Research paper

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Facade Aesthetics in Governor's Offices Representing Regional Architectural Identity

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Abstract

Governor's offices serve both as centers of provincial administration and as visible expressions of regional identity. This study compares the aesthetic elements of the facades of governor's offices in Yogyakarta, Bali, and Semarang. Using a qualitative descriptive and comparative approach, it examines entrances, openings, signage and ornament, color, materials, columns, and roofs through the criteria of rhythm, symmetry, harmony, functional expression, visual emphasis, and axis. The cases display distinct architectural approaches: Javanese vernacular expression in Yogyakarta, a combination of Balinese traditions and contemporary requirements in Bali, and predominantly modern composition in Semarang. These differences indicate how facade elements can convey local cultural references and institutional character. As the study relies on literature, online sources, visual documentation, and indirect observation, its interpretations concern visible architectural features rather than measured public perceptions. The comparison offers a conceptual reference for designing government buildings that respond to their cultural settings.

Keywords: Comparative study, facade aesthetics, governor's office, regional identity, vernacular architecture

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Introduction

Government office buildings accommodate regional administrative activities and represent the authority and identity of the places they serve. In urban settings, they also shape institutional image and the visual identity of a region. Among these buildings, a governor's office functions as a provincial administrative center and a landmark within a government precinct. Its architecture should therefore support administrative use while reflecting local character, culture, and values (Shintania, Wijayanti, and Setyowati 2012).

The facade is the most immediately visible architectural element of a building. As its public face, it communicates institutional function, image, and identity. Facades can also express the social and cultural context in which a building was constructed. In government buildings, their representative role relates to authority, legitimacy, and the visual relationship between government and society. A facade that pays little attention to aesthetic quality and cultural context may appear generic and fail to establish a meaningful connection with its surroundings (S Muhammad Jabbir Avicenna 2019; Fikroh, Handajani, and Razziati 2020).

The architectural approaches used in Indonesian governor's offices vary with their cultural and local contexts. Vernacular design emphasizes traditions and local knowledge as expressions of place, whereas neo-vernacular design combines traditional elements with modern principles to meet contemporary needs. Modern architecture tends to emphasize simplicity of form, functional rationality, and visual economy. These approaches affect entrance forms, opening patterns, ornament, colors, materials, roofs, and columns (Handayani and Nugrahaini 2022; Zafira and Prianto 2023; Enjelina, Putri, and Wahyuni 2021).

Although studies of government buildings have addressed function, symbolism, and architectural styles, fewer have examined facade aesthetics specifically as a means of shaping the visual identity of governor's offices. Previous discussions often separate aesthetics from cultural context and visual experience. This study compares the relationship among physical facade elements, aesthetic composition, and local cultural references. It thereby considers facades as part of how the public encounters a government building visually.

The study examines governor's offices in Yogyakarta, Bali, and Semarang, selected for their different architectural approaches and cultural settings. It asks how aesthetic facade elements are used in these buildings and how they contribute to visual identity. The aim is to identify and compare these elements as a reference for contextual government-building design.

Methods

This study used a qualitative descriptive and comparative approach to examine the aesthetic characteristics of the facades of three buildings: the governor's offices in Yogyakarta, Bali, and Semarang. The comparison considers the same set of facade elements across all three cases (Zayu, Herman, and Vitri 2023).

Data were collected through a review of relevant scholarly and reference literature, online sources, visual documentation, and indirect observation of the buildings. The analysis identified entrances, openings, signage and ornament, color, materials, columns, and roofs. These elements were then compared in terms of visual rhythm, symmetry, harmony, functional expression, visual emphasis, and axis. These criteria provide a framework for interpreting facade composition and architectural character (Anggito and Setiawan 2018).

Results and discussion

Yogyakarta Governor's Office

The Yogyakarta Governor's Office exhibits a strong Javanese vernacular character. Its facade incorporates elements associated with local philosophy and cultural symbolism. The main entrance takes the form of a paduraksa gateway, marking a transition and establishing a spatial hierarchy. Traditional Javanese carvings on the gateway add ornamental detail and convey associations with authority and order (Handayani and Nugrahaini 2022).



Figure 1
Yogyakarta Governor's Office
Source: Not specified in the source manuscript Sunartono and Jibi (2017)

The facade openings are arranged symmetrically and in balanced proportions (figure 1). This composition establishes a regular visual rhythm associated with harmony in traditional Javanese architecture. Traditionally patterned ventilation above the openings may contribute to airflow while enriching the facade. White, cream, and wood-brown tones give the composition a restrained and warm appearance.

The building features local materials, including wood, brick, and clay roof tiles. These choices reinforce its vernacular expression. Columns with Javanese carved details serve both structural and visual roles, while the

limasan roof forms a prominent feature of the overall composition and its cultural associations.

The entrance, columns, and roof together create a legible visual hierarchy. In this case, vernacular elements operate as aesthetic devices and as references to Javanese cultural values associated with order, balance, and authority.

Bali Governor's Office

The facade of the Bali Governor's Office is described as neo-vernacular, combining Balinese architectural elements with the requirements of a contemporary government building (Wiryadhi Saidi et al. 2019; Untarti 2022). Its composition includes extensive ornament and cultural references (figure 2). A candi bentar split gateway is a dominant entrance feature and a marker of Balinese identity. Large openings are intended to support natural light and ventilation. Traditionally carved wooden doors and windows add visual detail, while repeated openings establish rhythm within a broadly symmetrical composition.



