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# Symbolic Architecture at Sin Ming Hui Candra Naya Chinese Heritage in West Jakarta, Indonesia

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**Abstract** Sin Ming Hui Candra Naya is one of the most significant Chinese heritage buildings in Jakarta, Indonesia, originally built as the residence of the Khouw family, a prominent Chinese-Indonesian lineage during the colonial era. Over time, this heritage structure has undergone substantial changes in form, function, and meaning due to rapid urban development and modernization pressures in Jakarta Chinatown area. This study aims to explore the transformation of Candra Naya's architecture by focusing on the symbolic values embedded within its evolving spatial expressions. The research employs a qualitative-descriptive method using a symbolic architectural approach, combining architectural ethnography, spatial observation, semiotic analysis, and cultural interpretation. Data collection was conducted through direct site observation, in-depth interviews with heritage experts, community leaders, and local historians, as well as a comprehensive literature review of historical archives, architectural records, and urban policies. The findings reveal that the current architecture of Candra Naya reflects a layered identity—merging traditional Chinese architectural elements such as curved roofs and courtyard configurations with Dutch colonial masonry and tropical adaptations. Symbolically, the building embodies cultural continuity, resilience, and syncretism—representing values of harmony (He), prosperity (Fu), and ancestral reverence. The study also highlights the socio-political significance of the building, as it has shifted from a private mansion to a

public cultural icon, reflecting broader changes in urban identity and heritage politics. This research contributes to the growing discourse on heritage architecture in Southeast Asia by offering an interpretive model for understanding the symbolic transformations of hybrid heritage buildings. It emphasizes the need for adaptive reuse and sustainable conservation practices that respect symbolic meanings, while accommodating new functions. The study's limitations lie in restricted access to certain archival materials and limited participation from descendants of the original family. Nevertheless, the insights generated are valuable for urban planners, conservationists, and cultural scholars concerned with maintaining the identity and legacy of historic architecture in rapidly changing urban contexts.

**Keywords** Candra Naya, Symbolic Architecture, Chinese Heritage, Transformation, Sustainability, Colonial Hybridity

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## **1. Introduction**

China is one of the Asian countries with a deeply rooted and distinctive architectural tradition. Symmetry, representing balance, is a common feature in all types of Chinese architecture, from small homes to grand palaces.

This architectural system, shaped by cosmological concepts such as Feng Shui and Taoism, governs spatial organization and building orientation. Elements such as color symbolism, numerical associations, and roof design are central to its implementation. Chinese roofs range from single-pitched to multi-tiered forms, typically featuring curved structures adorned with mythological motifs in ceramic or painted wood, thereby creating a sense of grandeur. Yellow or gold, symbolizing prosperity and luck, is often used for upper building levels.

Sin Ming Hui, also known as Candra Naya, exemplifies this Chinese architectural heritage. Located at Jalan Gajah Mada No. 188, West Jakarta, it is a designated cultural heritage site. Candra Naya was built by the Khouw Tian Sek family in the late 1800s, during the year of the rabbit. The Khouw van Tamboen family originally owned the property before Majoor der Chinezen Khouw Kim An, their son, donated it. The Khouw family, of Chinese Dutch East Indies descent, was among the most influential Chinese Indonesian families. Majoor Khouw Kim was a bureaucrat, community leader, and land trader who became the last Chinese Mayor of Batavia, a position that represented the highest authority of the Chinese community within the colonial political and legal system. Visualization of the Candra Naya building in the 1950s is referred to Figure 1.



**Figure 1.** Sin Ming Hui Building, Jalan Gajah Mada No. 188 Jakarta in the 1950s. (Source: Kompasiana.com, downloaded December 12, 2023)

The two other Khouw family residences have since been repurposed. The former home of Mayor Tio Tek Ho now serves as a commercial site (Toko Kompak) in Pasar Baru, while another, once owned by Khouw Tjeng Po, functions as SMA Negeri 2 Jakarta, an educational institution.

Sin Ming Hui Candra Naya covers an area of over 2,000 square meters. This building is a protected cultural heritage site, listed in Jakarta Special Capital Region Regulation Number 9 of 1999 concerning the Preservation and Utilization of Cultural Heritage Buildings and Environments. Other regulations confirming this include the Decree of the Acting Governor of Jakarta in 1972, which at the time still referred to regulations from the

Dutch East Indies era, namely the *Monumenten Ordonnantie* of 1931, the Decree of the Minister of Education and Culture in 1988, and the Decree of the Governor of Jakarta in 1993 [1]. Over the past century, Candra Naya has developed into a center of Chinese Indonesian political and social activity.

