

# The Architectural Legacy of Colonial Buildings in Jakarta

“Preservation Endeavors: Unveiling Indonesia’s Cultural Heritage”



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## Abstract

The thesis explores the historical and cultural evolution of Jakarta, Indonesia, examining the influences of Dutch colonialization on the city's architectural heritage and cultural identity. Beginning with its early origins as Sunda Kalapa in the 14th century, the city underwent transformations under Dutch rule, culminating in the establishment of Batavia in 1619. Today, remnants of its colonial past are evident in Jakarta's architectural landscape, with colonial buildings serving as witnesses to its history. The research focuses on the Jakarta History Museum as a case study, highlighting its architectural significance and adaptive reuse practices. Through an exploration of the museum's evolution and preservation efforts, the study aims to understand how Jakarta's colonial buildings shape its cultural identity. By examining the interplay between architectural heritage, preservation, and cultural identity, the research seeks to uncover the role of colonial buildings in Jakarta's cultural narrative.

**Keywords:** Architectural heritage, adaptive reuse, colonial buildings, cultural identity, Dutch-colonial, heritage, Indonesia, Jakarta, preservation

## I. Introduction

Jakarta, the capital of Indonesia, is a dynamic city rich in history and culture. Influences from both the East and West have shaped its identity over time. Initially known as Sunda Kalapa during the 14th century, it later became Jayakarta in 1527, meaning 'Perfect Victory'. However, Dutch invaders destroyed it in the 17th century, leading to the establishment of Batavia in 1619. Renamed Djakarta during the Japanese occupation, the city continues to evolve, offering education, employment, and modern living. The oldest part, known as 'Kota', meaning 'fortified place', reflects its historical significance (Heuken, 1989). Despite its transformations, remnants of its past can still be seen today, as documented in Heuken's (1989) book 'Historical Sights of Jakarta.' In his book, Heuken poses an intriguing question: 'When did Jakarta begin its journey through history?' This inquiry urges us to delve into the establishment of the city's cultural identity. Was it the Dutch colonialization that significantly influenced the reconstruction of the city's cultural identity?

Today, Jakarta retains remnants of the Dutch colonial era within its varied collection of colonial buildings. Exploring the architectural heritage of these colonial buildings in Jakarta offers a journey through time, where they serve as witnesses and protagonists of history. The term 'Architectural heritage' originates from the Venice Charter (1964), embodying the essence of historic sites. In today's world, amidst globalization and climate change, architectural heritage holds significant importance, preserving local cultural identity. It is an integral component of cultural heritage, intricately linked to human living environments, reflecting the historical evolution of civilizations (Wang et al., 2021). Reflecting on Dutch colonization in the 17th century, particularly during the VOC period (1602), highlights the substantial impact the Dutch had on Indonesian architecture. Colonial-era buildings carry significant historical memory that seeks recognition.

This research examines the architectural legacy of a specific colonial building in Jakarta dating back to the 17th to late 18th century—the era of the Dutch East India Company. The focus will be on conducting a case study on the Jakarta History Museum, one of the city’s oldest extant buildings within the community. This edifice represents a significant aspect of Jakarta’s architectural heritage, illustrating the fusion of Dutch colonial influence with local Indonesian culture and history. Moreover, rather than being demolished for new constructions, the building retained its original architectural form, with functions evolving over time—a practice known as ‘Adaptive reuse’. Adaptive reuse, as a sustainable practice, prolongs the longevity of buildings by repurposing their elements for contemporary functionalities, thereby ensuring the preservation of architectural heritage. Through adaptive reuse, historic structures can be rejuvenated, preserving their cultural and historical significance while meeting the demands of the present era (Abdulameer & Abbas, 2020).

Beyond their architectural significance, Jakarta’s colonial buildings serve as invaluable educational tools for future generations, offering profound insights into Indonesia’s rich history and cultural heritage. The aim of this research is to explore the relationship between the role of architectural heritage and its influence on Jakarta’s cultural identity. From this, follows my research question: ‘How does the architectural heritage of colonial buildings in Jakarta shape the city’s cultural identity, considering the effects of preservation and adaptive reuse?’

## **II. Literature review**

### **II.I Colonial architecture**

In the past two decades, numerous scholars have participated in discussions regarding Jakarta’s identity, particularly concerning architecture within a colonial framework. Kusno (2000) argues that buildings serve as tangible manifestations of societal aspirations and endeavours to shape social norms. He emphasizes Indonesia’s status as a postcolonial nation inheriting colonial spaces, now imbued with new symbolic meanings relevant to today’s society. Kusno depicts Indonesian architecture as a fusion of indigenous nationalism and Western influences, reflecting cultural and political transformations.

