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Physical elements of building facades in narrating historical locality values: Case study in Alun-alun Contong, Surabaya, Indonesia

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Abstract

A historical location, especially in urban areas, can experience degradation in its historical value over a long period of time due to development. Especially when there is no cultural heritage status. Until certain conditions are met, history becomes blurred. Especially when it is not documented and written down. In this research, physical elements of building facades are used to highlight the local historical value of that location. This research involves a case study of Alun-alun Contong in Surabaya, Indonesia, to reveal its local historical value. In the process, this research will weave existing historical stories with documentary evidence from photographs and physical buildings in the field. Comparative analysis is also needed to look at the context of the city's historical unity as well as validate the findings. Thus, the physical elements of building facades can help in archiving and narrating local history.

Keywords: Alun-alun contong, element facades, historical area, locality value

Introduction

A historical value can gradually decrease over time due to development, especially in urban regions. As the second-largest city in Indonesia, Surabaya has quickly developed into a major metropolis due to the development of massive buildings that are the most visible. On the other hand, a lot of people overlook the fact that this modern city has a rich history, giving it the nickname "the city of heroes". Surabaya's history has existed since the 15th century, when it was under the rule of the Majapahit kingdom. Then it became part of the colonial Dutch East Indies until the Indonesian War of Independence in 1945 in the 20th century. Until now, Surabaya has always played an important role in various things.

Unfortunately, this city's conservation history has not been as extensive as the development of these tall buildings. Alun-alun Contong is one region that might be historically significant, yet few people even know about it. Formerly the southern square, Alun-alun Contong was included in the Surabaya duchy, or palace. This location has some invisible evidence of existing street names and heritage stories from each existing resident, even though this land is included in the historical Kampung Keraton (English: Palace Village) area, according to the Land Use Map ^[1].

Mainly on Jalan Kramat Gantung, which is in the Kampung Keraton area, it leaves several Dutch East Indies-style buildings amidst the dominance of contemporary-style buildings that function as shops. Architecture consisting of several buildings in the same location has the potential to explain history. This is because the quality of the character relates to a single period and links to landscapes and natural settings, especially in buildings that have existed for a long time ^[2]. With minimal documentation, archives, and physical conditions, this is what causes historical degradation, and incomprehensive studies will also make long-term development difficult. Therefore, this research will explore the physical elements of the building façade in narrating the local historical value at this location, using Alun-alun Contong in Surabaya as a case study.

