As faces of the Dutch Avant-garde, they wrote and taught about their architectural theory through the Theosophical Society and built remarkable projects. With the headquarters for the *Nederlandse Handels Maatschappij* (Dutch colonial trading company) from 1923 as a centrepiece, as far as influences of spirituality from the Dutch East Indies concerned.

Both De Bazel and Lauweriks started at the office of P.J.H. Cuypers and worked on neo-gothic churches, among others (Reinink, 1965). In light of the shifting Western zeitgeist, they too took their interests beyond the classic Western architecture styles. This would later result in a clash with P.J.H Cuypers and led them to starting their own firm in 1895, with their first signs of distancing themselves from their former tutor found in their woodworks based on ancient Egyptian artifacts, published in *Licht en Waarheid* in 1891 (Bazel, 1925).

By 1894 De Bazel and Lauweriks had left the anarchist movement publishing *Licht en Waarheid*, and took interest in a multitude of non-Western thought. The same year they joined the Amsterdam Theosophical Society (Reinink, 1965). They started with ancient Egyptian artifacts, as seen in their visit to the British museum, but not before long became more spiritual-orientated. De Bazel and Lauweriks started working on a systematic approach to design that could encapsulate a contemporary theory of the universal. This universal design system was to be based on a multitude of geometrical systems and would lead them through an awakening of cosmic consciousness, as they saw the sea of change of modernity (Henderson, 1999). They built on Viollet-le-Duc's rediscovery of geometry, by giving new meaning to his triangulated grid through separating themselves from rationalism, and instead linking the triangle to the occult (Groot, 2004). Within their early illustrations – lino and woodworks – they drew from Assyrian, Egyptian and Persian sources. This created mixes between contemporary art and that of the ancients, as seen in figure 1.

In 1895 De Bazel and Lauweriks split from Cuypers and start their own firm. This same year Lauweriks gives a lecture at the Theosophical Society named *Theosofie & Kunst.* Lauweriks talks about Brahma as source of beauty and art and refers to *De Geheime Leer* by Blavatsky (Bax, 2004). De Geheime Leer (1888) spends a lot of attention to the thee-point and triangle already, and this is what the already anti-western oriented architects got into theosophical literature. From this point on, the two start disseminating theosophical theory, induced with Hindu thought, into their

architecture and architecture theory. Ideas about spirituality and energy flows were translated into plasticity, meandering lines and symbolism. This drastically changed their works as seen in the illustrations in figures 2 and 3. The use of the circling serpent, in Hindu the Kundalini-shakti, comes to play an important role in the designs by Both De Bazel and Lauweriks. The meaning of Kundalini-shakti and it's relation with Lauweriks architecture theory will be elaborated on in the following sub-chapter 2.3.

Through Theosophy they found a way to extend the geometry by Viollet-le-Duc and were able to give meaning to the connection with their esoteric ideas (Henderson, 1999). They develop their universal geometrical system further, and even started teaching their theories. In 1896 they opened the Vahana-loge, a branch of the Theosophical Society, and a year later the Vahanaschool. With De Bazel as first president and Lauweriks as secretary (Gibbels, 1988).

2.3 The Vahana-Loge and the Translation into Architecture Theory

The Vahana-loge, established on 19 November 1896, quickly became the epicentre of theosophical activity and theory-creation in the Netherlands. It functioned as an 'artistic loge', independently operating next to the Amsterdam-loge at the Amsteldijk (Gibbels, 1988). De Bazel and Lauweriks taught their new found architecture theory here, through the Vahanaschool. Which is internationally also known as *The Dutch School of Proportion* (Frank, 1984).

The geometrical design system to work with proportion, based on the triangle, was substantiated by theosophical literature and interpretations of concepts taken from Hindu and Indo thought, with the literature from *De Geheime Leer* (1988) as their primary source. Lauweriks created a set of forty rules he named *Shloka's,* which is also a form of poem-song in Sanskrit (Harten, 2013). In his Shloka's, Lauweriks explains his vision of the architectural translation of the Hindu Kundalini-shakti.

