

Modernity in a Colonial Landscape: Hotel Kalitaman Salatiga 1930-1950

Dina Nanda Marinda^{1*}, Putri Agus Wijayati²

^{1,2}History Study Program, Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Universitas Negeri Semarang, Indonesia

*correspondence email : dinanandamarinda@gmail.com

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Abstrak

Penelitian ini mengkaji Hotel Kalitaman di Salatiga sebagai salah satu representasi kemodernan kolonial di kota kecil. Melalui pendekatan sejarah yang meliputi heuristik, verifikasi, interpretasi, dan historiografi, penelitian ini mengungkap bagaimana hotel tidak hanya berfungsi sebagai tempat menginap, tetapi juga sebagai simbol modernitas kolonial dalam aspek arsitektur dan fungsi sosial budaya. Hotel Kalitaman dibangun dengan gaya arsitektur tropis yang menyesuaikan dengan iklim lokal, namun tetap mencerminkan estetika Eropa. Selain itu, hotel ini menjadi ruang pertemuan sosial politik, dan budaya yang penting, baik bagi elit kolonial maupun lokal. Kegiatan seperti pesta dansa, kompetisi bridge, hingga kunjungan tokoh penting menunjukkan bahwa hotel ini menjadi titik temu antara jaringan sosial Hindia Belanda dan kondisi lokal Salatiga. Setelah kemerdekaan, fungsi hotel mengalami transformasi namun tetap menjadi ruang sosial strategis. Penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa modernitas kolonial tidak hanya terpusat di kota besar, tetapi juga menanamkan pengaruh yang kuat di kota-kota kecil seperti Salatiga.

Kata kunci: modernitas kolonial, hotel kalitaman, kota kecil, arsitektur tropis.

Abstract

This study examines the Kalitaman Hotel in Salatiga as one of the representations of colonial modernity in a small town. Through historical methods, including heuristics, verification, interpretation, and historiography, this study successfully presents a historical narrative that a building, such as a hotel, not only functions as a place to stay, but also as a symbol of colonial modernity in terms of architecture and socio-cultural functions. The Kalitaman Hotel was built in a tropical architectural style that adapts to the local climate, but still reflects a European style. This is because Salatiga is a city that is used as one of the residences for Dutch citizens who visit or settle in central Java. In addition, this hotel became an important socio-political and cultural meeting space, both for colonial and local elites. Activities such as dance parties, bridge competitions, and visits by important figures show that this hotel became a meeting point between the social networks of the Dutch East Indies and the local conditions of Salatiga. After independence, the function of the hotel underwent a transformation but remained a strategic social space. This study shows that colonial modernity was not only centered in big cities, but also had a strong influence on small towns like Salatiga.

Keywords: colonial modernity, hotel kalitaman, small town, tropical architecture.

INTRODUCTION

Colonial modernization was not only present in the form of technology but also in new infrastructure that was realized through the transformation of colonial space and lifestyle. This is inherent in symbolic buildings such as hotels, social clubs, and shopping centers. Hotels, in

particular, were not only places to stay, but also exclusive spaces that reflected class, race, and power relations (Elok & Purwaningsih, 2024). As part of the colonial modernization effort, hotels acted as a means of spreading European cultural values into the colonies.

In Mujaffar's study of Mountain Hotels or *Berghotels* in Garut in 1890-1942, the function of the hotel was not only accommodation, but also an active place that designed development and integration strategies to support sustainability in colonial recreation and tourism. Meanwhile, in the study (Wardhana et al., 2021) regarding the Hotel *Des Indes* which shows that hotels are not only commercial spaces, but also places of representation of colonial culture and lifestyle. Both studies show that hotels have a significant role as a means of spreading the idea of modernity as well as a tool of symbolic colonial power.

