

Evaluation of the Elements and Characteristics of the Facades of Cultural Heritage Buildings in the Context of Colonial Architecture

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the importance of preserving colonial cultural heritage buildings as part of urban identity and historical continuity. In many developing cities, rapid urbanization and functional changes have threatened the authenticity of heritage buildings, particularly their façades, which serve as the primary visual representation of architectural character. In Indonesia, colonial buildings in urban areas such as Surabaya hold significant historical and aesthetic value, yet face increasing pressure from modernization. Therefore, this research aims to evaluate the elements and characteristics of the façade of the Hagakita Bank Building as a representative colonial heritage structure and to assess how these elements contribute to maintaining its architectural identity. This study employs a qualitative-descriptive approach, utilizing purposive sampling with the Hagakita Bank Building as the primary research object. Data were collected through direct observation, photographic documentation, and literature review. The research instruments included observation sheets and documentation guidelines, while data validity was ensured through triangulation of sources and methods. The results show that façade elements such as form, openings, color, decoration, materials, and texture play a significant role in preserving the colonial architectural identity. These elements not only reflect historical authenticity but also enhance public appreciation of heritage buildings. In conclusion, maintaining the integrity of façade elements is essential for sustainable conservation and for strengthening the cultural identity of urban heritage areas.

INTRODUCTION

Cultural heritage buildings are important assets that reflect the historical, social, and cultural journey of a region. Buildings in Indonesia characterized by colonial architecture and possessing high historical value need to be preserved (Tamimi et al., 2020). In Indonesia, many cultural heritage buildings date back to the colonial period and still stand in urban areas today. These colonial buildings hold not only historical value but also strong architectural significance, particularly in the expression of their façades (Akbar & Prayogi, 2020; Antariksa et al., 2021; Budi Yuwono, 2022; Groat & Wang, 2022).

Surabaya is one of the cities in Indonesia with a long history of colonial architecture. These buildings date back to the 18th century, when Surabaya served as the center of colonial administration in Indonesia. Over the years, the city's urban configuration has produced a diverse array of residential and civic areas. Surabaya is also recognized as one of the major trading centers in the Far East, often nicknamed "*Queen of the East*." The Dutch East Indies government was heavily reliant on Surabaya as a port and commercial hub in the region (Saifulloh & Pamungkas, 2018).

Most of the colonial buildings in Surabaya are concentrated in the *Kota Lama* (Old Town) area of North Surabaya. This area is historically associated with the Battle of Surabaya on November 10 and is characterized by colonial-style built heritage (Putra, 2016). One of the most widely recognized corridors within this area is *Jalan Tunjungan*.

The Hagakita Bank Building is one of the colonial-era buildings in Surabaya, located on *Jalan Tunjungan*. Originally, the building functioned as a Dutch banking office. It has been designated as a cultural heritage building under the Decree of the Mayor of Surabaya No. 188.45/004/402.1.04/1998, with serial number 45. The building is also known as Bank Rabobank International Indonesia, located at *Jalan Tunjungan 60*, Surabaya. It subsequently operated as Hagakita Bank. Based on the Decree of the Governor of Bank Indonesia No. 10/43/KEP OBI/2008, dated July 24, 2008, Bank Hagakita was merged into Rabobank as a result of the consolidation of PT. Hagabank and PT. Hagakita (Hardinoto, 1996; Kusumo, 2016).

Urban cultural heritage has become a global concern as historic buildings are increasingly exposed to modernization, functional change, neglect, and commercial redevelopment (Habraken & Teicher, 2021; Kusuma & Cahyani, 2023; Mahsun & Faqih, 2022). In many cities, the façade is the most visible architectural component, as it communicates historical identity, aesthetic value, and collective memory to the public. Therefore, the conservation of heritage façades is not solely an architectural issue but also a cultural, social, and urban identity concern (Rahmat & Syaom Barliana, 2021; Widodo, 2020). Globally, UNESCO continues to emphasize the importance of documenting and protecting historic cities and urban heritage through cultural mapping and conservation programs, indicating that heritage preservation is closely tied to sustainable urban development particularly in cities where historic buildings coexist with rapid modernization.