The Kundalini-shakti refers to the dormant spiritual energy believed to reside at the base of the spine. In Hindu tradition, Kundalini is often depicted as a coiled serpent. Theosophy adopted the concept of Kundalini, but interpreted it within its own framework of spiritual evolution and metaphysics (Snell, 1895). Kundalini is believed to ascend through a series of energy centres or chakras along the spinal column. This ascent is not necessarily linear or straightforward but rather winding and meandering, symbolizing the intricate and sometimes unpredictable nature of spiritual growth and inner

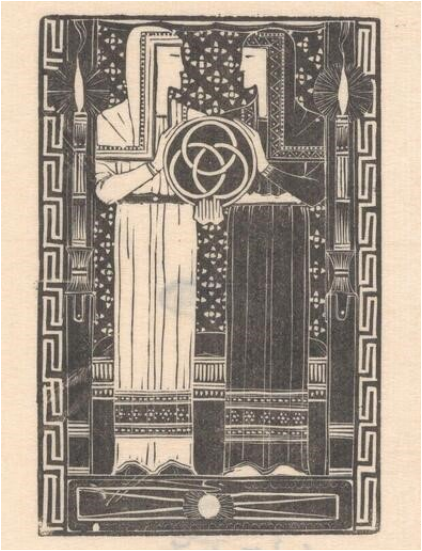

Figure 1. Woodworks by J.L.M Lauweriks, 1894
'Two figures with a circle with rings; The mind of time; Twelve woodcuts.two figures in long robes; The left in the white and the judge in black. Together they hold a circle with three borromean rings. Under their feet the sun.'

Source:
https://www.rijksmuseum.nl/nl/collectie/RP-P-1935-1116

Figure 2. Magazine cover for Theosophia by J.L.M Lauweriks, 1902
Ornamental border with flower buds and at the bottom a lotus flower. Above the lotus a circle surrounded by an ouroboros, a snake biting its own tail. In the centre of the circle spiritual symbols and at the bottom the text 'there is no religion beyond truth.

Source:
http://hdl.handle.net/10934/RM0001.COLLECT.198884

Figure 3. Ad by K.P.C de Bazel & J.L.M Lauweriks, 1895
Advertisement for woodworks by De Bazel & Lauweriks, Nicolaas Beetsstraat 118 in Amsterdam.

Source:
http://hdl.handle.net/10934/RM0001.COLLECT.198923

transformation. Lauweriks' Shloka's explain how this energy flow should be translated into architecture. He translates the Kundalini into a meandering line through spaces as decoration but also in façade elements and even through the structure of entire constructions (Tummers, 1968). The meander is described as an angular serpentine line that relates to continuity, connecting structural encounters. As seen in illustrations and woodworks such as figures 1 to 3, the meandering line and/or serpent already appears early on in Lauweriks works. Harten (2013) even argues Lauweriks already showed signs of this meandering line in his *Lauweriks Zuil*, a pillar he designed while working for Cuypers. Lauweriks' shlokas substantiate this urge with spiritual justification, and allowed him to develop his theory further into a larger architectural design system.

After the peak of the Vanahaschool in 1904, the De Bazel and Lauweriks part ways. While Lauweriks departed for Germany, De Bazel was increasingly receiving more and larger commissions in the Netherlands. Lauweriks developed their geometric design system of proportions further at his new teaching function at the *Kunstgewerbeschule* of P. Behrens in Düsseldorf (Tummers, 1968). Conversely, De Bazel struck out in a religious direction. He delved further into theorizing about the relationship between architecture and religion, particularly exploring its connection with 'the East' (Bazel, 1915). Although De Bazel and Lauweriks saw each other less, De Bazel continued to adhere to their theory. The Kundalini-shakti remained of great importance, but in addition, more attention is given to directionality and frontality (Miranda, 1977). This would lead to incorporation of aspects of ancient Indonesian architecture, in combination with his theosophy induced architecture theory (Bax, 2004). De Bazel makes comparisons with many religious buildings, with the Buddhist Borobudur temple in Mid-Java as one of the most important ones. These analysis contribute largely to his architectural perspective and final works. Yet, they do not form a clear path of architectural influence through spirituality from the Dutch East Indies, contrary to the theory he taught at the Vahana-loge.

