

Bandung

A short history on Urban and architectural development

by
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General lecture

Introduction

Bandung is a relative young town; a boomtown which expanded in a short period and started to grow at the beginning of the twentieth century. When we glance the map of Bandung, it is almost possible to read the historical development with a few explanation. The area around the Jl.Asia-Afrika is the central business district; directly at the south, the 'Alun-Alun' (recently partly destroyed by the enlargement of the mosque) and the former residence of the Bupati (Regent) might justify the conclusion that this area is the oldest part of Bandung.

It took some time before the town really started to grow. In around 1850 there lived about 12000 inhabitants in Bandung; in that year Bandung was appointed as the Residence for the part of West-Java named Pariangan, which till then settled in Cianjur.

The most important push to the development of Bandung was certainly the relocation of some Departments from Jakarta 'Batavia' to Bandung. It started in 1914 with the Department of War, followed in 1921 by the Department of Roads and Transportation. In the year 1906 Bandung became an independent municipality. The young Municipality Bandung started its impressive development.

Between 1906 and 1949 Bandung has grown from a medium sized town with 38.000 inhabitants to the third City in Nederlands-Indië (the colonial name of Indonesia), with 590.000 inhabitants.

In 1929, Bandung did become the Governmental approval for the so called 'Framework plan', which covered an area of 12.758 ha, divided in plans for mainly the Northern- and partly the Southern areas of the town.



The greatest number of the European population lived in the Northern part of the town in these new developed areas. The river Cikapundung manifested their selves - in this part of the town in a natural valley with designed green- and park facilities. Bandung-North was divided in an Army area, a Governmental area, areas for dwelling houses and villas, small-housing for the common people and kampung-areas for the labour people. The Chinese inhabitants lived - for the greatest number - in the compact quarter Pasar Baru, South-West of the railroad. The greatest number of Indonesian people lived in the Southern part of the town, like many of the Indo-Europeans.

The garden city concept was successfully applied in the Northern part of the town. But the valley of the river Cikapundung - which was ones fitted up as a park landscape (called Ijzerpark) is nowadays occupied by spontaneous kampung-settlements. Particular the Northern part of the town was designed with large public spaces, like streets and lanes, squares and parks; spacious and green residential areas in which public and private greens



are integrated. The roads were fit out with, originally, a consequent planting of trees.

Architecture

Considering the subject of architectural heritage in Bandung, one will conclude that the largest number of architectural monuments has been realized in the twentieth century, except for a small number of buildings - with mostly an original Governmental function - built in the nineteenth century in an Neo-Classic style.



Until about 1918, architects designed their buildings in a Eclectic architectural concept. The Department building of War (1910-1915) and the Javasche bank 'Bank Indonesia Negara' (1915) are superb examples. In the architectural designs of dwelling houses and villas, we are confronted with references to architecture developments in the Dutch garden cities.

In Bandung, Art Deco is strongly manifest in the

ornamental/artificial elements in the street facades, behind such a beauty full decor facade is often hiding an ordinary building with a helm roof and covered with tiles; these architecture is mostly the product of rebuilding and upgrading of commercial buildings in the twenties and thirties. Art Deco is also manifest in the soft and curved lines in architecture (particular Bandung) and sometimes is - what we call 'Art Deco' and often the bresult of the work of Indonesian artists, particular concerns the ornamental detail is the facades of buildings.

Most of the buildings and dwelling houses, realized in Bandung, are designed by architects who lived and worked in Bandung. A great number of the Bandung-architects were educated in Holland. But there are also Indonesian influences

and - just to make it more complicated there are also North-American and British-Indies influences in the Modern architecture of pre-independent Indonesia.

The first important buildings in Bandung - realized in the twentieth century - are designed by the architects 'Hulswit-Fermont, Batavia and Cuypers, Amsterdam'. The first building realized - in 1909 - by these architects is the toko building 'de Vries' at the Jl.Asia-Afrika, in front of the junction with the Jl.Braga, with the characteristic tower element. The



office of the bank 'Impor-Ekspor' in the older days the 'Nederlandsche Handels Maatschappij' (the Factory) on the Jl.Asia- Afrika 'Groote Postweg' is built in 1912 and a few years later, 1915, they designed the building of the bank 'Indonesia' - the former Javasche Bank' . Characteristic for the architectural conception of this bank building - Cuypers designed - is the outward form with the entrance 'portico' with double columns crowned by composition capitals, a cornice and tympanum; the Bandung a short history, by Cor Passchier



order of the facade-windows combined with columns and composition capitals. The relationship with the building of the Bank Impor-Ekspor (Factory) on the Jl.Asia-Afrika is evident but the architecture of this building is more sober in the details.

At the end of July 1920, the Municipal-building company started with the realization of the Department building for the Department of 'Public Works' (known as Gedung Sate); a design by the P.W. architect J.Gerber. The ground plan in U-form, the main entrance in the middle in an exclusive emphasizing shape. The external expression of the building derives from Western and Hindu-Javanese sources. The original plan in U-form was built without the designed West wing. This part of the ground-plan is built in 1977 by architect Sudibyo.