However, in the colonial *grand narration*, it is rare to find academic writings or studies that specifically discuss sites in the form of "hotels". Most colonial historiography discusses more narratives about political, economic, and cultural infrastructure. Meanwhile, "hotels" or places to stay in the colonial era are often understood as places to rest. In (King, 2004) emphasizes that colonial architecture is a manifestation of global power relations that are manifested in local spaces. Buildings such as hotels are not only functional spaces, but also representations of identity, modernity values, and colonial social structures that are symbolically embedded. In this context, hotels become a medium for conveying Western modern ideology into

colonial spatial planning, including small towns like Salatiga. Thus, hotel architecture can be understood as a form of colonial power that is present symbolically through spatial design and aesthetics that separate colonizers and natives.

Various studies, both academic and popular, that discuss the modernization of cities in Indonesia during the end of colonial rule (the first four decades of the 20th century) are more focused on large cities both in Java and outside Java. A study of Surabaya in the context of colonial architecture and its development throughout the years 1870 to 1940 has been produced by (Handinoto, 1996). In the same locus, an academic manuscript was also produced (Basundoro, 2004) which emphasized more on squatter settlements with a time span of 1945-1960, in (Colombijn et al., 2015) which discussed the development of cities in Indonesia from the colonial period to post-independence, has outlines such as a comparison between colonial cities and post-independence cities, the relationship between modernity and locality, and changes in the role of cities. Meanwhile, Abiyasakere (1987) studied Jakarta as a colonial political center city as well as an economic driving city (Abiyasakere, 1987). In the context of big cities, Freek Colombijn (2006) wrote about the use of space in Padang in his work *Paco-paco (city) Padang* (Colombijn, 2006). While

(Makkelo, 2010) discussed the development of Manado City.

The grand narrative in Indonesian historiography tends to be dominated by large cities, while small towns such as Salatiga are often marginalized from academic studies. However, small towns were also an important part of the colonial modernization project. Existing studies show the dominance of large cities in colonial historiography, whereas research on the forms of modernity that grew and developed in small towns such as Salatiga has not been widely studied and there is still an empty space that has not been touched on in the Indonesian-centric historiography narrative. (Purwanto, 2006). Studies on the small town of Salatiga have not been widely conducted, even though this city holds traces of colonial modernity that are important to study. By studying the Kalitaman Hotel, this research contributes to expanding the study of colonial heritage through the context of a small town, while also criticizing the dominance of historiographic narratives that focus on big cities.

Studies on small cities like Salatiga have not developed much, but several studies have raised distinctive social dynamics. For example, the thesis (Habibi, 2020) highlights the plague outbreak in Salatiga in 1917-1930. The study of Salatiga in the early days of *the gemeente* reviewing the beauty of Salatiga has been

produced by (Harnoko, 2013). This shows that Salatiga has great potential for further research, although the scope of the study is still limited, especially in seeing how colonial modernization reached small city spaces. In the context of a big city, namely Semarang, which studies the early 20th century temporal (Wijayati, 2016).

Small towns and suburbs are not only relevant in historical contexts, but also important in today's sustainable development narrative. In Indonesian colonial architecture, the legacy of modern architecture is often overlooked if it is not the work of a famous architect or on a monumental scale. A study (Ikaputra & Widyastuti, 2024) on *transformer huisje* (electricity substation) of the Dutch era shows that small-scale modern architecture is often marginalized, despite its significant historical and architectural value. This shows that colonial architectural forms such as the Kalitaman Hotel in the small town of Salatiga also deserve attention in cultural heritage studies.

Despite its small scale, Salatiga holds traces of complex colonial modernity. One of its real representations can be found in the existence of the Kalitaman Hotel. This hotel not only functions as an inn, but also radiates colonial social, cultural, and architectural values that are important for the small town landscape. This study examines the

Kalitaman Hotel as a manifestation of colonial modernity that is apparent in its architecture and social functions, as well as a reflection of the interaction between colonial modernity and local conditions.