In Indonesia, the urgency of cultural heritage preservation is supported by national data. A 2024 policy review reported that, as of August 2023, Indonesia had recorded 9,099 cultural heritage assets comprising buildings, objects, areas, sites, and structures with buildings representing the largest proportion at 48.10%. This demonstrates that heritage buildings occupy a central position in Indonesia's conservation agenda.

Surabaya holds particular significance among Indonesia's colonial cities, as its urban history was shaped by trade, port activities, and Dutch colonial administration. *Jalan Tunjungan* is especially notable for its concentration of colonial-style buildings, which contribute substantially to the city's historic streetscape. In this context, the Hagakita Bank Building at *Jalan Tunjungan 60* is a highly relevant case study, having been officially designated as a cultural heritage building through the Decree of the Mayor of Surabaya No. 188.45/004/402.1.04/1998.

The central issue addressed in this research is the potential degradation of colonial architectural identity resulting from functional changes, urban development pressures, and limited public awareness of façade authenticity. Colonial façades generally exhibit distinctive characteristics such as symmetry, balanced proportions, large openings, ornamental details, and climatic adaptation to tropical conditions; however, these characteristics may be diminished when buildings are physically altered or left without active use.

Previous studies have demonstrated that façade elements significantly influence public perception of historic buildings. Wijaya, Ernawati, and Santosa found that architectural style and façade composition were among the most influential factors shaping public perception of heritage building quality. Other recent research on *Jalan Tunjungan* also indicates that built form, signage, and heritage ornamentation contribute to the sense of place and distinguish this corridor from other urban streets in Indonesia. Nevertheless, prior studies tend to address heritage façades through broader urban corridor analyses, visual perception assessments, or public preference evaluations, while fewer studies focus specifically on the detailed façade elements of an individual colonial heritage building. This constitutes a research gap in documenting how form, openings, color, decoration, material, and texture collectively sustain the colonial identity of the Hagakita Bank Building.

The urgency of this research lies in the need to provide architectural documentation that can inform conservation decision-making. As the Hagakita Bank Building is currently reported to be unoccupied and without a designated function, a thorough evaluation of its façade elements is necessary to ensure that any future adaptive reuse or restoration does not compromise its colonial character. The novelty of this research lies in its specific focus on the façade elements and characteristics of the Hagakita Bank Building as a colonial cultural heritage object in Surabaya. Unlike broader heritage studies, this research emphasizes the relationship between physical façade components and the preservation of colonial architectural identity within the context of contemporary urban development.

This research aims to evaluate the elements and characteristics of the façades of the Hagakita Bank Building and to explain how these elements sustain the identity of its colonial architecture. The study is expected to contribute theoretically to architectural heritage discourse and practically to conservation planning, public appreciation, and the sustainable management of colonial cultural heritage buildings in Surabaya.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative descriptive research design aimed at evaluating the elements and characteristics of the façades of a colonial cultural heritage building, namely the Hagakita Bank Building in Surabaya. The population of this research comprises all façade elements found in colonial heritage buildings along the *Tunjungan* corridor, while the sample is specifically focused on the façade components of the Hagakita Bank Building, including form, openings, color, decoration, material, and texture. A purposive sampling technique was applied to select this building as the research object, as it represents a well-preserved example of colonial architectural style and has been officially designated as a cultural heritage building.

The research instruments include observation sheets, documentation guidelines, and literature review matrices, which were used to systematically record façade elements and their characteristics. To ensure validity, this study employs triangulation by comparing findings from field observations, photographic documentation, and relevant literature sources. Reliability is maintained through consistent observation procedures and cross-verification of data interpretations against established architectural theories pertaining to colonial built heritage. Data collection techniques consist of direct visual observation of the building, photographic documentation, and a literature study drawing from academic

journals, books, and official documents. The research procedure begins with a preliminary literature review, followed by field observation, data documentation, classification of façade elements, and verification of findings.