Similarly, Muthmainnah and Kurniawan (2018) echo Kusno’s perspective, highlighting that Indonesian architecture during the colonial era served as a political tool to display the city’s national identity. They underscore, like Kusno, the influence of Western concepts, particularly those of Dutch East Indies modern architects, during colonial times. Additionally, they argue that the postcolonial era witnessed the rise of ‘traditionality’ in architecture as a means of exploring the city’s identity, coinciding with the enactment of new laws during the Old and New Order periods. The viewpoints of both Kusno (2000) and Muthmainnah and Kurniawan (2018) center around the evolution of Indonesian architecture in the postcolonial period, mirroring the socio-political environment of the time.

## **II.II Heritage Conservation and Cultural Identity**

Van Roosmalen (2013) draws attention to the tangible nature of colonial buildings, presenting them as educational tools for comprehending the colonial past and its impact on the city's identity. She accentuates the visual impact of colonial buildings in fostering appreciation and awareness. While her viewpoint coincides with the idea of evolving perceptions of buildings, Van Roosmalen diverges from Kusno by highlighting the role of heritage organizations in shaping the narrative surrounding colonial buildings and urban designs in Indonesia.

Supporting Van Roosmalen's perspective, Eryudhawan (2017) underscores the emergence of cultural heritage laws and preservation programs aimed at safeguarding historical sites and buildings in Jakarta. Following the Independence War (1945-1949), Jakarta experienced urban development under various political regimes, transitioning from a colonial hub to a modern Indonesian city. Eryudhawan emphasizes the significance of initiatives such as the establishment of the Jakarta Department of Museum and History in 1968, marking the initiation of Jakarta's urban conservation endeavours. He argues that supporting living monuments can contribute to creating a vibrant and thriving cityscape.

Building upon the assertions of previous scholars, Faisal and Suwanto (2019) assert that colonial power significantly impacted the social conditions and identity of local communities. In line with the perspectives of Van Roosmalen (2013) and Eryudhawan (2017), they argue that colonial heritage buildings played a crucial role in city planning and development. They emphasize that these buildings hold memories that cannot be disregarded.

## **III. Methodology**

This qualitative research delves into the influence of architectural heritage from an existing colonial building on Jakarta's cultural identity. Utilizing both primary and secondary sources, the research aims to deepen understanding of the preservation and adaptive reuse of colonial buildings and their impact on the city's cultural identity. To achieve this, a comprehensive literature review was conducted on colonial architecture, heritage conservation, and cultural identity. Additionally, a case study centered on the Jakarta History Museum was undertaken. By collecting and analyzing data from various sources, including image analysis portraying the building's evolution over time, this research offers an in-depth exploration of how architectural heritage contributes to a city's identity.

### **III.I Data collection & Analysis**

Furthermore, to gain deeper insights into visitors' experiences at the Jakarta History Museum, online reviews pertaining to this cultural attraction were collected from the TripAdvisor platform. These selected comments cover various aspects of visitors' experiences, focusing on themes such as the Old Town, Dutch influences, artifacts, and the surrounding square. With a total of 497 reviews available on TripAdvisor, this study specifically concentrates on comments related to the experience of Dutch colonial buildings. These reviews, spanning from November 2011 to March 2024, were meticulously filtered based on their relevance to the cultural attraction. Only those comments that directly addressed the experience of visiting a colonial building and its historical significance were included in the analysis, resulting in a refined selection that accurately reflects visitors' perceptions.

## IV. Results and findings

### Chapter 1. Historical context – Dutch colonialism in Jakarta

#### 1.1 The beginning of Dutch colonialism in Jakarta

The colonial history of Jakarta under Dutch rule traces back to the 17th century with the establishment of the Dutch East India Company (VOC) in 1602. Throughout its history, the city underwent several name changes, eventually becoming known as Batavia following its overthrow by the Dutch in 1619. The name Batavia was chosen in remembrance of the Batavians, the mythical ancestors of the Dutch (Heuken, 1989). After the arrival of the VOC, Batavia developed into a central area symbolizing the Dutch colonial period. Dutch trading companies, facilities, and administrative organizations were all concentrated in this area. Seeking to replicate their homeland, the Dutch recreated the landscape and living environment, including the construction of canals, architectural style, and urban planning (Figure 1). Batavia thus became known as the ‘Dutch tropics’ in the 17th century. The concept of the ‘Dutch tropics’ served as a means for Dutch Batavians to maintain a connection with the Dutch Republic, strengthening their collective Dutch identity. However, for other inhabitants of the city, it served as a reminder of the dominance of the Dutch social group (Kehoe, 2015; Park, 2023).