2.4 Influences into Amsterdam School & Early Modernism

With the work of De Bazel and Lauweriks strongly influenced by theosophy and their teachings through the Vahanaschool, it must be questioned whether they have influenced further developments in various Dutch and international architectural movements too. Because even without large numbers within the Vahana-loge, the

influence of their theory seemed imminent. Many artists and architects, whom were taught at the Vahanaschool, became teachers at various Dutch art schools. Next to this, Lauweriks and De Bazel were high standing contributors to a number of magazines, such as *Bouw- en Sierkunst, Tijdschrift voor Vercieringskunst*, *De Beeldhouwer* and of course *Architectura & amicitia* (Bax, 2004).

Several architects who went to the Vahanaschool, like J. F. Staal for example, played roles in the Amsterdam School movement later on. This seems to be true for De Bazel himself too. The development of the Amsterdam School is stipulated in and influenced by magazines and associations, such as *De Wendingen*. De Bazel worked on these magazines as well, along with other members of the Free masons movement he was part of (Reinink, 1965). Yet, a clear distinction has to be made between the Amsterdam School movement and the theosophical architecture theory taught by De Bazel and Lauweriks. The roots of Amsterdam School lay in the teachings of E. Cuypers. He taught M. de Klerck, among others, who became the figurehead of the Amsterdam School movement. E. Cuypers worked both in Amsterdam and in the Dutch East Indies, and taught his students a compelling mix of architectural expressions and copied many Indonesian aesthetics directly (Norbruis, 2018). This led to compelling innovations in Dutch architecture to say the least, but its relation with spirituality from the Dutch East Indies is irrelevant, if not non-existent.

As Bax (2004) comprehensively argues, Influences of the Vahana School emerge in several other architectural and art movements. The Theosophical Society, as well as theory created by De Bazel and Lauweriks play a role in the basis of Dutch expressionism and the work of P. Mondriaan.

Multiple arguments are made for possible influences into early modernism. Theosophy must be counted as one of the more pertinent sources for modernist orientalism, since it was through Theosophy that a number of important modernist figures first became aware of Eastern traditions (Weir, 2020). The success of the Theosophical Society in the Dutch East Indies, as explained in chapter 1.2, played a big role in the interplay between early modernist architects and Eastern spirituality. This was clearly the case for architects like H.P. Berlage, but also C.P.W. Schoemaker later on (Weststeijn, 2008). Lauweriks' work played a role in early modernism as well, because of his move to Germany and his extensive written theory about proportions and universal grids (Livesey, 1999). Both is built work, as well as his theory is

mentioned in early works by Le Corbusier (Henderson, 1999). As Weir (2020) argues, the focal point resides in an exploration of the theosophically derived geometrical design framework. Figures such as P. Behrens and H.P. Berlage, among others of a broader cohort of contemporary architects, engaged in the examination and assimilation of Lauweriks' framework to inform their own systematic methods of design.

3. Influences in Dutch Architecture

In continuation of the architecture theory by De Bazel and Lauweriks from the previous chapter, this third chapter will showcase physical examples of such architectural elements in Dutch architecture around 1890 – 1930. The literature from previous chapters will form the basis of an analysis framework to explain said elements on the basis of the theosophical architecture theory. This will then provide an answer to the third sub-question: *What influences can be seen in Dutch architecture?*

3.1 Examples by De Bazel and Lauweriks

As Lauweriks shlokas wrote; transferred in geometric terms, the Kundalini-Shakti can be regarded as a line. The Kundalini representing the meandering energyfl ow between the main lines and level lines for the columns and beams, by the bands and partitions of the floors and by various modes of decoration (Harten, 2013). In architecture it is represented by a zigzag line. Both works by De Bazel and Lauweriks show physical examples of the use of the Kundalini-Shakti. Yet, there seems to be a difference in interpretation. To explain this, a couple of examples will be given.

