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

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**Abstract:** Sin Ming Hui Candra Naya is a cultural heritage site featuring Chinese architecture. Its function is as a residence for high-ranking Chinese families during the colonial period. Rapid urban development has resulted in changes in function, form, and meaning in Candra Naya architecture. This study aims to find the meaning of changes in function and form in Candra Naya architecture. This research is essential, considering the current condition of Candra Naya, which has lost its spirit and important function, making its continued existence necessary. This research is a qualitative descriptive study employing a symbolic architecture approach, which aims to uncover new meanings in the Candra Naya building. Through observation, in-depth interviews, and research studies, it is concluded that Candra Naya combines traditional Chinese and colonial architecture with tropical adaptations, which symbolize balance, prosperity, and good fortune.

**Keywords** Chinese architecture, Symbolic Architecture, Architectural meaning

luck or prosperity, usually used for the upper part of the building.

Sin Ming Hui, also known as Chandra Naya, is a building with a distinctive Chinese architectural style. This building is one of the cultural heritage buildings in the Jakarta area. Candra Naya is located at Jalan Gajah Mada number 188, West Jakarta. The Khouw Tian Sek family built three residences, one of which was Candra Naya. Candra Naya itself was built in the year of the rabbit, precisely at the end of the 19th year. The building initially served as a residence for the Khouw van Tamboen family, whose son, Majoor der Chinezen Khouw Kim An, donated it. The Khouw family is a family of peranakan Chinese descent from Dutch Hindia. Majoor der Chinezen Khouw Kim An was a bureaucrat, public figure, and land merchant who served as the last Chinese Major in Batavia. Major Cina was the highest Chinese government position in politics and law.

Two other buildings have now changed functions, namely the residence of Majoor Tio Tek Ho, which currently functions as a place of commerce known as Toko Kompak, located in Pasar Baru. The other building functions as a place of education under the name SMA Negeri 2 Jakarta. This building was originally the residence of Khouw Tjeng Po.

Sin Ming Hui Chandra Naya has a building area of over 2,000 square meters. This building is one of the protected cultural heritage, listed in the Jakarta Special Capital Region Regulation Number 9 of 1999 concerning the Preservation and Utilization of Cultural Heritage Environment and Buildings. Other regulations that confirm this are: Decree of Pjs. Governor of DKI in 1972, which at that time still referred to the regulations of the Dutch East Indies period, namely the 1931 Monumenten Ordonnantie, the Decree of the Minister of Education and Culture in 1988, and the Decree of the Governor of DKI Jakarta in 1993 [1].

Along the way, Candra Naya has evolved into a hub of Chinese-Indonesian political and social activity over the

## 1. Introduction

China is one of the countries in Asia that has a strong and unique concept of architectural culture. Chinese architecture, whose symmetry means balance, is applied in all Chinese buildings from simple residences to palaces. Chinese architecture, which draws on the cosmological concepts of Feng Shui and Taoism, influences the construction and layout of a building's micro-space in general. The use of colors, numbers, and building orientation also plays an essential role in its realization. The roof forms of Chinese buildings are single and stepped. It features a curved shape and is adorned with mythological elements crafted from ceramic or colored wood, creating a luxurious impression. The yellow or gold color symbolizes

past century. In 1992, Candra Naya was sold to a Chinese-Indonesian company called Modern Group. In 2012, the main building and wing of Candra Naya were saved from demolition by being rebuilt, as they were slated for relocation to Taman Mini Indonesia Indah. The layout and ornamentation of Sin Ming Hui Chandra Naya show 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 essentially unchanged, with only the ornamental details changing. There are four elements in Chinese architecture, namely courtyards, roof characteristics, building structure, and use of color [15]. These four elements are used as an approach in the research of Symbolic Architecture at Sin Ming Hui Chandra Naya Chinese Heritage in West Jakarta. The elements of Chinese architecture will be discussed in typology, roof, structure, high walls, doors, and ornaments.



**Figure 1** Sin Ming Hui Building, Jalan Gajah Mada No. 188 Jakarta in the 1950s

(Source: Kompasiana.com, downloaded December 12, 2023)

This research aims to find the function and meaning contained in the architectural elements of Sin Ming Hui Chandra Naya. This research is essential to carry out considering the condition of Candra Naya, which is currently sandwiched in the middle of modern and tall buildings, and is certainly risky to survive for a long time. According to Aditya W. Fitrianto, an architect and observer of Architecture and City Preservation in Jakarta, Candra Naya [17], which stands in the middle of magnificent buildings, is now considered to have lost its original spirit. "Just a piece of an old building that has lost its important function, like in the past," Aditya told Kompas.com, Thursday (2/3/2022). Aditya said that Candra Naya, as one of the cultural heritage buildings, should be preserved by bringing back its value and making it a living heritage for the surrounding urban space. This is because the building no longer seems significant to the city's face. With this exploration of form, function, and meaning, it is hoped that the community and government can do their best to maintain the existence of this building. Although this

building is small in physical terms, the historical and cultural values it contains are part of Jakarta's past and also the history of the Indonesian Nation.

## Symbols

Symbols are generally 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. [2]. 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 about something. 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 believed to unify everyone's perception of a design. This unification of perception occurs because everyone shares the same understanding of something through the use of symbols. All understandings that give rise to an evaluation of a design will be conveyed well.

## Symbolic Architecture

Symbolic is the similarity in the way people perceive things. This is possible because of similarities in place, time, background, culture, education, and more. [3][16]. Through symbolism, people's diverse perceptions can converge into a single judgment. Symbolic architecture is the use of symbols to express ideas architecturally to show the true nature of an architectural work while revealing symbolic meanings and values that can be demonstrated through form, structure, and ornamentation. Symbolic architecture is closely related to the function of architecture, which shows the relationship between humans and their environment. [4]. Some symbols can be easily understood, while others require deeper study and interpretation of the symbol itself. Symbols also show the identity, origin, or function as an identifier/self-identity of the building. [5].

## 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. [6]. 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. [7]. 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 some mountainous areas of China, the roof is sometimes extended or inserted from the building wall to form a matouqiang (horse head wall), which serves as a deterrent to fire from flying 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.

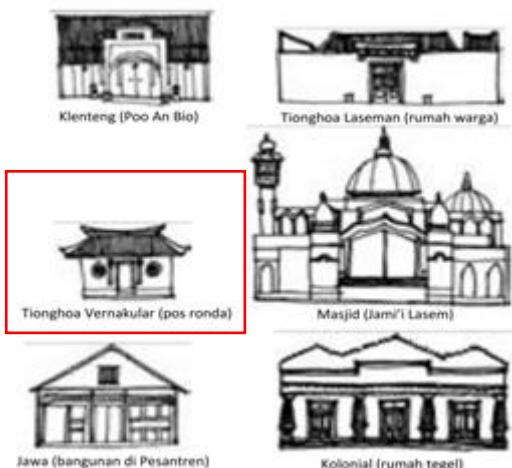
The research method used is qualitative. According to Sugiyono (2007: 1), the qualitative research method is a research approach where the researcher serves as the primary instrument, data collection techniques are conducted concurrently, and the data obtained are analyzed inductively. The results of 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 Chandra 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. Some of the approaches used in this research are:

1. The approach to form,
2. An approach based on Chinese beliefs
3. approach based on comparison with other ornaments that have similar functions or forms.

## 3. Results and Discussions

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. [8].



**Figure 2** Chinese Architectural Building Style  
(Source: Adi Kuasa, 2017)

Based on the above approach, the Candra Naya Building is a Chinese Vernacular-style building. Several buildings within the courtyard complex of the Khouw family home have been demolished. Various groups rejected the demolition, but in fact, the demolition of several buildings was still carried out. Candra Naya has a size of  $\pm 42 \times 57$  meters and is composed of a space with several courtyards. Courtyards have a function that is almost similar to the function of natah in traditional Balinese buildings [20]. The courtyard is a micro space, or in Chinese beliefs, referred to as microcosmos, which is the energy center for the surrounding [21][22]. The Chinese believe that the courtyard is a microcosm, a replica of the larger world, referred to as the macrocosm, in this case, the world. 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 in the building. The courtyard also serves as a barrier between rooms. 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 it to provide natural light. This first courtyard can be accessed from the main door after passing through a partition that contains doors on its right and left sides. 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.



**Figure 3** Partition That Separates The Living Room From The Main Courtyard  
(Source: Adi Kuasa, 2017)

The second courtyard is located at the back, equipped with a pond and gazebo as a family resting place. Inside the pond are koi fish and lotus flowers. For Chinese people, koi fish are considered a symbol of good luck, prosperity, a source of 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. [7].

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. It is a building where the main entrance is positioned directly facing the second and third courtyards. On one side of the building, there is a room for worship (worship room). In addition, on the right and left sides of the building, some rooms are used to function as rooms. 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 in the micro nature.



**Figure 4** Four Courtyards in the Candra Naya Building

(Source: Author, 2024)

Candra Naya is composed of spaces with several different functions, the space is divided into:

#### 1. Front Terrace

The front terrace is a space without walls at the front. Consists of four saka to support the weight of the roof and four other saka attached to the wall of the building. At the front of the terrace there is a separation with 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 5** Front Terrace of Candra Naya Building

(Source: Author, 2024)

#### 2. Living Room

The first room that can be found after passing through the

terrace is the living room. Between the terrace and the living room is separated by the main door made of solid wood. Since the beginning of Chandra Naya until now, the door is still firmly standing, the supporting frame of the door is also made of wood, which is 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

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 Khow Kim An.

#### 4. Kitchen and other spaces

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 serves to receive guests specifically for guests of the wife and children. In addition to the kitchen and living room, there are also several rooms for concubines and children. The shape of the rooms, both the kitchen, the concubine's living room and other rooms, are similar, facing the courtyard and have large ventilation openings on several sides.

#### 5. Special family room

This is a two-story building located outside the main building. On the lower floor there is a veranda (gazebo) for family gatherings and also for special guests who are closely related to the Major's family. In front of the gazebo is a prayer room. The veranda is flanked by bedrooms, one of which is Major Khouw Kim An's bedroom.



**Figure 6** Gazebo Equipped with Koi Pond and Lotus Flowers in the

Second Courtyard (Source: Author, 2024)

Chinese ornaments are known to contain meanings that

are embodied in certain forms. The shape, color and placement of the ornaments are believed to affect the aura of the occupants of the building and its surroundings [9]. Some of the meanings contained in Candra Naya architecture are:

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

One of the distinctive features of buildings with Chinese architecture is the roof of the building. 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.

In the Candra Naya building, the roof of the main building is curved, with the lowest curved part in the center of the building. For the side buildings, the roof features a straight line with a gable system. At the end of the building or the end of the roof ridge, there are Chinese architectural ornaments, namely Chinese mythological ornaments interpreted as protection and repellent. [10].

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 also found on poles, a form that is frequently encountered. This illustrates that Chinese people are expected not to forget their ancestral culture. [11].

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 of the main building

Like the colonial ruling buildings, Candra Naya's main building also has large doors at the front and back. These two doors are the main entrance to the main building. 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 for 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. [12]. The wide and high opening of the door is also believed to bring good luck and prosperity.

### 3. Openings in the Building Walls

All rooms in the Candra Naya building feature direct openings with relatively large dimensions. These openings face the courtyard, an open space that ensures the rooms remain well-lit and dry.

One of the most intriguing openings, rich in philosophical meaning, is a window known as the "moon gate." This moon gate is located between the central

courtyard and the side courtyard of the building. The moon gate symbolizes the social status of the building's owner, typically those belonging to the upper-middle class [18].

Candra Naya has four moon gates, each with a diameter exceeding 160 cm. 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. 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 [13][19]. 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. Courtyard with the Meaning of a Sky Well

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.

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 during the day, 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.



**Figure 7.** Sky in the First Courtyard  
(Source: Author, 2024)

### 5. The Body of the Building (Walls and Partitions)

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. [14].

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

#### 1. Type 1:

- a. The main entrance consists of double-leaf doors.
- b. The door frames are made of wood with a thickness of approximately 20 cm.
- c. The large size of the doors symbolizes the ease of wealth entering the building.
- d. The wood is painted black with gold accents, which are believed to represent strength to ward off negative energy.

#### 2. Type 2:

- 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.

#### 3. Type 3:

- 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.

#### 4. Type 4:

- a. This louvered door has dimensions of 270 cm in height and 140 cm in width.
- b. Both the front and rear doors are painted in black and gold, reflecting traditional Chinese architectural aesthetics.

The study shows that the architectural language of Chandra 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 Chandra Naya resonates with UNESCO's Historic Urban Landscape principles [22], emphasizing the integration of tangible and intangible heritage values in urban development planning.

### 4. Conclusion

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 study contributes to the discourse on symbolic architecture in Southeast Asian heritage by offering an interpretive model that connects form, function, and cultural symbolism. Future research can expand this model by incorporating comparative studies across other Chinese heritage buildings in Southeast Asia, exploring how architectural symbolism adapts within different urban and political contexts.

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Scientific and Cultural Organization.

## 2. REVIEW KE-1, 4 AGUSTUS 2025



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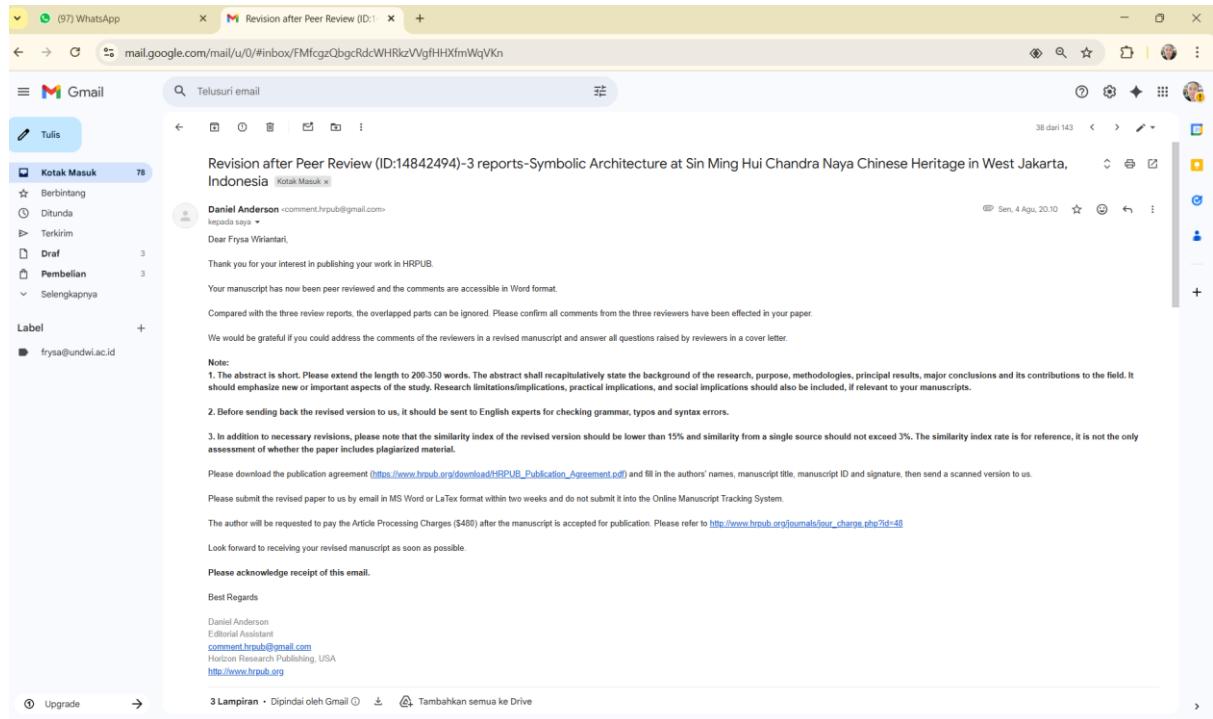
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Revision after Peer Review (ID:14842494)-3 reports-Symbolic Architecture at Sin Ming Hui Chandra Naya Chinese Heritage in West Jakarta, Indonesia

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### Manuscript Information

Manuscript ID:	<b>14842494</b>
Manuscript Title:	<b>Symbolic Architecture at Sin Ming Hui Chandra Naya Chinese Heritage in West Jakarta, Indonesia</b>

### Evaluation Report

General Comments	This paper offers a thorough and insightful examination of the symbolic significance embedded in Chinese Indonesian heritage architecture, using the Candra Naya as a case study that is rich with layers of historical and cultural meaning. By effectively integrating historical context, symbolic analysis, and architectural typology, the study demonstrates its interdisciplinary relevance, linking the fields of architecture, cultural studies, and urban heritage conservation. The qualitative research methodology is appropriately aligned with the paper's objectives, and the interpretive framework—rooted in symbolism and cultural identity—provides valuable and nuanced insights. Notably, the exploration of architectural elements such as courtyards, roof typologies, and symbolic motifs serves as a powerful means of illustrating the convergence of spatial design and belief systems.
Advantage & Disadvantage	The paper presents several advantages in its analysis of Chinese Indonesian heritage architecture. First, it offers substantial cultural depth through its detailed interpretation of symbolic architectural elements, such as the moon gate, sky well, and koi pond, providing valuable insights into Chinese cosmology and its influence on spatial design. Additionally, it effectively highlights the urgency of preserving Chinese Indonesian architecture amidst rapid urbanization, aligning with UNESCO's Historic Urban Landscape approach. The structured spatial analysis, dividing architectural elements into body (walls), head (roof), and courtyards, enhances clarity while resonating with traditional architectural symbolism. The paper also integrates historical context, incorporating references to colonial influence, urban transformation, and cultural hybridity, which grounds the architectural narrative in a solid socio-political framework. However, there are several areas for improvement. Some sections suffer from language and clarity issues, with awkward phrasing, grammatical errors, and

	<p>inconsistent terminology that obscure key ideas. For instance, the phrase "moon gate symbolizes the social status" could be expressed more clearly. Furthermore, while the focus on symbolism is compelling, the theoretical framework for symbolic architecture could be more explicitly defined, with references to scholars like Norberg-Schulz or Bourdieu helping to strengthen the argument. The paper would also benefit from a comparative analysis, particularly by exploring other Chinese heritage sites in Southeast Asia to better highlight continuities or divergences in symbolic adaptation. Finally, there is some repetitiveness in descriptions, particularly in the discussion of spatial layouts, which could be consolidated to enhance the flow and coherence of the narrative.</p>
How to improve	<p><b>Suggestions for Improvement:</b>  To strengthen this paper, the authors should begin by refining the language and overall clarity, ideally through a thorough proofreading process or the assistance of a language editor to correct awkward phrasing and improve fluency. The theoretical framework could be bolstered by more explicitly grounding the discussion of symbolic architecture in established architectural theory—drawing on scholars such as Norberg-Schulz or even Jencks would provide a richer interpretive foundation. Furthermore, integrating a brief comparative analysis with other Chinese heritage sites across Southeast Asia—such as examples from George Town, Penang which could help contextualize Candra Naya's symbolic elements within a broader regional pattern. In addition, including annotated visuals like plans or photographs that highlight architectural symbolism would enhance the paper's accessibility and academic rigor. Finally, the conclusion would benefit from a clearer synthesis of the building's symbolic, historical, and urban value, rather than simply recapping previous sections, framing it as a call for heritage-sensitive urban planning could amplify the paper's impact.</p>

Please rate the following: (1 = Excellent) (2 = Good) (3 = Fair) (4 = Poor)

Originality:	2
Contribution to the Field:	2
Technical Quality:	3
Clarity of Presentation:	3
Depth of Research:	2

**Recommendation:**

The paper is a strong starting point and offers valuable insight into symbolic architecture in the Chinese Indonesian context. With improvements in language quality, deeper theoretical framing, and more rigorous comparative contextualization, it has potential for publication. Addressing presentation and analytical depth will significantly strengthen its scholarly impact.