Hotel Kalitaman was chosen as a case study because it represents colonial modernity in a small town, an aspect that is still rarely discussed in the historiography of Indonesian colonial architecture. Unlike hotels in big cities such as Batavia or Surabaya, Kalitaman shows the practice of modernity in a peripheral space. This study uses a spatial-social approach to expand the narrative of historiography that has so far been Jakarta-centric, and offers new understandings of the relationship between architecture, function, society, and local context.

METHODS

This study uses a historical research method, the use of this method is relevant because this study aims to reveal the dynamics of the development and growth of the Kalitaman Hotel as a representation of colonial modernity in the small town of Salatiga in the period 1930 to 1950.

Historical source searches are carried out to maximize the presence of past realities, which are fragmented (Gottschalk, 1975; Kuntowijoyo, 2008). In addition, public documents in the form of newspapers are also important for compiling past facts (Wijayati, 2008). The

first stage, heuristic, is the process of collecting data sources that include primary and secondary data. The second stage is verification, namely source criticism carried out to assess the validity, authenticity, and reliability of the data that has been collected. Furthermore, the interpretation stage is carried out to interpret the data contextually in order to answer the formulation of research problems, especially related to the relationship between hotel architecture, social symbolism, and colonial modernity projects. The last stage is historiography, namely the compilation of research results in the form of argumentative, logical, and structured historical narratives.

The search was conducted through literature study and archival study, both from physical libraries and digital sources. Literature study refers to the search for scientific works such as books, journal articles, and relevant previous research, while archival study places more emphasis on primary historical documents such as colonial newspapers, old maps, and administrative documents from the Dutch East Indies era.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Traces of Modernity: The Architecture of the Kalitaman Hotel

As a cool city located in the highlands of Central Java, Salatiga has long been an attractive destination for Europeans during the colonial era, both for leisure and temporary residence. Its strategic

location and calm and beautiful atmosphere make this city ideal as a resting place for the elite (Harnoko, 2013). In the official travel notes of 1837, it was mentioned that Prince William Frederick Henry, son of King William II of the Netherlands, had visited Salatiga and stayed at a magnificent building owned by Mr. Pierre Hamar de la Bretoniere, who at that time was the owner of a large coffee plantation in the area (Permadi et al., 2016).

According to (Supangkat, 2023) de la Bretoniere allocated around 100.000 guilders to build the Kalitaman Hotel as a luxury facility in the city center. This development reflects an effort to spread colonial modernization to small towns, not just limited to Batavia or Semarang. This is in line with the findings of (Karyono, 2002) which show that the transformation of colonial cities includes changes in spatial planning and social life in response to the needs of the times. In addition, this is supported by research by Wihardyanto and Ikaputra, that development in colonial areas was also driven by the need for facilities and accommodation for European settlers (Wihardyanto & Ikaputra, 2019). The Kalitaman Hotel also became one of the symbols of the modernization process, which not only emphasized technology, but also the formation of a new lifestyle and city infrastructure.



Figure 1. Front view of Hotel Kalitaman as one of the representations of colonial luxury in Salatiga (1916). KITLV, Leiden (collection code 37478)

Hotel Kalitaman developed along with the spatial planning process of Salatiga City since the beginning of the 20th century, when the city was designated as a *gemeente* in 1917 and began to be directed as part of a more structured colonial urban landscape (Harnoko, 2013). The existence of the hotel actually reflects the social and cultural dynamics that lived in colonial society. Modern facilities such as hotels were generally built following the social hierarchy pattern at that time, where access to the best services and housing was prioritized for Europeans (Ikaputra & Widyastuti, 2024).

In the context of the development of the colonial city area, the existence of the Kalitaman Hotel became one of the important symbols of modernization with luxurious European facilities in the mountainous region of Central Java. Since its establishment, this hotel has existed until entering the 20th century, recorded

in the daily *De Locomotief* dated March 27, 1900, the Kalitaman Hotel began operating with integrity equipped with the "Merbaboe" health facility. The existence of this hotel shows the close relationship between recreational and healing functions in the colonial concept of utilizing tropical landscapes. In addition to being a place to stay, the Kalitaman Hotel is also equipped with bathing facilities and a place to eat serving typical European dishes such as *rijsttafel* and continental-style dinners (*Algemeen Handelsblad*, February 12, 1932).

