



Unveiling the Meaning of Political Architecture: A Semiotic Analysis of the Malang City Parliament Building

Aqsha Fadhlu Putra^{1*} and Susilo Kusdiwanggo²

¹ Master of Built Environment Architecture Program, Faculty of Engineering, Brawijaya University, Malang, Indonesia

² Department of Architecture, Faculty of Engineering, Brawijaya University, Malang, Indonesia
aqshafadhlu@student.ub.ac.id

Abstract. This study examines how the Malang City Parliament Building, a non-heritage contemporary parliament in a postcolonial Indonesian city, uses pseudo-colonial design to naturalize political meanings. Although its façade was restyled after 2012 to echo Indisch and Beaux-Arts repertoires along the historic Tugu–Kayutangan corridor, the building has received little scholarly attention beyond general heritage-area studies. Using Roland Barthes’ semiotic–mythological framework, this study interprets the building as a layered sign system. Field observation and photographic documentation are coded across four units—site and perimeter, thresholds, façade and massing, and representative interiors—and then analyzed through denotation, connotation, and myth using lexical rubrics such as transparency/visibility, symmetry and axiality, elevation/podium, and symbolic centralization. The analysis identifies two key constructions: “curated openness”, in which visual transparency and axial views are combined with fences, side portals, and controlled vertical access to regulate public participation; and “symbolic order”, produced by the pseudo-colonial façade, symmetrical massing, and alignment with the heritage corridor, which together project institutional authority and continuity with colonial governmental typologies. This paper argues that pseudo-colonial styling in this non-heritage parliament works as a semiotic device that balances democratic openness with institutional distance and control, contributing to debates on postcolonial governmental architecture in Indonesia.

Keywords: Political Architecture, Roland Barthes, Mythologies.

1 Introduction

Government buildings, especially parliaments, are not only workplaces for legislators but also serve as symbolic media that shape and display the political culture. Goodsell highlights how the form, spatial organization, and ceremonial protocols—from seating arrangements to lines of sight—make parliamentary chambers arenas of political culture that shape citizens’ perceptions of democracy. Comparative findings from

Europe also show that parliaments not only shape but are also shaped by the local political culture [1]. In the context of the Global South, interpreting state institutions in postcolonial cities requires sensitivity to the historical relationships between the North and South, as well as contextual knowledge of architecture and urbanism [2], [3], [4], [5].

In Indonesia, postcolonial studies position architecture and urban space as fields where political culture is both imagined and practiced amid colonial legacies, nationalism, and modernization projects [6]. Morphologically, the Indisch repertoire includes axial symmetry and main axes, columns, porticos, or loggias, monumental masses, and a neutral color palette. In public buildings, these elements signify order, hierarchy, and authority (formal authority), drawing attention to centers of power and framing state rituals [7], [8]. Beyond mere form, the country's iconography and symbolic appropriation of the colonial legacy help to naturalize political memory and national narratives. A reinterpretation of the facade and symbols of the Bogor Palace, for example, reveals how colonial markers are interpreted as national symbols [6], [9], [10].

Several studies on colonial government architecture in various colonial territories show that this pattern is not unique to Indonesia but is part of the global typology of colonial government buildings. For example, in Penang and Brisbane, city halls, government offices, and courthouses were designed as a unified administrative landscape. This composition asserted colonial authority through centralized massing, axial alignment, and classical iconography. Similar patterns can also be seen in colonial administrative centers in South Asia, such as Delhi and Lahore. In these cities, complexes of main offices, city halls, and judicial institutions became the primary reference points for urban spatial planning [11], [12], [13], [14]. In the context of the Dutch East Indies, similar patterns can be seen in city halls, resident offices, courts, and city council buildings that formed administrative centers in cities such as Bandung and Surabaya [15], [16]. This typology continues to serve as a reference in the postcolonial context for both the design and reorganization of government buildings in Indonesia—whether old colonial buildings are revitalized or new contemporary buildings are redesigned by borrowing colonial and Indisch visual language to align with the image of historic cities.

In the postcolonial context, colonial buildings are not merely preserved as historical objects but are maintained and adapted for continued use. Several studies in Bandung, Surabaya, Semarang, and other cities have shown that ventilation, openings, orientation, and materials have been adjusted to suit the tropical climate and current usage needs. Simultaneously, the main features of colonial composition, including symmetrical massing, column rhythms, and pale color palettes, have been retained [16], [17], [18], [19]. Simultaneously, categories such as "old town," "heritage corridor," or cultural heritage zones provide policy frameworks that encourage the preservation of the colonial image as the city's identity, even when not all the buildings within these areas originate from the colonial era [20], [21], [22]. In the midst of this process, colonial heritage is contested. Some groups promote preservation, whereas others criticize and challenge it. Both positions make use of redesigned facades, heritage regulations, and city branding strategies to negotiate the meaning of the colonial legacy [15], [23], [24].