[Awnsam Churchill, L0038152 The Tygers street canal in Batavia (Jakarta), 1744 -1746, Wellcome Library, London, accessed March 22, 2024, <https://wellcomecollection.org/works/ugjdr9bwj>]

**Figure 1:** Engraving from 1744 - 1746 by Awnsam Churchill depicting the Tygers Street canal in Batavia, featuring typical Dutch canal and housing styles.

#### 1.2 The architecture of Batavia - 17th century

Under Dutch rule, the architecture of Batavia in the 17th century reflected a fusion of building forms and materials influenced by Dutch city planning principles. Government buildings, such as the City Hall, adopted a simplified neoclassical style. The vernacular architecture of the city mirrored domestic Dutch architecture, with residential plots characterized by deep but narrow dimensions, resulting in narrow street facades and step- and spout-gabled rooflines typical of Dutch architecture. However, adapting these building forms to the tropical climate required significant modifications to withstand extreme sunny and rainy weather conditions. Dutch builders opted to rotate the gable 90 degrees to create a deep overhang across the facade, providing shade and deflecting rain from the building’s walls. This approach drew inspiration from Javanese indigenous architecture. Local building materials, including overseas bricks, were used for construction (Kehoe, 2015).

### 1.3 The downfall of the Dutch hierarchy

Batavia remained under Dutch colonial rule for over three centuries until the Japanese invasion of Indonesia from 1942 to 1945. During this period, Batavia was officially renamed Djakarta. Following the defeat of the Japanese troops at the end of the Pacific War, the Japanese surrendered and maintained the status quo until the arrival of the Allied forces. It was during this time that Indonesia, under the leadership of Sukarno and Hatta, seized the opportunity and proclaimed independence on August 17, 1945, at Sukarno's house in Jakarta. Throughout the Independence War (1945-1949), Indonesia once again fell under Dutch rule until the transfer of sovereignty in the late 1949. Since that time, Indonesia has upheld its independence and became officially recognized as the Republic of Indonesia. Indonesia's colonial era spanned over 340 years, beginning with the establishment of the Dutch VOC in 1602 and ending with independence in 1949 (Eryudhawan, 2017; Park, 2023).

## Chapter 2. Case study: Jakarta History Museum

In contemporary society, what was once Batavia is now commonly referred to as Kota Tua or the Old City of Jakarta. When exploring Jakarta's historical buildings and monuments, one ventures into the Kota area. This historically significant area serves as the origin of Jakarta's colonial narrative, tracing back to the remnants of the VOC period (1602-1800). At the core of Batavia's Old Kota lies the old City Hall of Batavia, presently known as the Jakarta History Museum (Figure 2). Despite being reconstructed three times, it stands as the original City Hall of Batavia since 1627 (Alen, 2023). To comprehend the preservation of this building over the years, we initiate with a historical analysis of its significance and its impact on Jakarta's cultural identity throughout the years.

**Figure 2:** Aerial view of Batavia's City Hall and urban landscape 1900 - 1940.



[Unknown, TM-10014860, Aerial view of Batavia's City Hall and urban landscape 1900 - 1940, NMMW-Collectie, Amsterdam, <https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.11840/232483>]

### 2.1 The emergence of Batavia's City Hall (1620 - 1710)

The VOC established its initial City Hall on the eastern bank of the Ciliwung River in 1620, but it stood for only six years. The presence of this City Hall marked a significant phase in the growth and development of Batavia as a colony. Acting as the administrative hub of Batavia, the first city hall facilitated various affairs, ranging from tax payments to bribes. Nonetheless, it was dismantled in 1626 prior to the second siege of Batavia by the Sultan of Mataram's army (Heuken, 1989; Winardi, 2023). Unfortunately, there are no drawings of the First City Hall.

After the dismantling, the Second City Hall was reconstructed in the center of Batavia in 1627 (Figure 3). This second city hall (1627 - 1707) was constructed on 'Stadshuisplein,' also known as Fatahillah Square, the current site of Jakarta History Museum. Initially designed with flat roofs to accommodate cannons for defence against the Sultan of Mataram's army (Figure 4), the Second City Hall later served as a burial place for Jan Pieterszoon Coen, the founder of Dutch Batavia, who died during Sultan Agung's second siege of Batavia in 1629. However, the Second City Hall proved unsatisfactory, being deemed too small and simplistic (Alen, 2023; Winardi, 2023).