Figure 2
Bali Governor's Office
Source: Not specified in the source manuscript Kristianto (2017)

Terracotta, cream, and brown tones evoke materials and colors associated with Balinese architecture. Natural stone, red brick, wood, and glass bring traditional and contemporary materials together. Ornamented columns provide visual focal points, while the steeply pitched roof expresses a local architectural language and responds to the tropical climate.

With its ornament, repeated openings, and candi bentar gateway, the facade communicates cultural and ritual references as well as providing visual interest. Its neo-vernacular approach yields a composition rich in symbolic associations.

Semarang Governor's Office

The Semarang Governor's Office has a large building mass and a geometric composition associated with modern architecture. Glass, concrete, and aluminium composite panels dominate the facade, giving it a contemporary appearance (figure 3). Large pillars and strong vertical lines

frame a comparatively restrained but monumental main entrance (Rahmiati et al. 2020).



Figure 3
Semarang Governor's Office
Source: Not specified in the source manuscript Kinanthi (2021)

Large glazed openings are arranged in a modular and symmetrical pattern, creating a consistent visual rhythm and admitting daylight. The glazing's effect on energy performance, however, cannot be established from facade appearance alone. White, cream, and black reinforce the restrained modern palette. Reinforced concrete, glass, and aluminium composite panels support the building's contemporary expression. A stepped roof form inspired by Javanese architecture introduces a local reference into the otherwise modern composition.

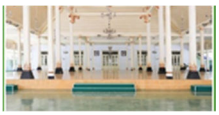
In contrast to the other cases, Semarang conveys institutional authority through simple geometry, modular order, and contemporary materials. These features suggest an image of rational administration, while the roof form retains a symbolic connection to local architecture.

Comparative analysis of the case studies

Table 1 compares the aesthetic strategies through which the three buildings express their visual identities within different cultural and architectural contexts.

Element	Yogyakarta Governor's Office	Bali Governor's Office	Semarang Governor's Office
Entrance			
	A paduraksa gateway with a roof and Javanese carved details.	split candi bentar gateway with traditional Balinese motifs.	An entrance framed by substantial columns or pillars.

Table 1
Analysis of facade aesthetic elements

Element	Yogyakarta Governor's Office	Bali Governor's Office	Semarang Governor's Office
Openings			
	Several facade doors; the main doorway has five leaves and others have three. Ventilation patterns draw on traditional motifs.	large two-leaf main doorway and windows distributed across the facade to support ventilation.	A large automatic entrance and windows placed symmetrically along the facade.
Signage and ornament			
	The building name combines Latin lettering with Javanese script	building sign is framed by a carved roof; statues and reliefs add ornament	The official government emblem and building sign appear on an accent stone wall near the entrance accent stone wall near the entrance
Color			
	Brown provides warmth; cream or ivory walls create a soft contrast; gold or yellow accents appear in carved details	Brown forms a base, with white or cream for a lighter appearance and brick red and gold as traditional accents	White and cream create a warm neutral palette; black glazing reinforces the modern appearance
Materials			
	Wood is used for doors, windows, roof framing, and carvings; clay tiles contribute to the traditional roof expression	Red brick, carved wood, and other local materials characterize the composition	Glass and aluminium composite panels dominate the contemporary facade

Element	Yogyakarta Governor's Office	Bali Governor's Office	Semarang Governor's Office
Columns			
	Javanese motifs decorate the upper and lower parts of the columns.	Patterned details at the base of entrance columns draw attention to the gateway	Square columns clad in aluminium composite panels create a neat, restrained appearance
Roof			
	A clay-tiled limasan roof forms a distinctive Javanese vernacular feature.	Balinese pitched roof with a small sculptural element at its peak.	A stepped roof inspired by traditional Javanese forms is reinterpreted with modern materials.

The three architectural approaches result in different visual strategies. Yogyakarta emphasizes hierarchy and cultural symbolism through a Javanese vernacular composition of gateway, columns, and roof. Bali relies on ornament and ritual references to reinforce the cultural associations of its government building. Semarang expresses institutional authority through geometric order and contemporary materials while retaining a local reference in the roof. In each case, facade elements help communicate regional identity through the building's public appearance.

Conclusion

The comparison indicates that facade elements contribute to the visual identity and institutional image of provincial governor's offices. Yogyakarta, Bali, and Semarang use distinct architectural approaches and compositions to convey cultural references and governmental authority.

Yogyakarta presents Javanese vernacular features through its gateway, limasan roof, carved ornament, and natural materials and colors. Bali combines Balinese forms, including the candi bentar gateway and local ornament, with contemporary building elements. Semarang uses a predominantly modern composition with large glazed openings and contemporary materials while retaining a stepped roof as a local reference.

Across the cases, entrances, openings, ornament, color, materials, columns, and roofs establish rhythm, symmetry, harmony, and visual emphasis. These observations suggest that government-building design can integrate aesthetic composition with cultural context. Further research incorporating direct observation and public perception would be needed to assess how these facades are experienced by users and residents.

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