In 1992, Candra Naya was sold to a Chinese Indonesian company called Modern Group. In 2012, Candra Naya's main building and wings were rebuilt to prevent demolition instead of moving them to Taman Mini Indonesia Indah. The layout and ornamentation of Sin Ming Hui Candra Naya demonstrate that Chinese architecture has evolved over thousands of years and influenced architecture throughout East Asia. Since the freezing of architectural styles in early imperial China, the structural principles of Chinese architecture have remained unchanged, only the ornamental details have changed. There are four elements in Chinese architecture, namely courtyards, roof characteristics, building structures, and the use of color [2]. These four elements serve as a framework in the study of Symbolic Architecture within the Chinese Heritage of Sin Ming Hui Candra Naya in West Jakarta. This discussion covers the elements of Chinese architecture: typology, roofs, structures, high walls, doors, and ornaments.

This research aims to discover the function and meaning contained in the architectural elements of Sin Ming Hui Candra Naya. This research is essential given Candra Naya's current situation, as it is surrounded by modern high-rise buildings, which presents potential risks to its long-term preservation. Aditya W. Fitrianto, an architect and urban preservationist in Jakarta, notes that Candra Naya [3], now surrounded by modern buildings, has lost its original character. "Just a piece of an old building that has lost its important function, as in the past," Aditya told Kompas.com, Thursday (2/3/2022). Aditya stated that Candra Naya should be preserved and revitalized as a living heritage in the urban area. This is because the building no longer appears significant to the face of the city. By exploring the form, function, and meaning of this, it is hoped that the community and government will make every effort to maintain the existence of this building. Although this building is physically small, the historical and cultural value it contains is part of Jakarta's past and the history of the Indonesian nation.

## • Symbols

Symbols are the result of an agreement. According to F.W. Dillistone in his famous work, *The Power of Symbols*, a symbol is a word that represents or expresses something.

Turner distinguishes symbols from signs. Symbols have multiple meanings and broad implications [4]. For example, the yellow color of a traffic light gives drivers morning instructions to be cautious, while the yellow-gold color symbolizes cheerfulness, prosperity, and fertility. It is not surprising that gold is the dominant color in Chinese architecture, alongside black and red. Through symbols,

we express thoughts, concepts, and ideas. The meaning of something depends on the way we present it. Symbolic is an equation of human perception of an object due to similarities in place, time, culture, and others. Symbolic is thought to unify perceptions of a design. This unification of perception occurs because everyone shares the same understanding of something using symbols. All understandings that give rise to an evaluation of a design will be conveyed well.

#### • **Symbolic Architecture and Theoretical Framework**

Symbolism is the similarity in how people perceive something. This occurs due to commonalities in factors such as location, period, background, culture, education, and others [3][5]. Through symbolism, diverse people's perceptions can be unified into a single assessment. Symbolic architecture employs symbols in design to convey ideas, highlighting both the essence and deeper meaning of a structure through its form, structure, and ornamentation. Symbolic architecture is closely related to the function of architecture, which is to demonstrate the relationship between humans and their environment [6]. Certain symbols are immediately recognizable, whereas others may necessitate further analysis and interpretation to comprehend their meaning. Symbols also indicate identity, origin, or function as a building's identifier/self-identity [7].

Following Christian Norberg-Schulz's [19] phenomenological notion of *genius loci*, symbolic architecture reveals how physical forms embody cultural meanings and human experiences in their place. This helps explain why features such as the courtyard, moon gate, and axial order at Candra Naya are not only functional but also linked to notions of dwelling, identity, and memory.

Similarly, Charles Jencks (1995) emphasized that architecture in postmodern and pluralistic societies embodies diverse and layered meanings. This is particularly relevant to Candra Naya, which blends Chinese vernacular forms with colonial bureaucratic symbolism, creating an architectural language that reflects the identities of both cultures.

From a heritage management perspective, UNESCO's Historic Urban Landscape (HUL) framework (2011) advocates the integration of tangible and intangible values in contemporary urban planning. Viewing Candra Naya through this perspective allows us to evaluate not only its architectural symbolism, but also the social, spiritual, and political meanings embedded within it as part of Jakarta's evolving urban landscape.

#### • **Chinese architecture**

Chinese architecture is based on balance. This is reflected in the building's emphasis on articulation and the symmetrical system on its sides [8]. The arrangement of space in the building is such that the central courtyard is

the center of the room around it. The wings also show a symmetrical impression on each side of the building to maintain the overall bilateral symmetry [9]. The primary materials used in the establishment are wooden beams that support the overall building structure, as well as clay (usually in the form of bricks). Wooden beams are a structural support for the roof load. The roof is either a single pyramid or multiple pyramids. In certain Chinese mountain areas, roofs are extended or built with *matouqiang* (horse head walls) to prevent fires from airborne embers.

## 2. Methods

This research employs a descriptive, qualitative approach with a symbolic architecture framework. This method seeks to determine the meaning of an object optimally by considering symbols from various perspectives or approaches that facilitate interpretation. Interpretation will be related to background, education, cultural differences, and others.

The research method used is qualitative that involves the researcher as the main instrument, uses simultaneous data collection, and relies on inductive data analysis. The results of qualitative research focus on the philosophy of meaning rather than generalization. This method seeks to find meaning in the forms and ornaments found in the Sin Ming Hui Candra Naya Cultural Heritage.