Here, the framework of governmental building typology is used as a conceptual backdrop to position the Malang City Parliament Building within the broader patterns

of colonial and postcolonial governmental architecture. Instead of systematically mapping out the various types of government buildings, this typological reading highlights two main aspects. First, how the patterns of form and spatial arrangement established during the colonial regime continue to shape the way the state presents itself to its citizens in the post-colonial era. These patterns include symmetrical masses, ceremonial axes, and the use of fences and podiums as framed elements. Second, how these same patterns are revived in pseudo-colonial design practices, when contemporary government offices are redesigned to resemble “heritage” buildings to borrow the visual authority of the past. Thus, typology is not merely used to inventory styles but rather to highlight the political implications of formal language: how the configuration of fences, façades, and council chambers creates distance, hierarchy, and the image of state openness in the eyes of citizens. Within this framework, the Malang City Parliament Building is positioned as a concrete example of a non-heritage building in the city center that is visually “colonialized” to align with the heritage landscape, while simultaneously asserting institutional authority through its site arrangement, façade, and representative interior.

In such a landscape, Barthes’ semiotics and mythology offer a way to understand how political claims are naturalized in architecture. Within the framework of Mythologies from Roland Barthes, first-order signs (denotation) in the form of physical shapes and spatial arrangements can be repurposed as forms associated with specific concepts. Through connotation, these pairings of form and concept rise to the level of myth—a second-order narrative that turns “history” into “the natural” [25]. In government architecture, claims such as openness, order, and statehood are packaged through glass, empty space, sightlines, symmetry, axes, elevation, symbols, flags, and official markers on the [1], [26], [27]. This article uses that framework as an operative lens to interpret how elements of form and space—shaped by colonial and pseudo-colonial typologies—naturalize political meanings in the case of the Malang City Parliament Building.

This study focuses on the Malang City Parliament Building, which occupies a key position in the historic Tugu and Kayutangan corridors and serves as an important visual landmark for the city’s image [28], [29]. Unlike many surrounding structures, this building is not a colonial heritage building, designated as a cultural property. It is a contemporary building that underwent a stylistic shift following a façade renovation after 2012. The original, more neutral, and modern facade was replaced by a composition enriched with pseudo-colonial elements, such as columns, axial balconies, and a palette of white and gray colors. This change was intended to harmonize the building with the heritage landscape of the Tugu and Kayutangan Corridors while strengthening its institutional image in the city center. A visual perception study of the facades of heritage buildings in the Malang City Government Center area indicated that facade form and color are the most influential elements in shaping the visual quality of historical building facades in the area [30]. These findings affirm that the composition of form and color palette is key to forming the visual identity of the administrative area. Therefore, changes in the style of the DPRD facade have the potential to shift the public’s perception of this building’s position among the surrounding heritage buildings. These elements align with the Indisch repertoire characterized by axial symmetry, col-

umns, and the formation of monumental masses, as noted in studies of colonial architecture in Indonesia [7], [8]. Institutionally, the DPRD is required to carry out its legislative functions transparently and in favor of the public. The literature on local governance emphasizes the importance of openness of information and access to public services [31], [32]; therefore, a design response that is sensitive to cultural heritage while also being operationally effective is a prerequisite for establishing a credible institutional image.

Nevertheless, academic knowledge of this building remains limited. As of 2023, the City Government, archivists, and historians have only just begun to compile the historiography of the Malang City Parliament Building, as the original archives are scattered and scarce; the year it was built and its initial function have never been officially published. Circulating information is still dominated by popular media coverage and city promotional narratives, which require more systematic archival verification and academic reviews [28]. From the perspective of spatial studies, existing research tends to focus on the city corridor and the image of the Tugu and Kayutangan areas, as well as visual perception assessments of the facades of heritage buildings in the Malang City Government Center Area [28], [29], [30], rather than reading the facade and spaces of the DPRD as a sign system that articulates power. There has yet to be a study that explicitly examines the pseudo-colonial restyling of this regional parliament building—as a non-heritage structure within a heritage corridor—using a mythological semiotic framework to connect facade transformation with the construction of institutional myths.

Departing from this gap, this article aims to read the Malang City Parliament Building as an architectural text that naturalizes political meanings through the language of form and space. More broadly, this article seeks to explain how the typology of governmental architecture in postcolonial Indonesia is shaped by the continuity and appropriation of colonial and Indisch languages. This language is also applied to contemporary buildings that are not colonial heritage but are dressed up to align with the image of a heritage city. The research questions posed are as follows: (1) how do the architectural elements of the Malang City Parliament Building—at the scales of site, threshold, façade, and representative interior—embody claims of openness, orderliness, and statehood?; and (2) how do the Indisch repertoire and the post-2012 façade restyling function as a system of signs that construct an institutional myth of local power? To answer these questions, this study positions the parliament building as a system of signs across scales, from the site and façade or threshold (fences, gates, and guard posts) to the representative interior. The analysis then applies Barthes' mythological semiotic framework to trace the transformation from denotation to connotation and to myth.

2 Research Method

This descriptive analytical case study focuses on a single object, namely the Malang City Parliament Building. The analytical framework used is Roland Barthes' semiotics mythologies (see Fig 1), which views objects as systems of layered signs. The analysis was carried out through three main stages: (1) denotation, (2) connotation, and (3) myth.

In Barthes' framework, denotation refers to the objective description of the forms and spatial arrangement, connotation refers to the cultural associations attached to those forms, and myth is the second-order narrative that renders the relationship between form and concept as natural.