Although De Basel also uses the meandering line in the structure of some of his later projects, he quite consistently expresses the Kundalini in decorative elements. Besides the decorative elements De Bazel experiments with horizontal layering to highlight the lines and rhythms in his façades, as seen in gfiure 4. De Bazel's design for the Headquarters of the Heidemij (*Nederlandse Heide Maatschappij*) has a brick façade with strong meandering patterns. While the building is not outstanding structure-wise, the façade decorations, horizontal layers and strong rhythmic proportions stand out clearly. In other projects De Bazel expresses the Kundalini-Shakti structurally, in relation with rhythmic proportions. With early projects he seems to be rather mild and cautious. As seen ingfi ure 5 and 6, there are some structural indents in

the facades. While these are quite subtle, the horizontal layering on the ground floor highlights the meander from up-close.

Already in his time, De Bazel was criticized for being too cautious and boring even. Some considered him to be a figurehead for the Dutch Avant-garde, but others argue this was only for the lack of actual innovative movements (Bax, 2004). Yet, with his latest work - together with his untimely death - he managed to turn this image around. In 1926, three years after his death, De Bazel's now best known work was completed. The headquarters of the *Nederlandse Handels Maatschappij* (further on NHM-building), is one of Amsterdam's most prominent buildings in the city centre till today. With its imposing size, layered facade and stepped topfloors, the building is also known as the temple on the Vijzelstraat. This project has by far the strongest expression of Kundalini- Shakti seen in physical examples of De Bazel's works. As seen in figure 7, the meandering line becomes apparent in both decorations as in the outline of the facade. The horizontal layering has become part of the complete façade, which led to the nickname of *De Spekkoek*, which is referring to the Indonesian *lapis legit* or *thousand layer cake*. the meandering line of the Kundalini-shakti is also strongly visible in the interior of the building, with the treasury's decorations being the jewel in the crown, see figure 8. The interior of the building, with its' two central light courts in particular, is also often compared with the very similar central light court of the Larkin Company Administration Building in Buffalo from 1903 (Van Bergeijk, 2015).

Although comparisons with F.L. Wrights Larkin Company Administration Building are not inappropriate, they are particularly true for the floorplan and functionality. De Bazel does something entirely different in his decoration and façade-design. Noteworthy is the use of Kundalini-shakti in his meandering outline of the building plot. This creates a certain depth in the façade, as not seen before. This is a strong example of De Bazel distancing himself from his former tutor Cuypers and his decorated two dimensional facades as well. Yet, De Bazels use of the meandering line is not seen in the rest of the fl oorplan of the building, which makes the use of Kundalini arguably never truely develop into his buildings structure.

A big difference with Lauweriks works is De Bazel's consistent rhythm. While both work within grids from their universal design system, Lauweriks writes about the Kundalini-Shakti as an unpredictable meander (Tummers, 1968). This comes forward in

Figure 4. Headquarters of the Heidemij, in Arnhem (1912). Source: Nationaal Archief https://www.nationaalarchief.nl/

Figure 5. Home for unmarried people, Rijswijkseweg 340-342. By K.P.C. de Bazel in The Hague, 1923

Source: The Hague Monuments https://www.monumentenzorgdenhaag.nl/monumenten/rijswijkseweg-340342-noordpolderkade-3-laakkade-80-asstraat-2

Figure 6. Housing block with three stores, Zaandammerplein - Oostzaanstraat eo. By K.P.C de Bazel in Amsterdam, 1918

Source: A https://amsterdamopdekaart.nl/1850-1940/Zaandammerplein/81-176

one of his best known works, the *Stirnband* in Hagen, see figure 9. While the project consists of different plots with different houses. The buildings jump back and forth in forming this unpredictable zigzag-line. There is no rhythmic meander as seen in De Bazel's projects. Lauweriks takes this idea to a new level with every room subtly meandering around the ongoing roofline of the street. While at the same time he too, uses the Kundalini-Shakti in many decorative elements as well.