[Dirk Teeuwen, The Second City Hall in 1682, <http://www.indonesia-dutchcolonialheritage.nl/jahistoricalsites/Stadhuis%20arikel.pdf>]



**Figure 3:** The Second City Hall in 1682.



**Figure 4:** An illustration of the Second Stadhuys with flat roofs from 1629 by Francois Valentyn in 1726.

[Alen, An illustration of the Second Stadhuys with flat roofs from 1629 by Francois Valentyn in 1726, OBSERVER, <https://observerid.com/395th-anniversary-of-the-former-batavia-town-hall-now-the-history-of-jakarta-museum/>]

The Third City Hall construction began following the demolition of the second one on 23 January 1707 during the administration of Lord Governor-General John van Hoorn (Figure 5). It reached completion under the governance of Lord Governor-General Abraham van Riebeeck, on 10 July 1710. The Third City Hall (1707-1710) at that time bore a resemblance to the old city hall of Amsterdam, now known as the Royal Palace Amsterdam, both constructed in the style of Baroque Classicism (Figure 6). Although relatively modest, the City Hall building was well-proportioned. The architectural design was conceived by W.J. van der Velde, the head of the VOC's artisans, and executed by the chief carpenter J. Kemmer. Its practical design has proven effective over more than two and a half centuries of existence. The structure stands as one of the prime exemplars of Dutch colonial architecture (Heuken, 1989).

[Alen, Drawing of the third Stadhuys taken from 'Oud en Nieuw Oost-Indien' by Francois Valentyn in 1724, OBSERVER, <https://observerid.com/395th-anniversary-of-the-former-batavia-town-hall-now-the-history-of-jakarta-museum/>]



**Figure 5:** Drawing of the third Stadhuys taken from 'Oud en Nieuw Oost-Indien' by Francois Valentyn in 1724.



**Figure 6:** The Town Hall in the old city of Batavia, reminiscent of the Royal Palace Amsterdam, was constructed in 1710.

[Unkown, TM-H-3441. The Town Hall in the old city of Batavia, reminiscent of the Royal Palace Amsterdam, was constructed in 1710, NMVW-Collectie, Amsterdam, <https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.11840/202259>]

## 2.2 The Role of Batavia's City Hall (1710 - 1974)

The establishment of the new City Hall marked a significant milestone in the growth and development of the VOC. Throughout its extensive history, Batavia's City Hall served a multitude of purposes. Primarily serving as the administrative center of Batavia, it earned the moniker 'House of Talk' from locals due to the discussions and negotiations held within its walls. It functioned as a hub for various affairs, facilitating interactions between the diverse populace of Batavia, including Europeans, Chinese, and Arabs, with local officials (Winardi, 2022, October 20). Designed to accommodate city governance, the building housed numerous committees, with key offices including those of the Bench of Magistrates and Council of Justice. Additionally, the City Hall doubled as a prison compound in old Batavia, where punishments were often executed in the square outside. Over the years, the building witnessed widespread injustice, as not all individuals were treated equally before the law (Heuken, 1989).

The city hall also served as the headquarters for the militia or ‘schutterrij’ until 1815, with the president of the Bench of Magistrates acting as its commander. It functioned as the militia’s command post, and the square in front of it was utilized as its drill ground. Despite its primarily administrative role, the city hall witnessed moments of joyous occasions throughout its history. One such event was the wedding of Dutch Indies archivist E.C. Godée Molsbergen at the City Hall in 1924. Furthermore, to commemorate the marriage between Princess Juliana and her husband Prince Bernhard in 1937, the City Hall was adorned with beautiful illumination in honor of the future queen of the Netherlands (Figure 7) (Alen, 2023; Heuken, 1989).

**Figure 7:** The City Hall illumination in 1937.



[Alen, The City Hall illumination in 1937, OBSERVER, <https://observerid.com/395th-anniversary-of-the-former-batavia-town-hall-now-the-history-of-jakarta-museum/>]

Continuing its role as the seat of city government into the early 19th and 20th centuries, the Hall served as the administrative center for the Province of West Java from 1925 until World War II. After the war, the building was repurposed as a military office. Undergoing a regeneration project under Governor Ali Sadikin, since 1974, it has been home to the History of Jakarta Museum. The Museum features an extensive collection of Dutch colonial furniture spanning various styles and periods, complemented by a diverse array of objects showcasing Jakarta’s rich history. Additionally, it hosts permanent and special exhibitions highlighting Jakarta’s city and Indonesia’s modern and contemporary history (Alen, 2023; Park, 2023).