The diversity of views on meaning will, in turn, lead to a wealth of meaning in human life, enriching the quality of aesthetics, ethics, logic, and understanding of the object in question. The research uses these approaches:

1. The approach to form,
2. An approach based on Chinese beliefs
3. A comparative approach referring to similar symbolic features in Chinese heritage architecture across Southeast Asia, particularly in Penang (Malaysia), Singapore, Bangkok (Thailand), and Manila (Philippines), to identify shared symbolic vocabularies and local adaptations.

## 3. Results and Discussions

The data was obtained using three main methods: (1) direct observation at the location, (2) in-depth interviews with local people, heritage experts, and academics, and (3) a literature review summarized in Table 1.

The Candra Naya building currently leaves only the main building or its core. Through the building style approach, there are six distinctive Chinese building styles, namely *Klenteng*, Chinese *Laseman*, Chinese Vernacular, Mosque, Javanese, and colonial [10]. Table 2 summarizes these six architectural styles and their key characteristics.

**Table 1.** Summary of Observation, Interviews, and Literature Review on Symbolic Meanings of Candra Naya's Architectural Elements

| Data Source  | Key Findings  | Symbolic Meaning / Interpretation  |
|--|---|--|
| Observation<br>(site visit, spatial layout, ornaments, courtyards, roof, moon gates, etc.)                             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Four courtyards with koi ponds, lotus, and gazebos.</li> <li>- Roof with dragon ornaments, curved 'swallow-tail' style.</li> <li>- Moon gates (4 units, diameter <math>\pm 160</math> cm).</li> <li>- Doors with symbolic carvings and colors (gold, black, red).</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Courtyard as microcosm (balance between humans &amp; universe).</li> <li>- Roof dragon = protection, prosperity, authority.</li> <li>- Moon gate = unity, family harmony, prosperity.</li> <li>- Door dimensions = status, fortune inflow.</li> </ul> |
| In-depth Interviews<br>(community members, heritage experts, academics)  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Candra Naya lost its original character due to high-rise surroundings (Aditya Fitrianto, 2022).</li> <li>- Still considered a living heritage with symbolic and historical value.</li> <li>- Community hopes for revitalization, not just façade preservation.</li> </ul>    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Symbolism is not only architectural but also cultural identity.</li> <li>- Importance of memory, ritual, and urban heritage values.</li> </ul>  |
| Literature Review (previous studies, heritage documents, comparative analysis with Penang, Singapore, Bangkok, Manila) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Chinese architectural principles: symmetry, Feng Shui, Taoist cosmology.</li> <li>- Comparative studies show hybrid symbolism across Southeast Asia.</li> <li>- UNESCO's HUL framework stresses integration of tangible &amp; intangible heritage.</li> </ul>                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Candra Naya as hybrid symbol (vernacular + colonial + bureaucratic authority).</li> <li>- Importance of embedding symbolic values into conservation.</li> </ul>   |

**Table 2.** Six distinctive Chinese building styles, namely Klenteng, Chinese Laseman, Chinese Vernacular, Mosque, Javanese, and colonial

| Style                     | Characteristics  | Symbolic Meaning                           |
|---------------------------|--|--|
| <b>Klenteng</b>           | Multi-tiered roof, red color, dragon/loan ornaments                | Religion, devotion, protection, prosperity |
| <b>Chinese Laseman</b>    | Blending of local Javanese and Chinese forms                       | Adaptation, acculturation                  |
| <b>Chinese Laseman</b>    | Courtyard, moon gates, domestic orientation                        | Balance, harmony, family unity             |
| <b>Chinese Vernacular</b> | Courtyard, moon gates, domestic orientation                        | Balance, harmony, family unity             |
| <b>Mosque (Chinese)</b>   | Dome with pagoda fusion, Arabic calligraphy                        | Syncretism of faith and culture            |
| <b>Javanese</b>           | Joglo structure with Chinese ornamentation                         | Local integration                          |
| <b>Kolonial</b>           | Dutch structure techniques combined with Chinese symbolic ornament | Power, hybrid authority                    |

Based on the above approach, Candra Naya's architectural typology falls within the "Vernacular Chinese" but is combined with colonial elements, making it unique among heritage sites in Southeast Asia.