Besides hefty use of the meandering line, De Bazel takes the design of the NHM even further, as far as influences from the Dutch East Indies concerned. He takes inspiration from Hindu and Buddhist temples from the Dutch East Indies. Both Miranda (1977) and Bax (2007) compare De Bazel's NHM-building with the Borobudur. They argue how he focusses on directionality and frontality, similarly seen in such ancient temples. Yet, one could question the relation to spirituality from the Dutch East Indies. Just because it concerns ancient spiritual buildings does not prove spiritual relevance to De Bazel. Based on orientalist pragmatism, it would be fitting the image of the client – the NHM, successor to the VOC (Vereenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie) – to simply borrow *Indische* culture to celebrate their own image. Much like the statues of Dutch colonial rulers on top of the building (Mobron, 2007). Another clear example of this would be the use of a *Kalakop* above the entrance of the safe deposit, see figure 10. The depiction of a Kalakop is traditional and spiritually charged in ancient Indonesian architecture and temple construction. The Kalakop was depicted on banisters and in framing ornaments and aims to drive away evil spirits (Vogler, 1949). It is telling that such a monster head is also used in De Bazel's design and it is a typical example of loan symbolism with no authentic spiritual value.

As explained in chapter 1.2, there were people opposing the influence and dissemination of Hindu and Indo culture into theosophy in the Dutch East Indies. Many Hindu did not agree with the dissemination of the, in their eyes, incorrect interpretations of Hindu thought into theosophy. Some concepts, like the original version of the caste system, became barely recognisable after what the Theosophical Society did with them (Tollenaere, 2004). Thus, although there is a clear spiritual influence in Dutch architecture visible, one could question the value of this spirituality. But it is hard to

Figure 7. Headquarters for the Dutch Trading Company (NHM: Nederlandse Handels-Maatschappij), Vijzelstraat in Amsterdam, by K.P.C. de Bazel (1926). Today, the building has been renamed De Bazel and is used by Stadsarchief Amsterdam.
Source: Herbestemming https://www.herbestemming.nl/projecten/de-bazel-amsterdam

Figure 8. Treasury of Dutch Trading Company (NHM: Nederlandse Handels Maatschappij). Source: Stadsarchief Amsterdam https://www.museum.nl/nl/stadsarchief-amsterdam/rondleiding/rondleiding-door-de-bazel

evaluate the spiritual authenticity of Lauweriks shlokas at this point, for example. On the one hand, through theosophical influences, his theories clearly derive from Hindu and Indo culture. Yet he never visited the Dutch East Indies, but got his information from Theosophical literature. Therefore the spiritual authenticity is arguably tainted to say the least. On the other hand, one could argue the opposite as well. For Lauweriks to be this distanced one could also argue he created his own authentic spirituality, for the Theosophists do not call their theory Hindu but Theosophy.
Anyway, it is certain De Bazel and Lauweriks were heavily influenced by spirituality from the Dutch East Indies through the Theosophical Society. As are their architectural theories derived from these influences also certainly visible in their built works. Both De Bazel and Lauweriks work with their universal metric design system and show signs of the Lauweriks translations of the Kundalini-Shakti, in both façade, decoration and floorplan.

3.2 The End of the Meander

As discussed in chapter two, the influence of De Bazel and Lauweriks reaches beyond their own practice. They taught their theosophical architecture theory, both through the Vahanaschool, and Lauweriks as well in Dusseldorf later on. Yet, there are little to no physical examples that also show the influence of Eastern spirituality.

There are still some spiritual influences into early modernism apparent in the works of Berlage, with some interplay between Berlage and De Bazel in earlier years and signs of Berlage's interest in the universal geometric design system of the theosophists (Weir, 2020). In addition, Weststeijn (2008) expresses his surprise of Western historians ignoring Berlage's *Indische* interest. For how important Berlage was to early modernism, it is surprising that little attention was paid to his visit to the Dutch East Indies in 1923. Livesey (1999) also links theosophical developments to Berlage's *Beurs* in Amsterdam. He explains how Berlage used geometrical proportions that he himself earlier labelled Oriental. Besides through the influence of the Vahanaschool, De Bazel himself had some to do with this as well. Berlage and De Bazel worked closely together at times and shared concepts and ideas on occasion.