### 2.2.1 Visual Analysis: Photographs captured at Batavia’s City Hall (1863 - 1885)



**Figure 8:** The photograph of Batavia’s City Hall dates back to 1863-1866.

[Unkown, NG-2011-30-10, The photograph of Batavia’s City Hall dates back to 1863-1866, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, <https://www.rijksmuseum.nl/en/collection/NG-2011-30-10>]



**Figure 9:** The photograph of Batavia’s City Hall dates back to 1874 -1875.

[Unkown, RV-A111-3-22, The photograph of Batavia’s City Hall dates back to 1874 -1875, NMVW-Collectie, Amsterdam, <https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.11840/907928>]



**Figure 10:** The photograph of Batavia’s City Hall dates back to 1875 -1885.

[Unkown, TM-60005160, The photograph of Batavia’s City Hall dates back to 1875 -1885, NMVW-Collectie, Amsterdam, <https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.11840/4947>]

### Photographs captured at Batavia’s City Hall (1890 - 1932)



**Figure 11:** The photograph of Batavia’s City Hall dates back to 1890 -1900.

[Unkown, TM-ALB-0252-8, The photograph of Batavia’s City Hall dates back to 1890 -1900, NMVW-Collectie, Amsterdam, <https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.11840/223560>]



**Figure 12:** The photograph of Batavia’s City Hall dates back to 1910 -1930.

[Unkown, TM-60035520, The photograph of Batavia’s City Hall dates back to 1910-1930, NMVW-Collectie, Amsterdam, <https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.11840/1022682>]



**Figure 13:** The photograph of Batavia’s City Hall dates back to 1932.

[Merrilees, 2000, TM-ALB-0180-79, The photograph of Batavia’s City Hall dates back to 1932, NMVW-Collectie, Amsterdam, <https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.11840/23053>]

## Photographs captured at Batavia's City Hall (1935 - 1993)



**Figure 14:** Photograph of Batavia's City Hall at Stadshuisplein - 1935.

[Unkown, TM-60016064, Photograph of Batavia's City Hall at Stadshuisplein - 1935, NMVW-Collectie, Amsterdam, <https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.11840/240771>]



**Figure 15:** Buses and taxis at Taman Fatahillah in Jakarta Kota - 1971

[Unkown, TM-20018032, Buses and taxis at Taman Fatahillah in Jakarta Kota - 1971, NMVW-Collectie, Amsterdam, <https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.11840/293633>]



**Figure 16:** Former Batavia City Hall, now Jakarta History Museum since 1974.

[Unkown, TM-20023587, Former Batavia City Hall, now Jakarta History Museum since 1974, NMVW-Collectie, Amsterdam, <https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.11840/484096>]

Observed in the photographs, the Dutch Government building stands firm, preserving its colonial-era allure. Its timeless architecture exudes grandeur, offering a glimpse into the past. Meanwhile, Fatahillah Square transforms into a bustling public space, reflecting the area's dynamic evolution.

### 2.3 Jakarta History Museum (1974 - present)

The Old City Hall of Batavia has undergone restoration multiple times in the 20th century, maintaining essentially the same shape and features throughout. The present building's design comprises two levels, featuring orange-tinted roof tiles and large windows with green-painted covers. Today, people from all over the world are visiting the Jakarta History Museum to explore the rich history of Jakarta. Fatahillah Square has evolved from a military ground into a popular tourist destination. This historic site serves as a homage to Jakarta's colonial past. As mentioned by Yatun Sastramidjaja (2010) in her article 'Playing with the past,' such sites were once regarded as gloomy places to avoid due to their grim history of cruelty. However, in recent times, an increasing number of young people are intrigued by the prospect of rediscovering forgotten histories. A group of individuals coordinates heritage trails and other historical events across various sites to offer a deeper understanding of Jakarta's heritage trail. As depicted in the photographs, the Jakarta History Museum is featured, with Fatahillah Square bustling with tourists, retaining its popularity over time (Figure 17, 18 & 19)

Engaged organizations such as the Indonesian History Community (KHI) actively participate in these endeavours. These programs are designed to be recreational, educational, and entertaining, with the goal of fostering cultural and historical awareness. Young individuals are keen to explore various historical narratives through firsthand experiences, such as organizing role-plays featuring colonial costumes. This interactive approach breathes life into the colonial past, showcasing its multifaceted nature. Rather than presenting it solely as a period of hardship, the role-play illuminates the diverse everyday experiences and ethnic dynamics that influenced urban life in Indonesia (Sastramidjaja, 2010).



**Figure 17:** Photograph of tourists at Jakarta History Museum, Fatahillah Square - 2022

[Unkown, 2022, Photograph of tourists at Jakarta History Museum, Fatahillah Square - 2022, GetYourGuide, Jakarta, <https://www.getyourguide.nl/jakarta-1278/jakarta-begeleid-bustour-door-oud-batavia-218460/>]



**Figure 18:** Photograph of tourists at Jakarta History Museum, Fatahillah Square - 2023

[Shanice Soeroredjo, 2023, Photograph of tourists at Jakarta History Museum, Fatahillah Square - 2023, Jakarta.]



**Figure 19:** Photograph of tourists at Jakarta History Museum, Fatahillah Square - 2024

[Peter Eckermann, 2024, Photograph of tourists at Jakarta History Museum, Fatahillah Square - 2024, Google photos, Jakarta.]