The same year - 1920 - in which the 'Gedung Sate' was built, the

Bandung-Municipal building-company realized the main building of the ITB-complex (Technical University); a design made by architect Henry F.Maclaine Pont. This architecture owed a great deal to the principles of domestic art of building in Indonesia. Maclaine Pont strongly believed that the possibilities of a new architectural development in Indonesia should proceed from the vernacular traditional architecture. He had a great knowledge about the history of Hindu-Javanese architecture, but he did not try - by designing the complex - to perform a historical art of building. Maclaine Pont searched for new ways in architecture, inspired by native principles.



It was the year 1919 when architect C.P.Wolff Schoemaker designed the 'Trade Fair Centre', nowadays known as 'Gedung Kologdam' at the Jl.Ambon. It was the first plan that he realized since he arrived from a journey - for a year - in the USA. And it seems that the work of the great North-American architect Frank Lloyd Whright impressed him very much. Considering this building, looking upon the edification of the outward form, the symmetry in composition, the handling of the roofs and how the building is detailed; one can conclude it is all of a superb - and in that period - renewing quality.



In 1921, he realized a principal rebuilding - the part of the building with the main entrance - of the club Concordia today 'Gedung Merdeka', Jl. Asia/Afrika in Bandung. In the same period he designed the new office for the 'N.V.Olifabrieken Insulinde' (factory office) - a building which was doubled in volume within a few years, nowadays a Police-office.

The design of villa 'Isola', was realized in 1932, in the North at the road to Lembang, the Jl.Setya Budi. It was built for the press magnate Dominique Berretty. It seems Wolff Schoemaker turned - by designing villa Isola - to an approach derived from the sources of the Modern Western architecture movement. Nevertheless it is one of his most unique works, featuring a symmetric ground plan which is also expressed in the facades, the outward proportions of the building are reduced by each level so the whole shape expressed a dramatic silhouette. Consequently he designed the surrounding environment in symmetry and in harmony with the building. Villa Isola is a magnificent example of architecture that fits in the surrounding landscape (in 1932), sawahs with at the background, mountains and the inclines of the Tangkuban Prah. Villa Isola is one of the most superb





examples of achievement in Modern architecture in the thirties.

It is really miraculous, no where else in Indonesia are the influences of the 'Modern movement' in architecture perceptible as in the City Bandung. The architect A.F.Aalbers - born in Rotterdam can be nominated as the most dominant representative of the Modern movement in architecture in the Interbellum in Indonesia. The 'DENIS' bank 'Bank Karya Pembangunan'- situated at the corner of the Jl.Braga/Jl.Naripan - was built in 1935. The genius way how Aalbers placed the building in the situation with the partly receding facades, gives

the intersection the quality of a square. The building with the horizontal dividing of the facades in company with the lift- tower - which nails the building to the ground - is a fine example of Modern architecture. The building is constructed as a steel skeleton with concrete floors. The height of the building and the architectonic shape can be considered as an anticipation on a future - more city like street plan.

In the year 1936 he designed the so called 'three locomotives', named so by his colleague architects; I mean three villas in Bandung North, on the Jl.Dago (Jl.ir.H.Juanda). Again a clear and pure treatment of the external form and using no ornaments. The villa 'Warna Tiga' (three colours) is built in 1938, at the corner of the Jl.ir.H.Juanda/Jl.Sultan Agung. The building is extremely well situated. Coming from the City it is a landmark on the Jl.Juanda and an introduction in direction to the 'Gedung Sate'. The name of the villa 'Warna Tiga' has been derived from the use of colours on the facades instead of the usual white texture; it must have satisfied him very much because he repeated the use of coloured facades with the realization of hotel Savoy-Homann.



The villa has been rebuilt, in the eighties, with a new store, unfortunately in a coarse and clumsy architecture.

The view of hotel Savoy Homann can almost be announced as the trade- mark of the City Bandung. Hotel Homann established in Bandung since 1880. Aalbers designed the present hotel building in 1939. The building is reflecting - just like the bank building on the Jl.Braga - on intentions to create a higher and more united street facade. The way the hotel facade - on the Jl.Asia/Afrika - is formed, back from the alignment and coming forward in a curve is featuring a unique and refined feeling to



situate a building in the environment of an existing street. The architecture of the 'Savoy Homann' building is familiar to the bank building on the Jl.Braga; a horizontal divided building - in four floors - and detailed clearly. As already noted the facades have a coloured texture. Very remarkable was the open ground-floor of the lobby; there was a visual contact with the street beside, nowadays the lobby doesn't exist anymore it is changed in a corridor with some seats. Hotel Savoy Homann is not only a culmination point in the work of Aalbers, but also a mark for the Modern architecture movement in Indonesia before World war 2.



In 1939 Aalbers realized 12 dwelling houses on the Jl.Pagar Gunung, they are today still in a healthy shape. These houses

with strong references to the prairie houses of the North-American architect Frank Lloyd Wright, are dominating - in a very positive way - the quality of the environment. These houses which all have the same architectural expression, do not have the same ground plans; the people who were interested in such a house were allowed to design their own ground plan.

No Where else in Indonesia are the influences of the 'Modern movement' in architecture observable as in the City Bandung. The City should handle carefull with their architectural heritage, which is reflecting the historical development of the town and which is primilary responsible for the exceptional identity of the town.