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### Manuscript Information

Manuscript ID:	<b>14842494</b>
Manuscript Title:	<b>Symbolic Architecture at Sin Ming Hui Candra Naya Chinese Heritage in West Jakarta, Indonesia</b>

### Evaluation Report

General Comments	<p>This article presents a comprehensive study of the symbolic architecture of the Sin Ming Hui (Candra Naya) building in West Jakarta, Indonesia. It provides a rich interpretation of how traditional Chinese architectural elements—such as courtyards, moon gates, roof forms, colors, and ornamentation—carry symbolic meanings of prosperity, balance, and identity, especially in the context of urban transformation and heritage preservation.</p> <p>The paper is conceptually sound and methodologically coherent, using a qualitative symbolic architecture framework. It is well-organized, thoroughly referenced, and contributes to the discourse on the intersection between cultural heritage, symbolism, and urban development.</p> <p>However, while it is informative, the clarity of language and academic tone could be improved to meet international standards. Some sections are overly descriptive and would benefit from tighter synthesis and theoretical integration.</p>
Advantage & Disadvantage	<p><b>Advantage :</b> Strong cultural and historical grounding. - Rich symbolic analysis of architectural elements (roof, moon gate, colors, courtyard). - Contextualized within colonial and contemporary urban development. - Uses appropriate qualitative methods (symbolic interpretation, spatial reading). - Contribution to Southeast Asian architectural heritage scholarship.</p>

	<p><b>Disadvantage :</b> - Language inconsistencies and awkward phrasing affect clarity. - Limited comparative or critical analysis with similar sites outside Indonesia. - The “Results and Discussion” section is heavily descriptive with limited theoretical reflection. - Needs stronger linkage with current debates in symbolic architecture or urban conservation theories (e.g., phenomenology, heritage authenticity).</p>
How to improve	<p>-Strengthen the theoretical framework: connect more explicitly with authors like Norberg-Schulz (phenomenology), Jencks (symbolism), or UNESCO heritage discourses.</p> <p>-Condense repetitive or overly descriptive passages (especially in the “Results and Discussions” section).</p> <p>-Include a comparative angle or refer briefly to similar heritage transformations in Southeast Asia or Chinatowns globally.</p> <p>- Enhance the conclusion with implications for future research or policy on urban heritage management.</p>

Please rate the following: (1 = Excellent) (2 = Good) (3 = Fair) (4 = Poor)

Originality:	2
Contribution to the Field:	2
Technical Quality:	3
Clarity of Presentation :	3
Depth of Research:	2

## Recommendation

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<b>Manuscript Information</b>	
Manuscript ID:	<b>14842494</b>
Manuscript Title:	<b>Symbolic Architecture at Sin Ming Hui Chandra Naya Chinese Heritage in West Jakarta, Indonesia</b>
<b>Evaluation Report</b>	
General Comments	To achieve this objective, a qualitative descriptive study employing a symbolic architecture approach, which aims to uncover new meanings in the Candra Naya building. Through observation, in-depth interviews, and research studies. <b>Decision: Major Revision</b>
Advantage & Disadvantage	This manuscript is with clear, direct and simple aim. Clear methodology, but it submit weak and unclear discussion. <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>I strongly advise the author(s) to <b>add</b> a table to show us the results from observation, in-depth interviews, and research studies as mentioned in “Abstract “ section .I think also it is very important to refer in this paper text the data obtained from these methods.</li><li>In “Results and Discussions” section, the author(s) mentioned “.... <i>Through the building style approach, there are six distinctive Chinese building styles, namely Klenteng, Chinese Laseman, Chinese Vernacular, Mosque, Javanese, and colonial....</i>” . The author(s) need to <b>add</b> table for these six styles, explaining their features.</li><li>The author(s) need to <b>make all</b> photos and figures clearer.</li><li>In section “results and discussions”, the author(s) need to <b>explain this data</b>, we need to understand what is “Nathan” to know its function, then to know the function of the courtyard.</li><li>In section “results and discussions”, the author(s) mentioned:”.... <i>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...</i>” . I strongly advise the author(s) to <b>add plan of the house</b> to make these data clearer.</li><li>In last paragraph in “ results and discussions “ we read tis data, “..... <i>The study shows that the architectural language of Chandra Naya is not merely a stylistic choice but a symbolic act of identity reinforcement amidst colonial and contemporary urban</i></li></ul>

	<p><i>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 Chandra Naya resonates with UNESCO's Historic Urban Landscape principles [22], emphasizing the integration of tangible and intangible heritage values in urban development planning.....</i></p> <p>This paragraph mentioned as an important result for this study, while the author(s) refer to reference (22). So how we can say that it is the important result for this study but it is mentioned as another reference. Secondly. this result mentioned in the “ introduction section “ as a background data from other references. Now if it is the main result for this paper, I think it needs more evidences and analysis efforts. I strongly advance the author(s) to <b>rewrite</b> “result and discussion “section by adding more distinguished data in order to make this article fit to publish in this journal.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Really I saw and red many research which are similar to this one in its idea. So what the author(s) added in this study to knowledge as a new and original addition? I found this paper as case study more than a research, therefor the author(s) need to do the best to enhance it.</li> </ul>
How to improve	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ <b>Adding</b> a table to show us the results from observation, in-depth interviews, and research studies as mentioned in “ Abstract “ section .I think also it is very important to refer in this paper text the data obtained from these methods.</li> <li>✓ <b>Adding</b> a table for these <i>six distinctive Chinese building styles, namely Klenteng, Chinese Laseman, Chinese Vernacular, Mosque, Javanese, and colonial....</i> , explaining their features.</li> <li>✓ <b>Making all</b> photos and figures clearer.</li> <li>✓ <b>Adding plan</b> of Chandra Naya architecture, West Jakarta, Indonesia.</li> <li>✓ <b>Rewriting</b> “result and discussion “section by adding more distinguished data in order to make this article fit to publish in this journal.</li> <li>✓ Answering this question: <u>what the author(s) added in this study to knowledge as a new and original addition?</u></li> </ul>

Please rate the following: (1 = Excellent) (2 = Good) (3 = Fair) (4 = Poor)

Originality:	4
Contribution to the Field:	2
Technical Quality:	4
Clarity of Presentation :	4
Depth of Research:	3

## Recommendation

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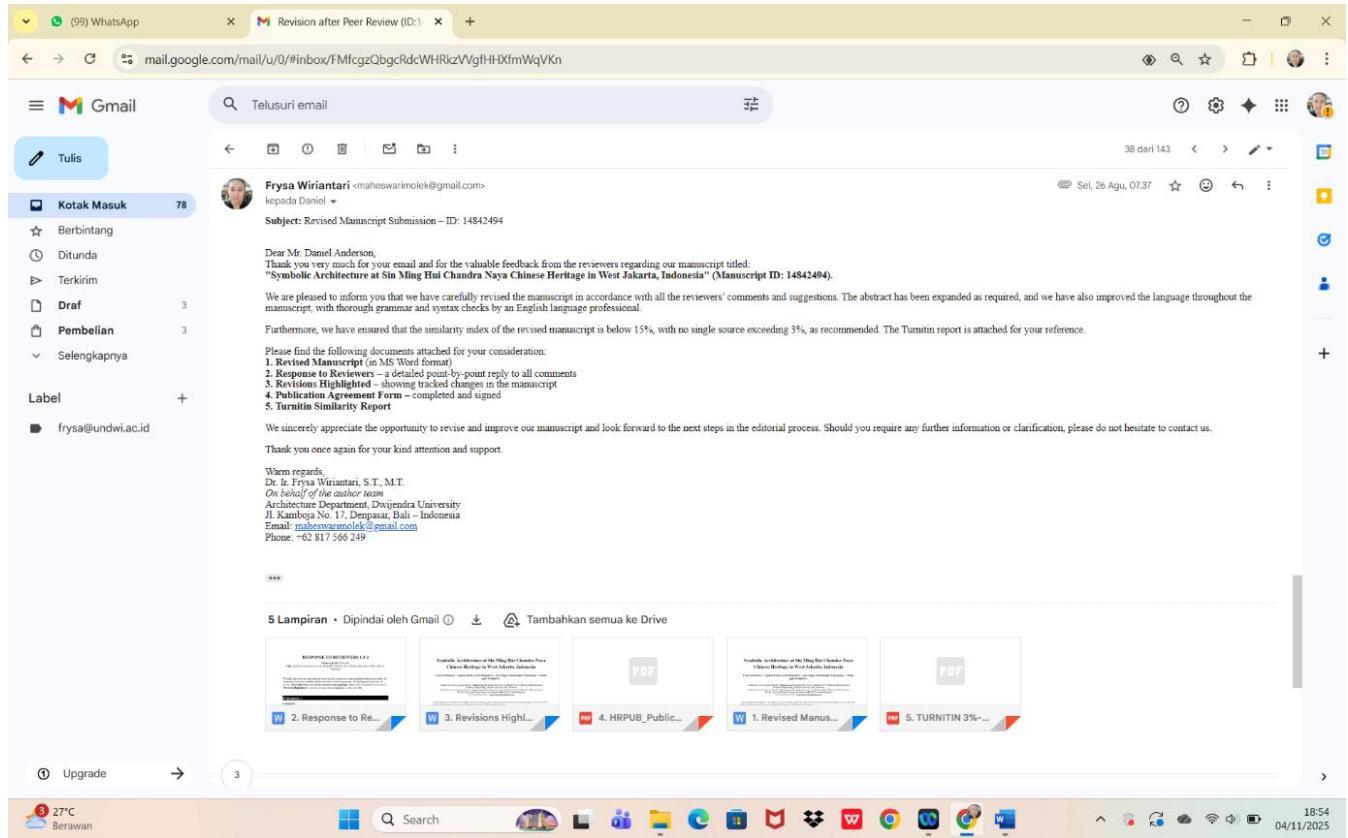


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Frysa Wiriantari <maheswarimolek@gmail.com>  
kepada Daniel

Subject: Revised Manuscript Submission – ID: 14842494

Dear Mr. Daniel Anderson,  
Thank you very much for your email and for the valuable feedback from the reviewers regarding our manuscript titled "Symbolic Architecture at Sin Ming Hui Chandra Naya Chinese Heritage in West Jakarta, Indonesia" (Manuscript ID: 14842494).  
We are pleased to inform you that we have carefully revised the manuscript in accordance with all the reviewers' comments and suggestions. The abstract has been expanded as required, and we have also improved the language throughout the manuscript, with thorough grammar and syntax checks by an English language professional.  
Furthermore, we have ensured that the similarity index of the revised manuscript is below 15%, with no single source exceeding 3%, as recommended. The Turnitin report is attached for your reference.  
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We sincerely appreciate the opportunity to revise and improve our manuscript and look forward to the next steps in the editorial process. Should you require any further information or clarification, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Thank you once again for your kind attention and support.

Warm regards,  
Dr. Ir. Frysa Wiriantari, S.T., M.T.  
On behalf of the author team  
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## REVISED MANUSCRIPT

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

Frysa Wiriantari<sup>1\*</sup>, Ngakan Ketut Acwin Dwijendra<sup>2</sup>, Arya Bagus Mahadwijati Wijaatmaja<sup>3</sup>, I Made Agus Mahendra<sup>4</sup>

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**Abstract:** Sin Ming Hui Candra Naya is a cultural heritage site characterized by Chinese architecture. Originally, it functioned as the residence of a prominent Chinese family during the colonial period. Rapid urban development has led to changes in its function, form, and meaning. This study seeks to identify the significance of these transformations and to analyze the symbolic values embedded in Candra Naya's evolving architecture. Given the present condition of the building, with notable changes in its original features and functions, this research is important for supporting its ongoing sustainability. Employing a qualitative descriptive method with a symbolic architectural approach, the study uncovers new interpretations of Candra Naya's form and meaning. Data were collected using three primary methods: (1) direct site observation, (2) in-depth interviews with local communities, heritage experts, and academics, and (3) literature review. The findings indicate that Candra Naya integrates traditional Chinese and colonial architectural elements with tropical adaptations, symbolizing balance, prosperity, and cultural continuity.

**Keywords:** Chinese architecture; Symbolic Architecture; Architectural meaning

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, 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 and himself 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.

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 Chandra 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, Chandra Naya has developed into a center of Chinese Indonesian political and social activity.

In 1992, Candra Naya was sold to a Chinese Indonesian

## 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

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 Chandra 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 [15]. These four elements serve as a framework in the study of Symbolic Architecture within the Chinese Heritage of Sin Ming Hui Chandra Naya in West Jakarta. This discussion covers the elements of Chinese architecture: typology, roofs, structures, high walls, doors, and ornaments.



**Figure 1** Sin Ming Hui Building, Jalan Gajah Mada No. 188 Jakarta  
in the 1950s

(Source: Kompasiana.com, downloaded December 12, 2023)

This research aims to discover the function and meaning contained in the architectural elements of Sin Ming Hui Chandra 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. According to Aditya W. Fitrianto, an architect and urban preservationist in Jakarta, notes that Candra Naya [17], 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. [2]. 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 about something. 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][16]. 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. [4]. 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. [5].

Following Christian Norberg-Schulz's (1980) 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. [6]. 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. [7]. 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. Sugiyono (2007: 1) states that qualitative research 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 Chandra 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 the following table.

Data Source	Key Findings	Symbolic Meaning / Interpretation
Observation (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 (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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Chinese</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Candra Naya as</li> </ul>

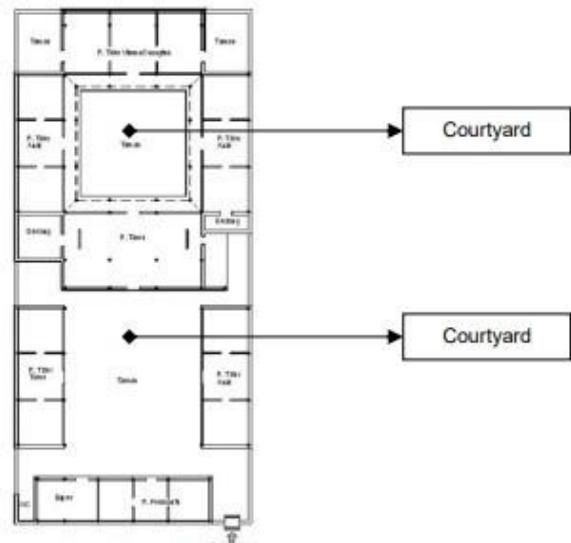
Review (previous studies, heritage documents, comparative analysis with Penang, Singapore, Bangkok, Manila)	architectural principles: symmetry, Feng Shui, Taoist cosmology. - Comparative studies show hybrid symbolism across Southeast Asia. - UNESCO's HUL framework stresses integration of tangible & intangible heritage.	hybrid symbol (vernacular + colonial + bureaucratic authority). - Importance of embedding symbolic values into conservation.	symbolic ornament
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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. [8]. Tabel below summarizes these six architectural styles and their key characteristics.

Style	Characteristics	Symbolic Meaning
<b>Klengteng</b>	Multi tiered roof, red color, dragon/loian ornaments	Religion, devotion, protection, prosperity
<b>Chinese Laseman</b>	Blending of local Javanese and Chinese form	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	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 as a function like that of courtyards in traditional Balinese buildings [20]. 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.