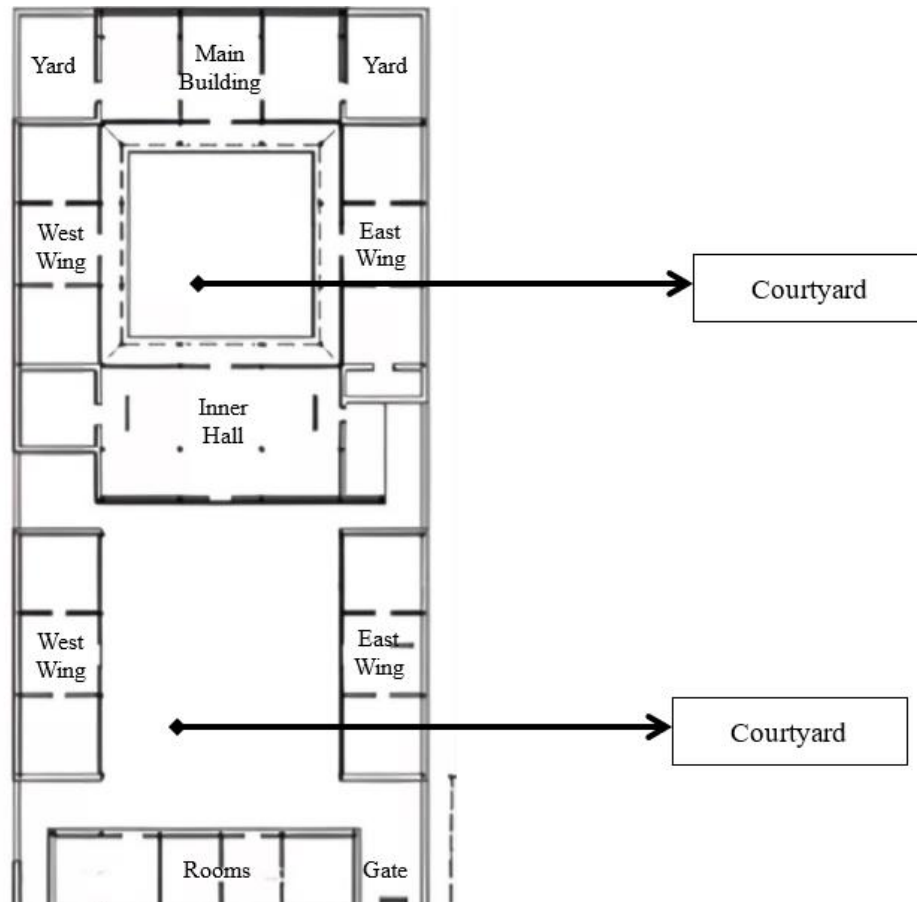
Certain structures within the Khouw family compound were removed. Various groups have opposed the demolition. Candra Naya is about 42 by 57 meters and features multiple courtyards. These courtyards serve a function like that of courtyards in traditional Balinese buildings [11] [12]. The courtyards at Candra Naya also serve as a microcosm, reflecting cosmological beliefs about the harmony between humans and the universe. Their functions as a light source, ventilation system, and social gathering area converge in a symbolic center, representing ecological adaptation and cultural significance. The traditional Chinese building floor plan can be seen in Figure 2.

The courtyard is a microspace, or in Chinese beliefs, referred to as microcosmos, which is the energy center for the surrounding [12] [13]. The Chinese believe that the courtyard is a microcosm, a replica of the larger world, referred to as the macrocosm. The courtyard is located at the center or central axis of the building.

In addition to being the energy center of the surrounding

buildings, the courtyard serves as a source of natural lighting and ventilation. The courtyard also serves as a barrier between rooms [14]. Candra Naya itself has four courtyards, the first of which is located inside the main building. The first courtyard features a shade of transparent material, allowing natural light to enter. The initial courtyard is accessible through the main entrance, with a partition inside that has doors positioned to the right and left. The creation of this partition was based on Chinese beliefs, ensuring that the sustenance and prosperity entering through the main front door do not leak or run through the back door, thereby allowing the sustenance to continue growing and remain with the residents of the building.

The second courtyard is located at the back, equipped with a pond and a gazebo as a family resting place. Inside the pond are koi fish and lotus flowers. In Chinese culture, koi fish are associated with good luck, prosperity, sustenance, and happiness. The Chinese people have long favored lotus flowers. Lotus culture originates from Buddhism, and people believe that the lotus symbolizes purity, longevity, humility, and honor [9]. Visualization of the courtyard, pond and gazebo at Candra Naya Building is referred to in Figure 3.



