

## Research Article

# Characteristics of Dutch Colonial Architecture in Public Buildings of Tegal, Central Java

Niken Laksitarini\*, Ahmad Nur Sheha Gunawan, Alifa Hanifiar Rifanti, and Yumna Almira Badr

Telkom University, Bandung, Indonesia

## Abstract.

Tegal is a city which is located on the coast of Java, it has grown exponentially in various sectors, including that of the domination of Dutch Colonial architecture. Tegal's legacy is that it houses various public buildings that served as National Government offices for the Dutch during the colonial era. As a result of this, many public buildings in Tegal are shaped in the Dutch Colonial architectural style. During this era of colonialism, colonial architecture served as a symbol of an architectural identity for the city. The city of Tegal houses several public and government buildings with the colonial architectural style, such as the Birao Building, the Mako Lanal Building, the Tegal DPRD Building, and the Post Office Building. Culturally, Tegal's architecture connects the city's colonialist past with the local traditions. Furthermore, the existence of colonialist structures serves as proof of the city's historical identity. This study uses a descriptive qualitative research method, as well as further examination of the characteristics of buildings in Tegal that fit the colonial archetype. According to the findings of this research, all four of the buildings explored in this study exhibit characteristics befitting of the Dutch Colonial architectural style.

**Keywords:** Colonial architecture, characteristics, public building, Tegal

Corresponding Author: Niken  
Laksitarini; email:  
nikenoy@telkomuniversity.ac.id

**Published:** 8 January 2025

**Publishing services provided by**  
**Knowledge E**

© Niken Laksitarini et al. This  
article is distributed under the  
terms of the [Creative Commons](#)  
[Attribution License](#), which  
permits unrestricted use and  
redistribution provided that the  
original author and source are  
credited.

Selection and Peer-review under  
the responsibility of the BCM  
2023: Sustainable Design  
Conference Committee.

## 1. Introduction

Tegal is a city in Central Java Province, Indonesia that is located to the west of Semarang. The city is notable for its large number of heritage buildings from Dutch colonial era that are still standing to this day. Many of these are public buildings. Dwi Ariandi in Ayo Tegal.com stated that according to records on Tegal City Education and Cultural Office there are 36 historically significant buildings that have been designated as heritage buildings. The form of the Dutch Colonial architecture in the city is specific and unique to its location, it is the result of a compromise between the Dutch modern architecture and Indonesia's naturally humid tropical climate. Many buildings in Tegal have implemented local traditional elements into the city's architectural style [1].



The typical characteristics of the Dutch Colonial buildings in Tegal include the use of gable, towers, and dormers on the structures. Many architectural elements of the Dutch colonial style are worked on with meticulous detail, starting from the gutters, staircase railings, trellises, and windows. These kinds of structures have become Tegal's main tourist attractions, examples of them are the Birao Building, the Mako Lanal Building, the Tegal DPRD Office, and the Post Office. They are often visited and enjoyed by the general public.

The Birao Building, which was designed by Henri Maclaine Pont in the early 1910s. It is a four-storey building that is approximately 7106 m<sup>2</sup> that served as the office for the Semarang Cheriboon Stroomtam (SCS) railway company. The Birao Building has undergone many changes and purpose over the years. The building now sits as a historical tourist destination in the city of Tegal. The second building is Mako Lanal. At the beginning of its construction, this building was used as an N.V. office. Afterward, it was used as a Naval Base for the Republic of Indonesia (ALRI) in the 1960s. It then became the Tegal Naval Base Command Headquarters (Lanal) which still stands today. The third building is the DPRD Parliament Building, which was constructed in 1750 by Mathijs Wilem de Man. It was originally used as a government office for the Dutch, which is part of the residency for the Pekalongan area. In 1910, the building was used as the office of the Assistant Resident of Tegal. Then in 1950, it once again changed its function to become Tegal's city hall and it made its final change in 1987 when it became the Tegal DPRD Office. The fourth and last building is the Post Office, which was made in the 1930s. This building sits at a crossroad on Jalan Proklamasi No. 2 in Tegalsari, Tegal, Central Java. Initially, it was used as a naval base during the colonial era, until 1954, when this building was handed to a telephone and communications company which is now known as PT. POS Indonesia.