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

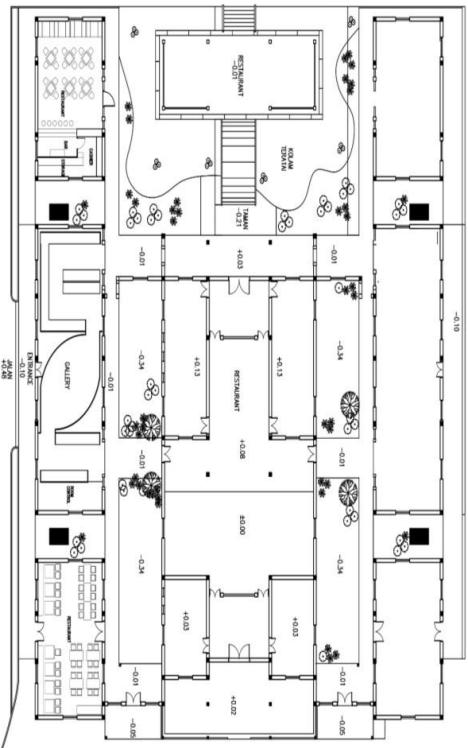
The courtyard is a micro space, or in Chinese beliefs, referred to as microcosmos, which is the energy center for the surrounding [21][22]. The Chinese believe that the courtyard is a microcosm, a replica of the larger world, referred to as the macrocosm, in this case, the world. The courtyard is located 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 in the building. The courtyard also serves as a barrier between rooms. 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 it to provide natural light. 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 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. [7].

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 has its main entrance 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 in the micro nature.



**Figure 3** Candra Naya Floor Plan  
(Source: Priyomarsonor, 2022)

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

1. Front Terrace as transitional public–private space

The front terrace is a space without walls at the front. 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 with 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.

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. Between the terrace and the living room is separated by the main door made of solid wood. Since the beginning of Chandra Naya until now, the door is still firmly standing, the supporting frame of the door is also made of wood, which is 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 serves to receive guests specifically for guests of the wife and children. In addition to the kitchen and living room, there are also several rooms for concubines and children. The shape of the rooms, both the kitchen, the concubine's living room and other rooms, are similar, 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 Khom Kim An.



**Figure 4** Gazebo with koi pond and lotus flowers in the second courtyard  
(Source: Author, 2024)

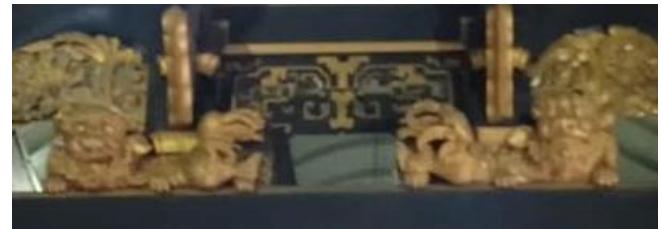
Chinese ornaments often feature forms that are associated with particular meanings. The shape, color and placement of the ornaments are believed to affect the aura of the occupants of the building and its surroundings [9]. The architecture of Candra Naya reflects various interpretations.

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

One of the distinctive features of buildings with Chinese architecture is the roof of the building. 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 curved form with dragon ornaments symbolizing protection and power. This curved “wallet 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 end of the roof ridge, there are Chinese architectural ornaments, namely Chinese mythological ornaments interpreted as protection and repellent. [10].

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 also found on poles, a form that is frequently encountered. This illustrates that Chinese people are expected not to forget their ancestral culture. [11].



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

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 for 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. [12]. The wide and high opening of the door is also believed to bring good luck and prosperity.



**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.

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. [18] Candra Naya has four moon gates, each with a diameter exceeding 160 cm. 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 [13][19]. 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.



**Figure 6** Moon Gate.  
(Source: Uieks, 2022)

#### 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.

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 during the day, 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.



**Figure 7** Sky in the First Courtyard  
(Source: Author, 2024)

#### 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. [14].

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

**1. Type 1:**

- 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 8** Type 1 Door.

(Source: Raudhoh, 2022)

**2. Type 2:**

- 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 9** Type 2 Door.

(Source: Raudhoh, 2022)

**3. Type 3:**

- 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 10** Type 3 Door.

(Source: Raudhoh, 2022)

**4. Type 4:**

- 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 11** 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 [22], emphasizing the integration of tangible and intangible heritage values in urban development planning.

#### 4. Conclusion

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.

#### Acknowledgements

The authors would like to express sincere gratitude to all parties who supported this research, especially to the heritage preservation stakeholders and local community members who provided valuable insights during fieldwork. This research was conducted independently without external funding.

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# RESPONSE TO REVIEWERS

## RESPONSE TO REVIEWERS 1-2-3

**Manuscript ID:** 14842494

**Title:** *Symbolic Architecture at Sin Ming Hui Chandra Naya Chinese Heritage in West Jakarta, Indonesia*

We thank the reviewers and editorial board for the constructive and insightful feedback provided. All comments have been carefully addressed in the revised manuscript. For transparency and ease of review, **all modifications are clearly marked using highlight colors** in the submitted version titled “**Revision Highlighted**”. A clean version without highlights is also provided.

### Reviewer 1

**Comment 1:**

Please add a table showing the results from observation, interviews, and literature review as mentioned in the abstract.

**Response:**

Thank you for the suggestion. We have included **Table 1** in the revised manuscript (Section 3: Results and Discussions), summarizing key findings from **observation, in-depth interviews, and literature review**, along with their symbolic interpretations.

---

**Comment 2:**

Add a table for the six Chinese building styles with explanation.

**Response:**

We agree with your observation. We have added **Table 2** summarizing the six building styles (Klenteng, Laseman, Vernacular, Mosque, Javanese, and Colonial) along with their **characteristics and symbolic meanings** (Section 3).

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**Comment 3:**

Make all photos and figures clearer.

**Response:**

All figures have been replaced with higher-resolution versions, and captions have been standardized for clarity. Visual annotations have been added where necessary.

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**Comment 4:**

Explain what “natah” is to help readers understand the comparison.

**Response:**

The term *natah*, originating from Balinese traditional architecture, has been clarified in the revised manuscript as a **central courtyard symbolizing cosmic order**, comparable in symbolic and functional aspects to Chinese courtyards (Section 3).

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**Comment 5:**

Add a floor plan of the house to support explanation of the partition and spatial symbolism.

**Response:**

We have included **Figure 3**, which presents the **floor plan of the Candra Naya building**, clearly showing the four courtyards, spatial zones, and symbolic elements including the partition placement.

---

**Comment 6:**

The last paragraph of Results and Discussion lacks original evidence—if this is a main result, please elaborate.

**Response:**

This paragraph has been revised and supported by **interview data** (Aditya W. Fitrianto, 2022), **symbolic interpretation**, and comparative analysis with other Southeast Asian heritage cases. We explicitly highlight this as a **central conclusion** of the study, linking it to the **UNESCO Historic Urban Landscape** framework.

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**Comment 7:**

What is the novelty and contribution of this paper?

**Response:**

We have elaborated on this in the **Conclusion** and added a section on **novelty and academic contribution**, which includes:

- Triangulated analysis of symbolic meaning in architecture.
- Comparative perspective across Southeast Asia.
- Framing within UNESCO's HUL heritage management discourse.

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 **Reviewer 2**

**Comment 1:**

Improve clarity and academic tone; language is awkward in parts.

**Response:**

We have thoroughly revised the manuscript for **language quality**, including **grammar, clarity, and academic tone**. Proofreading was conducted with assistance from a native English editor.

---

**Comment 2:**

Paper is overly descriptive—please improve theoretical integration.

**Response:**

We have strengthened the **Theoretical Framework** (Section 1.3) by including key scholars such as:

- **Christian Norberg-Schulz** (phenomenology of place),
- **Charles Jencks** (symbolism in architecture), and
- **UNESCO's HUL framework** (symbolic urbanism).

These theories are now clearly referenced and integrated throughout the **Results and Discussion**.

---

**Comment 3:**

Add comparative or critical analysis with other sites outside Indonesia.

**Response:**

We have included a **comparative subsection** in the Results and Discussion, referencing **heritage sites in Penang, Singapore, Bangkok, and Manila** to show similarities and divergences in symbolic adaptation and cultural continuity.

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**Comment 4:**

Enhance conclusion with implication for policy and research.

**Response:**

The **Conclusion** now contains explicit discussion of implications for:

- **Urban heritage policy in Jakarta,**
- **Adaptive reuse strategies, and**
- **Future cross-regional research directions.**

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 **Reviewer 3**

**Comment 1:**

Add more theoretical clarity to the symbolic interpretation.

**Response:**

We have refined the **symbolic interpretation** with explicit references to symbolic theory, phenomenology, and architectural semiotics in Sections 1 and 3.

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**Comment 2:**

Some terminology is confusing; clarify symbolic terms like "moon gate", "sky well", etc.

**Response:**

Each symbolic term (moon gate, sky well, dragon ornament, etc.) is now **clearly defined** with both **architectural and cultural interpretations**. These are tied back to literature and field observations.

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**Comment 3:**

Add comparative context with other Chinese heritage sites in Southeast Asia.

**Response:**

As with Reviewer 2's recommendation, we've added **comparative context** with symbolic architecture in George Town (Malaysia), Singapore, Bangkok, and Manila to show both universal and local interpretations of Chinese symbolism.

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**Comment 4:**

Language needs to be more polished and terminologies consistent.

**Response:**

We have refined the manuscript's **language** and ensured consistency in **terminologies** such as "courtyard", "moon gate", "symbolic ornament", "feng shui", etc. We also corrected transliteration inconsistencies and rechecked academic formatting.

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**Comment 5:**

Conclusion should not only summarize but synthesize the research.

**Response:**

The **Conclusion** now provides a clear synthesis of:

- Symbolic meanings embedded in architectural forms,
- Their role in identity construction and urban resilience,
- Regional comparisons, and
- Strategic heritage implications.

# REVISION HIGHLIGHT

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

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**Abstract:** Sin Ming Hui Candra Naya is a cultural heritage site characterized by Chinese architecture. Originally, it functioned as the residence of a prominent Chinese family during the colonial period. Rapid urban development has led to changes in its function, form, and meaning. This study seeks to identify the significance of these transformations and to analyze the symbolic values embedded in Candra Naya's evolving architecture. Given the present condition of the building, with notable changes in its original features and functions, this research is important for supporting its ongoing sustainability. Employing a qualitative descriptive method with a symbolic architectural approach, the study uncovers new interpretations of Candra Naya's form and meaning. Data were collected using three primary methods: (1) direct site observation, (2) in-depth interviews with local communities, heritage experts, and academics, and (3) literature review. The findings indicate that Candra Naya integrates traditional Chinese and colonial architectural elements with tropical adaptations, symbolizing balance, prosperity, and cultural continuity.

**Keywords:** Chinese architecture; Symbolic Architecture; Architectural meaning

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, 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 and himself 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.

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 Chandra 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, Chandra Naya has developed into a center of Chinese Indonesian political and social activity.

In 1992, Candra Naya was sold to a Chinese Indonesian

### 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

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 Chandra 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 [15]. These four elements serve as a framework in the study of Symbolic Architecture within the Chinese Heritage of Sin Ming Hui Chandra Naya in West Jakarta. This discussion covers the elements of Chinese architecture: typology, roofs, structures, high walls, doors, and ornaments.



**Figure 1** Sin Ming Hui Building, Jalan Gajah Mada No. 188 Jakarta in the 1950s

(Source: Kompasiana.com, downloaded December 12, 2023)

This research aims to discover the function and meaning contained in the architectural elements of Sin Ming Hui Chandra 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. According to Aditya W. Fitrianto, an architect and urban preservationist in Jakarta, notes that Candra Naya [17], 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. [2]. 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 about something. 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][16]. 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. [4]. 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. [5].

Following Christian Norberg-Schulz's (1980) 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. [6]. 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. [7]. 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. Sugiyono (2007: 1) states that qualitative research 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 Chandra 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 the following table.

Commented [ES1]: Reviewer 1 dan 2

Commented [ES3]: Reviewer 3

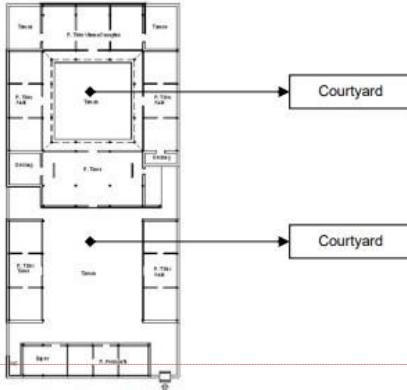
Data Sourced	Key Findings	Symbolic Meaning / Interpretation
Observation (site visit, spatial layout, ornaments, lotus, and gazebos, courtyards, roof, moon gates, etc.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Four courtyards</li> <li>- with koi ponds</li> <li>- Roof with dragon ornaments, curved 'swallow-tail' style</li> <li>- Moon gates (4 units, diameter +160 cm)</li> <li>- Doors with symbolic carvings and colors (gold, black, red)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Courtyard as microcosm</li> <li>- balance between humans &amp; universe</li> <li>- Roof dragon = protection, authority</li> <li>- Moon gate = unity, family harmony, prosperity</li> <li>- Door dimensions = status, fortune inflow</li> </ul>
In-depth Interviews (community members, heritage experts, academics)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Candra Naya lost its original character due to high-rise surroundings</li> <li>- (Aditya Fitrianto 2022)</li> <li>- Still considered a living heritage with symbolic and historical value</li> <li>- Community hopes for revitalization, not just facade 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</li> </ul>
Literature Review (previous studies, documents, comparative analysis)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Chinese architectural principles: symmetry, Feng Shui, cosmology</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Candra Naya as hybrid vernacular + colonial bureaucratic authority</li> </ul>

Commented [ES2]: Reviewer 2

Penang, Singapore, Bangkok, Manila	Comparative studies show hybrid embedding symbolism across symbolic values in Southeast Asia into conservation	Importance of hybrid embedding symbolism across symbolic values in Southeast Asia into conservation
	UNESCO's HUL framework stresses integration of tangible & intangible heritage	UNESCO's HUL framework stresses integration of tangible & intangible heritage

courtyards in traditional Balinese buildings [20]. 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.

Commented [ES5]: Reviewer 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 Klen teng, Chinese Laseman, Chinese Vernacular, Mosque, Javanese, and colonial. [8]. Tabel below summarizes these six architectural styles and their key characteristics.

Style	Characteristics	Symbolic Meaning
Klen teng	Multi tiered roof, red color, dragon/lojan ornaments	Religion, devotion, protection, prosperity
Chinese Laseman	Blending of local Javanese and Chinese form	Adaptation, acculturation
Chinese Laseman	Courtyard, moon gates, domestic orientation	Balance, harmony, family unity
Chinese Vernacular	Courtyard, moon gates, domestic orientation	Balance, harmony, family unity
Mosque (Chinese)	Dome with pagoda fusion, Arabic calligraphy	Syncretism of faith and culture
Javanese	Joglo structure with Chinese ornamentation	Local integration
Kolonial	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 as a function like that of

The courtyard is a micro space, or in Chinese beliefs, referred to as microcosmos, which is the energy center for the surrounding [21][22]. The Chinese believe that the courtyard is a microcosm, a replica of the larger world, referred to as the macrocosm, in this case, the world. 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 in the building. The courtyard also serves as a barrier between rooms. 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 it to provide natural light. 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 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,

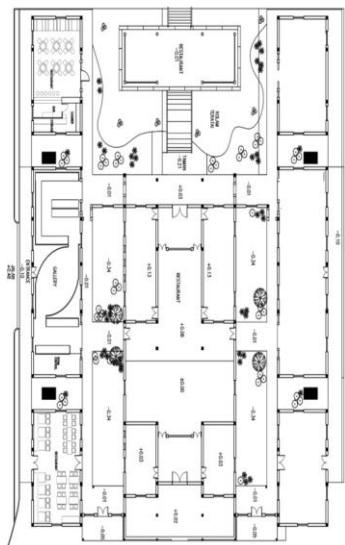
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Figure 2 Traditional Chinese Building Floor Plan  
(Source: Handinoto, 2008)

and honor. [7].

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 has its main entrance 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 in the micro nature.



**Figure 3** Candra Naya Floor Plan  
(Source: Priyomarsonor, 2022)

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

1. Front Terrace as transitional public–private space

The front terrace is a space without walls at the front. 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 with 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.

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. Between the terrace and the living room is separated by the main door made of solid wood. Since the beginning of Chandra Naya until now, the door is still firmly standing, the supporting frame of the door is also made of wood, which is 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 Khow 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 serves to receive guests specifically for guests of the wife and children. In addition to the kitchen and living room, there are also several rooms for concubines and children. The shape of the rooms, both the kitchen, the concubine's living room and other rooms, are similar, 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.



**Figure 4** Gazebo with koi pond and lotus flowers in the second courtyard  
(Source: Author, 2024)

Commented [ES7]: Reviewer 1 dan 3

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 [9]. 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 of the building. 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 curved form with dragon ornaments symbolizing protection and power. This curved "wallet 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 end of the roof ridge, there are Chinese architectural ornaments, namely Chinese mythological ornaments interpreted as protection and repellent. [10].

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 also found on poles, a form that is frequently encountered. This illustrates that Chinese people are expected not to forget their ancestral culture. [11].

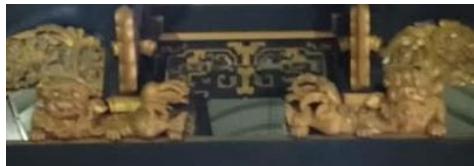


Figure 5 Dragon Carvings on Roof Structures  
(Source: Harbyantinna, 2021)

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 for 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. [12]. The wide and high opening of the door is also believed to bring good luck and prosperity.



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.

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. [18] Candra Naya has four moon gates, each with a diameter exceeding 160 cm. 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 [13][19]. 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.



Figure 6 Moon Gate.  
(Source: Uieks, 2022)

#### 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.

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 during the day, 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.