**Figure 2.** Traditional Chinese Building Floor Plan. (Source: Handinoto, 2008)



**Figure 3.** Gazebo with koi pond and lotus flowers in the second courtyard. (Source: Author, 2024)

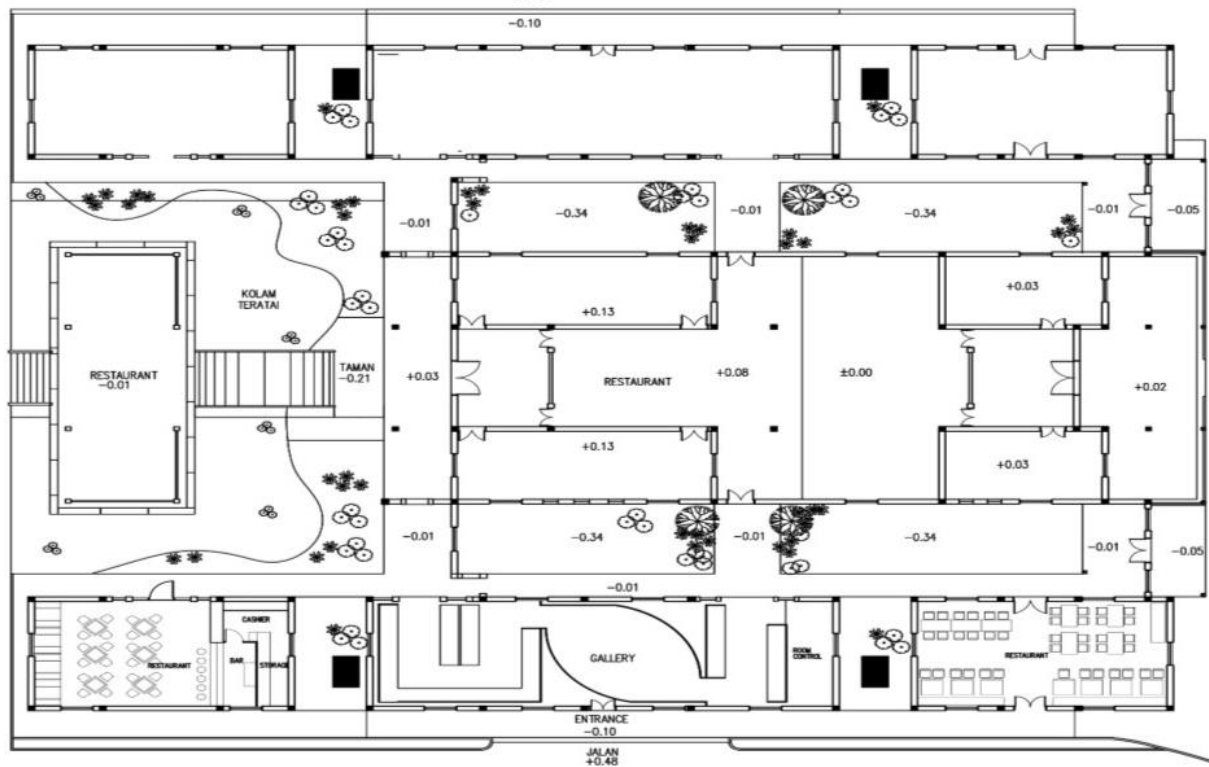
This second courtyard is the most spacious and is directly accessible from two other courtyards on the right and left sides of the building (third and fourth courtyards). The third and fourth courtyards are the separation between

the main building and the side buildings. The building's main entrance is located opposite the second and third courtyards. On one side of the building, there is a room for worship (worship room). Certain rooms located on both the right and left sides of the building are used for their intended functions. The room has a large and wide opening towards the courtyard, allowing the entire side of the building to receive maximum natural lighting and airflow. The existence of the courtyard in the central axis of the building and symmetrical shape has a meaning of balance and harmony, both for the macro nature and for users who occupy the micro nature. Visualization of the Candra Naya floor plan can be seen in Figure 4.

Candra Naya includes spaces designated for a variety of functions, organized as follows:

#### 1. Front Terrace as a transitional public-private space

The front terrace is a space without walls, which consists of four columns to support the weight of the roof and four other columns attached to the wall of the building. At the front of the terrace, there is a separation from the general area in the form of a fence with a height of about 90 cm. The length of the terrace is equal to the width of the building and is a transitional space between the public area and private (residential) facilities.



**Figure 4.** Candra Naya Floor Plan. (Source: Priyomarsonor, 2022)

## 2. Living Room and workspaces flanking the main axis.

The first room that can be found after passing through the terrace is the living room. The terrace and the living room are separated by the main door made of solid wood. Since the beginning of Candra Naya until now, the door is still firmly standing, and the supporting frame of the door is also made of wood, which has been preserved until it remains intact in appearance / shape. This room is used as a reception room by Major Khom Kim An's family.

To the right and left of the living room is a room of considerable dimensions. This room is the workspace of the major and the other side of the room functions as a special living room for the close family of the occupants. Both rooms have large windows on the part that borders directly with the courtyard on the side and back.

## 3. Center Room/Central courtyard with skylight.

In the form of a courtyard located in the center of the main building. The upper part of this room uses translucent transparent material as a skylight that functions as natural lighting for the surrounding rooms. The center room is located between the two rooms on the right and left which are also parallel to the workspace of Major Khom Kim An.

## 4. Kitchen and domestic quarters along the side wings.

Located in the side building of the main building. The kitchen is located at the front compared to the other rooms

on this side. After the kitchen, there is a room that specifically serves to receive guests' wives and children. In addition to the kitchen and living room, there are also several rooms for concubines and children. The shape of the rooms, including the kitchen, the concubine's living room and other rooms, is similar, while they are facing the courtyard and have large ventilation openings on several sides.