Architecturally, Hotel Kalitaman represents a top colonial style that adapts to the local climate and culture, but still displays European aesthetics. According to Handinoto, colonial buildings like this generally have wide verandas, large ventilation, high roofs with overhangs, and use local materials. One form of this adaptation is seen in the semi-open space called the "cold corner" or *koele hoek*, which is designed so that guests can relax while enjoying the cool air of Salatiga while enjoying soft drinks (*Algemeen Handelsblad*, April 15, 1929).

The addition of galleries and swimming pools reinforces the impression that this hotel is a modern facility designed with an architectural understanding of tropical comfort (*Algemeen Handelsblad*, December 23, 1933). As also stated by (Ricard & Roosandriantini, 2023, p. 2) the adopted

architectural style can also be associated with the emergence of the *Indisch Empire Style* which flourished in Indonesia in the 18th to 19th centuries, reflecting the influence of European architectural elements into local conditions (Muhsin et al., 2023, p. 4).



Figure 2. Facilities at the Kalitaman Hotel during the colonial period, one of which was a swimming pool (1929). KITLV, Leiden (collection code 124067)

In the 1930s, the management of the Kalitaman Hotel changed from Mr. van der Lely to Mr. Weidema. This change was accompanied by a major renovation that marked a significant change in the architectural form and appearance of the hotel to become more modern and magnificent (*Algemeen Handelsblad*, March 27, 1933). Although there was an incident of a roof collapse, the renovation process continued until it was completed towards the end of the year (*De Locomotief*, July 7, 1933). In its December 22, 1933 edition, the newspaper *De Locomotief* reported that the hotel had resumed operations and was ready to welcome guests for the Christmas celebrations, with various new facilities

such as a modern lobby and musical performances by the Semarangsch Trio. This shows that the Kalitaman Hotel did not merely function as a place to stay, but also played a role as a social and cultural space for European citizens and the indigenous elite. As in the study (Dewi et al., 2019, p. 100), hotel renovations during the colonial period also reflect the close relationship between architectural developments and political, social and educational dynamics that helped shape the lifestyle and culture of society at that time.



Figure 3. Kalitaman Hotel after major renovation (1931). *Ancient manuscript system, Salatiga City Library and Archives Service*

Thus, the Kalitaman Hotel represents a project of modernizing a small colonial town, not only as a place of leisure, as in the study (Elok & Purwaningsih, 2024, p. 3) which states that leisure in closed spaces of Europeans includes activities of visiting societies, watching films in cinemas, watching operas, eating at famous restaurants, and staying at hotels. This hotel is also part of the formation of a colonial architectural

landscape, by combining European architectural styles adapted to the local climate and life. As expressed (Tarore et al., 2016) this type of typology reflects the symbolic manifestation of colonial power through space and form. As part of the *Indies architecture*, the Kalitaman Hotel also serves as a city marker, although many similar buildings have changed or disappeared over time (Chawari et al., 2023).

Hotel Kalitaman: a symbol of social interaction and colonial cultural heritage

Hotel Kalitaman not only functions as accommodation, but also as a significant social space in the dynamics of colonial Salatiga culture. In addition to serving guests, this hotel became a center for social activities, such as concerts, dance parties, diplomatic meetings, and charity events. In 1930, in the newspaper *De Locomotief*, this hotel became a place to stay for the Commander of the Army and his entourage, who participated in joint military training between Salatiga and Ungaran (*De Locomotief*, August 13, 1930). As the first starred hotel in Salatiga, Hotel Kalitaman attracted many guests from outside, for example, as stated in (*De Locomotief* December 26, 1931), where it was written that on Christmas Eve Hotel Kalitaman was filled with guests from outside Salatiga who wanted to spend Christmas Eve and the end of the year in this mountain city.