Some argue there the influences through the Vahana loge and the two architects are there, but physical examples of Lauweriks ideas about the meandering line of the Kundalini-Shakti end with his own works. The Theosophical Society played a role in the

lives of many artists and architects of this time, and so did the Dutch East Indies. Yet, many belong to either one of them. As Bax (2004) shows, there is a multitude of examples of painters and expressionists influenced by theosophy and the Vahanaschool. And as shown in chapter 2.4 there is also a multitude of architects inspired and influenced by the Dutch East Indies. But except for De Bazel and Lauweriks, there seems to be no other clear path of spirituality from the Dutch East Indies becoming its own aesthetic in Dutch architecture as opposed to an Indische aesthetic copied.

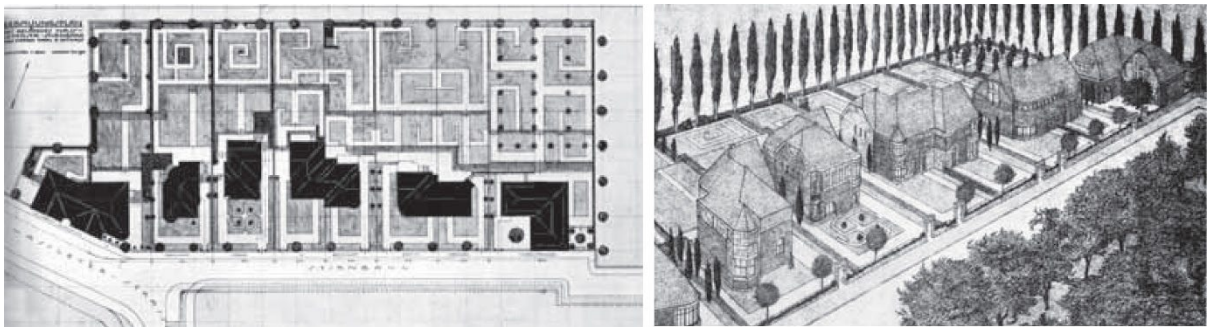

Figure 9. Am Stirnband in Hagen. By J.L.M Lauweriks (1915)
Source: Tummers, N.H.M. (1968) J.L. Mathieu Lauweriks: zijn werk en zijn invloed op architectuur en vormgeving rond 1910: *De Hagener Impuls*, Hilversum, Van Saane.

Figure 10. Kalakop above the Safe Deposit entrance of the Dutch Trading Company (NHM: Nederlandse Handels-Maatschappij), Vijzelstraat in Amsterdam, by K.P.C. de Bazel (1926).
Source: Stadsarchief Amsterdam https://www.amsterdam.nl/stadsarchief/stukken/geld/safe-deposit/

Conclusion

To answer the main question: *How did spirituality from the Dutch East Indies flniuence Dutch architecture from 1890 to 1920?* A clear connection is drawn from Eastern spirituality to Dutch architecture through theosophy. Through the three chapters a pathway is outlined. Spirituality from the Dutch East Indies, in the form of Hindu concepts and Indo culture, influenced Dutch architecture through Western architects, whom were inspired by Eastern concepts brought to them by Theosophy. This pathway shows how spiritual concepts were translated into architecture by men who never visited the Dutch East Indies. This means said spirituality was brought to the Netherlands in an abstract form, as a theory, and not as architectural aesthetics already existing in the Dutch East Indies beforehand.

The first chapter introduced theosophy and its' influence in both the Dutch East Indies and the Netherlands. It sets out the origins of the Theosophical Society and theosophical thought. It shows how the Theosophical Society grew successful in the Dutch East Indies because of the heavy incorporation of Hindu concepts and Indo culture. Theosophy became interesting for both Dutch colonists and Javanese natives, although mostly nobility. It made the Theosophical Society's reach expand beyond Dutch colonial power. This chapter also explains a shifting Western zeitgeist. The turn of the century was a turbulent time with profound cultural changes and great nervousness. This paved the way for many alternative thinkers and occultist movements, such as the Theosophical Society. So called high society in the Dutch East Indies, filled with members of the Theosophical Society, together with a shifting Western zeitgeist made it possible for theosophy to flourish in the Netherlands from 1890 to 1920, and resonated particularly with Dutch artists and architects.