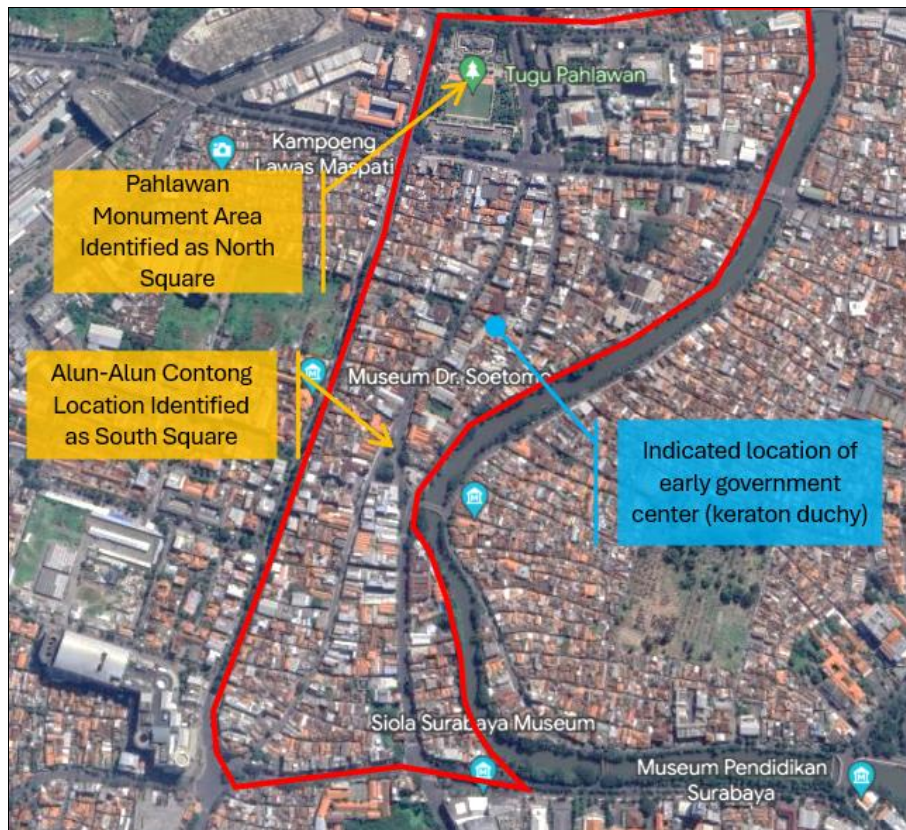
Materials and Methods

This research discusses an area in the city of Surabaya called Alun-alun Contong. There are several descriptions of this name. First, Alun-alun Contong is a sub-district-level government

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administrative area. With regional boundaries as shown in Figure 1. Second, Alun-alun Contong is an ancient regional name that refers to a square of city, the centre of

government, which is also located in Alun-alun Contong Sub-district but with a very small area and no physical evidence of it at the time.



Source: map from Google Earth with author's analysis

Fig 1: Current district boundaries of Alun-alun Contong

Before looking for physical evidence that can provide an overview of the history of Alun-alun Contong, the first thing that must be done is to understand the history of both Alun-alun Contong itself and the position of Alun-alun Contong in relation to Surabaya. A holistic understanding of history will make observation and identification of details in buildings more comprehensive. The search for evidence on building elements does not only look at their age and shape but also compares them with cultural heritage buildings where the architectural style is clearly visible. The relationship between building type and urban fabric over time^[3] can show how buildings developed in a particular area, which ultimately gave rise to the buildings that dominate today. This analysis can indicate a trend in building styles in Alun-alun Contong, especially since there are only 2 buildings based on the Land Use Map (1) that are cultural heritage buildings. Validation can be done in two ways. You can use old photos at this location. If not, you can involve residents at the location who understand the story. The results of tracing physical evidence, history, and current conditions are analysed by descriptive narratives into an interrelated unity.

Results and Discussion

The History of Alun-alun Contong & The Entire Surabaya

Kwanda^[4] explains in his research that the beginning of Surabaya's development began in the 14th–15th centuries, when it was a port area for agricultural and plantation

products. Until finally, at the end of the 15th century, the Majapahit Kingdom acquired this area. When colonialism entered Indonesia in the 18th century, Surabaya was under colonial rule. In the Colonial Era (18–20 centuries) until now, Alun-alun Contong was physically located between two historical areas that were previously known, namely the Pahlawan monument area and Tunjungan.

Long before the colonial period, Alun-alun Contong was an important area in the kingdom (keraton). Damayanti and Handinoto^[5] explain that the "Alun-alun" or city square, in the concept of urban spatial planning in Java usually consists of two squares, the north and south squares, between which there is the palace or government center. Therefore, if we use this concept, Alun-alun Contong is the city square on the south side, while the Pahlawan monument area is the city square on the north side. The north square is used for state activities, while the south square is for more private palace affairs. Unfortunately, the physical palace and written evidence do not exist at all. According to historian Aminuddin Kasdi from Surabaya State University (Unesa), quoted from the Surabaya News Website^[6], "all that remains of the Surabaya Palace are the names of areas and streets. Kampung Keraton is currently said to be the residence of kings. Some of the names of the streets not far from Kampung Keraton include Pandean, or the blacksmith's (Indonesia: pande) place. Then Kawatan, which is the centre for wire (Indonesia: kawat) crafts". Alun-alun Contong itself has a funnel shape, as shown in Figure 2.