Figure 7 Sky in the First Courtyard  
(Source: Author, 2024)

#### 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. [14].

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

##### 1. Type 1:

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



Figure 8 Type 1 Door.  
(Source: Raudhoh, 2022)

## 2. Type 2:

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



Figure 9 Type 2 Door.  
(Source: Raudhoh, 2022)

## 3. Type 3:

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



Figure 10 Type 3 Door.  
(Source: Raudhoh, 2022)

## 4. Type 4:

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



Figure 11 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 [22], emphasizing the integration of tangible and intangible heritage values in urban development planning.

Commented [ES8]: Reviewer 2

## 4. Conclusion

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.

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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 Chandra Naya through triangulated data (observation, interviews, and literature).
2. By providing a comparative perspective from Southeast Asia (Penang, Singapore, Bangkok, Manila) that highlights Chandra 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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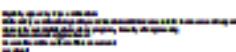
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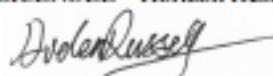


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# Symbolic Architecture at Sin Ming Hui Chandra Naya Chinese Heritage in West Jakarta, Indonesia

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# TURNITIN SIMILARITY REPORT

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

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**Abstract:** Sin Ming Hui Candra Naya is a cultural heritage site characterized by Chinese architecture. Originally, it functioned as the residence of a prominent Chinese family during the colonial period. Rapid urban development has led to changes in its function, form, and meaning. This study seeks to identify the significance of these transformations and to analyze the symbolic values embedded in Candra Naya's evolving architecture. Given the present condition of the building, with notable changes in its original features and functions, this research is important for supporting its ongoing sustainability. Employing a qualitative descriptive method with a symbolic architectural approach, the study uncovers new interpretations of Candra Naya's form and meaning. Data were collected using three primary methods: (1) direct site observation, (2) in-depth interviews with local communities, heritage experts, and academics, and (3) literature review. The findings indicate that Candra Naya integrates traditional Chinese and colonial architectural elements with tropical adaptations, symbolizing balance, prosperity, and cultural continuity.

**Keywords:** Chinese architecture; Symbolic Architecture; Architectural meaning

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, 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 Majoro 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. Majoro Khouw Kim and himself 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.

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

### 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

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 Chandra 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 [15]. These four elements serve as a framework in the study of Symbolic Architecture within the Chinese Heritage of Sin Ming Hui Chandra Naya in West Jakarta. This discussion covers the elements of Chinese architecture: typology, roofs, structures, high walls, doors, and ornaments.



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

This research aims to discover the function and meaning contained in the architectural elements of Sin Ming Hui Chandra 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. According to Aditya W. Fitrianto, an architect and urban preservationist in Jakarta, notes that Candra Naya [17], 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. [2]. 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 about something. 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][16]. 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. [4]. 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. [5].

Following Christian Norberg-Schulz's (1980) 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.<sup>8</sup>

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. [6]. 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. [7]. 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. Sugiyono (2007: 1) states that qualitative research 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 Chandra 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 the following table.

Data Source	Key Findings	Symbolic Meaning / Interpretation
Observation (site visit, spatial layout, ornaments, 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 ±160 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 (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 urban heritage values.</li> </ul>
Literature Review (previous studies, documents, comparative analysis)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Chinese architectural principles: symmetry, Shui, with cosmology.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Candra Naya as hybrid symbol (vernacular + colonial + bureaucratic authority).</li> </ul>

Penang, Singapore, Bangkok, Manila)	- Comparative studies show hybrid embedding symbolism across symbolic values in Southeast Asia. - UNESCO's HUL framework stresses integration of tangible & intangible heritage.	Importance of studies show hybrid embedding symbolism across symbolic values in Southeast Asia. into conservation.
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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. [8]. Tabel below summarizes these six architectural styles and their key characteristics.

Style	Characteristics	Symbolic Meaning
<b>Klengteng</b>	Multi tiered roof, red color, dragon/loian ornaments	Religion, devotion, protection, prosperity
<b>Chinese Laseman</b>	Blending of local Javanese and Chinese form	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 ornamentation	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 as a function like that of

courtyards in traditional Balinese buildings [20]. 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.

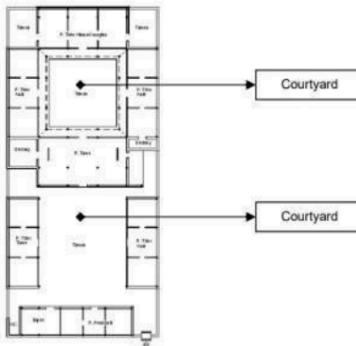


Figure 2 Traditional Chinese Building Floor Plan  
(Source: Handinoto, 2008)

The courtyard is a micro space, or in Chinese beliefs, referred to as microcosmos, which is the energy center for the surrounding [21][22]. The Chinese believe that the courtyard is a microcosm, a replica of the larger world, referred to as the macrocosm, in this case, the world. 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 in the building. The courtyard also serves as a barrier between rooms. 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 it to provide natural light. 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 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: [7].

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 has its main entrance 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 in the micro nature.

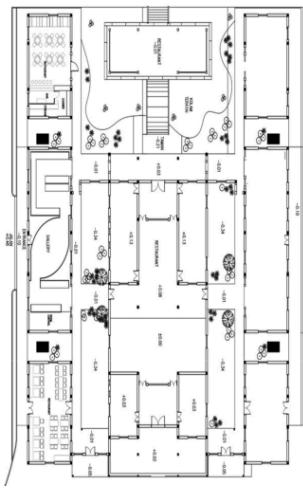


Figure 3 Candra Naya Floor Plan  
(Source: Priyomarsonor, 2022)

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

1. Front Terrace as transitional public-private space

The front terrace is a space without walls at the front. 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 with 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.

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. Between the terrace and the living room is separated by the main door made of solid wood. Since the beginning of Chandra Naya until now, the door is still firmly standing, the supporting frame of the door is also made of wood, which is 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. Kitchens 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 serves to receive guests specifically for guests of the wife and children. In addition to the kitchen and living room, there are also several rooms for concubines and children. The shape of the rooms, both the kitchen, the concubine's living room and other rooms, are similar, 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.



Figure 4 Gazebo with koi pond and lotus flowers in the second courtyard  
(Source: Author, 2024)

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 [9]. 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 of the building. 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 curved form with dragon ornaments symbolizing protection and power. This curved "wallet 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 end of the roof ridge, there are Chinese architectural ornaments, namely Chinese mythological ornaments interpreted as protection and repellent. [10].

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 that is frequently encountered. This illustrates that Chinese people are expected not to forget their ancestral culture. [11].



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

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 for 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. [12]. The wide and high opening of the door is also believed to bring good luck and prosperity.



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.

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. [18] Candra Naya has four moon gates, each with a diameter exceeding 160 cm. 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 [13][19]. 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.



**Figure 6** Moon Gate.  
(Source: Uieks, 2022)

#### 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.

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 during the day, 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.

**Figure 7** Sky in the First Courtyard  
(Source: Author, 2024)

#### 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. [14].

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

1. **Type 1:**
  - 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 8** Type 1 Door.  
(Source: Raudhoh, 2022)

2. **Type 2:**

- 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 9** Type 2 Door.  
(Source: Raudhoh, 2022)



**Figure 11** Type 4 Door.  
(Source: Raudhoh, 2022)

3. **Type 3:**

- 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 10** Type 3 Door.  
(Source: Raudhoh, 2022)

4. **Type 4:**

- 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.

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 [22], emphasizing the integration of tangible and intangible heritage values in urban development planning.

#### 4. Conclusion

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.

#### 6 Acknowledgements

The authors would like to express sincere gratitude to all parties who supported this research, especially to the heritage preservation stakeholders and local community members who provided valuable insights during fieldwork. This research was conducted independently without external funding.

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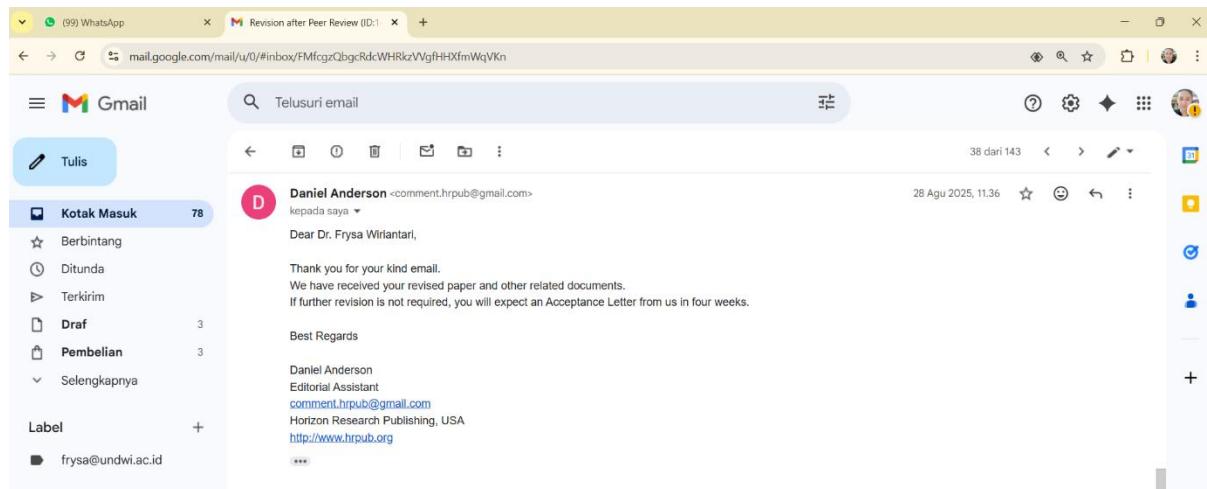
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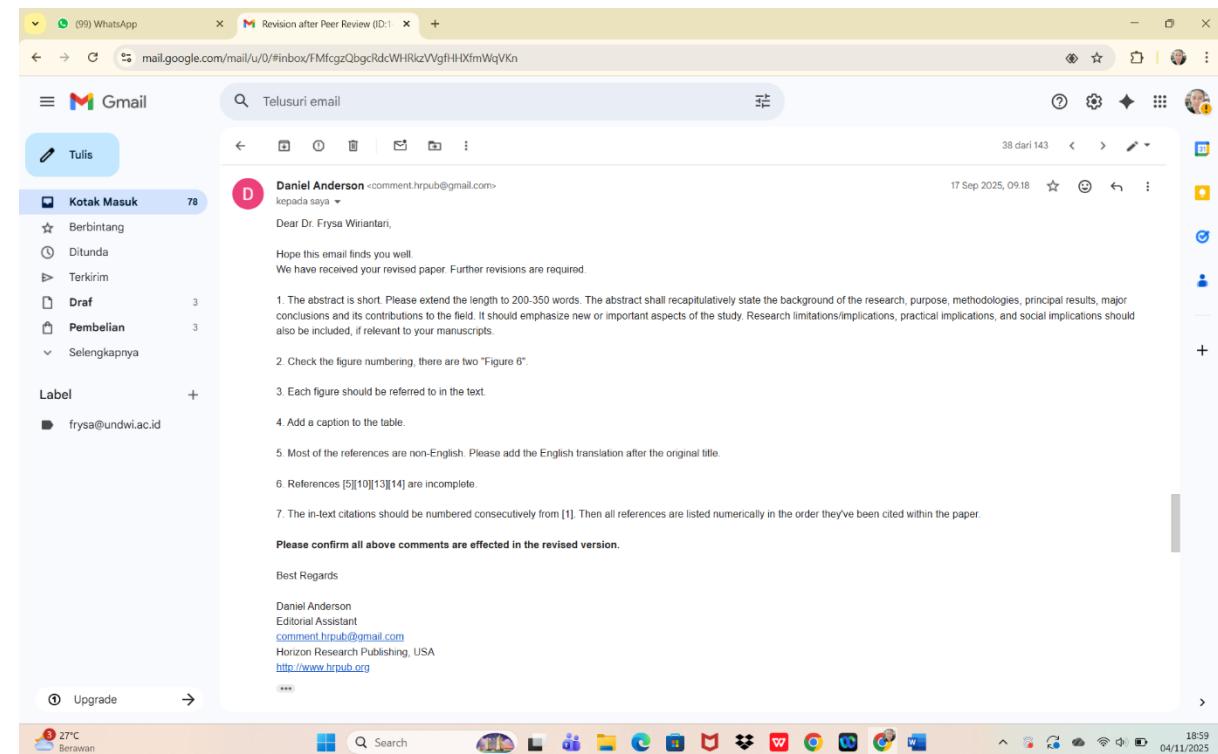
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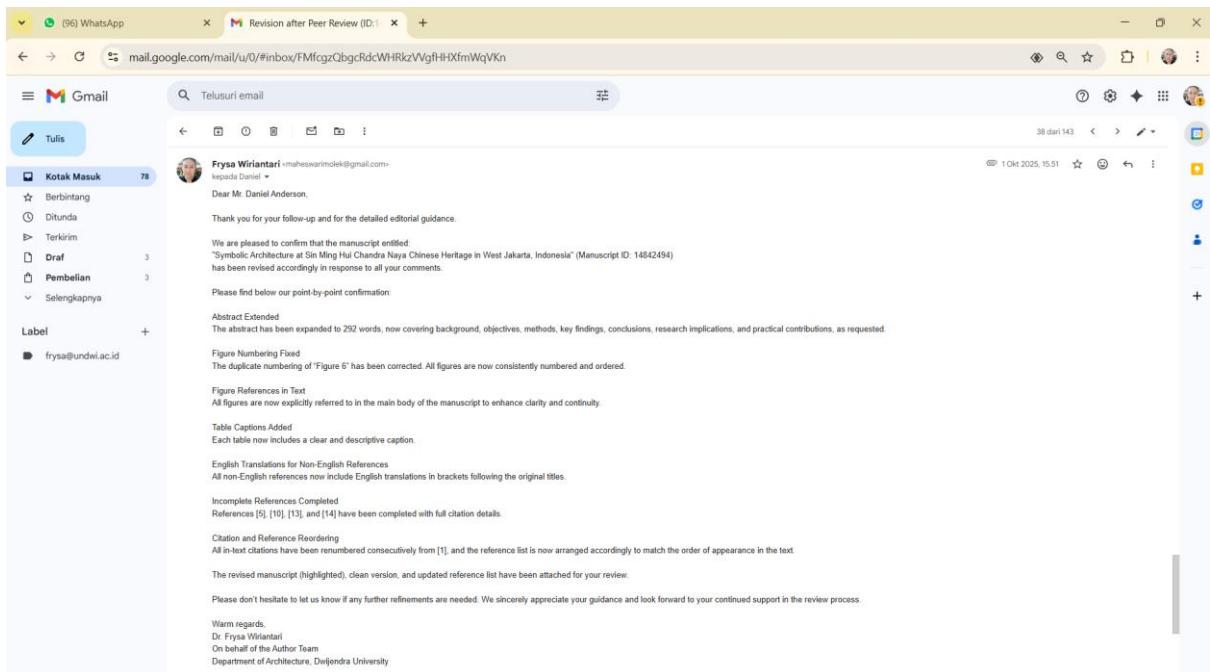
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Dear Mr. Daniel Anderson,

Thank you for your follow-up and for the detailed editorial guidance.

We are pleased to confirm that the manuscript entitled "Symbolic Architecture at Sin Ming Hui Chandra Naya Chinese Heritage in West Jakarta, Indonesia" (Manuscript ID: 14842494) has been revised accordingly in response to all your comments.

Please find below our point-by-point confirmation:

**Abstract Extended**  
The abstract has been expanded to 292 words, now covering background, objectives, methods, key findings, conclusions, research implications, and practical contributions, as requested.

**Figure Numbering Fixed**  
The duplicate numbering of "Figure 6" has been corrected. All figures are now consistently numbered and ordered.

**Figure References in Text**  
All figures are now explicitly referred to in the main body of the manuscript to enhance clarity and continuity.

**Table Captions Added**  
Each table now includes a clear and descriptive caption.

**English Translations for Non-English References**  
All non-English references now include English translations in brackets following the original titles.

**Incomplete References Completed**  
References [5], [10], [13], and [14] have been completed with full citation details.

**Citation and Reference Reordering**  
All in-text citations have been renumbered consecutively from [1], and the reference list is now arranged accordingly to match the order of appearance in the text.

The revised manuscript (highlighted), clean version, and updated reference list have been attached for your review.

Please don't hesitate to let us know if any further refinements are needed. We sincerely appreciate your guidance and look forward to your continued support in the review process.

Warm regards,  
Dr. Frysa Wiriantari  
On behalf of the Author Team  
Department of Architecture, DwiJendra University

# REVISED MANUSCRIPT

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

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**Abstract:** Sin Ming Hui Chandra 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's Chinatown area. This study aims to explore the transformation of Chandra 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 Chandra 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:** Chandra Naya, symbolic architecture, Chinese heritage, transformation, sustainability, colonial hybridity.

### 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 Chandra Naya, exemplifies this Chinese architectural heritage. Located at Jalan Gajah Mada No. 188, West Jakarta, it is a designated cultural heritage site. Chandra 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. Major Khouw Kim himself 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 Chandra Naya building in the 1950s is referred to in figure 1.

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 Chandra 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, Chandra Naya has developed into a center of Chinese Indonesian political and social activity.

In 1992, Chandra Naya was sold to a Chinese Indonesian company called Modern Group. In 2012, Chandra 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 Chandra 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 Chandra Naya in West Jakarta. This discussion covers the elements of Chinese architecture: typology, roofs, structures, high walls, doors, and ornaments.

Figure 1 Sin Ming Hui Building, Jalan Gajah Mada No. 188 Jakarta in the 1950s

(Source: Kompasiana.com, downloaded December 12, 2023)

This research aims to discover the function and meaning contained in the architectural elements of Sin Ming Hui Chandra Naya. This research is essential given Chandra Naya's current situation, as it is surrounded by modern high-rise buildings, which presents potential risks to its long-term preservation. According to Aditya W. Fitrianto, an architect and urban preservationist in Jakarta, notes that Chandra 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



Chandra 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 warning 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 about something. 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 or self-identity [7].