## 2. Methods and Equipment

### 2.1. Methods

This study examines the elements of the Dutch Colonial architectural style that are found in public buildings in Tegal, Central Java. The topics of discussion in this study are four government buildings in Tegal, namely the Birao Building, the Mako Lanal Building, the Tegal DPRD Building, and the Post Office. This study uses a descriptive qualitative research method. Primary data was obtained only through field observations due to the

regulatory restrictions in place. Secondary data was obtained through literature review, for both electronic and physical literature, such as scientific journals, seminar papers, websites, and videos. The collected data is then compiled to be analyzed, from which then conclusions are drawn from. The purpose of this study is to determine and examine the characteristic of the Dutch Colonial architectural style in the four buildings that were used as research subjects in this study.

3. Results and Discussion

The Colonial architectural style in Indonesia is divided into 3 development periods, namely [2]:

1. Indische empire (18th-19th Century)

Initially appearing in Batavia, this style emerged from an Indische Culture culture that developed in the Dutch East Indies. Indische or 'indis' is a culture that is a mixture of European, Indonesian and a little bit of Chinese Peranakan culture

2. Transitional architecture (1890-1915)

This transition is a process of change from the Indische Empire era to the modern colonial period

3. Modern colonial architecture (1915-1940)

This was a protest from Dutch architects against the Indische Empire style which was foreign because it came from France and had not developed in the Netherlands itself.

These characteristics are classified in the chart below;

TABLE 1: Key characteristics of Dutch colonial architecture in Indonesia. Adapted from Purnomo [2].

Indische empire (18th-19th Century)	Transitional architecture (1890-1915)	Modern colonial architecture (1915-1940)
The floor plan is symmetrical	The floor plan still follows the Indic style	The floor plan is more varied
Covered roof	Gable and shield roof shapes	Gable roof and shields
Greek style stone pillars	A terrace surrounds the building	Has sun blocking elements (sun shading)
The service area is separate from the main building	There are dormers	Form follows function

Colonial styled architecture in Indonesia that was built during the 18th and 19th centuries is often referred to as the Indische Empire style, which is an imperial architectural style that was developed prior to the westernization of cities and towns in Indonesia during the early 20th century [3 Akihari, 4 Handinoto and Soehargo, 5 Nix]. The main characteristics of the Indische Empire architectural style are the shielded roofs, extensive yards, lack of terraces, symmetrical plains, unobstructed entrances with stone pillars in the style of the Greeks, and the use of classically patterned stone skirtings around the roofs. Furthermore, buildings in this architectural style are generally divided into main buildings and smaller supporting buildings which are connected by central corridors and gates, structures of this style often give off a monumental impression to passersby. The Indische Empire style has architectural elements that include detailed entrances, roofs, and columns. According to Wardani (2009), the colonial style (also known as Dutch Colonial) was a dominant design trend in the Netherlands (Netherlands) between 1624 and 1820. [2]

### 3.1. Birao Building

The Birao Building has a symmetrical layout and shape, with a main entrance that is exactly in the middle of the structure and is accompanied by a characteristic arch on the interior as well as the exterior. It uses red tile on the roofs and the building is colored in white both on its exterior and interior walls.



**Figure 1:** View of the Birao Building, personal documentation, image taken by Yumna Almira Badr.

The building has the general characteristics of Dutch Colonial architecture, as can be seen from the use of tile flooring as well as the large doors and windows that have a grid pattern. Additionally, the Birao Building is designed with a tall ceiling height with a wooden frame roof, this was done to maintain a cool temperate inside the structure. Based on the results of identifying the building characteristics, The Birao Building is included in the Indische Empire architectural style



**Figure 2:** View of the Birao Building, personal documentation, image taken by Aris Aprilianto.

### 3.2. Mako Lanal Building

The Mako Lanal Building has a cluster-shaped layout with a cylindrical main entrance that faces the street intersection and a roof that resembles one from a European castle. The triangular roof of the building uses wooden frames and red tiles. The structure has the characteristics of transitional colonial architecture. This can be seen from the large windows and doors which reach more than 2 meters in height, then there are the grid patterns on the window glasses. The use of these elements, including that of a tall ceiling, helps to maintain a cool temperature inside the building.