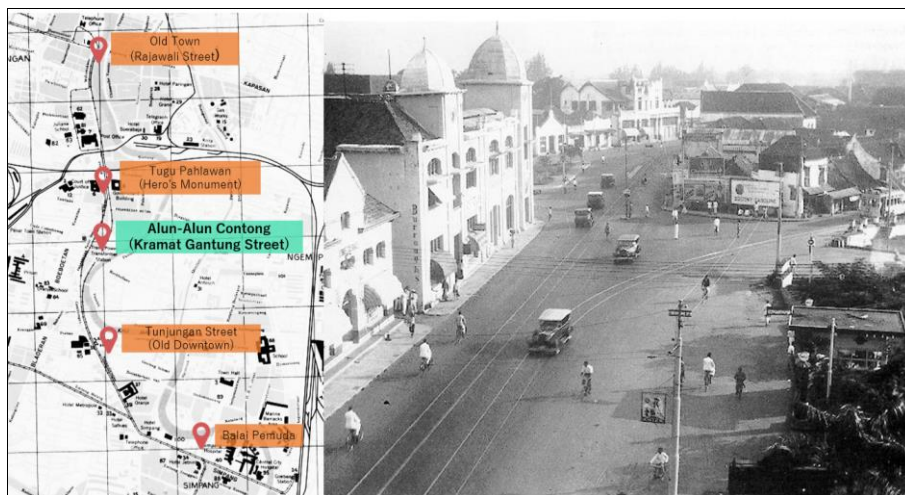


Source: Past Photos from KITLV Universiteit Leiden, present photos from Google Street View

Fig 2: Comparison Alun-alun Contong “Square” in past (circa 1930-1935) and present

As a city that experienced development and as a center for trading activities during the colonial period [7], Surabaya continuing the activity center that existed in the previous period, the initial center of Surabaya was located in the Jembatan Merah area or the current Rajawali Street to Kembang Jepun Street. The center of this old city emerged as a result of the existence of the Kalimas Traditional Harbor which was on the Jembatan Merah river. Along with the development of trade, Surabaya is experiencing rapid north-south development, where it is north is the port side and south is for housing and plantations needs [4].

Alun-alun Contong, which is on the south side of the initial centre of Surabaya, is also experiencing development. This is what makes the areas connected to each other. From north to south, from the point of the Jembatan Merah Area - Tugu Pahlawan (hero’s monument) - Alun-alun Contong (Kramat Gantung Street) - Tunjungan Street - to the Balai Pemuda – even as far south as possible. Previously, trains had connected areas in Surabaya. However, specifically for this area, in the early 1923 [8] these areas were once connected by tram lines, as shown in Figure 3, to support commercial activities.



Source: edited by authors KITLV Universiteit Leiden Digital Collections

Fig 3: Tram Map and Past Condition in Alun-alun Contong circa 1930

Existing Building Facades as Physical Evidence of Historical Tracing

One that influences the image of place identity is the visual impact of buildings, especially new ones. This is possible by making sure of the following: continuity of a site's functional function, continuity of the process of maintaining the space (i.e., continuity of the process of maintaining and arranging the social and physical space of a site); and continuity of the community's physical presence on the site [9]. Urban planners should consider preserving existing structures and changing facades [10]. The facade is an important part because it is the face of the building that

faces the street or the outside environment [11]. It can be the front, side, or rear. The facade of a building can be an image of a place, especially regarding its embedded history [12]. In architecture, the major classification types can be seen in the spatial system (formers of space), physical systems (formers of visual elements), and stylistic systems (formers of meaning or principles). One of the easiest to see is physical systems such as the shape of doors, columns, wall materials, roofs, etc [13]. In Garudea, Soemardiono [14] the typology of physical facades in Dutch East Indies-style buildings consists of nine main items with explanations of the sub-classes, namely:

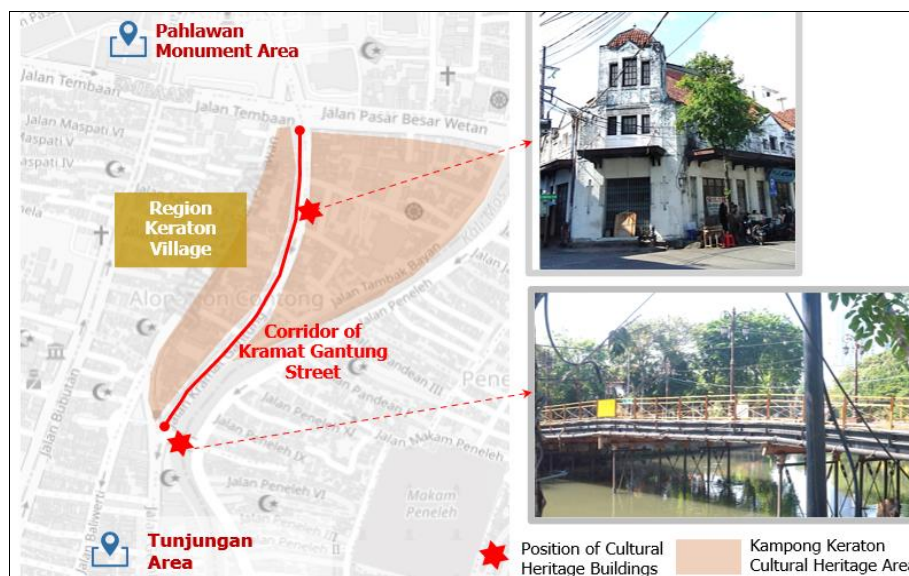
Table 1: Physical Items Forming the Dutch East Indies Style Façade

No.	Main Classification	Sub-class
1	Shape of Entrance	-
2	Wall details	Pillars, door & window openings, type of wall material, ornaments on openings
3	Arcade/curved beam	-
4	Outdoor space on multi-storey floors	balcony, loggia, canopy (no outdoor space)
5	Fence on multi-storey floors	-
6	Roof	Roof shape/gevel, nok (rooftop decoration), dormer (roof window), balustrade (roof fence/bars)
7	Tower	-
8	External stairs	-
9	Nameplate/signage	-

Source: [14]

The Keraton Village region, based on the Land Use Map (1), has two main roads, namely Pahlawan street and Kramat Gantung street. The tram line that passes through this area divides these two roads before finally joining back together, as seen in Figure 3. The search for physical

evidence will focus on Jalan Kramat Gantung because Jalan Pahlawan does not contain any cultural heritage buildings or is still in the Dutch East Indies style. Meanwhile, on Kramat Gantung street, there is two cultural heritage building, as shown in Figure 4.



Source: author's analysis and documentation

Fig 4: Position of Cultural Heritage Object in Alun-alun Contong

Figures 5 to 9 show physical evidence of the remaining buildings, which are still in the style of the past. These photos also serve as documentation archives for historical preservation, so that no parts are removed or damaged.

Figure 5, which is a cultural heritage building, is a building with very high significance in this area. The physical parts are quite complete in explaining Dutch East Indies-style buildings.



Source: author's analysis and documentation

Fig 5: Existing building 1st as physical evidence and its facade elements



Source: author's analysis and documentation

Fig 6: Existing building 2nd as physical evidence and its facade elements



Source: author's analysis and documentation

Fig 7: Existing building 3rd as physical evidence and its facade elements

In Figures 6 and 7, there are two buildings that are not far from the building in Figure 5. This building looks identical in parts to the building in Figure 5, such as the use of gevel and ornaments on the sides of the roof, the use of wooden canopies, and decorations on the roof and openings.