Following Christian Norberg-Schulz's (1980) 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 Chandra 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 Chandra 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 Chandra 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 forms the focal point of the surrounding rooms. 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 which 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 Chandra 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:

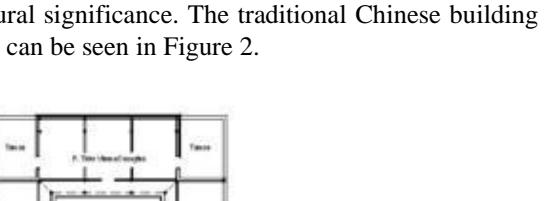
1. Approach to form,
2. An approach based on Chinese beliefs
3. A comparative approach referring to similar symbolic features in Chinese heritage architecture across Southeast Asia, particularly in Penang (Malaysia), Singapore, Bangkok (Thailand), and Manila (Philippines), to identify shared symbolic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

## 3. Results and Discussions

The data were 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 the following table.

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

Data Source	Key Findings	Symbolic Meaning / Interpretation
Observation (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'.</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 (community)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Chandra Naya lost its original character due to</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Symbolism is not only architectural but</li> </ul>

<p>members, heritage experts, academics)</p>	<p>high-rise surroundings (Aditya Fitrianto, 2022).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Still considered a living heritage with symbolic and historical value.</li> <li>- Community hopes for revitalization, not just façade preservation.</li> </ul>	<p>also cultural identity.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Importance of memory, ritual, and urban heritage values.</li> </ul>	<table border="1"> <tr> <td><b>Chinese Laseman</b></td><td>Blending of local Javanese and Chinese form</td><td>Adaptation, acculturation</td></tr> <tr> <td><b>Chinese Vernacular</b></td><td>Courtyard, moon gates, domestic orientation</td><td>Balance, harmony, family unity</td></tr> <tr> <td><b>Mosque (Chinese)</b></td><td>Dome with pagoda fusion, Arabic calligraphy</td><td>Syncretism of faith and culture</td></tr> <tr> <td><b>Javanese</b></td><td>Joglo structure with Chinese ornamentation</td><td>Local integration</td></tr> <tr> <td><b>Kolonial</b></td><td>Dutch structure techniques combined with Chinese symbolic ornament</td><td>Power, hybrid authority</td></tr> </table>	<b>Chinese Laseman</b>	Blending of local Javanese and Chinese form	Adaptation, acculturation	<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
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<p>Literature Review (previous studies, heritage documents, comparative analysis with Penang, Singapore, Bangkok, Manila)</p>	<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>- Chandra Naya as hybrid symbol (vernacular + colonial + bureaucratic authority).</li> <li>- Importance of embedding symbolic values into conservation.</li> </ul>	<p>Based on the above approach, Chandra Naya's architectural typology falls within the "Vernacular Chinese" but is combined with colonial elements, making it unique among heritage sites in Southeast Asia.</p> <p>Certain structures within the Khouw family compound were removed. Various groups have opposed the demolition. Chandra Naya is about 42 by 57 meters and features multiple courtyards. These courtyards serve as a function like that of courtyards in traditional Balinese buildings [11] [12]. The courtyards at Chandra 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.</p> 															

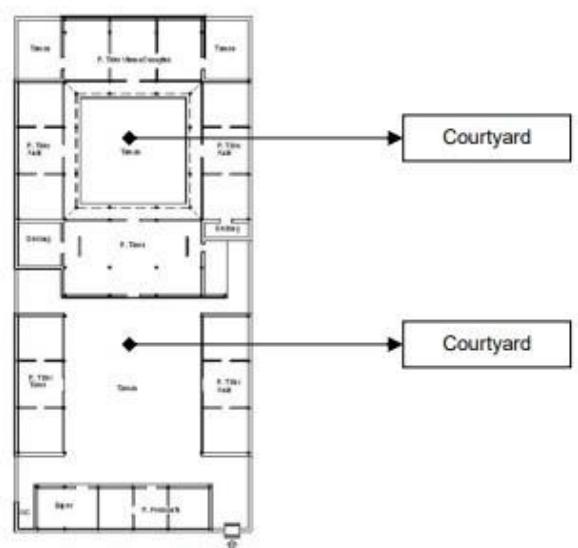
The Chandra Naya building currently retains only the main building or its core. Through the building style approach, there are six distinctive Chinese building styles, namely Klenteng, Chinese Laseman, Chinese Vernacular, Mosque, Javanese, and colonial. [10]. Table below summarizes these six architectural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

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

Style	Characteristics	Symbolic Meaning
<b>Klenteng</b>	Multitiered roof, red color, dragon/lion ornaments	Religion, devotion, protection, prosperity

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

The courtyard is a micro space, 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, in this case, the world. 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 in the building. The courtyard also serves as a barrier between rooms. Chandra 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 it to provide natural light. 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 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 Chandra Naya Building is referred to in Figure 3.

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 has its main entrance 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 along the central axis and its symmetrical shape has a meaning of balance and harmony, both for the macro nature and for users who occupy in the micro nature. Visualization of the Chandra Naya floor plan can be seen in Figure 4.



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

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

1. Front Terrace as transitional public–private space

The front terrace is a space without walls at the front. 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 with 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.

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. Between the terrace and the living room is separated by the main door made of solid wood. Since the beginning of Chandra Naya's history until now, the door is still firmly standing, the supporting frame of the door is also made of wood, which is preserved until it remains intact in appearance / shape. This room is used as a reception room by Khouw Kim An.

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 Khouw Kim An.

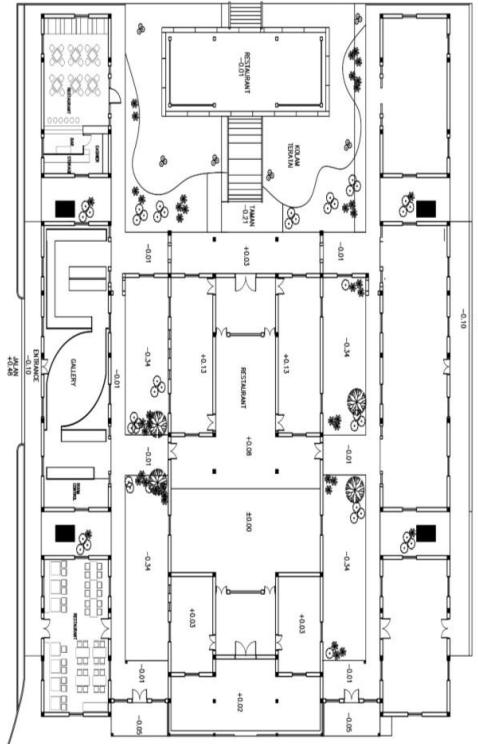
4. Kitchen and domestic quarters along the side wings.

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 serves to receive guests specifically for guests of the wife and children. In addition to the kitchen and living room, there are also several rooms for concubines and children. The shape of the rooms, both the kitchen, the concubine's living room and other rooms, are similar, 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.



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

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 Chandra Naya reflects various interpretations.

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

One of the distinctive features of buildings with Chinese architecture is the roof of the building. 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.

The roof has a curved form with dragon ornaments symbolizing protection and power. This curved "swallow-tail" roof also denotes status and authority. 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 end of 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 in figure 5.

This belief is also reflected in the commercial buildings surrounding the Chandra 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 also found on poles, a form that is frequently encountered. This illustrates that Chinese people are expected not to forget their ancestral culture. [17].



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

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 swallow-tail shape on the Chandra 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, Chandra 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 for 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 Chandra 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 Chandra 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 Fig 7).

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]. Chandra Naya has four moon gates, each with a diameter exceeding 160 cm. 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.



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

### 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 fig 8).

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 during the day, and serving as a gathering space for family members.

From the time of its construction, the courtyard in Chandra 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 Chandra Naya building.



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

## 5. Walls and structure

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

### 1. Type 1 (see Fig. 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 Fig. 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.

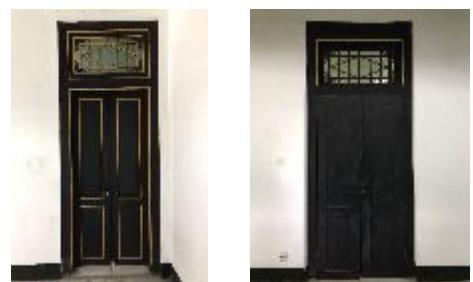


**Figure 10** Type 2 Door.

(Source: Raudhoh, 2022)

### 3. Type 3 (see Fig. 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 Fig. 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, Chandra 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, Chandra Naya's design emphasizes a fusion of domestic, social, and bureaucratic functions shaped by Dutch colonial urbanism. This comparative lens situates Chandra 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, Chandra 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 Chandra 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 Chandra Naya resonates with UNESCO's Historic Urban Landscape principles [23], emphasizing the integration of tangible and intangible heritage values in urban development planning.

#### 4. Conclusion

Chandra 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 Chandra 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 Chandra 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 Chandra Naya through triangulated data (observation, interviews, and literature).
2. By providing a comparative perspective from Southeast Asia (Penang, Singapore, Bangkok, Manila) that highlights Chandra 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 Chandra 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.

## Acknowledgements

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# HIGHLIGHTED

## Symbolic Architecture at Sin Ming Hui Chandra 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's 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.

### 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, 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.

Major Khouw Kim himself 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 in figure 1](#)

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 Chandra 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, Chandra Naya has developed into a center of Chinese Indonesian political and social activity.

In 1992, Chandra Naya was sold to a Chinese Indonesian company called Modern Group. In 2012, Chandra 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 Chandra 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 Chandra Naya in West Jakarta. This discussion covers the elements of Chinese architecture: typology, roofs, structures, high walls, doors, and ornaments.

Figure 1 Sin Ming Hui Building, Jalan Gajah Mada No. 188 Jakarta in the 1950s

(Source: Kompasiana.com, downloaded December 12, 2023)

This research aims to discover the function and meaning contained in the architectural elements of Sin Ming Hui Chandra Naya. This research is essential given Chandra Naya's current situation, as it is surrounded by modern high-rise buildings, which presents potential risks to its long-term preservation. According to Aditya W. Fitrianto, an architect and urban preservationist in Jakarta, notes that Chandra 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



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Chandra 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 about something. 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 (1980) 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 Chandra 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 the following table.

**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 (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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Candra Naya</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Symbolism is</li> </ul>

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Interviews (community members, heritage experts, academics)	lost its original character due to high-rise surroundings (Aditya Fitrianto, 2022). - Still considered a living heritage with symbolic and historical value. - Community hopes for revitalization, not just façade preservation.	not only architectural but also cultural identity. - Importance of memory, ritual, and urban heritage values.
Literature Review (previous studies, heritage documents, comparative analysis with Penang, Singapore, Bangkok, Manila)	- Chinese architectural principles: symmetry, Feng Shui, Taoist cosmology. - Comparative studies show hybrid symbolism across Southeast Asia. - UNESCO's HUL framework stresses integration of tangible & intangible heritage.	- Candra Naya as hybrid symbol (vernacular + colonial + bureaucratic authority). - Importance of embedding symbolic values into conservation.

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]. Tabel below summarizes these six architectural styles and their key characteristics.

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

<b>Klenteng</b>	Multi tiered roof, red color, dragon/loian ornaments	Religion, devotion, protection, prosperity
<b>Chinese Laseman</b>	Blending of local Javanese and Chinese form	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

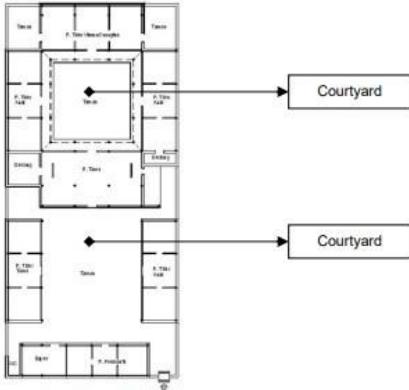
Based on the above approach, Candra Naya's architectural typology falls within the "Vernacular Chinese" but is combined with colonial elements, making it unique among heritage sites in Southeast Asia.

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 as 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.

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Style	Characteristics	Symbolic Meaning

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

The courtyard is a micro space, 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, in this case, the world. 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 in the building. The courtyard also serves as a barrier between rooms. 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 it to provide natural light. 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 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]. [\[Visualization of the courtyard, pond and gazebo at Chandra Naya Building is referred in figure 3.\]](#)

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 has its main

entrance 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 in the micro nature. [\[Visualization of the Candra Naya floor plan can be seen in Figure 4.\]](#)

**Commented [ES6]:** Figure 4 - references in the text



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

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

1. Front Terrace as transitional public-private space  
The front terrace is a space without walls at the front. 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 with 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.
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. Between the terrace and the living room is separated by the main door made of solid wood. Since the beginning of Chandra Naya until now, the door is still firmly standing, the supporting frame of the door is also made of wood, which is 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

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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 Khou 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 serves to receive guests specifically for guests of the wife and children. In addition to the kitchen and living room, there are also several rooms for concubines and children. The shape of the rooms, both the kitchen, the concubine's living room and other rooms, are similar, 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 Khou Kim An.

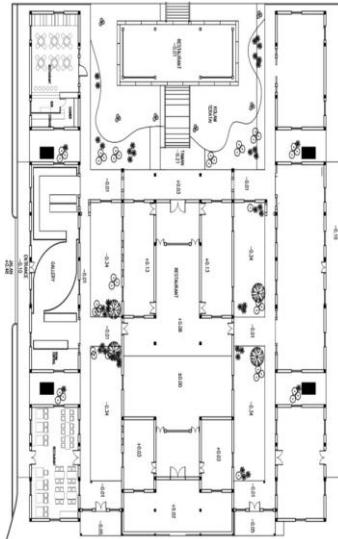


Figure 4 Candra Naya Floor Plan  
(Source: Priyomarsonor, 2022)

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 of the building. 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 curved form with dragon ornaments symbolizing protection and power. This curved "wallet 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 end of 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 in figure 5](#)

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 also found on poles, a form that is frequently encountered. This illustrates that Chinese people are expected not to forget their ancestral culture. [17].

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

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 for 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 visualisation 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 fig 7).

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, each with a diameter exceeding 160 cm. 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.



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### 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 fig 8).

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 during the day, 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.

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

##### 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 Fig. 9):

- The main entrance consists of double-leaf doors.
- The wooden door frames are about 20 cm thick.
- The enormous size of the doors symbolizes the ease of wealth entering the building.
- 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)

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###### 2. Type 2 (see Fig. 10):

- Located at the rear of the main building, the door, including its frame, measures 240 cm x 345 cm.
- The carvings on the rear door depict Lingzhi mushroom vegetation, a motif rooted in Chinese mythology.
- 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)

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###### 3. Type 3 (see Fig. 11):

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



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

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

- This louvered door has dimensions of 270 cm in height and 140 cm in width.
- 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. Conclusion

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

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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.

#### Acknowledgements

The authors would like to express sincere gratitude to all parties who supported this research, especially to the heritage preservation stakeholders and local community members who provided valuable insights during fieldwork. This research was conducted independently without external funding.