### 3.3. Tegal DPRD Parliament Building

The DPRD Parliament Building in Tegal has almost the same layout as the two previous buildings with Indische Empire style architectural characteristics. This is a result of the use of columns in the Tuscan Order within the building, which are cylindrical columns



**Figure 3:** View of the Mako Lanal Building, personal documentation.

that expands at the base and shrinks upwards. These types of columns generally have a thin base, however, the columns in this building are thicker at the base. This structure adopts several architectural elements that are typically attributed to the Roman architectural style, namely the application of a simplified entablature and the existence of a pediment on the building’s façade, which is a triangular roof that faces forward. These elements are then combined with the general features of Indonesian architecture, such as the elongated pyramid-shaped roof.



**Figure 4:** View of the DPRD Building in Tegal, personal documentation.



### 3.4. Post Office of Tegal

The Post Office of Tegal has a cluster-shaped building layout with an angled main entrance that faces the intersection which it sits on. The exterior of the building is very unique due to the incredibly symmetrical shape of the structure which is then combined with a triangular-shaped roof, which still uses wooden frames and red tiles. The walls above the entrance host various windows that utilize stained glass and high ceilings, which makes air circulate more smoothly in the building. Different from the three previous buildings, the Tegal Post Office has a modern Colonial architectural style



**Figure 5:** Interior of the Post Office in Tegal, image was obtained from Google Maps and Info Tegal.

## 4. Conclusion

Despite serving very varied functions, the four buildings mentioned in this article adhere to European architectural style and are influenced by Dutch architects. Tegal's climate, which is influenced by its location near the shore and by harsh sun rays and a lot of rainfall, makes the building materials used there extremely important. Colonial-style structures are typically used as government buildings because of their strategic placement in key locations. The primary entrances differ depending on where they are, such as the circular entry at a crossroads of the Mako Lanal Building. To faithfully reproduce these characteristics, an axially symmetric scatterer model is employed. Although in general the Colonial architectural style is divided into 3 periods, the buildings in Tegal

that researchers have managed to identify are only 2 periods, namely the Indische Empire style and Transitional Architecture.

All in all, there are several striking characteristics of the Dutch Colonial architectural style that are featured among the four buildings. The Birao Building features a symmetrical layout with a central entrance that has an arch formation on it. Its tiled floors, large doors, and windows, as well as the grid patterns, are hallmark features of the Dutch Colonial architectural style. Furthermore, the building's high ceiling and wooden roof frames ensure a cool internal temperature. The Mako Lanal Building features a cluster-shaped layout with a cylindrical main entrance and a roof that resembles a European Castle's roof. Its large windows and doors, along with its high ceilings are the typical features of the Dutch Colonial architectural style which ensures a cool room temperature. The DPRD Parliament Building utilizes columns in the style of the Tuscan Order, which has thicker bases and adopts many Roman architectural characteristics, such as the simplified entablature. Additionally, it has a triangular roof with an elongated pyramid shape, which comes from the typical characteristics of Indonesian architecture. The Tegal Post Office features a cluster-shaped layout with an angled main entrance and a symmetrical exterior with a triangular roof, stained glass windows, as well as high ceilings for smooth air circulations.

## Conflict of Interest

The authors have no conflict of interest to declare.

## References

- [1] Handinoto. *Arsitektur dan Kota di Jawa pada Masa Kolonial*. Yogyakarta: Graha Ilmu; 2010.
- [2] Akihary H. *Architectuur & Stedebouw in Indonesië 1870/1970*. Zutpem: De Walburg Pers; 1990.
- [3] Handinoto & Soehargo PH. *Perkembangan Kota dan Arsitektur Kolonial Belanda di Malang*. Surabaya: Institute for Research and Community Service, PETRA Christian University; 1996.
- [4] Nix T. *Sumbangan Tentang Pengetahuan Bentuk Dalam Perencanaan dan Perancangan Kota Terutama Di Indonesia*. Bandung: Technical Faculty, Tarumanegara University; 1994.



- [5] Poesponegoro MD, Notosusanto N. Sejarah Nasional Indonesia II. Jakarta: Balai Pustaka; 1993.
- [6] Purnomo H, Waani JO, Wuisang, CEV. "Gaya & Karakter Visual Arsitektur Kolonial Belanda di Kawasan Benteng Oranje Ternate." Media Matrasain. 2017;14(1): 23-33.