The recreational function of the hotel was further reflected in its involvement in arts and cultural activities. In October 1930, the hotel became the location of singing lessons organized by Mrs. Herrman, where she would give singing lessons to the children of the colony. The hotel also supported young musicians through theater performances or musical dramas (*De Locomotief*, 05 July 1930), (*De Locomotief*, 05 June 1930). These initiatives demonstrated the hotel's role in supporting the arts and strengthened its position as a center of entertainment and social activity in colonial society.

Hotel Kalitaman was also used as a high-class meeting and recreation space, reflected in the regular holding of *bridge* and chess competitions. *Bridge competitions* were often held for various events such as the inauguration of new hotel rooms, charity events and friendly matches between the Kalitaman Bridge Clubs of Salatiga, Semarang, and Yogyakarta. In addition, Mr. van der Lely, who at that time was still managing Hotel Kalitaman, also often gave prizes to all participants in *bridge* and chess matches. This activity was not only entertainment, but also a means of strengthening social solidarity and networking between colonial elites, especially between Semarang and Salatiga. (*Algemeen Handelsblad*, 25 September 1929), (*Algemeen Handelsblad*, 30 September

1929), (*De Locomotief*, 17 March 1930), (*De Locomotief*, 01 January 1934), (*Suara Merdeka*, 09 April 1955).

In addition to serving adults, the hotel was also involved in children's social activities, hosting a holiday event for hundreds of colonial children who were greeted by the hotel orchestra (*Algemeen Handelsblad*, 11 November 1930). A similar event was held again in June 1932 by Mr. and Mrs. van der Lely, including a children's party and the singing of the national anthem 'Wilhelmus' (*De Locomotief*, 18 June 1932). This activity reflected a paternalistic form of colonial *philanthropy*, while also becoming a representational space for the process of exchanging colonial and local relations.

The social function of the hotel is also reflected in the awards given to local workers, such as the awarding of a gold star from the Hotel Owners Association to foreman Nitikandjo who had worked since 1908 and was known for his loyalty. This award shows the recognition of local workers even within the colonial power structure. (*De Locomotief*, March 22, 1933). However, access to the hotel's social space was exclusive. Like other colonial hotels, the Kalitaman Hotel implemented racial segregation that restricted access based on race and social status. Prohibitions such as "*Verboden voor Honden en Inlanders*" illustrate how the space of colonial modernity also became a tool of social discrimination

(Permadi et al., 2016, p. 18) , (Supangkat, 2023, p. 49).

After independence, the Kalitaman Hotel continued to play an important role as a social space in Salatiga, despite being damaged by the Japanese occupation and the early upheavals of the republic (*De Locomotief*, 14 February 1948). The hotel became a venue for various meetings, ranging from Dutch citizen events, religious activities of Indonesian Muslim students, the Central Java Information Service conference, to the PGRI meeting attended by hundreds of participants. In 1957, the hotel even became a stopover location for President Sukarno and Soviet President Voroshilov when they visited Salatiga. This transformation shows the shift in the function of the hotel from a colonial space to part of the national socio-political dynamics. (*Suara Merdeka*, 27 September 1950), (*Suara Merdeka*, 17 April 1952), (*Suara Merdeka*, 15 August 1952), (*Suara Merdeka*, 12 September 1952), (*Java-bode*, 14 May 1957) (*ANP Indonesische Documentatie Dienst*, 18 May 1957).

Over time, the Kalitaman Hotel experienced a shift in function and identity. After no longer being managed by colonial management, the hotel changed its name to Grand Hotel Kalitaman, then to Hotel Kaloka (Supangkat & Budi, 2019). The name change shows an adjustment to the national socio-political dynamics and an

effort to assert a new identity in the post-colonial context. In subsequent developments, this building was no longer used as a hotel, but instead became the Sasana Widya Praja (city hall), and is now used as the office of Bank Jateng (Supangkat, 2023).