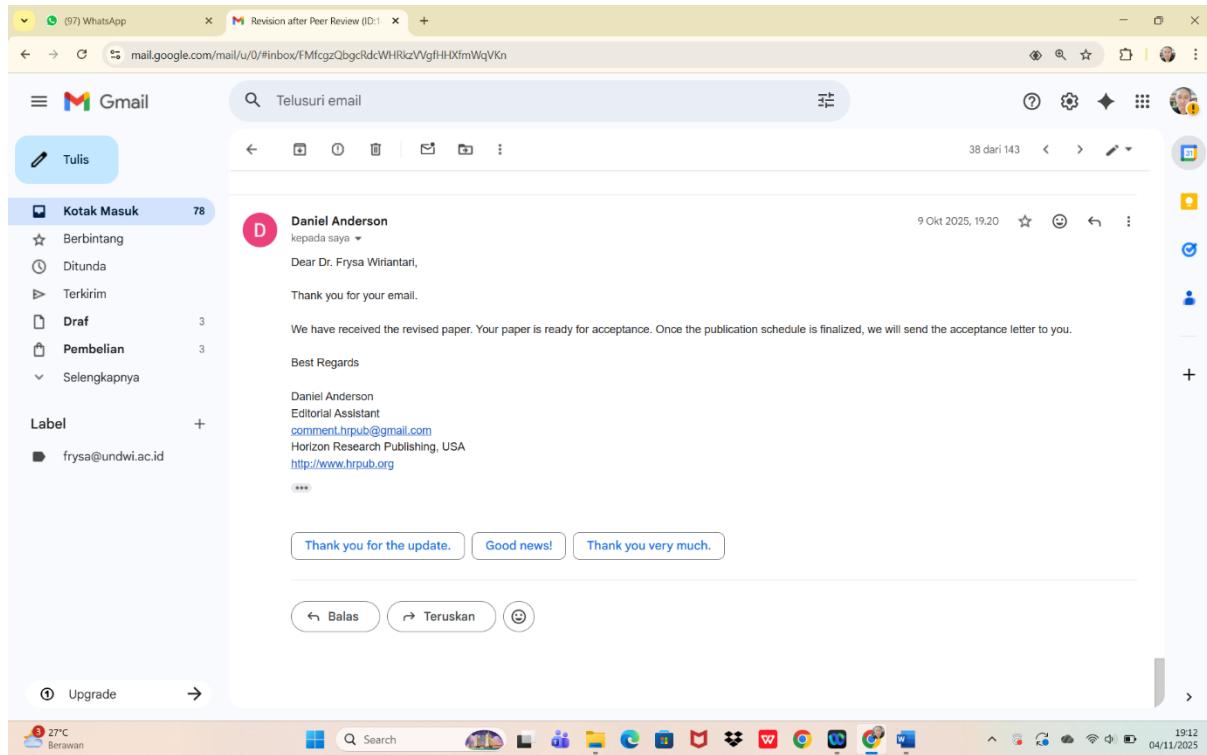
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### 3. KONFIRMASI REVISI KE-2 TELAH DITERIMA, 9 OKTOBER 2025

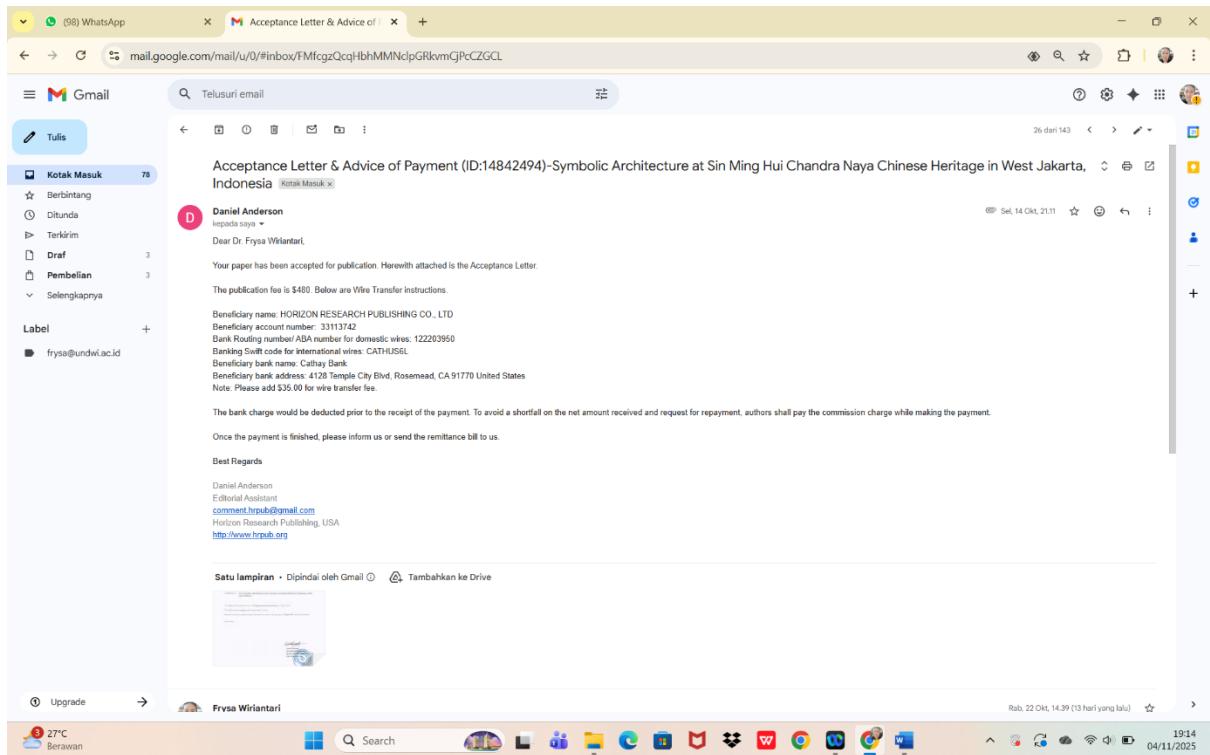


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Dear Dr. Frysa Wiriantari,  
Thank you for your email.  
We have received the revised paper. Your paper is ready for acceptance. Once the publication schedule is finalized, we will send the acceptance letter to you.  
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## 4. LOA, 14 OKTOBER 2025



Acceptance Letter & Advice of Payment (ID:14842494)-Symbolic Architecture at Sin Ming Hui Chandra Naya Chinese Heritage in West Jakarta, Indonesia

D Daniel Anderson  
lepasasaya <[lepasasaya@gmail.com](mailto:lepasasaya@gmail.com)>

Dear Dr. Frysa Wiriantari,

Your paper has been accepted for publication. Herewith attached is the Acceptance Letter.

The publication fee is \$480. Below are Wire Transfer instructions.

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## Acceptance Letter

Dear Frysa Wiriantari,

Congratulations! As a result of the reviews and revisions, we are pleased to inform you that your following paper has been accepted for publication

Paper Title: Symbolic Architecture at Sin Ming Hui Chandra Naya Chinese Heritage in West Jakarta, Indonesia

Paper ID: 14842494

Contributor (s): Frysa Wiriantari, Ngakan Ketut Acwin Dwijendra, Arya Bagus Mahadwijati Wijaatmaja, I Made Agus Mahendra

It is scheduled for publication on Civil Engineering and Architecture, Vol 13, No 6.

The publication fee \$ 480 should be paid within 2 weeks.

Should you have any questions, please feel free to let us know by quoting your **Paper ID** in any future inquiries.

Best wishes,

Journal Manager

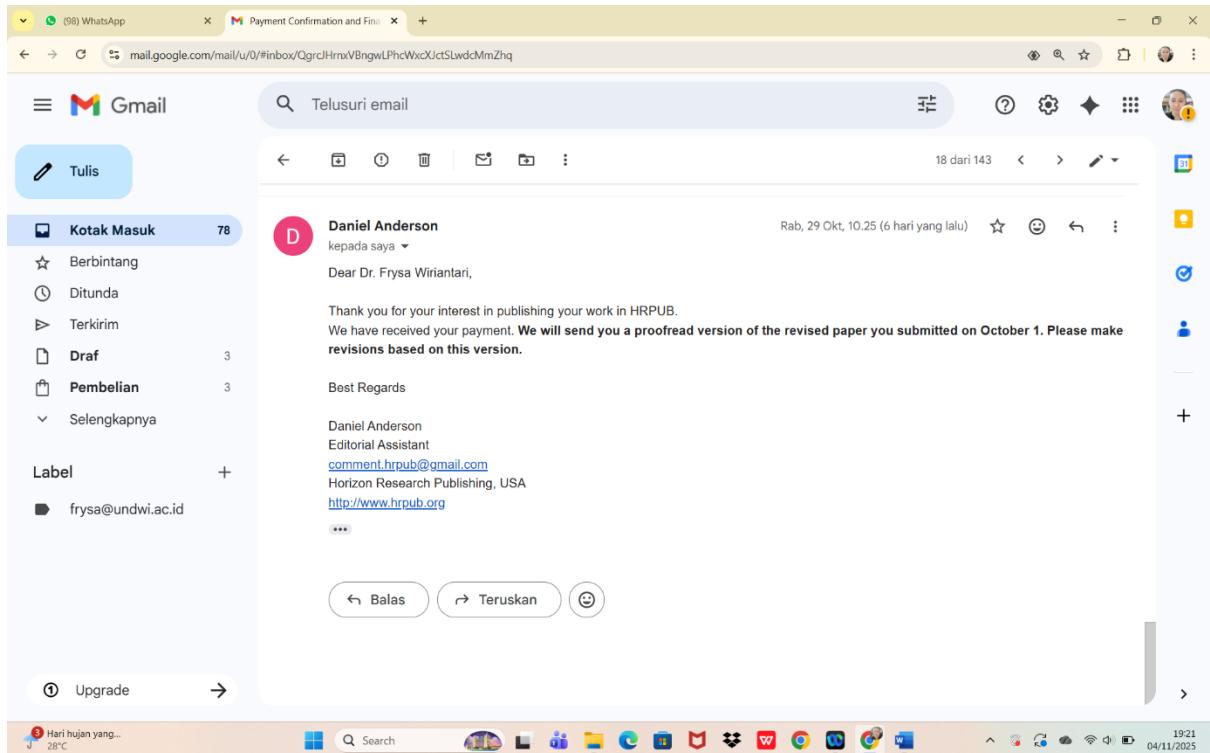
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**Tulis**

**Kotak Masuk 78**

**D Daniel Anderson**  
kepada saya ▾  
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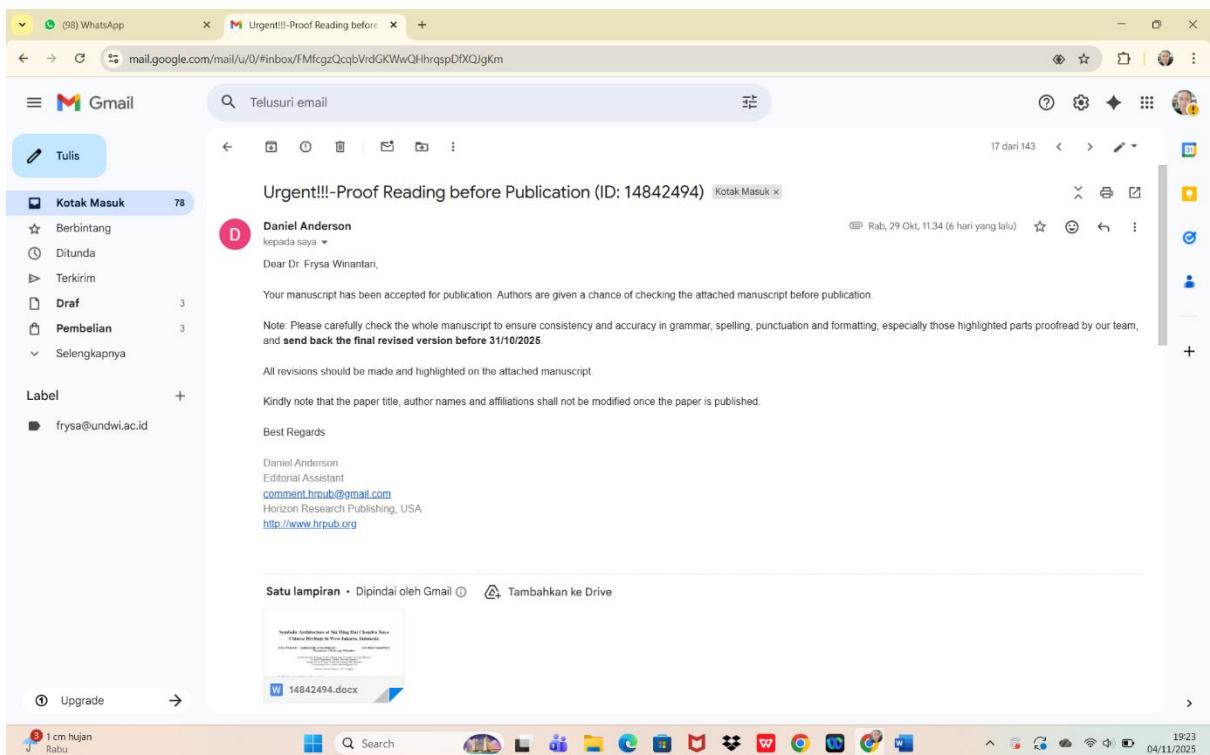
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Dear Dr. Frysa Wiriantari,

Your manuscript has been accepted for publication. Authors are given a chance of checking the attached manuscript before publication.

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# LAMPIRAN REVIEW/PROOF READING

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

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Arya Bagus Mahadwijati Wijaatmaja<sup>1</sup>, I Made Agus Mahendra<sup>3</sup>

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(b): Frysa Wiriantari, Ngakan Ketut Acwin Dwijendra, Arya Bagus Mahadwijati Wijaatmaja, I Made Agus Mahendra (2025). *Symbolic Architecture at Sin Ming Hui Chandra Naya Chinese Heritage in West Jakarta, Indonesia*. *Civil Engineering and Architecture*, X(X), XXX - XXX. DOI: 10.13189/XXX.2025.110XXX.

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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's 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

### 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, 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 [and himself](#) 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 [in 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 Chandra 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 Chandra 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 Chandra 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 Chandra 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. [According to](#) 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 **about something**. 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 (1980)[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 Chandra 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 below** 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 (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 ±160 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 (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 Klegteng, Chinese Laseman, Chinese Vernacular, Mosque, Javanese, and colonial

Style	Characteristics	Symbolic Meaning
<b>Klegteng</b>	Multi tiered roof, red color, dragon/loian ornaments	Religion, devotion, protection, prosperity
<b>Chinese Laseman</b>	Blending of local Javanese and Chinese form	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 as 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 micro space, 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 in this case, the world. The courtyard is located at the center or central axis of the

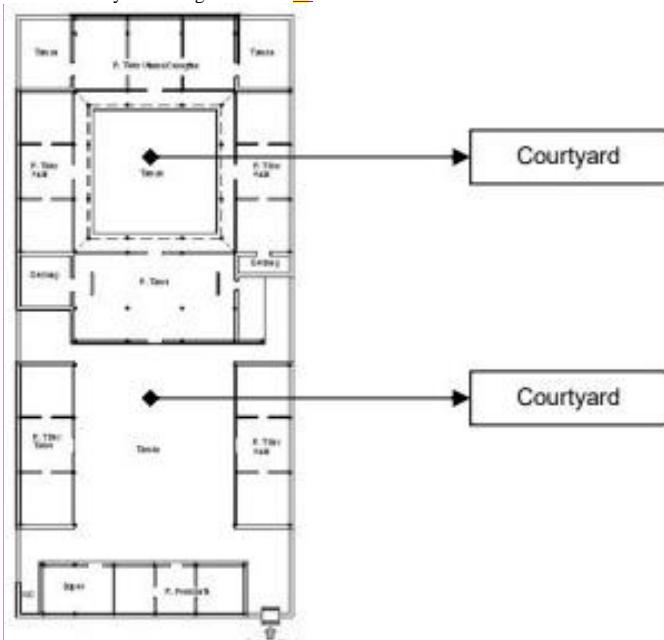
building.

In addition to being the energy center of the surrounding buildings, the courtyard serves as a source of natural lighting and ventilation in the building. The courtyard also serves as a barrier between rooms. 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 it to provide 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 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 Chandra Naya Building is referred to in

Figure 3.



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

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**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 has its main entrance 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 in the micro nature. Visualization of the Chandramaya 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 transitional public–private space

The front terrace is a space without walls **at the front**. 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 **with 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.

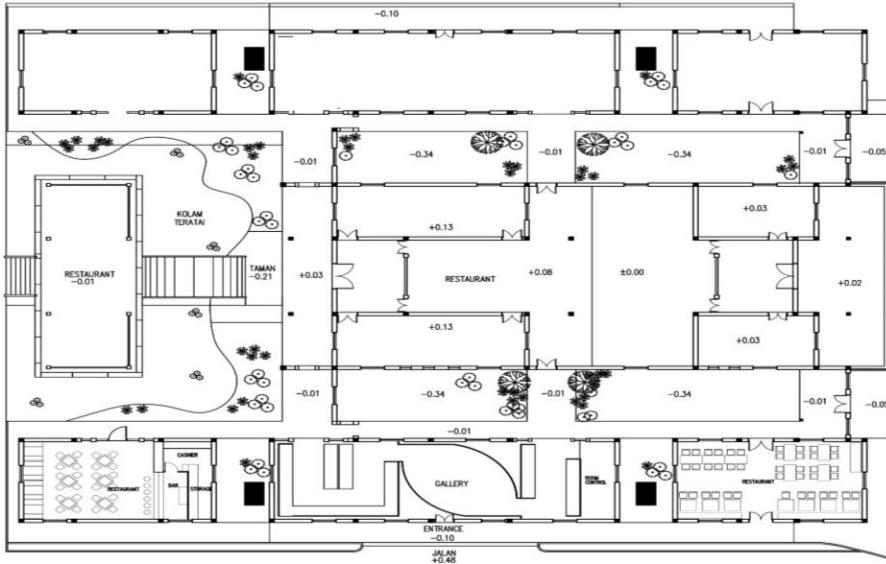


Figure 4. Candra Naya Floor Plan. (Source: Priyomarsonor, 2022)

## 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. Between the terrace and the living room is a room that is separated by the main door made of solid wood. Since the beginning of Chandra 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, specifically for guests of the wife and children. In addition to the kitchen and living room, there are also several rooms for concubines and children. The shape of the rooms, both including the kitchen, the concubine's living room and other rooms, are 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 of the building. 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 "wallet 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 ~~end of 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 ~~also~~ found on poles, a form ~~that~~ 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 for 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, each with a diameter exceeding 160 cm. 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 *during the day*, 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):

- The main entrance consists of double-leaf doors.
- The wooden door frames are about 20 cm thick.
- The enormous size of the doors symbolizes the ease of wealth entering the building.
- 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 Chandra 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 Chandra 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 Chandra Naya through triangulated data (observation, interviews, and literature).
2. By providing a comparative perspective from Southeast Asia (Penang, Singapore, Bangkok, Manila) that highlights Chandra 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.