Fig. 1. Roland Barthes Semiotic Mythologies Framework

The first stage, denotation, consists of a systematic description of spatial and formal markers (material, shape, color, relative size, position, sequence of movement) in four main units of analysis: (a) the relationship between the site and the urban context; (b) boundaries/perimeters (fences, left and right gateways, guard posts, name boards); (c) building facades and massing (symmetry/axiality, columns/porticoes/canopies, stairs/podiums, balconies, rhythm of openings, materials, and color palette); and (d) representative interiors (lobby, corridors, courtrooms: seating arrangement, balconies, visibility). The second stage, connotation, interprets the cultural associations of the denotative findings using lexical rubrics that are applied repeatedly: transparency/visibility, symmetry and axiality, elevation/podium, centralization of symbols, column rhythm, and tiered thresholds. Through these rubrics, the emerging meanings were grouped into three main clusters: openness, orderliness, and statehood, in line with the focus of the research questions. The third stage, myth, synthesizes the relationship between form and concept into a second-level meaning in Barthes' terms, namely, an institutional narrative that appears natural. This synthesis maps connotative patterns into two analytical constructs used in this study: (1) curated openness, that is, the configuration of form and space that displays transparency while controlling access, and (2) symbolic order, that is, axial and monumental composition that communicates the authority and hierarchy of the institution.

Data were obtained through field observation documentation of each unit of analysis (site and urban relationships, threshold/perimeter, façade and massing, representative interiors) and a compilation of verified online images. Each photograph and field finding was coded and systematically recorded in a coding sheet that connected denotative findings, connotative readings, and the formulation of the institutional myths.

3 Results and Discussion

3.1 Architectural Description of the Malang City Parliament Building

The Malang City Parliament Building occupies a strategic position within the Alun-alun Tugu roundabout, facing City Hall and visually connected to the historic Tugu and Kayutangan corridors (see Fig 2). Historically, this building does not date back to the colonial era and is not classified as a heritage site. It serves as a government office with a contemporary design, whose façade was later modified to harmonize with the surrounding heritage landscape, especially with the Malang City Hall building. The post-2012 façade renovation shifted its initial, more neutral, and modern image toward a pseudo-colonial appearance, borrowing the Indisch repertoire in the form of symmetrical massing and a light color palette (see Fig 3). The tiered limasan roof was integrated as a local adaptation to the climate and the surrounding heritage landscape, emphasizing the building's role as an institutional hub in the city's center.

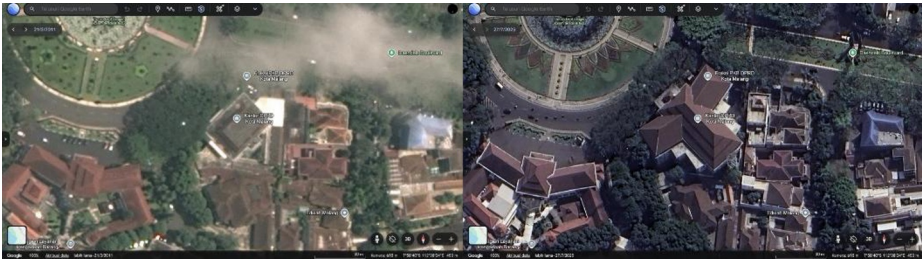


Fig. 2. Site View Before & After 2012



Fig. 3. Building Facade Before & After 2012

From the outside, this building appears to blend in with the row of structures along the ring road of Alun-alun Tugu in Malang City. The front yard is a large terrace at a higher elevation than the street level, separated from the sidewalk by a concrete fence, making it inaccessible directly from the front (see Fig 4). Public access to the yard and main entrance is provided from the side of the site through a side door and ramp leading up to the drop-off area. The fence surrounding the site, together with the difference in

elevation, forms a clear boundary between the street space and the institutional environment within it. Two side gates direct the flow of vehicles and pedestrians coming in and out, while the institution's sign is placed on the central axis facing Tugu (see Fig 5). This configuration of an elevated terrace, fencing, and side access allows the building to remain accessible to the public at the ground floor while still being perceived as a space set slightly apart from the city's public area.



Fig. 4. Massive Perimeters Infront of the Building

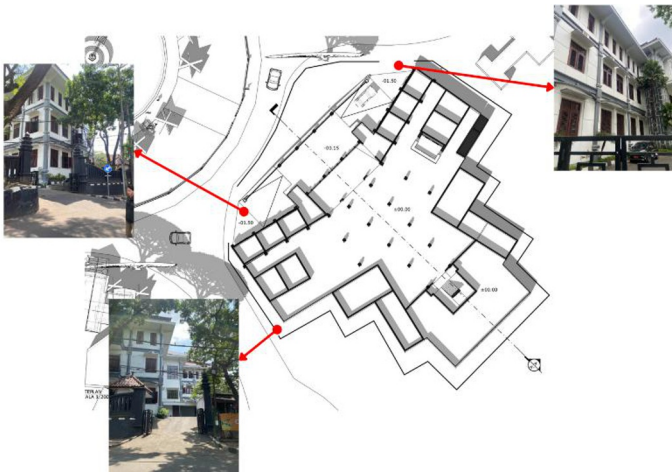


Fig. 5. The Entrance of the Building

Visitors enter a relatively spacious front lobby that serves as the first representative space. The axis line from the main door guides the view through this area toward the void and the staircase connecting to the upper floor, where the main assembly hall is located (see Fig 6). This hall occupies a dominant position on the upper floor and is arranged with seating oriented toward the leadership tables. The relationship between the ground floor as the reception area and the upper floor as the site of legislative activity emphasizes the elevation of institutional functions in the vertical composition. This arrangement creates a well-organized spatial experience: the public is welcomed in the lobby and can look toward the activities above while still being aware of the access boundaries to the decision-making space.