Window on the 2nd floor. Although it is not designated as a cultural heritage building, this building is thought to have been inspired by historical-style buildings, as in Figure 5, or Dutch East Indies-style buildings in other locations.



Source: author's analysis and documentation

Fig 8: Existing building 4th as physical evidence and its facade elements

In Figure 8, you can clearly see that the building materials are very old, but you can still see the detailed ornamentation on the roof or sides of the roof. This condition is quite convincing that this building has historical value. Meanwhile, in Figure 9, it is an old-style building where the details of the physical elements still look old-style, such as

the gavel ornaments on the side of the roof, the balcony on the 2nd floor, the shape of the windows on the 2nd floor, or even the wooden doors on the 1st floor. However, if you look at the building in Figure 5, these buildings look different. The details of this search will be explored further in the next section.



Source: author's analysis and documentation

Fig 9: Other buildings as physical evidence and its facade elements



Source: author's analysis and documentation

Fig 10: Viewing post building as physical evidence and it's facade elements

Apart from buildings that function as shops or commercial buildings or warehouses, there is one building that is thought to be a relic of the past, namely a gate at the entrance to the village. If you look at the physical components, there is an arcade, then there are ornaments on the walls and a roof in the form of a roof. Meanwhile, on the back side, there is a balcony and a door to enter the building. Based on these physical conditions, it is very likely that this building functions as a viewing post. The buildings in this photo can be said to be the remaining.

Dutch East Indies-style buildings, even though they are not included in the cultural heritage category. A more detailed analysis involving various scientific fields is needed to trace its authenticity so that it can be designated as a cultural heritage building, even though it is in the weak category.

Connecting Current Evidence in the Wider Area

Connectivity, however, is not only something tangible in the form of movement of individuals and populations but also has an intangible dimension. Cultural heritage connection in the landscape is normally constituted of complexes of components (e.g., buildings, vegetation elements, patches with different land use) and their spatial structure and juxtapositions, e.g., traditional village systems ^[15], the connection of the landscape is the key component of heritage corridors. Heritage trails often develop from linear paths with different types of paths at various geographic sizes that define routes connecting important items of an area's heritage. Cultural heritage trails can either be planned paths or routes that have evolved naturally. The terms "trail," "route," and "corridor" are frequently used

interchangeably, despite the fact that each has a more detailed definition^[16].

Therefore, it is very important to connect what is found inside Contong Square with the wider area around it. This also validates the discovery of archives and physical evidence in the previous section. Returning to the history of Surabaya, the development of architectural styles in Surabaya itself is dominated by the colonial-era style. This was influenced by the long period of colonialism. However, Faber^[17] explains that throughout the colonial period, there were also several forts and buildings that were demolished to support the development of the city. In this period, because of the diversity of ethnicities that existed, there were also influences from Javanese, Arabic, and Chinese architecture. This can be seen in the Kembang Jepun as chinatown and Ampel area with arabic culture, which show the acculturation of these ethnicities^[16]. This combination is often called Indische style, a combination of European and local styles.



Source: KITLV Universiteit Leiden Digital Collections

Fig 11: Photo archive of Alun-alun Contong circa 1930

In Figure 11, you can see the tram passing through Jalan Kramat Gantung. The existing buildings have various styles. There are buildings with gable roofs without ornaments, but there are those that use gevels and roof ornaments like crowns. There are also buildings that have balconies, and there are also those that don't. On the first floor, there are wooden doors, and some are equipped with arcades or curved beams. However, one thing that these buildings have in common is the function of the first floor as a shop or commercial area. Meanwhile, the second floor is used as a residence.