## Acknowledgements

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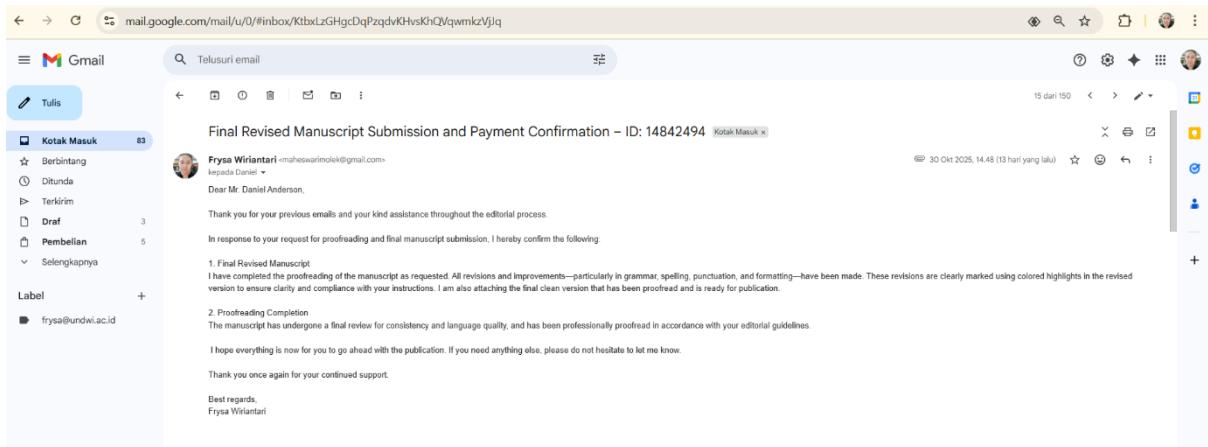
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## 13. REVISI KE-3 PROOFREADING, 29 OKTOBER 2025



The screenshot shows an email in the Gmail inbox. The subject of the email is "Final Revised Manuscript Submission and Payment Confirmation – ID: 14842494". The email is from "Frysa Wiriantari <maheswarimolek@gmail.com>". The message content is as follows:

Dear Mr. Daniel Anderson,

Thank you for your previous emails and your kind assistance throughout the editorial process.

In response to your request for proofreading and final manuscript submission, I hereby confirm the following:

1. Final Revised Manuscript:  
I have completed the proofreading of the manuscript as requested. All revisions and improvements—particularly in grammar, spelling, punctuation, and formatting—have been made. These revisions are clearly marked using colored highlights in the revised version to ensure clarity and compliance with your instructions. I am also attaching the final clean version that has been proofread and is ready for publication.
2. Proofreading Completion:  
The manuscript has undergone a final review for consistency and language quality, and has been professionally proofread in accordance with your editorial guidelines.

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Best regards,  
Frysa Wiriantari

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# REVISI PROOF READING

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

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**Abstract** Sin Ming Hui Chandra 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 Chandra 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 Chandra 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** Chandra Naya, Symbolic Architecture, Chinese Heritage, Transformation, Sustainability, Colonial Hybridity

### 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

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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 Chandra Naya, exemplifies this Chinese architectural heritage. Located at Jalan Gajah Mada No. 188, West Jakarta, it is a designated cultural heritage site. Chandra 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 Chandra 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 Chandra 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, Chandra Naya has developed into a center of Chinese Indonesian political and social activity.

In 1992, Chandra Naya was sold to a Chinese Indonesian company called Modern Group. In 2012, Chandra 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 Chandra 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 Chandra 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 Chandra Naya. This research is essential given Chandra 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 Chandra 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 Chandra 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

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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 Chandra 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 Chandra 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 Chandra 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.

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## 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 Chandra 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.

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

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

Data Source	Key Findings	Symbolic Meaning / Interpretation
Observation (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 ±160 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 (community members, heritage experts, academics)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Chandra 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>- Chandra 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 Krenteng, Chinese Laseman, Chinese Vernacular, Mosque, Javanese, and colonial

Style	Characteristics	Symbolic Meaning
<b>Krenteng</b>	Multi tiered roof, red color, dragon/loian ornaments	Religion, devotion, protection, prosperity
<b>Chinese Laseman</b>	Blending of local Javanese and Chinese form	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, Chandra 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. Chandra 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 Chandra 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 micro space, 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]. Chandra 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 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 Chandra Naya Building is referred to in Figure 3.

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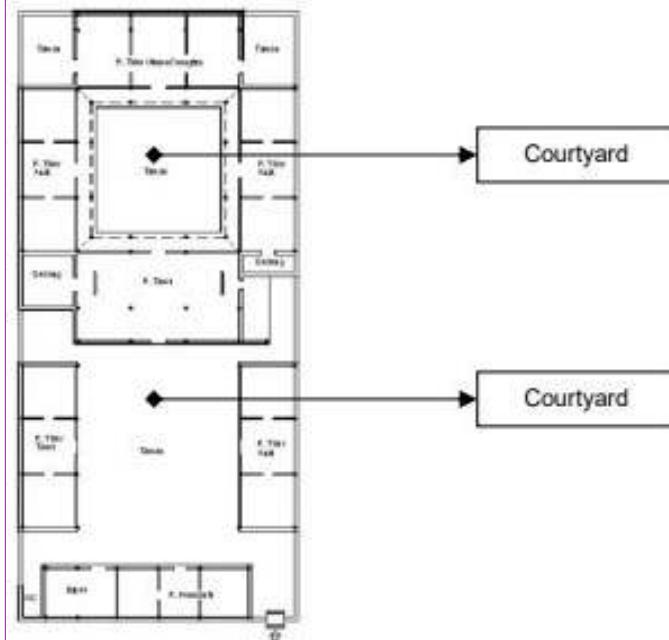


Figure 2. Traditional Chinese Building Floor Plan. (Source: Handinoto, 2008)



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 Chandra Naya floor plan can be seen in Figure 4.

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

1. Front Terrace as transitional public-private space

The front terrace is a space without walls. 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.

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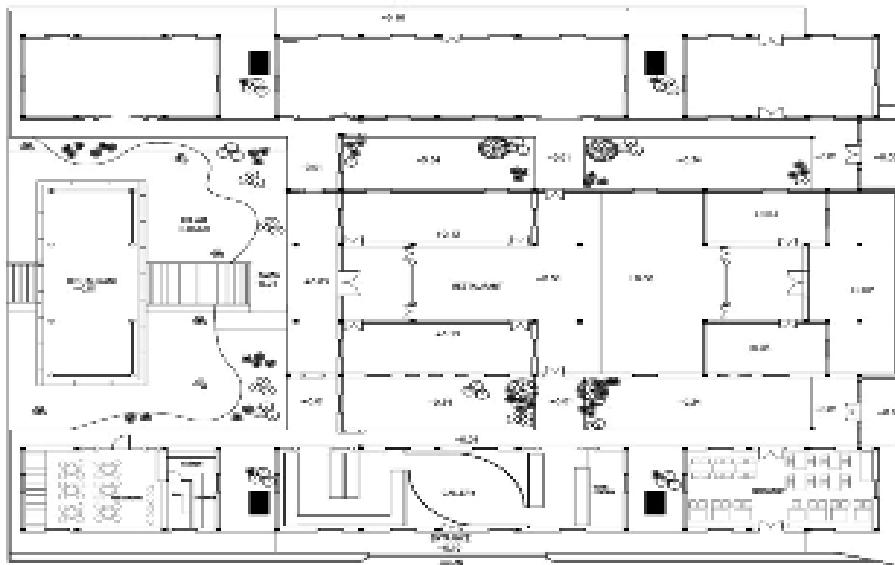


Figure 4. Chandra Naya Floor Plan. (Source: Priyomarsonor, 2022)

## 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 Chandra 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' wife 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 Chandra 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.

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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 Chandra 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 Chandra 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, Chandra 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 for 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 Chandra 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 Chandra 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]. Chandra 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

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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 Chandra 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 Chandra Naya building.

#### 5. Walls and structure

The Chandra 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 Chandra 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 Chandra 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)

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

- Located at the rear of the main building, the door, including its frame, measures 240 cm x 345 cm.
- The carvings on the rear door depict Lingzhi mushroom vegetation, a motif rooted in Chinese mythology.
- 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):

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



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

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

- This louvered door has dimensions of 270 cm in height and 140 cm in width.
- 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, Chandra 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, Chandra Naya's design emphasizes a fusion of domestic, social, and bureaucratic functions shaped by Dutch colonial urbanism. This comparative lens situates Chandra 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, Chandra 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 Chandra 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 Chandra 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

Chandra 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 Chandra 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 Chandra 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 Chandra Naya through triangulated data (observation, interviews, and literature).
2. By providing a comparative perspective from Southeast Asia (Penang, Singapore, Bangkok, Manila) that highlights Chandra 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 Chandra 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.

## Acknowledgements

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*Thesis, Department of Archaeology, Universitas Gadjah Mada,*

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Arsitektur Cina Pada Bentuk Pintu dan Jendela Bangunan Chandra Naya [The Influence of Chinese Architecture on the Form of Doors and Windows in the Chandra Naya Building],” *Lintas Ruang* vol. 10, no. 1, pp. 25–31, 2022.

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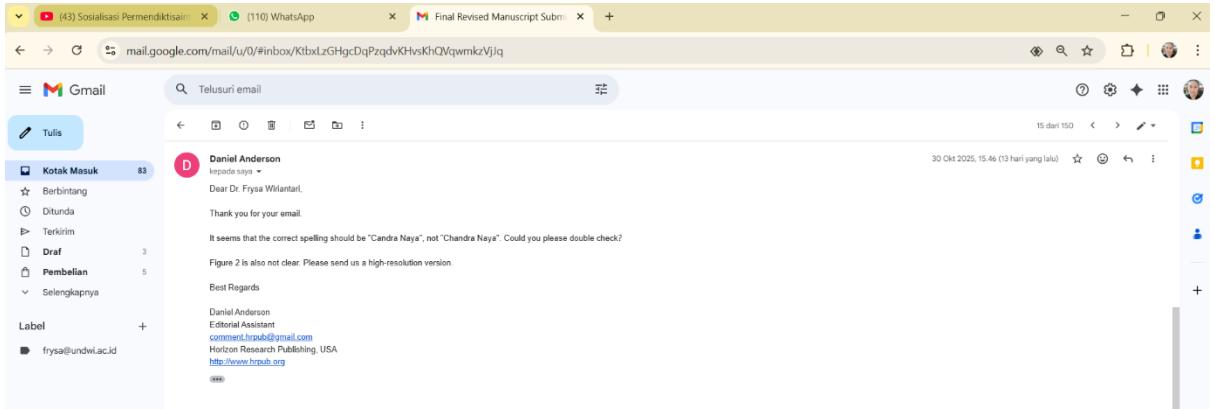
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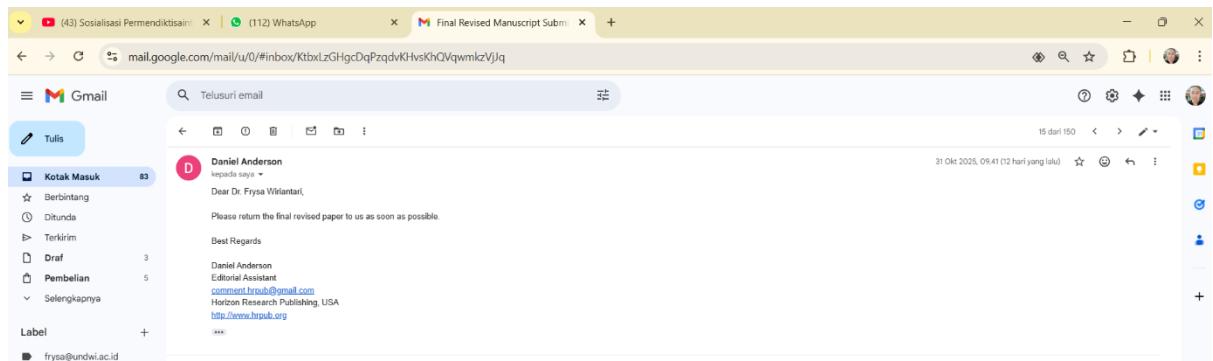
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## 14. REVIEW KE-4, 30 & 31 OKTOBER 2025



A screenshot of a Gmail inbox. The inbox contains 83 messages. The message from Daniel Anderson is highlighted. The message content is as follows:

Daniel Anderson  
kepada saya  
Dear Dr. Frysa Wilantari,  
Thank you for your email.  
It seems that the correct spelling should be "Candra Naya", not "Chandra Naya". Could you please double check?  
Figure 2 is also not clear. Please send us a high-resolution version  
Best Regards  
Daniel Anderson  
Editorial Assistant  
[comment.hrpub@gmail.com](mailto:comment.hrpub@gmail.com)  
Horizon Research Publishing, USA  
<http://www.hrpub.org>



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Best Regards  
Daniel Anderson  
Editorial Assistant  
[comment.hrpub@gmail.com](mailto:comment.hrpub@gmail.com)  
Horizon Research Publishing, USA  
<http://www.hrpub.org>

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

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**Abstract** Sin Ming Hui Chandra 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 Chandra 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 Chandra 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** Chandra Naya, Symbolic Architecture, Chinese Heritage, Transformation, Sustainability, Colonial Hybridity

## 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

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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 Chandra Naya, exemplifies this Chinese architectural heritage. Located at Jalan Gajah Mada No. 188, West Jakarta, it is a designated cultural heritage site. Chandra 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 Chandra 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 Chandra 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, Chandra Naya has developed into a center of Chinese Indonesian political and social activity.

In 1992, Chandra Naya was sold to a Chinese Indonesian company called Modern Group. In 2012, Chandra 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 Chandra 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 Chandra 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 Chandra Naya. This research is essential given Chandra 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 Chandra 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 Chandra 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

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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 Chandra 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 Chandra 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 Chandra 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.

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## 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 Chandra 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.

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

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

Data Source	Key Findings	Symbolic Meaning / Interpretation
Observation (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 ±160 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 (community members, heritage experts, academics)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Chandra 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>- Chandra 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 Krenteng, Chinese Laseman, Chinese Vernacular, Mosque, Javanese, and colonial

Style	Characteristics	Symbolic Meaning
<b>Krenteng</b>	Multi tiered roof, red color, dragon/loian ornaments	Religion, devotion, protection, prosperity
<b>Chinese Laseman</b>	Blending of local Javanese and Chinese form	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, Chandra 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. Chandra 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 Chandra 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 micro space, 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]. Chandra 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 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 Chandra Naya Building is referred to in Figure 3.

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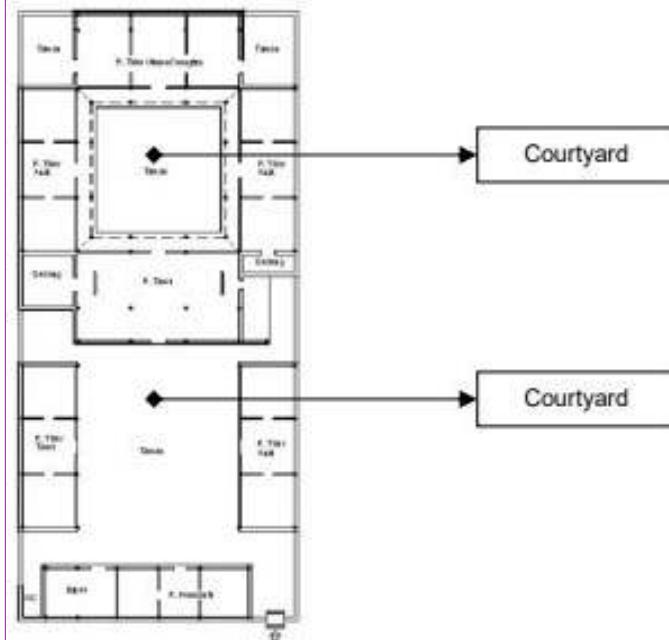


Figure 2. Traditional Chinese Building Floor Plan. (Source: Handinoto, 2008)



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 Chandra Naya floor plan can be seen in Figure 4.

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

1. Front Terrace as transitional public-private space

The front terrace is a space without walls. 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.

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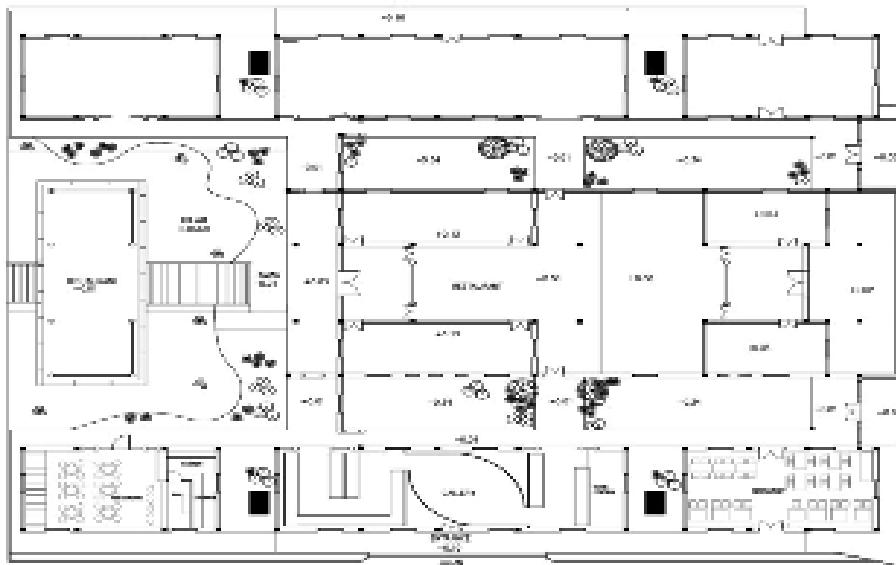


Figure 4. Chandra Naya Floor Plan. (Source: Priyomarsonor, 2022)

## 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 Chandra 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' wife 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 Chandra 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.

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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 Chandra 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 Chandra 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, Chandra 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 for 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 Chandra 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 Chandra 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]. Chandra 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

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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 Chandra 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 Chandra Naya building.

#### 5. Walls and structure

The Chandra 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 Chandra 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 Chandra 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)

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

- Located at the rear of the main building, the door, including its frame, measures 240 cm x 345 cm.
- The carvings on the rear door depict Lingzhi mushroom vegetation, a motif rooted in Chinese mythology.
- 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):

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



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

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

- This louvered door has dimensions of 270 cm in height and 140 cm in width.
- 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, Chandra 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, Chandra Naya's design emphasizes a fusion of domestic, social, and bureaucratic functions shaped by Dutch colonial urbanism. This comparative lens situates Chandra 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, Chandra 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 Chandra 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 Chandra 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

Chandra 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 Chandra 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 Chandra 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 Chandra Naya through triangulated data (observation, interviews, and literature).
2. By providing a comparative perspective from Southeast Asia (Penang, Singapore, Bangkok, Manila) that highlights Chandra 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 Chandra 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.