## 2.4 Adaptive reuse of Jakarta History Museum

The Jakarta History Museum exemplifies effective adaptive reuse strategies, transforming an old colonial building, originally the City Hall during the Dutch colonial period, into a modern-day museum. Following a period of neglect after Indonesia's independence (1945-1949), the building was thankfully restored under the leadership of Ali Sadikin, Jakarta's Governor from 1966 to 1977, who spearheaded efforts to preserve colonial urban architecture by establishing state museums funded by the government budget (Winardi, 2022, March 30). This transformation honours the building's historical significance while providing an engaging educational experience. By revitalizing the structure, the museum celebrates Jakarta's rich history. Additionally, its adaptive reuse enhances the sustainability of urban areas by preventing the demolition of historic buildings and promoting their continued use for cultural and educational purposes. Through its exhibits, visitors can explore Jakarta's diverse cultural heritage and significant historical events, fostering curiosity and learning for generations to come (Sastramidjaja, 2010).

### 2.4.1 Visitors' experience at Jakarta History Museum

Analyzing visitor feedback on TripAdvisor, at least 73 individuals rated their museum visit with just one to two stars, citing inadequate maintenance, lack of air-conditioning, and insufficient historical artifacts, leading to overall dissatisfaction. They perceive the building as failing to provide insights into Indonesian history, viewing its structure as tired and the exhibits as inadequate representations of Jakarta's history. However, it's worth noting that some comments are outdated, dating back at least 13 years, during a period of poor maintenance and underutilization by the government (Tripadvisor, n.d.).

Conversely, there are also reviews with ratings ranging from 3 to 5 stars, some more recent. Significantly, there have been significant improvements in maintenance and preservation efforts over the years, enhancing the building's appeal. Recent comments, particularly from around 2023 and 2024, highlight the building's heritage and its importance as a place for learning about Indonesia's history and culture. Additionally, many foreign tourists have observed an increase in local visitors, including students on school trips, as mentioned in Yatun Sastramidjaja's article (2010). However, some observers note that many locals seem more interested in taking pictures than engaging with the artifacts, indicating a certain level of indifference toward the culture. Furthermore, there are suggestions for the government to take additional steps to improve the visitor experience. Most reviewers are aware of the building's history, dating back to the colonial era, which has prompted them to visit the building in person (Tripadvisor, n.d.).

## Chapter 3. City's identity – Socio-political transformation

In continuation of the previous chapters, the city's cultural identity has undergone significant changes over the years, transitioning from a colonial center to a modern Indonesian city. Similarly, as illustrated in the case study, the Jakarta History Museum evolved from an old City Hall into a modern-day museum. The transition was profoundly influenced by the socio-political context of the time, with the development of architecture often being shaped by the policies of the era and the significant influence of architects employed by the government.

### 3.1 Old Order - Sukarno regime (1945 – 1966)

Following the Independence War (1945-1949), Jakarta underwent significant socio-political shifts under various regimes. First president Sukarno (1945 – 1966) sought to redefine Jakarta's colonial identity into a symbol of national unity and pride. Initiating the Guided Democracy project in 1950, Sukarno aimed to boost the self-esteem of Indonesians post-colonization. This project aimed to embellish central Jakarta with modern monuments, exemplified by the National Monument in Independence Square (Figure 20). Sukarno's modernization efforts aimed to distance Indonesia from its colonial past, utilizing the International Style in architecture as a symbol of nationalism, sidelining traditional values (Muthmainnah and Kurniawan, 2018). However, maintenance of old colonial buildings was neglected during his regime, resulting in deterioration.



**Figure 20:** Photograph of the National Monument in Independence Square

[Fuadi, 2023, The National Monument in Independence Square, Idetrips, Jakarta, <https://idetrips.com/monas-national-monument/>]

Sukarno envisioned Jakarta not just as a model for other cities, but as the nation's central symbol, embodying Indonesia's emerging identity. Sukarno's vision started to diminish by 1965, and as the 1960s drew to a close, the previous political structure under Sukarno ceased to function effectively due to significant political upheavals. As a result, in 1966, amidst changing political landscapes, a new regime emerged, known as the New Order under the leadership of the second President, Suharto (1966 – 1998). Under this regime, the field of architecture and its practitioners gained greater independence and freedom from state control or intervention (Indonesia Investments, 2024, -a; Kusno, 2000).

### 3.2 New Order - Suharto regime (1966 – 1998)

After the downfall of the Old Order, policies quickly shifted with the advent of Suharto's New Order, placing a strong emphasis on economic development. Suharto's regime aimed to restore ties with the West, mending the rift created by Sukarno and enabling much-needed foreign aid to flow into Indonesia. This marked a stark departure from the previous regime's approach to Indonesia's identity (Indonesia Investments, 2024; Muthmainnah and Kurniawan, 2018).