## 5. Family pavilion and prayer room at the rear

This is a two-story building located outside the main building. The lower floor features a veranda (gazebo) for family gatherings and close guests of the Major's family. In front of the gazebo is a prayer room. The veranda is bordered by bedrooms, including the one belonging to Major Khouw Kim An.

Chinese ornaments often feature forms that are associated with particular meanings. The shape, color and placement of the ornaments are believed to affect the aura of the occupants of the building and its surroundings [15]. The architecture of Candra Naya reflects various interpretations.

### 1. Roof (The head of the building)

One of the distinctive features of buildings with Chinese architecture is the roof. In general, the roof of the building is single, but some are stacked, as seen in the roof of the Meru building in traditional Balinese architecture.



Roof is in a curved form with dragon ornaments symbolizing protection and power. This curved swallow-tail roof also denotes. The roof of the main building features a curved design, with its lowest point situated at the center of the structure. For the side buildings, the roof features a straight line with a gable system. At the end of the building or the roof ridge, there are Chinese architectural ornaments, namely Chinese mythological ornaments interpreted as protection and repellent [16]. Visualization of the Dragon Carvings on Roof Structures is referred to in Figure 5.



**Figure 5.** Dragon Carvings on Roof Structures. (Source: Harbyantinna, 2021)

This belief is also reflected in the commercial buildings surrounding the Candra Naya building, as evidenced by the presence of Chinese mythological ornaments in the form of dragons placed at the end of the building's roof. The dragon is a symbol of power. In addition to power, the dragon is also a symbol of goodness and luck. Dragon symbols are often found on poles, a form is frequently encountered. This illustrates that Chinese people are expected not to forget their ancestral culture [17].

The curved roof shape on Chinese buildings started during the Han dynasty. Some Chinese buildings also feature roofs and shapes resembling the tail of a peacock, often associated with higher social status.

The wallet's tail shape on the Candra Naya building was a gift from the Dutch government to officials, such as majors and captains. Curved roofs are also commonly used on religious buildings, such as temples, in Chinese-style buildings in Indonesia.

## 2. Main entrance.

Like the colonial ruling buildings, Candra Naya's main building also has large doors at the front and back. Large double doors signifying status and openness to fortune, consistent with Feng Shui beliefs. The front and back doors are similar in size and shape. The height of the door reaches  $\pm 3$  meters, while the door leaves are  $\pm 1$  meter each. Each door has two door leaves so that the opening width of each front and back door is  $\pm 2$  meters. The large door at the central part of the building is based on the Chinese belief in Feng Shui, where the main door of a building indicates the status of the owner [18]. The wide and high opening of the door is also believed to bring good luck and prosperity. The visualization proportion of the height of the main door of the Candra Naya's building can be seen in Figure 6.



**Figure 6.** Main Entrance and Main Door from Front and Back Side View. (Source: Author, 2024)

## 3. Openings and moon gates

All rooms in the Candra Naya building have relatively large, direct openings. These openings face the courtyard, an open space that ensures the rooms remain bright and dry.

One of the most striking openings, rich in philosophical significance, is the window known as the "moon gate." The moon gate is one of the most distinctive features. This gate is not simply an architectural opening, but a symbolic marker of power and social standing. In traditional Chinese society, its presence usually indicated that the building belonged to a family of high cultural status. Its circular shape evokes the full moon, which is associated with family unity and happiness. Ritual use, such as a wedding procession through the gate, underscores its symbolic role in affirming prosperity and new beginnings (see Figure 7).



**Figure 7.** Moon Gate. (Source: Uieks, 2022)

The moon gate is located between the central courtyard and the side courtyard of the building. It symbolizes the social status of the building's owner, usually those belonging to the upper middle class [19]. Candra Naya has four moon gates, approximately 160 cm in diameter. The primary function of the moon gate is to serve as a visual connection between the interior and the exterior spaces, linking private and public areas. These gates serve to connect interior and exterior spaces, symbolize unity and familial harmony, and are traditionally incorporated into

ceremonial events such as weddings. The moon gate thus functions both as an architectural device and a cultural signifier of social status.

The circular shape of the moon gate evokes the image of a full moon, representing the unity and happiness of all family members. It also serves as a reminder for family members who are away from home to return.

In traditional Chinese society, the moon gate often functions as a passage to a garden. According to Chinese beliefs, the moon gate is considered a welcoming gateway that bestows good fortune on those who pass through it [20] [21]. This meaning is the foundation of its use in sacred ceremonies, such as weddings, where newlyweds walk through the moon gate together to symbolize good luck and a happy life. The curved shape at the top of the moon gate is interpreted as a crescent moon, symbolizing birth and new beginnings.

#### 4. Sky well (Tien Cjing)

Within the main building, there is a courtyard covered with a transparent roof. This transparent roof allows those inside the building to gaze at the sky above. Traditionally, courtyards are open-air spaces without roofs. To preserve this traditional meaning, transparent and light-permeable materials are used, creating a sense of connection with the sky. This transparent roof is referred to as a "sky well," or Tien Cjing in Chinese (see Figure 8).