Figure 4. The former Hotel Kalitaman building which has now been converted into the office of Bank Jateng and several buildings have been converted into shophouses. *Ancient Manuscript System, Salatiga City Library and Archives Service*

Various activities that took place from the colonial period to the independence period show that Hotel Kalitaman was a meeting place between colonial modernity and local reality. Its functions that include cultural, entertainment, social, and political activities make this hotel a meeting place across classes and identities from the colonial elite to the local community. Hotel Kalitaman is not only part of the physical landscape of Salatiga, but also a social space that represents the changes and balance of culture in the history of this small city.

Hotel Kalitaman as a Meeting Point and Colonial Social Network

Not only did it function as a place to stay, but the hotel also became an important space in the colonial social network that connected interactions between regions, social classes, and cultural backgrounds. This network is evident from the various events and activities that took place at the hotel, showing how Salatiga, despite being a small city, remained connected to the dynamics of mobility and social exchange in the Dutch East Indies more broadly.

One of the most obvious examples is the visit of Mr. G. van Veen, captain of the ship *Hr. Ms. De Zeven Provinciën* which was docked at the port of Semarang. During his visit with the Navy Officers who were in Semarang to Salatiga, he enjoyed lunch at the Hotel Kalitaman (*De Locomotief*, May 30, 1927). This incident shows that the hotel was a stopover point for individuals from outside the city, even from outside Java, who came to enjoy the cool air and natural scenery of Salatiga. The Hotel Kalitaman became the first face of the city for newcomers, as well as part of the colonial tourist and transit route in Central Java.

Moreover, the connection between Hotel Kalitaman and the political elites and Javanese nobility was also reflected in several visits by Sri Sultan HH Soesoehoenan with Queen Hemas and the royal entourage. One of them was on the

way from Semarang to Solo after visiting the *Johan van Oldenbarnevelt ship*, the high-ranking royal entourage chose to stop and enjoy lunch at Hotel Kalitaman (*Het Nieuws*, 13 September 1930). The presence of the great figure of Soesoehoenan in a series of official trips showed the important position of this hotel as a decent and representative space in the social and political standards of that time.

The hotel also played an active role in social activities, such as hosting scouting meetings from various regions in Central Java, where the hotel owner, van der Lely, also gave a speech and shared his military experiences in South Africa and England (*Algemeen Handelsblad*, May 26, 1931). This reflects the hotel's involvement in the informal social and educational sphere. Events like this confirm the position of the Kalitaman Hotel as an important meeting point in the colonial social network. Bringing together various levels of society, both local and immigrant, and becoming a space for official and daily interaction. Thus, the hotel had a strategic role in shaping the colonial social and cultural landscape in Salatiga.

CONCLUSION

This study shows that the Kalitaman Hotel in Salatiga is one of the representations of colonial modernity manifested through its architecture and social functions.

Architecturally, this building adopts a tropical colonial typology that is adaptive to the local climate, but still maintains typical European aesthetic and functional elements. A major renovation that took place in the early 1930s further strengthened the hotel's image as a magnificent modern facility in a small town. In addition, the Kalitaman Hotel not only functioned as accommodation, but also became an important center for the social and cultural activities of the colonial elite, including European dinners, dance parties and upper-class meetings. However, this space was not completely open, with racial segregation emphasizing the dividing line between colonial and native. After independence, the hotel transformed into an important space in the national socio-political dynamics, hosting various important meetings and even a stopover location for President Sukarno.

Thus, the Kalitaman Hotel in Salatiga is a reflection of the complex blend of colonial modernity ideas with local conditions, both in terms of the physical aspects of the building and its role in the social structure of small-town society. Its existence proves that small towns like Salatiga have a significant role in the internalization of colonial modernity values, not just being on the fringes of colonial historiographic narratives.

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