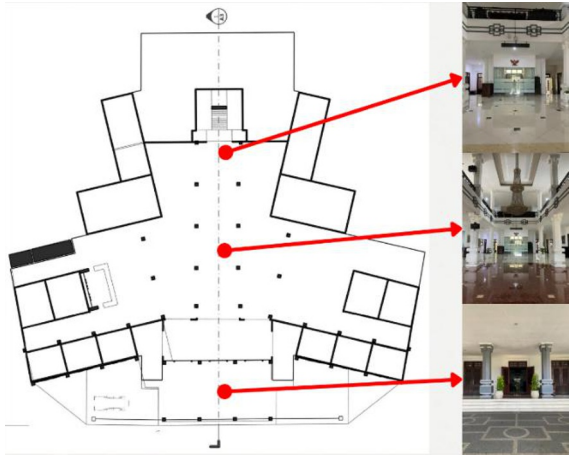


Fig. 6. Axis of the Building

3.2 Denotation (first-order sign system)

This subchapter outlines the results of a denotative reading of the relationship between the site and the urban environment, thresholds, façades, and massing, and the representative interior of the Malang City Parliament Building. For analytical purposes, the visual findings were grouped into several main codes: FT-01 (site and perimeter), FT-02 (façade and massing), INT-01 (representative interior), and DOC-01 (pre- and post-2012 transformation).

At the site and perimeter levels (code FT-01), the building stands within the circle of Alun-alun Tugu, with its main façade facing the ring road and an elongated mass running parallel to the corridor. The setback creates a front yard in the form of a terrace elevated above street level (see Fig 7), serving as an intermediary space before the entry threshold. This terrace is accessed via a side entrance and ramp from the site. A concrete perimeter surrounds the site; two gates are located to the left and right of the building, while the institution’s nameplate or identification occupies the central axis of the perimeter to mark the official entrance.



Fig. 7. Building Elevation

At the façade and massing level (code FT-02), the architectural "face" is composed of frontal symmetry (see Fig 8). A projecting balcony occupies the central axis, facing the street and flanked by two relatively balanced wings that are not symmetrical. Simple square-section columns with compact bases, shafts, and capitals frame the terrace and the balcony. Vertical openings are rhythmically repeated; paired wooden windows with small transoms emphasize upright proportions, accompanied by small balconies on the left and right sides (see Fig 9). On one wall surface, a decorative panel with a repeating box-and-circle pattern was installed on the vertical plane near the central axis. A tiered hip roof with red clay tiles creates a silhouette that reinforces the axial composition.



Fig. 8. Building Axis and Façade



Fig. 9. Building Front and Side Balcony

At the representative interior level (code INT-01), the lobby was the first representative space. An axis line from the entrance penetrates the lobby, passing through a central void and ending at a partitioned stairway leading to the upper floor, which is enclosed by a glass door. Upstairs, the main meeting room is arranged with frontally oriented seating (classroom-type) (see Fig 10): the leadership table is at the end of the room, and rows of members' chairs are aligned to face it. The interior balcony railing features repeating geometric patterns. The interior columns were square with tiered bases or

moldings and simple capitals. Their proportions differ from those of slimmer and more open façade columns. The main doors inside are double wooden doors with classic profiles and small transoms.

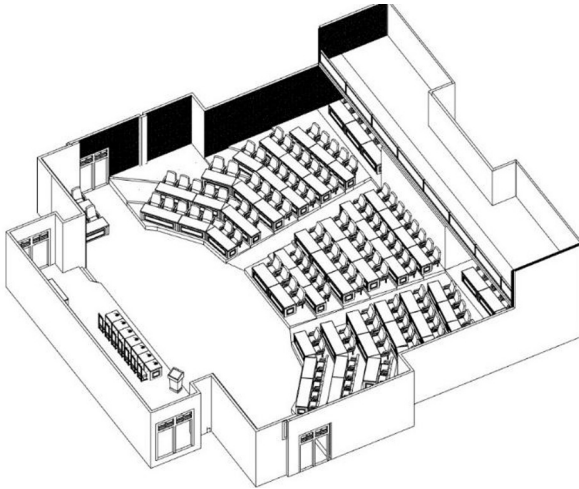


Fig. 10. Parliamentary Chamber

Visually and historically (code DOC-01), documentation shows changes since 2012. Before 2013, the building mass appeared lower and more elongated, without prominent column articulation or a central balcony. Between 2013 and 2025, the façade became symmetrical, with a bolder column composition, axial balcony, and stronger rhythm of openings. The color palette of white and gray was combined with more prominent red roof tiles, along with the addition of an interior void in the entrance area.

Table 1. Denotative Code.

Code	Unit/Element	Description
FT-01	Footprint & perimeter	Buildings surrounding the Tugu Square; front yard, surrounding concrete fence, two gates, name board on the central axis
FT-02	Façade & massing	Symmetrical façade with a central balcony, square columns, vertical window rhythm, geometric panels, tiered pyramid roof with red tiles
INT-01	Representative interior	Axial lobby with central void, staircase to the upper floor enclosed by glass doors, columns and railings with geometric patterns, and a meeting room with seating arranged around the chairman's table and a balcony at the back of the room
DOC-01	Transformation before and after 2012	Change from a flat façade without columns/balcony to a symmetrical façade with columns, axial balcony, and a white and gray palette + red roof tiles

3.3 Connotation (composition of signifiers)

Reading the denotation of codes FT-01, FT-02, INT-01, and DOC-01 through the lexicon of transparency/visibility, symmetry and axiality, elevation/podium, symbol centralization, column rhythm, and layered thresholds produces several clusters of meanings. This section summarizes the main connotations that emerged from each of these codes.