## Acknowledgements

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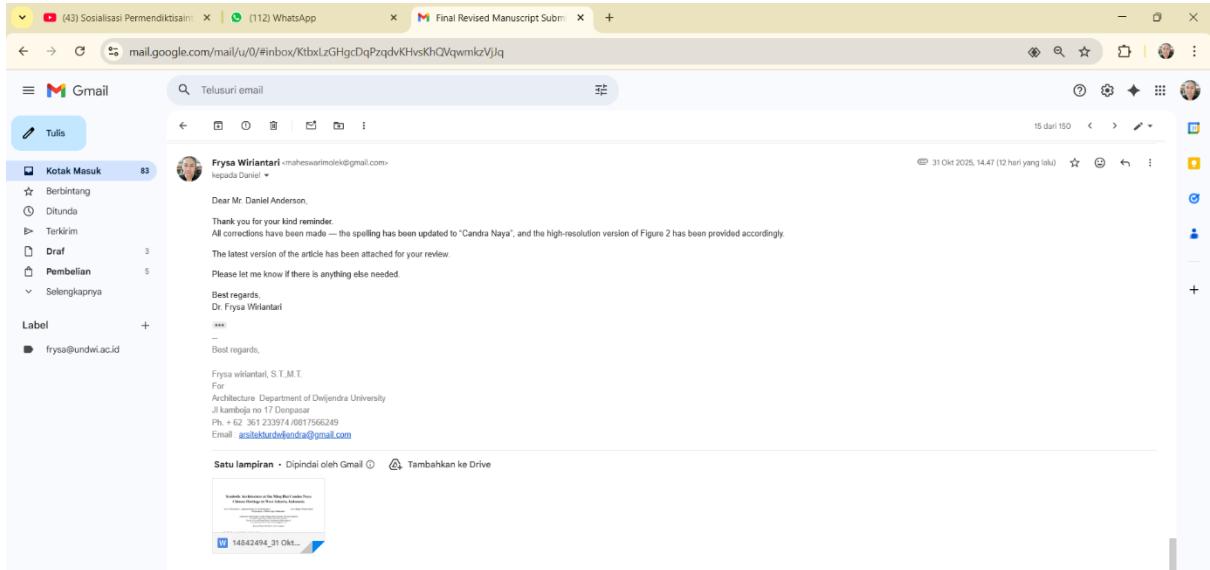
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## 15. REVISI KE-4, LATEST VERSION, 31 OKTOBER 2025



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**Frysa Wiriantari** <maheswarimolek@gmail.com>  
kepada Daniel

31 Okt 2025, 14:47 (12 hari yang lalu)

Dear Mr. Daniel Anderson,

Thank you for your kind reminder.

All corrections have been made — the spelling has been updated to 'Candra Naya', and the high-resolution version of Figure 2 has been provided accordingly.

The latest version of the article has been attached for your review.

Please let me know if there is anything else needed.

Best regards,  
Dr. Frysa Wiriantari

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Best regards,

Frysa Wiriantari, S.T.M.T  
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# LATEST VERSION

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

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(b): Frysa Wiriantari, Ngakan Ketut Acwin Dwijendra, Arya Bagus Mahadwijati Wijaatmaja, I Made Agus Mahendra (2025). *Symbolic Architecture at Sin Ming Hui Candra Naya Chinese Heritage in West Jakarta, Indonesia. Civil Engineering and Architecture*, X(X), XXX - XXX. DOI: 10.13189/XXX.2025.110XXX.

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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

### 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.

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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,

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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.

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## 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.

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## 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.

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**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 (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 ±160 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 (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 Krenteng, Chinese Laseman, Chinese Vernacular, Mosque, Javanese, and colonial

Style	Characteristics	Symbolic Meaning
<b>Krenteng</b>	Multi tiered roof, red color, dragon/loian ornaments	Religion, devotion, protection, prosperity
<b>Chinese Laseman</b>	Blending of local Javanese and Chinese form	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 micro space, 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 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.

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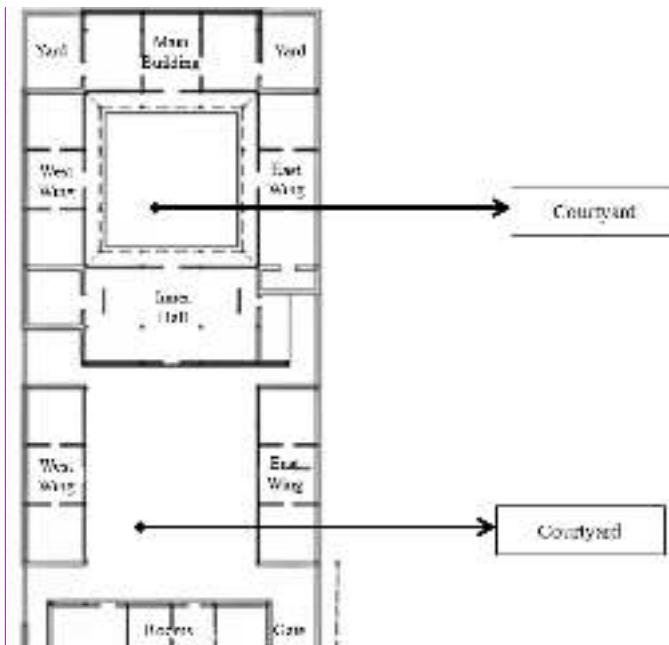


Figure 2. Traditional Chinese Building Floor Plan. (Source: Handinoto, 2008)



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 transitional public-private space

The front terrace is a space without walls. 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.

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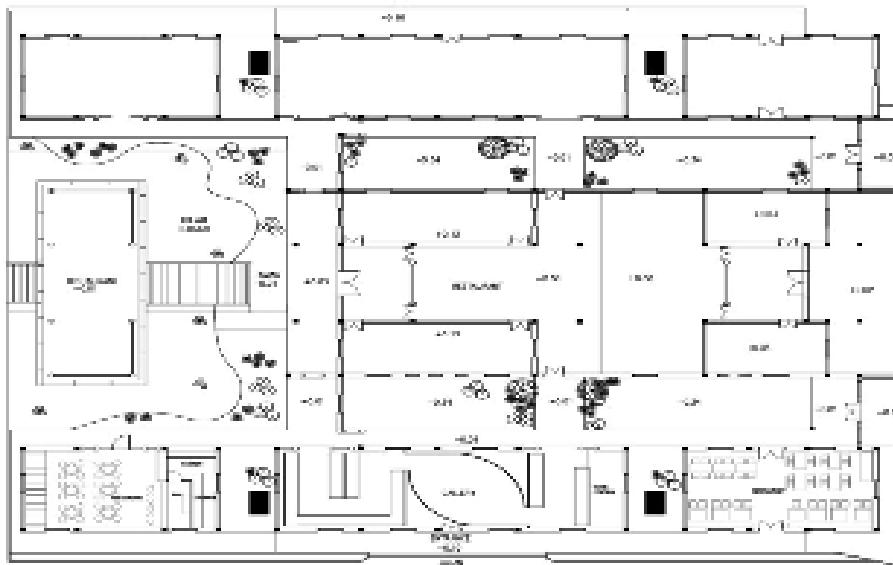


Figure 4. Candra Naya Floor Plan. (Source: Priyomarsonor, 2022)

## 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' wife 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.

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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 for 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 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

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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)

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

- Located at the rear of the main building, the door, including its frame, measures 240 cm x 345 cm.
- The carvings on the rear door depict Lingzhi mushroom vegetation, a motif rooted in Chinese mythology.
- 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):

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



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

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

- This louvered door has dimensions of 270 cm in height and 140 cm in width.
- 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.

## Acknowledgements

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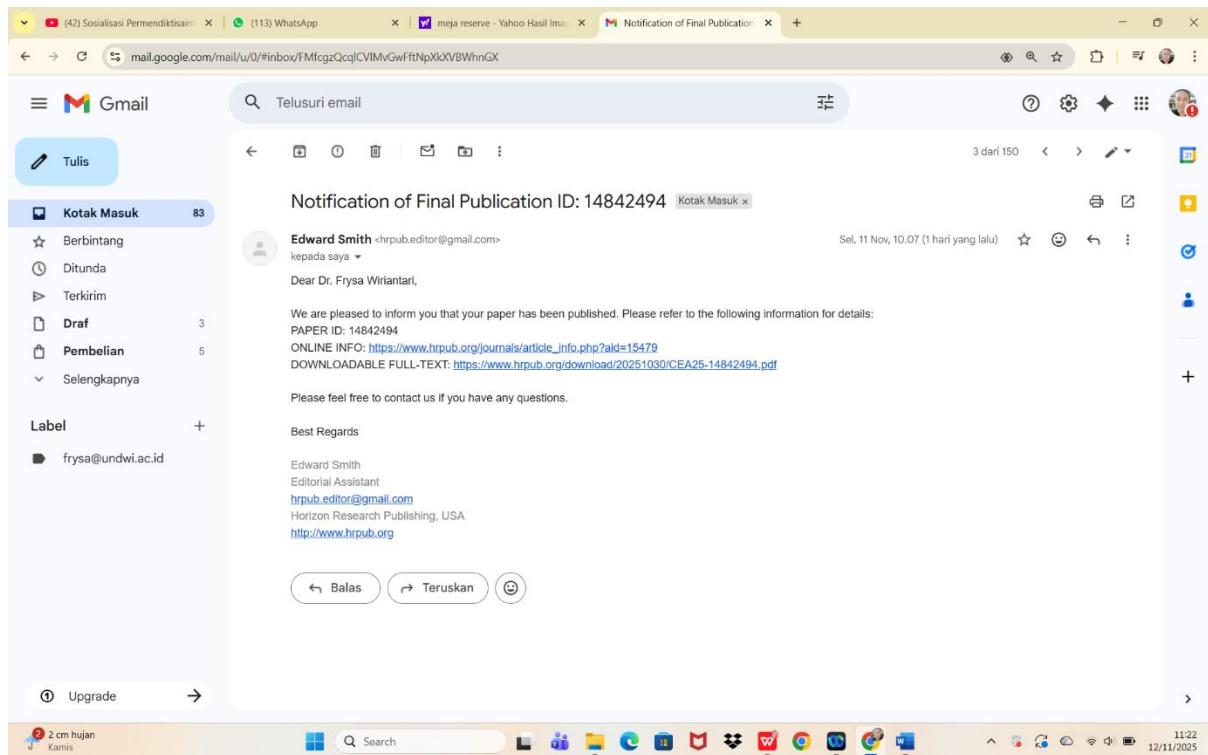
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**Symbolic Architecture at Sin Ming Hui Candra Naya: Chinese Heritage in West Jakarta, Indonesia**

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**Abstract**

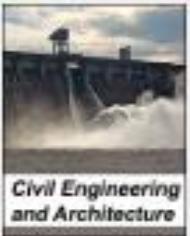
Sin Ming Hui Candra Naya is one of the most significant Chinese heritage buildings in Jakarta, Indonesia, originally built as the residence of the Khoew family, a prominent Chinese-Indonesian lineage during the colonial era. Over time, this heritage structure has undergone substantial changes in form, function, and meaning due to rapid urban development and modernization pressures in Jakarta's 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 expression. 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 courtyards configurations with Dutch colonial memory and local adaptations. Symbolically, the building embodies cultural continuity, resilience, and syncretism—representing values of harmony (He), prosperity (Fu), and spiritual 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 policy. 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, conservators, 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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# 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

## 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 (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 60</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 (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 <i>fa çade</i> 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.

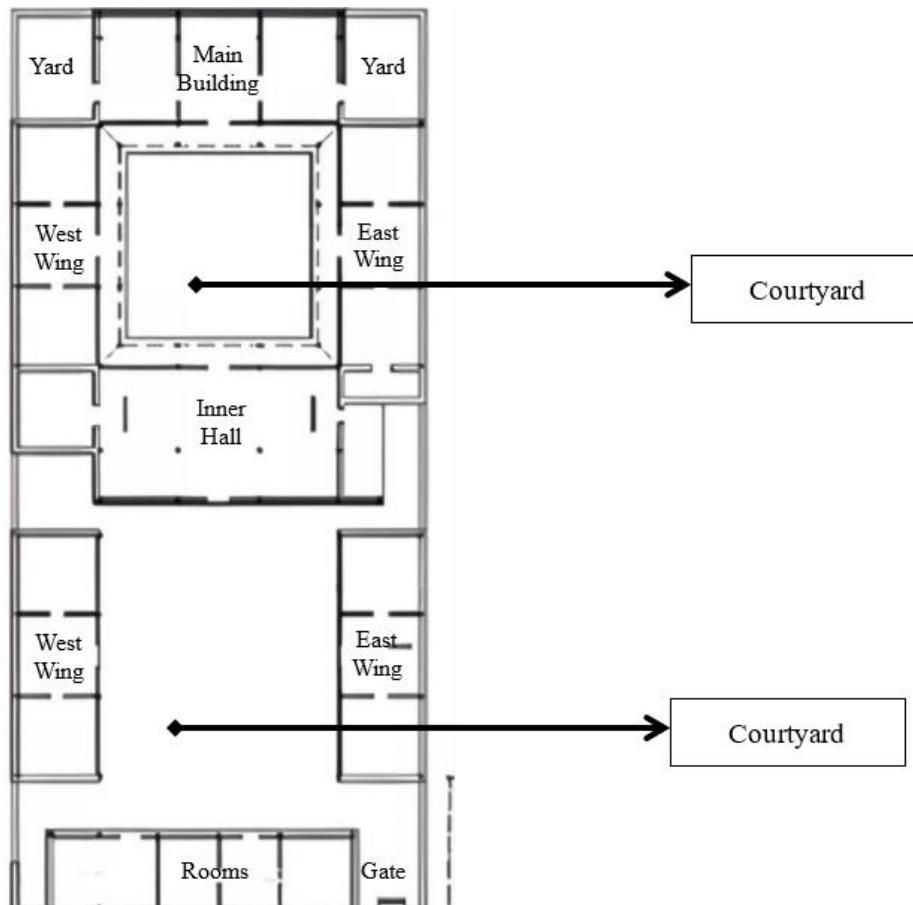


Figure 2. Traditional Chinese Building Floor Plan. (Source: Handinoto, 2008)



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

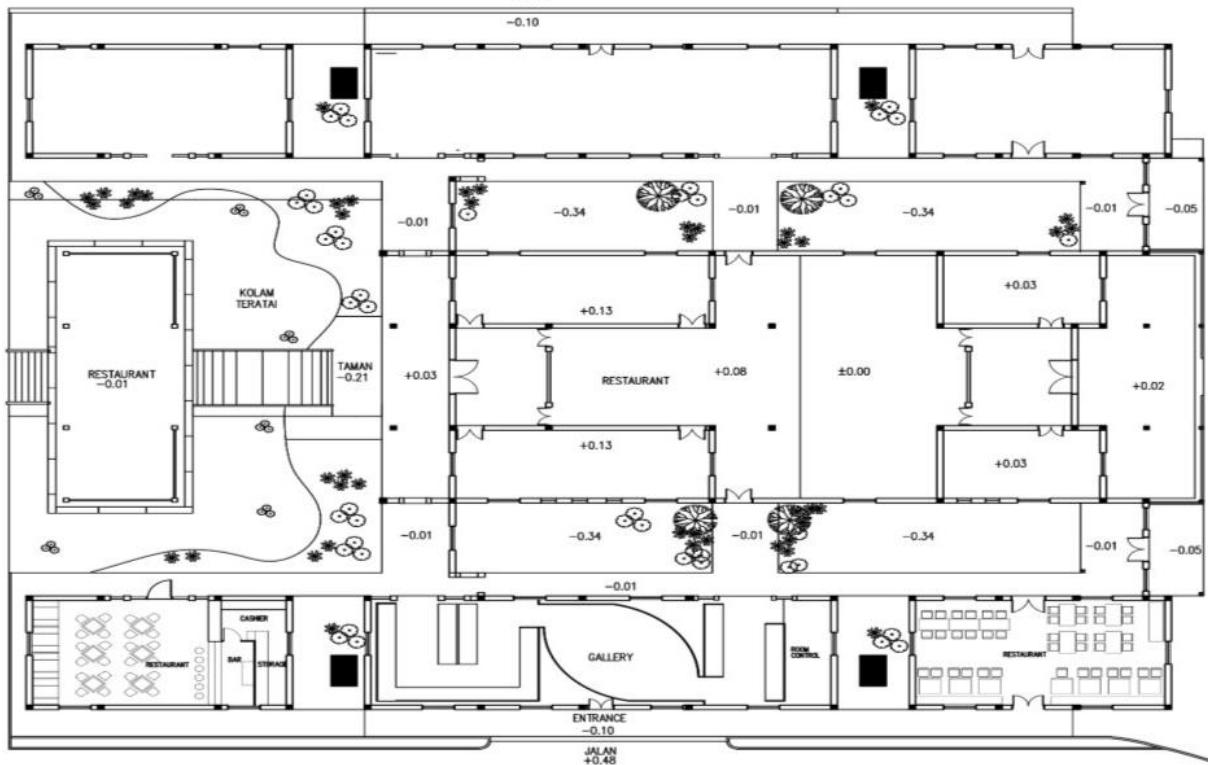
This second courtyard is the most spacious and is directly accessible from two other courtyards on the right and left sides of the building (third and fourth courtyards). The third and fourth courtyards are the separation between

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 Khow 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 Khou 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):

- The main entrance consists of double-leaf doors.
- The wooden door frames are about 20 cm thick.
- The enormous size of the doors symbolizes the ease of wealth entering the building.
- 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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