Under the leadership of the second president, Suharto (1966 – 1998), the primary objective was to establish stability within the socio-political context, linking the new order with economic progress. Suharto prioritized stabilizing the economy and bringing order to social life, placing economic concerns above political ones. Social, political, and economic reforms were enacted to solidify the power of the new state. In contrast to Sukarno's vision, architects under the New Order focused on preserving cultural heritage (Kusno, 2000).

The New Order sought to elevate Indonesian tradition and culture as the nation's identity, aiming to restore Indonesian architecture to its original diversity of local traditions and cultures. With concerns arising about the younger generation losing faith in common goals and turning to foreign cultures, preserving national heritage through traditionalization was deemed essential for restoring stability and guiding their development (Kusno, 2000; Muthmainnah and Kurniawan, 2018).

The New Order aimed to emphasize the essence and continuity of Indonesian tradition and culture from the pre-colonial era, using traditionality in architecture as a tool for propaganda to consolidate power. For instance, the establishment of the Beautiful Indonesian Miniature Park (TMII), spearheaded by Suharto's wife, served as a means to circulate government propaganda through architecture (Figure 21). Located outside Jakarta City and deliberately distanced from former government structures and monuments, the establishment of the park aimed to create new narratives while breaking away from past memories. However, Suharto's focus on promoting traditional Indonesian architecture and local identity meant that he paid little attention to the maintenance of old colonial buildings, prioritizing the creation of structures devoid of colonial-era elements (Muthmainnah and Kurniawan, 2018).



**Figure 21:** Photograph of a traditional house in Beautiful Indonesian Miniature Park (TMII).

[Jakarta City Tour, 2023, February 10, Traditional house in Beautiful Indonesian Miniature Park (TMII), Ekaputra Tour, Jakarta, [https://ekaputrawisata.com/jakarta\\_city\\_tour/beautiful-indonesia-miniature-park/](https://ekaputrawisata.com/jakarta_city_tour/beautiful-indonesia-miniature-park/)]

During their respective presidencies, Sukarno and Suharto strategically employed architecture and heritage to shape Jakarta's identity in line with their ideologies. Sukarno's Guided Democracy project from 1945 to 1966 aimed to redefine Jakarta's colonial past, symbolizing national unity through modern monuments like the National Monument. However, this focus led to the neglect of old colonial buildings.

In contrast, Suharto's New Order regime from 1966 to 1998 prioritized economic development and cultural preservation. Architects focused on preserving Indonesian tradition and culture, exemplified by the Beautiful Indonesian Miniature Park. Yet, maintenance of colonial buildings was sidelined as Suharto promoted structures devoid of colonial elements.

In conclusion, both leaders strategically used architecture and heritage to shape Jakarta's identity. Sukarno emphasized modernization to distance from colonialism, while Suharto prioritized cultural preservation. Despite differing approaches, their legacies significantly influenced Jakarta's urban landscape and identity. However, it's noteworthy that both legacies contributed to the deterioration of colonial buildings over time. Further exploration into architectural heritage preservation on colonial buildings will be examined in the subsequent chapter.

#### **Chapter 4. Architectural Heritage in Jakarta**

In recent years, a growing awareness has emerged regarding the significance of conserving colonial buildings in Indonesia. This movement has been driven by dedicated groups committed to safeguarding these historic structures. This movement finds its roots in the 1970s with the formation of the Ganesha Volunteers, later rebranded as the Indonesian Heritage Society in 1995. These groups, comprising individuals deeply connected to Indonesian culture, forged partnerships with museums, setting the stage for concerted efforts to deepen understanding and appreciation of Indonesia's rich history and traditional culture. Recognizing the importance of preserving tangible remnants from the colonial period, these groups have argued against neglect or demolition, understanding that erasing these structures would only complicate historical analysis. As a result, there is a growing advocacy for the preservation and adaptive reuse of colonial buildings, with emerging middle-class supporters of heritage arguing for the conservation of these structures due to their architectural quality. These groups actively lobby national

and local authorities for legal measures to protect and preserve the nation's-built heritage, emphasizing the importance of conserving colonial-era structures. Through their concerted efforts, they seek to ensure that Indonesia's rich architectural legacy is safeguarded for future generations to appreciate and learn from (Post, 2017; Van Roosmalen, 2013).