First, in code FT-01, a centralized threshold was formed. The concrete perimeter surrounding the site, gates on the left and right, and a nameplate in the center place the institution's identity before the building itself. This configuration signifies access that is open but still directed. The public is encouraged to first read who holds authority and where the official entrance is, before entering the grounds. This pattern aligns with the use of thresholds as ceremonial and hierarchical devices in governmental architecture [26], [27], as well as the understanding of public space as a medium of communication between the state and its citizens [33], [34]. Thus, at the site and perimeter levels, openness is presented as an experience choreographed from the outset through thresholds and institutional markers.

Second, in code FT-02, the symmetry and axiality of the façade serve as the main sources of visual order. The arrangement of the columns with a central balcony, balanced wings, and rhythm of vertical openings creates an impression of order and rationality. This vocabulary is widely used as a sign of official authority in the field of public architecture. From ancient monumental traditions to modernity, symmetry, axes, and columnar compositions have been replicated to display order and authority [26]. The main balcony functions as a stage of representation facing the street, in line with the role of the façade as a ceremonial face. Decorative panels with square and circular motifs placed on one part of the façade function as contemporary layers attached to the pseudo-colonial composition without altering the dominance of the reading of symmetry, columns, and the axial balcony. At this level, statehood and order are projected through a pseudo-colonial face that repackages the Indisch idiom into the image of a modern government institution.

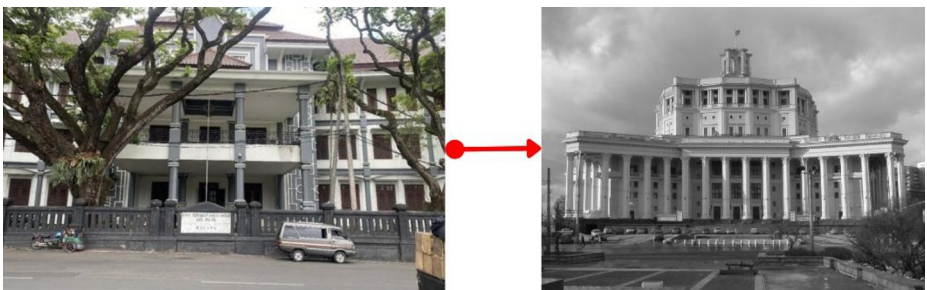


Fig. 11. The Symbolic Order

Third, in code INT-01, the choreography of the interior emphasizes the relationship between visibility and the boundaries. The axial sequence from the entrance through

the lobby and void toward the glass staircase enclosure presents visibility without erasing the physical boundaries. Visitors can look up and sense the activity, but physical access to the assembly chamber remains controlled. This pattern aligns with research on parliaments as arenas of political culture that curate public visibility [34] and on public spaces designed to both facilitate and filter [33]. The classroom-type arrangement, with the leadership table at one end of the room, rows of members' seats facing toward it, and a balcony at the rear, accentuates the main floor and leadership table as focal points. This configuration resonates with Psarra's findings on how spatial geometry and seating orientation shape political culture and patterns of interaction in parliaments [1]. In this context, parties outside the decision-making circle are positioned primarily as directed spectators rather than equal actors within the chamber.

Fourth, in DOC-01, the rhythm of the columns and articulation of the new facade reinforce signals of visual authority. The shift from a flatter facade in the previous phase to a more symmetrical columnar expression strengthened the impression of the institution's authority. The addition of balconies, more pronounced columns, and a stronger rhythm of openings reinforced continuity with the visual memory of the Tugu and Kayutangan corridors as the city's representative axes [28], [29], making the message of symbolic order more explicit than in the previous phase. This transformation shows that the restyling of the facade is not merely an aesthetic adjustment to the heritage corridor but a visual strategy to thicken institutional authority.

Thus, the dominant connotations are curated openness and a symbolic order. Curated openness refers to visibility that is presented but directed through layered thresholds and controlled access, while symbolic order refers to visual and axial order that normalizes institutionalized distance. These two clusters of meaning serve as a bridge to the Barthesian myth, namely the second-order natural meaning that is naturalized by recurring forms (Roland-Barthes-Mythologies, n.d.). In the context of this study, this connotative reading shows that the pseudo-colonial aspect of the Malang City Parliament Building functions as a semiotic device to balance the image of democratic openness with the necessity of institutional distance and control.

Table 2. Conotative Code.

Code	Lexical Meaning	Meaning Cluster
FT-01	Tiered threshold; symbol centralization	Curatted Openness
FT-02	Symmetry and axiality; column rhythm; axial balcony	Symbolic Order
INT-01	Transparency/visibility; elevation/podium	Curatted Openness
DOC-01	Column rhythm; continuity with heritage corridor	Symbolic Order

3.4 Institutional Myths

This section enters the mythical stage in Barthes's schema, when recurring signs and connotations blend into meanings that appear to be natural. In the case of the Malang

City Parliament Building, two myths arise simultaneously: curated openness and a symbolic order. Both operate through the language of form and space to reinforce the legitimacy of institutions in the public eye.