The translation from theosophy to architecture became apparent in the second chapter. With the emergence of new architectural styles and many artists and architects in search for something new, K.P.C. De Bazel and J.L.M. Lauweriks found their interests in Eastern thought, among others. They joined the Theosophical Society and through theosophy found a way to substantiate their ideas and interests. This leads to direct architectural translations of Hindu concepts, like the Kundalini-shakti and the development of an universal geometrical design system. The two architects started a new loge at the Theosophical Society – the Vanaha loge - and taught their new found theories, anchored in Hindu and Indo thought. Lauweriks' elucidation of architectural

principles through Shlokas – poetic expressions drawing from Hindu tradition – illuminated a pathway to translate the intricate energies of Kundalini-Shakti into architectural form. While he wrote extensively about the meandering line and energy flow in design objects, his counterpart De Bazel went another path. De Bazel went into a more religious direction, analysing ancient temples, with his focus on frontality and directionality. Although this direction can be seen as a strong influence from the Dutch East Indies, it is important to make a distinction between authentic spirituality and *Indische* temple aesthetics. This same distinction is made regarding the influence of spirituality from the Dutch East indies into the architecture from the Amsterdam School movement. Although there are many signs of Eastern influence, there are not related to the pathway of theosophy as shown with Lauweriks and De Bazel. De basis of the Amsterdam School seems to be laying in the teachings of E. Cuypers. He worked in both the Netherlands and the Dutch East Indies and was heavily influenced by Eastern aesthetics.

Multiple built projects by both De Bazel and Lauweriks show signs of their architecture theories. Although not all projects seem to be as fully integrated as they may suggest in theory, many aspects are constantly visible in decorations. The third chapter works through a couple projects, pointing out the presence and readability of the use of Kundalini-shakti. As Lauweriks wrote, the meandering line would be the weaving system that brings all horizontal and vertical lines together. He writes about the totality of the designed object, and thus not just its' decoration. This also becomes apparent in physical architecture by both De Bazel and Lauweriks himself. Lauweriks uses the meandering line as an esoteric expression, allowing for unpredictability and asymmetry. De Bazel's design of the headquarters of the *Nederlandse Handels Maatschappij* on other hand, has a strong rhythmic façade. His use of the Kundalini-shakti gives depth in the façade itself, while the rest of the floorplan seems to be an open plan much like F.L. Wright's Larkin building. Another note on De Bazel's building is the strong presence of influences of Indo culture through loan symbolism. These elements have little to do with the authenticity of Eastern spirituality and would not be more than a mere reflection of the colonial perspective of the *Nederlandse Handels Maatschappij.* The use of the Kalakop, as shown in chapter three is an illustrative example of this.

Although De Bazel and Lauweriks were influential architects with their theories taught to many and their buildings seen by more, it does not necessarily reflect so in the works of those after them. Literature shows relations between them and early modernist architecture and Dutch expressionist painters. Most arguments focus on the interest in Lauweriks universal geometrical design system. Some argue the underlit position of influence of the Theosophical Society in architects like Berlage and Behrens, but physical examples of the use of Kundalini-shakti for example stay out after the death of De Bazel and Lauweriks. Therefore it is questionable how much of Eastern spirituality survived in Dutch architectural theory after them, even though the Theosophical Society exists up until today.

Discussion

This thesis shows one specific stream of *Indische* influences in Dutch architecture. Influences through spirituality. While at the same time, there were different forms of influences from the Dutch East Indies, as briefly explained around the Amsterdam School movement for example. In order to understand the importance of this stream of influences, further research could strive to create a full overview of the different forms of influences or might follow another form of influence in the same time period.

Another discussion point might be the matter of authenticity of spirituality, as toughed upon in chapter 3.1. Although this research shows a clear pathway of how certain forms of spirituality end up on the other side of the world, translated into architecture. One could question how acceptable this occurrence is, up onto a matter of ‘good’ or ‘bad’. Since in light of orientalist and colonialist context, the interpretation of Hindu thought by the western theosophists might not be acceptable for Eastern Hindu. To the point where it can be perceived as appropriation.

The conclusion ends with another question as well. Even though the influences of spirituality from the Dutch East Indies in Dutch architecture are quite visible within the time period of this research, it is not yet completely clear how much of this survives beyond the work of De Bazel and Lauweriks. Therefore, further research should be done to understand what happens with the architectural theory after them.

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