Data analysis was conducted using a qualitative descriptive approach by categorizing façade elements and interpreting their architectural characteristics in relation to colonial design principles. The analytical process encompasses data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing to identify how each façade component contributes to the preservation of colonial architectural identity. Supporting software such as Microsoft Excel was used to organize and classify data, while visualization tools assisted in presenting findings systematically. The results are subsequently interpreted to provide recommendations for the conservation and sustainable management of colonial cultural heritage buildings.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Hagakita Bank Building

The Bank Hagakita building is located on Jalan Tunjungan number 60 Surabaya City, currently an empty building that does not have a special function, so there are no special activities carried out in it. This building is one of the modern colonial buildings in Surabaya, its status as a cultural heritage building makes this building need to be considered because it is related to building the identity of the historical area. There is not much information available as to when this building was built. Simple information can be seen on the plaque attached to the building which is estimated to have existed since the 1912s. Thus, this building can be categorized as a transitional architectural style. The building looks simple but majestic and has ornamental details on its façade.



Image 1. Hagakita Bank Building

Source: Researcher, 2024

Building Shape

The typical shape of colonial buildings has a wide portico in front and side, has a simple symmetrical plan, large neoclassical-style columns, monumental facades, European symmetrical proportions, but there are still large openings for the tropical climate, geometric shapes, minimalist decoration (Handinoto – Architecture and Cities in Java in the Colonial Period (1996)).

The shape of a building is a variable related to regularity and complexity Iffiyah, (2022). The Bank Hagakita building has a spacious portico and a sturdy monumental façade. The building is decorated with large neoclassical-style columns. Compared to the building style of imperial architecture, the building of the Hagakita Bank is simpler and less complicated. The large columns on the outside of the building make it look sturdy. There is a triangular gevel inside this building. The ends of the gevel are also decorated with a circular shape called a geveltoppen (gable roof decoration) (Figure 2).



Image 2. Building Shape of Bank Hagakita
Source: Researcher, 2024

The shape of the roof of the building in the Hagakita Bank Building uses a low-slope shield roof model. Basically, the function of the roof is to limit visibility and provide a sense of security against the infinite emptiness of the sky (Wiryomartono, 2014). The combination of the low slope of the roof, the elevated shape of the building and the presence of walls at the top of the building make the roof of this building invisible to the human eye.



Image 3. Roof of Bank Hagakita Building
Source: Pinterest, 2025

Openings

The characteristic of openings in colonial buildings in tropical climates is their large size and proportions can reach half the height of the walls (Handinoto – Architecture and Cities in Java in the Colonial Period (1996)). According to Dink Kalayci & Bilir (2016)

openings are doors and windows in buildings (Dinç Kalayci & Bilir, 2016). The design of doors and windows in this building is in the form of a large wooden grille. This reflects the appearance of doors and windows in the colonial era.



Image 4. Bank Hagakita Building Window
Source: Researcher, 2024

Color

Early colonial buildings used natural colors of materials such as white walls made of lime/plaster, red brick roofs, dark brown wood (Handinoto – Architecture and Cities in Java in the Colonial Period (1996)). The aesthetic pleasure of the individual's subconscious is created by the colors that can be enjoyed by the human eye, as well as the cognitive level of human perception. Color is one of the important elements of a building that can also affect the assessment of the building.

The color of the Bank Hagakita Building does not use the natural color of the material, but the concept of coloring from the basic material of this natural color is maintained in this building. The colors used in the Hagakita Bank building are dominated by white and brown paint on the door and window frames. The dominant white color of this building is a characteristic of colonial buildings in the Nieuwe Bouwen style. The color white also symbolizes calm and peace (Arifianto, 2009).



Image 5. Colors of Bank Hagakita Building
Source: Researcher, 2024

Decoration

Decoration refers to some carvings and ornaments on buildings. There are no striking decorations on the Hagakita Bank Building, but the walls and columns use fine carvings and ornaments throughout the building that beautify the building.