Curated openness emerges from a combination of visual and spatial elements that foreground transparency while maintaining control over access. Rows of vertical windows on the façade, the main balcony facing the street, and the primary void along the central axis create a visual experience that allows the public to “see” the institutional processes from the outside. However, the high concrete fence, side portals, and vertical access to upper-floor meeting rooms act as filters, regulating the intensity of public and institutional interactions. In Barthes’s terms, these forms serve as embodiments conveying the concept of transparency; at the mythical level, these forms construct a narrative about a state that is open yet maintains a measured distance from its citizens.

As Goodsell and Dickenson have stated, parliament as a “stage of political culture” puts the visibility of the institution on display to demonstrate an orderly and calibrated democracy. Through the repetition of such visual and spatial cues, the architecture of the Malang City Parliament Building naturalizes the idea that openness is part of the state’s order, an openness that is curated and directed by the state. The seating layout in the plenary hall, which centers around the leadership table and separates the main floor from the rear balcony, further reinforces this narrative, as this configuration visually directs attention to the leadership table while placing those outside the circle of decision-making in a more distant and framed position.

Symbolic order arises from the repetition of classical cues, such as symmetric façades, columns, balconies, and a palette of white and gray that exudes a formal impression. Symmetry and axiality suggest rationality and hierarchy, while the columns and balconies create visual axes that direct the focus to the center of authority. These elements convey an image of authority and stability that, in the colonial tradition, served to legitimize the state [26]. This interpretation aligns with studies of Dutch colonial government buildings as Beaux-Arts/neoclassical languages that have been continuously re-appropriated in post-independence public [13], [14], [35].

The post-2012 restyling reinforced this myth by aligning the visual language of the City Parliament with the Tugu and Kayutangan corridors, which are representative axes linking the city’s legislative and executive powers [28], [29]. Such appropriation reproduces symbolic continuity between colonial architecture and modern governance, making the City Parliament more than simply a functional representation but rather a part of a visual heritage of power that continues to be reinterpreted [36], [37]. In the broader typology of colonial government architecture, the configuration of a symmetric façade, axial balcony, and visual connection to city hall places the Malang City Parliament Building alongside patterns seen in city halls and council buildings in Penang, Brisbane, and other colonial cities that consolidated power through Beaux-Arts compositions [11], [13], [35].

Thus, the architecture of the Malang City Parliament Building balances two symbolic narratives: curated openness, which articulates public participation within the boundaries of control, and symbolic order, which asserts the hierarchy and authority of the state. Together, these narratives normalize power through repeated visual experiences, making the institution’s legitimacy seem natural and difficult to challenge.

3.5 Synthesis

This synthesis summarizes the relationship between denotative findings, connotative readings, and the formulation of institutional myths in the case of the Malang City Parliament Building’s design. At the denotative level, elements of the site, threshold, façade, and interior—such as fences, gates, podiums, columns, balconies, windows, voids, and seating arrangements— are mapped as a series of signifiers that organize the relative positions of the public and the institution. At the connotative level, readings through the lenses of transparency/visibility, symmetry and axially, elevation/podium, symbol centralization, column rhythm, and layered thresholds group these signifiers into recurring patterns.

These patterns of meaning, when elevated to the level of myth, condense into two analytical constructs: curated openness and symbolic order. Curated openness encapsulates how the configuration of thresholds, vertical access, and interior visibility blends visual transparency with the regulation of public participation intensity. Symbolic order encapsulates how symmetry, axes, and pseudo-colonial monumentality crystallize the impression of institutional authority and hierarchy. Within Barthes' framework, these two constructs demonstrate how pseudo-colonial forms and contemporary spatial arrangements not only carry meaning but also package these meanings as something that appears natural and inherently attached to the city’s legislative institution.

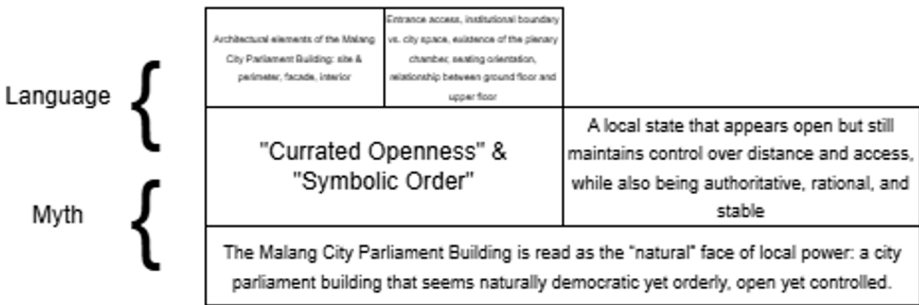


Fig. 12. Semiotic Mythologies Framework in Malang City Parliament Building

4 Conclusion

This study concludes that the Malang City Parliament Building functions as a symbolic text that negotiates colonial heritage and modern institutional identity. Through a mythological semiotic analysis, two main constructions were identified: curated openness and symbolic order. Together, they form a visual and spatial narrative of how state power is articulated at the local scale.