**Figure 8.** Sky in the First Courtyard. (Source: Author, 2024)

According to Chinese beliefs, the sky well is considered a source of blessings and prosperity for the occupants while also serving as a medium for connecting with the divine. The primary functions of the sky well include facilitating air circulation, providing natural daylight, and serving as a gathering space for family members.

From the time of its construction, the courtyard in Candra Naya has been covered, likely an adaptation to Indonesia's tropical climate, which is characterized by consistent heat throughout the year and significant rainfall during the wet season. Despite being enclosed, the courtyard still receives illumination from the sun, moon, and stars, allowing the surrounding spaces to be lit without

diminishing the original concept and meaning of the sky well in the Candra Naya building.

#### 5. Walls and structure

The Candra Naya building exhibits architectural structures and construction techniques characteristic of traditional Chinese architecture. This is evident in all parts of the building, from the roof, symbolizing the "head" of the structure, to the foundation, representing its "feet." The use of distinctly Chinese architectural elements, along with vibrant colors, enhances the presence of Chinese philosophical values throughout the building [1].

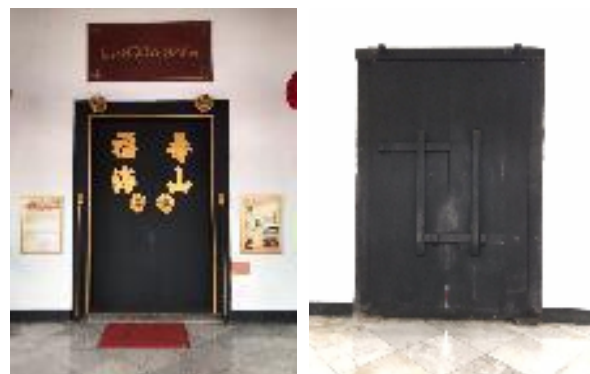
In terms of dimensions, the Candra Naya building is quite large, complemented by generously sized windows and doors. The walls typically exceed 4 meters in height and have varying thicknesses ranging from 25 to 30 cm. The thick walls not only serve as structural reinforcements for the roof but also contribute to maintaining a stable indoor thermal condition. During the day, the walls absorb external heat, which is then released at night, creating a balanced indoor temperature.

The walls are constructed using thick bricks and layered with high-quality cement mixtures. To ensure strong load-bearing walls, a red cement mixture is used, incorporating limestone. The adhesive material consists of finely crushed red bricks mixed with lime, and the walls are finished with paint. Columns are typically between 20 and 25 cm in diameter and are constructed using wood, which connects to the roof trusses. This integration creates a unified structure, resembling the cohesiveness seen in traditional Balinese architecture. The joints are strengthened with natural materials such as wooden pegs [22].

The Candra Naya building incorporates various door typologies, as described below:

##### 1. Type 1 (see Figure 9):

- a. The main entrance consists of double-leaf doors.
- b. The wooden door frames are about 20 cm thick.
- c. The enormous size of the doors symbolizes the ease of wealth entering the building.
- d. The wood is finished in black with gold accents, which are traditionally regarded as symbols of strength intended to repel negative energy.



**Figure 9.** Type 1 Door. (Source: Raudhoh, 2022)



2. **Type 2** (see Figure 10):

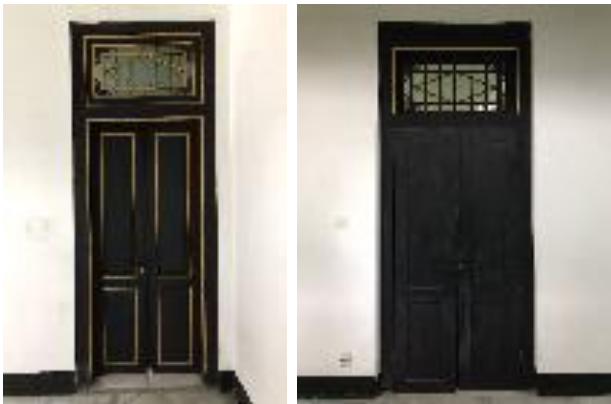
- a. Located at the rear of the main building, the door, including its frame, measures 240 cm x 345 cm.
- b. The carvings on the rear door depict Lingzhi mushroom vegetation, a motif rooted in Chinese mythology.
- c. The Lingzhi mushroom, renowned for its cancer-healing properties, symbolizes longevity and well-being for its occupants.



**Figure 10.** Type 2 Door. (Source: Raudhoh, 2022)

3. **Type 3** (see Figure 11):

- a. This swing door measures 320 cm in height, featuring lattice openings at the top.
- b. The width of the door, including the lattice, is 135 cm.
- c. Black and gold dominate the door's color scheme.