The decoration on the Hagakita Bank building consists of carvings on the façade of the building, decorative lights with colonial designs, and carved pipes. The carvings add a classic/ancient impression to the cultural heritage building.



Image 6. Carvings on the façade of the Bank Hagakita Building
Source: Researcher, 2024



Image 7. Decorative lamps with colonial design
Source: Researcher, 2024



Image 8. Engraving on the pipe of the Hagakita Bank Building
Source: Researcher, 2024

Decorations on the roof of the building were also added in the form of Windwijzer/Wind Pointer placed above the nok level which can rotate according to the direction of the wind.



Image 9. Windwijzer Bangunan Bank Hagakita
Source: Researcher, 2024

Material

The use of permanent materials such as brick, concrete, iron, cast iron is one of the characteristics of colonial buildings. The materials used in the Hagakita Bank building are bricks and concrete, besides the materials on the doors and windows use wood.



Image 10. Building Materials of Bank Hagakita
Source: Researcher, 2024

Texture

Textures can be formed from the density of the layers on the façade, the softness and hardness of the layers, as well as the contrast and similarity of the layers in view (Utaberta et al., 2012). In visual art, texture is an important element to give a smooth, rough, and various other feelings. In the Hagakita Bank building, textures are found in the natural materials produced from wood and carvings formed on the façade. The grooves and carvings on the wooden windows and doors create a special pattern when touched.



Image 11. Texture details resulting from wood material
Source: Researcher, 2024

The authenticity of the shape, opening, color, decoration, materials and textures of a building, especially colonial-style cultural heritage buildings, is very important to be maintained and preserved.

The value of community appreciation

This aims to maintain existing cultural values so that they can be effectively maintained in accordance with the local situation and conditions (Hartono, 2022). In addition, maintaining the authenticity of buildings can increase public appreciation which is also important in efforts to preserve and manage colonial cultural heritage buildings in a sustainable manner.

Considering public participation can help support public awareness of historic buildings. Maintaining the elements and characteristics of the façade in accordance with the original can affect the increase in public interest in colonial buildings is an important part of the urban architectural heritage in Indonesia. The elements and characteristics of the façade which is the first face of a colonial building form the identity of colonial architecture in the midst of the dynamics of urban development. This is because the uniqueness of colonial buildings is a marker of colonial architectural objects so that the building has distinctive qualities or characteristics and distinguishes it from other buildings today (Hartono, 2022).

In the Hagakita Bank building, elements and characteristics of the façade such as the shape of triangular gables, gabletops, windvane, large openings, color selection, decoration and carving, as well as maintaining natural materials and textures are maintained in their authenticity and quality so that until now the historic building is still maintained and can add to the identity of colonial architecture in the midst of the dynamics of urban development.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the evaluation of the elements and characteristics of the façade of the Bank Hagakita building, it can be seen that all elements and characteristics of the façade show that the building is a characteristic of a colonial building. The results of the evaluation show that the colonial elements contained in the Hagakita Bank building are as follows: The Hagakita Bank building is straightforward and simple, with large pillars that accentuate colonial nuances but remain stylish and sturdy, having a large proportion on a human scale. The shape of the building that reflects colonialism is also strengthened by the existence of gables and gabletops. The opening of the Hagakita Bank has large dimensions, making it look majestic as a colonial building. The colors of the Bank Hagakita building reflect the characteristics of the Nieuwe Bouwen-style colonial buildings which are dominated by white colors that symbolize tranquility and peace. The typical colonial decoration is reflected in the Windvane/wind indicator on the roof of the building. The main materials used in the Hagakita Bank building are natural materials in the form of bricks and concrete and natural materials, namely wood. The texture of the Bank Hagakita Building is minimal and natural like in other colonial buildings made from original construction materials, textures that give a smooth or rough impression can be found in the materials used on the façade, especially wood and carving, in the Bank Hagakita building.

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