Curated openness demonstrates how architectural design projects transparency and public accessibility while simultaneously regulating pathways and boundaries of citizen participation through thresholds, fences, and vertical hierarchies. The symbolic order asserts the institution's legitimacy and authority through symmetry, columns, visual axes, and monumental façades that evoke the visual language of the colonial era. These two constructions give rise to an institutional myth that renders power natural, rational, and stable in the eyes of the public. Conceptually, this study shows that pseudo-colonial features in non-heritage parliamentary buildings function as semiotic devices to balance the image of democratic openness with institutional control needs.

In postcolonial Indonesia, government architecture does not merely inherit colonial forms but also reproduces the meaning of power within the framework of modernity and democracy. The Malang City Parliament Building illustrates how the Indisch repertoire is adapted in non-heritage buildings to construct the image of a dignified and modern state within a historic urban landscape. These findings align with broader patterns in the typology of revitalized and re-appropriated colonial government buildings in cities such as Bandung, Penang, and Brisbane, where the classical architectural language is retained as a symbolic framework while its functions and political narratives are reconfigured within the context of the contemporary nation-state [11], [16], [35].

References.

- [1] S. Psarra, U. Staiger, and C. Sternberg, "Parliament Buildings." [Online]. Available: www.uclpress.co.uk
- [2] A. Cooper, "Why, When, and How the Global South Became Relevant," pp. 18–32, 2021, doi: 10.1093/oxfordhb/9780190930028.013.2.
- [3] N. Dados and R. Connell, "The Global South," *Contexts*, vol. 11, no. 1, pp. 12–13, 2012, doi: 10.1177/1536504212436479.
- [4] A. M. Salama and D. Grierson, "Editorial: An Expedition Into Architecture and Urbanism of the Global South," *Open House International*, vol. 41, no. 2, pp. 4–5, 2016, doi: 10.1108/ohi-02-2016-b0001.
- [5] Y. Zhang *et al.*, "A Global North-South Division Line for Portraying Urban Development," *iScience*, vol. 24, no. 7, p. 102729, 2021, doi: 10.1016/j.isci.2021.102729.
- [6] Abidin Kusno, "Behind the Postcolonial," 2000.
- [7] A. Ronarizkia and N. S. S. Giriwati, "Visual Character of Colonial Building Facade in Suroyo Street Corridor, Probolinggo City Indonesia," *Local Wisdom Jurnal Ilmiah Kajian Kearifan Lokal*, vol. 12, no. 1, 2020, doi: 10.26905/lw.v12i1.3833.
- [8] F. Rozi and I. Purnama, "Fasade Bangunan Gedung SMPN 16 Kota Cirebon," *Jurnal Arsitektur Terracotta*, vol. 2, no. 3, 2021, doi: 10.26760/terracotta.v2i3.4800.

- [9] D. R. B. Barus, "Sunda Empire Dan Tantangan Terhadap Nilai Historis Pancasila: Studi Kasus Disintegrasi Simbolik," *Jurnal Pendidikan West Science*, vol. 3, no. 03, pp. 297–303, 2025, doi: 10.58812/jpdws.v3i03.2211.
- [10] Z. A. Haq, "Narasi Toleransi Beragama Pada Akun Youtube 'Jeda Nulis,'" *Pusaka*, vol. 10, no. 1, 2022, doi: 10.31969/pusaka.v10i1.673.
- [11] P. Roennfeldt, "The South Brisbane Municipal Chambers," *Queensland Review*, vol. 25, no. 1, pp. 102–118, 2018, doi: 10.1017/qre.2018.10.
- [12] A. Rehman and M. Arshad, "The British Vision of Lahore: An Examination of Concepts of Architecture and Urban Design Through Literary Sources," *Journal of Research in Architecture & Planning*, vol. 13, no. 2, pp. 8–17, 2012, doi: 10.53700/jrap1322012_2.
- [13] G. A. Bremner, "Sir Herbert Baker," 2024, doi: 10.1093/obo/9780190922467-0094.
- [14] D. V. A. Shihabi, "Capitol Furniture Types of <i>Beaux-Arts</i> Architect: Design Hierarchy Reveals Meaning," *J Inter Des*, vol. 38, no. 1, pp. 33–51, 2013, doi: 10.1111/joid.12001.
- [15] F. Colombijn, "Colonial Heritage as Bricolage: Interpreting the Colonial Built Environment in Surabaya, Indonesia," *J Southeast Asian Stud*, vol. 53, no. 4, pp. 617–640, 2022, doi: 10.1017/s0022463422000807.
- [16] H. Hashartyadi and S. Handayani, "Application of Colonial Architectural Design to 'Bandoeng Tempo Doeloe' in Kota Baru Parahyangan," *JoDiE*, vol. 3, no. 2, pp. 65–74, 2024, doi: 10.17509/jodie.v3i2.47010.
- [17] J. Roosandriantini, J. A. Poernama, F. H. Setiawan, and K. D. Limantara, "Akulturasi Arsitektur Kolonial Terhadap Perbedaan Iklim Di SDN Ditotrum Lumajang Dan Rumah Dinas Bakorwil Madiun," *Arsitektura*, vol. 21, no. 1, p. 27, 2023, doi: 10.20961/arst.v21i1.62585.
- [18] I. R. A. Kuncoro, W. Setyaningsih, and K. Sunoko, "Characteristics of Architectural Typology in Colonial Buildings in Loji Wetan Surakarta Area," *IOP Conf Ser Earth Environ Sci*, vol. 969, no. 1, p. 012063, 2022, doi: 10.1088/1755-1315/969/1/012063.
- [19] N. D. Sabilla, "Jejak Peninggalan Kolonial Belanda Di Bekri Sebagai Sumber Belajar IPS," *Ment*, vol. 2, no. 4, pp. 344–351, 2024, doi: 10.59689/ment.v2i4.1623.
- [20] Y. M. Ardiani, K. R. Kurniawan, and Y. N. Lukito, "The Gap on Architecture Conservation Regulations from Colonial until Postcolonial Era in Indonesia," *Evergreen*, vol. 9, no. 2, pp. 594–600, Jun. 2022, doi: 10.5109/4794207.
- [21] H. Santosa, A. Yudono, and M. S. Adhitama, "The Digital Management System of the Tangible Culture Heritage for Enhancing Historic Building Governance in Malang, Indonesia," *IOP Conf Ser Earth Environ Sci*, vol. 738, no. 1, p. 012056, 2021, doi: 10.1088/1755-1315/738/1/012056.
- [22] S. Rukayah, S. Juwono, and A. Etenia, "Post Office and the Sustainability of Triangle Historical Area in Semarang From the Traditional Era to the Colonial Era," *Journal of Architecture and Urbanism*, vol. 46, no. 1, pp. 20–32, 2022, doi: 10.3846/jau.2022.15242.