**Figure 11.** Type 3 Door. (Source: Raudhoh, 2022)

4. **Type 4** (see Figure 12):

- a. This louvered door has dimensions of 270 cm in height and 140 cm in width.
- b. The front and rear doors are painted black and gold, consistent with traditional Chinese architectural styles.



**Figure 12.** Type 4 Door. (Source: Raudhoh, 2022)

When compared with other Chinese heritage sites across Southeast Asia, Candra Naya reveals both continuity and divergence. For example, the clan houses of George Town, Penang, and shophouses in Singapore similarly employ courtyards and symbolic ornamentation, yet adapt them to different climatic and political contexts. While Penang's clan houses foreground communal identity, Candra Naya's design emphasizes a fusion of domestic, social, and bureaucratic functions shaped by Dutch colonial urbanism. This comparative lens situates Candra Naya within a regional pattern of symbolic adaptation.

Similar symbolic strategies appear in clan houses in George Town (Malaysia), Singapore shophouses, and Chinese temples in Bangkok and Manila. However, while those examples emphasize communal or religious identity, Candra Naya blends domestic, bureaucratic, and symbolic authority, reflecting its hybrid role in colonial Batavia.

From a heritage management lens, this symbolic layering presents both opportunity and challenge. As UNESCO's HUL principles suggest, safeguarding such places requires integrating physical conservation with interpretation of intangible values—memory, ritual, and identity.

The study shows that the architectural language of Candra Naya is not merely a stylistic choice but a symbolic act of identity reinforcement amidst colonial and contemporary urban transformations. The articulation of courtyards, moon gates, and mythological ornaments indicates the building's role in maintaining cultural continuity. However, this symbolic richness is now obscured by surrounding high-rise commercial developments, reflecting the tension between heritage values and neoliberal urbanization. In this light, the case of Candra Naya resonates with UNESCO's Historic Urban Landscape principles [23], emphasizing the integration of tangible and intangible heritage values in urban development planning.

## 4. Conclusions

Candra Naya demonstrates how symbolic architecture operates at the intersection of cultural continuity and urban transformation. Courtyards, moon gates, and ornaments serve as more than stylistic features; they embody meanings of harmony, prosperity, and identity in local and regional contexts.

The Sin Ming Hui Candra Naya building exhibits a typology consistent with traditional Chinese architecture. It consists of open spaces (courtyards) located inside the building, at the rear, and on both sides of the main structure. The spatial arrangement follows the principles of balance and symmetry, which are fundamental to Chinese architectural styles.

The central courtyard, situated within the building, differs from the other three in that a transparent roof covers it. This adaptation addresses Indonesia's climatic conditions, characterized by high rainfall. Despite the presence of a roof, the symbolic meaning of the "sky well" remains intact, in line with the feng shui concept applied to this building. This is demonstrated by the occupants' ability to view the sky and experience natural light through the transparent roof.

From the perspective of the building's façade, the Candra Naya building exhibits a colonial vernacular form, characterized by its distinctive roof design and overall architectural composition.

The large openings, including doors and windows, are imbued with symbolic meaning, representing the flow of wealth, prosperity, and well-being for its occupants. Functionally, the large openings also contribute to creating a comfortable indoor thermal environment, preventing dampness, and eliminating the need for artificial ventilation systems.

The thick walls and structural system, which have endured to this day, highlight the distinctive characteristics of Chinese architecture. Additionally, the use of red, black, and gold colors carries symbolic meanings, representing luck and prosperity.

This research contributes new and original knowledge in three ways:

1. By documenting and systematizing the symbolic reading of Candra Naya through triangulated data (observation, interviews, and literature).
2. By providing a comparative perspective from Southeast Asia (Penang, Singapore, Bangkok, Manila) that highlights Candra Naya's hybrid symbolic role between domestic, bureaucratic, and colonial functions.
3. By framing the building within UNESCO's approach, emphasizing that heritage preservation must go beyond facade conservation to reintegrate symbolic meaning into contemporary life.

This research adds originality by positioning Candra Naya not only as a Chinese vernacular building but as a

hybrid symbolic landmark shaped by colonial governance and contemporary urban forces. The novelty lies in connecting local architectural elements with global heritage discourse, providing a framework for urban policy and comparative heritage research in Southeast Asia.

By grounding the analysis in symbolic architecture theory (Norberg-Schulz, Jencks) and contextualizing it through UNESCO's HUL framework and Southeast Asian comparisons, this paper contributes to academic discourse on heritage symbolism and urban identity.

From a policy standpoint, the findings suggest that heritage management in Jakarta should move beyond façade preservation toward holistic interpretation of symbolic values—integrating memory, ritual, and social function into adaptive reuse strategies.

For future research, it is recommended to expand this model to other Chinese heritage buildings in Southeast Asia to explore how architectural symbolism adapts in different urban and political contexts. Cross-disciplinary approaches involving anthropology, urban design, and heritage policy would further enrich this field.

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