Source: KITLV Universiteit Leiden Digital Collections

Fig 12: Photo archive of Kembang Jepun (top) & Jembatan Merah Straat (bottom) 1930

When compared with Figure 12, which is the centre of Surabaya, Kramat Gantung Street has the same building style as the buildings on Kembang Jepun Street (Figure 12, top), which is the Chinatown area (formerly Handelstraat). Apart from the similarity of the shapes of the facade elements, another similarity is that the width of the existing buildings tends to be small. Meanwhile, in the current condition of the existing buildings (in Section 3.2), the width of the existing buildings tends to be above 10 metres, as shown in Figure 12 (bottom), which is the current Jembatan Merah Road (formerly: Willemskade).

If you follow the tram route described in Section 3.1, namely: Jembatan Merah Area - Tugu Pahlawan (the hero's monument) - Alun-alun Contong (Kramat Gantung Street) - Tunjungan Street - to the Balai Pemuda, then Alun-alun Contong has nothing in common with the area flanking it. Contong squares tend to be populist, traditional or ethnic, and inhabited by middle- to lower-income classes.

The Narrative of Historical Locality Values in Alun-alun Contong

Based on the analysis in the previous section, Alun-alun Contong, especially on Kramat Gantung Street, has a populist, traditional/ethnic character and is inhabited by middle- to lower-income groups. Even though it was inhabited and activities in the past targeted the lower middle class economy, this area has a strategic and important position for Surabaya's economy because it is crossed by a tram line to connect the middle to upper trade areas in the Red Bridge and Jalan Tunjungan areas. This is also strengthened by the Paneleh Bridge, which connects it to other residential areas (kampong/urban villages). The bridge, which is right at the intersection where Alun-alun Contong "Square" used to be, certainly has a very important role.

If you look at history from the kingdom period to the colonial period, Alun-alun Contong has the value of a people's trading area that is close to or adjacent to the centre of the palace and easy to access from the large area of land, namely Alun-alun Contong "Square". As a city that, during the kingdom and early colonial period, depended on water and river transportation, Alun-alun Contong is strongly suspected of being a loading dock or even for palace transportation purposes. With the change in the city's transportation system from water transportation to land transportation such as cars, trains, or trams, the function and existence of Alun-alun Contong have been degraded. This could be one of the things that makes his physical condition gradually disappear.

This condition was also strengthened because the Alun-alun Contong area during the colonial period was not an important concern for the government, and life developed sporadically. The old buildings that still remain can provide this picture. The acculturation of Dutch East Indies-style buildings and local ethnic values makes the buildings in the Alun-alun Contong area unique and distinctive. Making local style a distinctive identity in describing buildings with lower middle-class economic functions based on physical evidence, connectivity, and archival photographic evidence, it is very likely that these remaining buildings were not designed by architects, so it is up to the imagination of building owners (ordinary people) to copy buildings designed by architects of that time while still incorporating traditional or local values. Thus, the strength of local

historical values can be used as capital in future conservation and development considerations.

Conclusion

Physical Elements of Building Façade in Narrating Historical Locality Values

In narrating local history at a location, it is very important to collect historical stories first to provide an initial overview. This initial picture can be compared with the current physical condition to see the contrasting differences. This difference can be used as a reference in tracing further historical excavations or identifying physical evidence in the field. The sequence of historical periods will give birth to different architectural styles. Likewise, ethnic phenomena and location factors The physical components of the building will be separated, such as the elements forming the facade, in an effort to find a value relationship with the location or other buildings.

So, in narrating the local historical value of a location, physical elements of the building façade can be used. Apart from understanding historical stories that have previously existed and excavating physical evidence (in this case, buildings), it is necessary to compare the condition of the building with the surrounding area or wider area. As final validation, the use of comparative analysis with old photos at that location can strengthen the analysis results.

Limitation of This Research

This research only uses photo data and existing physical conditions in its analysis. Validation can be carried out because there are old photos of this object area, so comparative analysis can be carried out. However, if old photos are not available, validation can be carried out by involving the building owner or local residents who may have inherited and understood the story of that location. The involvement of local residents in this research (Alun-alun Contong, Surabaya) is a limitation that can be investigated in further research.

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