The architectural legacy of the Jakarta History Museum stands today as a result of Jakarta's urban conservation efforts initiated under the leadership of Ali Sadikin, Governor of Jakarta from 1966 to 1977. Kusno (2000) emphasizes in his book that 'museums' serve as authentic repositories of Indonesia's past, preserving cultural traditions for future generations. In 1968, Ali Sadikin established the Department of Museum and History, marking a historic departure from previous urban policies in Indonesia. This move aimed to conserve Jakarta's historical assets in the interest of preserving its history and civilization. Notably, Jakarta became the first city in Indonesia to officially launch a conservation program for its old city center (Eryudhawan, 2017).

Additionally, Soedarmadji Jean Henry Damais, serving as the final director of the Jakarta History Museum from 1989 to 1999, left an lasting mark on Indonesia's cultural landscape. Renowned for opening ten museums within just three years, from 1974 to 1977, Damais was a dedicated supporter for preserving architectural heritage (Seno, 2021). His belief in repurposing old buildings led to the establishment of institutions within these colonial structures, guaranteeing the preservation of their cultural significance.

Furthermore, the creation of the Department of Museum and History in 1968 led to the preservation of numerous historic buildings. Additionally, another Governor's Decree was enacted to safeguard buildings, structures, and artifacts in and around Fatahillah Square in the interest of Jakarta's history. In alignment with this policy, the city established the Agency of Conservation for the Fatahillah Square Area. This agency successfully oversaw the restoration of the square and three significant colonial historic buildings nearby: Batavia's City Hall, the former Museum of Old Batavia, and the former Court of Justice, whose transformation contributes to preserving a connection with the past. Batavia's City Hall was transformed into Jakarta History Museum, the Old Batavia Museum was converted into Wayang Museum, and the former Court of Justice was repurposed as the Museum of Ceramics and Arts. Colonial buildings are often repurposed as museums or restaurants, as commercial functions prove to be effective to attract both locals and tourists. The restoration approach and principles adopted ultimately determine the building's prospects for future survival (Eryudhawan, 2017; Van Roosmalen, 2013).



**Figure 22:** Photograph of the Jakarta History Museum

[Agoda Travel Guides, 2024, Photograph of the Jakarta History Museum, Jakarta, <https://www.agoda.com/travel-guides/indonesia/jakarta/3-days-in-jakarta-itinerary-exploring-the-heart-of-indonesia/>]

## V. Conclusion

Studying the architectural legacy of colonial buildings dating back to the Dutch colonial period offers a fascinating insight into the historical journey of a former colonial nation as it emerged from its tumultuous past and forged a new identity. This thesis delves into the historical and cultural transformation of Jakarta, Indonesia, exploring the impact of Dutch colonization on the city's architectural heritage and cultural identity. It seeks to answer the research question: 'How does the architectural heritage of colonial buildings in Jakarta shape the city's cultural identity, considering the effects of preservation and adaptive reuse?'

In conclusion, the architectural heritage of colonial buildings in Jakarta has played a pivotal role in shaping the city's cultural identity, with preservation and adaptive reuse strategies serving as crucial factors. From the Dutch colonial period to contemporary times, Jakarta's urban landscape has been marked by the remnants of its colonial past, evident in iconic structures like the Jakarta History Museum. The evolution of these buildings reflects the city's historical narrative, encompassing periods of colonial rule, independence movements, and modernization efforts.

The colonial-era buildings, including the Jakarta History Museum, stand as tangible reminders of Jakarta's complex history and cultural heritage. Under Dutch rule, these structures symbolized the imposition of colonial power and the fusion of Dutch architectural styles with local influences. Over time, they have undergone transformations, serving various functions and adapting to changing socio-political contexts.

The preservation and adaptive reuse of colonial buildings have emerged as crucial strategies in safeguarding Jakarta's architectural heritage from demolition and deterioration. Efforts led by influential figures like Governor Ali Sadikin and museum director Soedarmadji Jean Henry Damais have contributed significantly to these endeavours. By repurposing old buildings and establishing institutions within them, they ensured the cultural significance of these structures endured.

Additionally, government initiatives, such as the Department of Museum and History and the Agency of Conservation for the Fatahillah Square Area, have played key roles in the restoration and maintenance of colonial buildings. These efforts have transformed historic sites like Batavia's City Hall into vibrant cultural hubs, attracting both locals and tourists.

In contemporary society, the Jakarta History Museum and other colonial buildings continue to serve as educational tools, offering insights into Indonesia's rich history and cultural heritage. While challenges remain, including issues of maintenance and visitor experience, ongoing advocacy efforts seek to address these concerns and further enhance Jakarta's cultural landscape.

Overall, the architectural heritage of colonial buildings in Jakarta serves as a testament to the city's resilience and adaptation over time. By preserving these structures and embracing their historical significance, Jakarta reaffirms its cultural identity and ensures that future generations can appreciate and learn from its diverse heritage.

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