- [23] M. Bouquet, "Heritage," *Museum Worlds*, vol. 1, no. 1, pp. 85–100, 2013, doi: 10.3167/armw.2013.010106.
- [24] T. Laotan-Brown, "Valorization and Destruction: Colonial Buildings In Lagos State, Nigeria, As Sites of Contestation," *Cahiers De La Recherche Architecturale Urbaine Et Paysagère*, vol. 23, 2025, doi: 10.4000/144tr.
- [25] "roland-barthes-mythologies".
- [26] "Architecture, Power, and National Identity Second edition."
- [27] W. H. Coaldrake, "The Gatehouse of the Shogun's Senior Councillor: Building Design and Status Symbolism in Japanese Architecture of the Late Edo Period," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, vol. 47, no. 4, pp. 397–410, 1988, doi: 10.2307/990383.
- [28] K. N. Erine, S. Rimasari, and A. Supto, "Eksistensi Bangunan Gaya Kolonial Belanda Di Kawasan Kayutangan, Kota Malang Pada Tahun 1900-2021," *Historiography*, vol. 2, no. 4, p. 588, 2022, doi: 10.17977/um081v2i42022p588-602.
- [29] N. Suryasari, A. Antariksa, L. D. Wulandari, and H. Santosa, "Aesthetic Visual Signs for the Public Building Facade Design of Dutch East Indies Architectural Heritage in Malang City," *IOP Conf Ser Earth Environ Sci*, vol. 780, no. 1, p. 012071, 2021, doi: 10.1088/1755-1315/780/1/012071.
- [30] F. Bahar, H. Santosa, and J. Ernawati, "Visual Perception of The Heritage Building Facades in The Administrative Center Area of Malang City," *Syntax Literate*, vol. 7, no. 10, 2022.
- [31] N. Ayu and A. Nurjaman, "Implementasi Pelaksanaan Pengawasan Pembangunan Oleh Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat Daerah (DPRD)," *Jurnal Ilmu Pemerintahan Nakhoda*, vol. 21, no. 1, pp. 59–69, 2022, doi: 10.35967/njip.v21i1.287.
- [32] R. F. Nurita, "Penerapan Layanan E-Government Dalam Perwujudan Good Governance Di Pemerintah Kota Malang," *Jurnal Cakrawala Hukum*, vol. 7, no. 2, 2016, doi: 10.26905/idjch.v7i2.1914.
- [33] C. P. Dickenson, "Constructing Public Space," pp. 217–232, 2024, doi: 10.1093/oxfordhb/9780192870933.013.16.
- [34] C. T. Goodsell, "The Architecture of Parliaments: Legislative Houses and Political Culture," *Br J Polit Sci*, vol. 18, no. 3, pp. 287–302, 1988, doi: 10.1017/s0007123400005135.
- [35] A. Hassan and M. H. A. Nasir, "Colonial City Planning in Penang With a Special Reference to the Government Buildings," *International Journal of Heritage Architecture Studies Repairs and Maintenance*, vol. 2, no. 1, pp. 11–22, 2017, doi: 10.2495/ha-v2-n1-11-22.
- [36] S. Harris-Brandts, "The Role of Architecture in the Republic of Georgia's European Aspirations," *Natl Pap*, vol. 46, no. 6, pp. 1118–1135, 2018, doi: 10.1080/00905992.2018.1488827.
- [37] M. Rosser-Owen, "Andalusi Spolia in Medieval Morocco: 'Architectural Politics, Political Architecture,'" *Medieval Encounters*, vol. 20, no. 2, pp. 152–198, 2014, doi: 10.1163/15700674-12342164.

Open Access This chapter is licensed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>), which permits any noncommercial use, sharing, adaptation, distribution and reproduction in any medium or format, as long as you give appropriate credit to the original author(s) and the source, provide a link to the Creative Commons license and indicate if changes were made.

The images or other third party material in this chapter are included in the chapter's Creative Commons license, unless indicated otherwise in a credit line to the material. If material is not included in the chapter's Creative Commons license and your intended use is not permitted by statutory regulation or exceeds the permitted use, you will need to obtain permission directly from the copyright holder.

