

Warenhuis As a National Cultural Heritage Site A Legacy of The Dutch Colonial Era In Medan

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Abstract.

At the beginning of its development, Medan City was a small village called "Medan Putri". After that, workers from the port who had run out of contracts began to come to the village, precisely in the Kesawan area, to trade. Warenhuis is a heritage building from the Dutch Colonial Period which was once victorious and is a silent witness to the journey of the Dutch people while ruling this region, namely the city of Medan. One type of research used in this paper is literature research, which is included in the category of library research. In continuation of this research, the approach method in this research uses a historical method with a descriptive approach which is used to create a picture of an event or event. Writing history not only records events in chronological order, but also requires in-depth analysis supported by relevant theories. Warenhuis is one of the buildings that has been neglected in recent years. If you look at its shape, it will be in accordance with the functional space requirements of the performing arts building and gallery for historical objects. When the building was first built, this building functioned as a Dutch chamber of commerce, then it changed its function as an opera house and after Indonesia became independent this building became an office building. In the present, Warenhuis has been taken over and managed by the government. During its revitalization period, it will be transformed into the Medan City Education Center and Painting Art Gallery.

Keywords: Warenhuis, Cultural, Heritage, Colonial and Medan; Cultural acculturation; Ethnography and Manunggal Karya.

I. INTRODUCTION

The first person to establish Medan village was Guru Patimpus, a Karo native. Guru Patimpus was a progressive group. In its early development, Medan was a small village named "Medan Putri" (Wahid & Karsono, 2009). Afterward, ethnic Chinese dockworkers arrived in Medan to trade, until the Dutch occupation of Indonesia. Afterward, dockworkers whose contracts had expired began arriving in the village, specifically in the Kesawan area, to trade (Handoko, 2018).

Warenhuis is a heritage building from the Dutch colonial era that was once successful and a silent witness to the Dutch's journey during their rule over the city of Medan. Warenhuis is a department store located in downtown Medan, built by a trading company called NV Medan Warenhuis. Medan Warenhuis was designed by Gerard Bos in 1918. The Warenhuis building consists of two floors with a total area of approximately 8,000 m², with a ground floor of 1,400 m² and a second floor of 1,000 m².

Originally designed as a department store in 1920, the Warenhuis ceased operations in 1942 and changed functions several times before being occupied. The building marks the beginning of the development of commercial trade in Medan. The Warenhuis has been a vital part of Medan's economy since the Dutch colonial era. Its presence in Kesawan Old Town is particularly interesting in understanding its historical characteristics and the rationale for maintaining its existence alongside urban growth. As one of Medan's key historical buildings, its condition is concerning. The historic building was neglected and deteriorated after a fire in 2013. (Winata, Tobing, & Herwindo, 2023). Efforts to reuse heritage buildings strengthen their existence as part of urban public space (Bির & ÇalıřırAdem, 2022).

Rapid urban development has placed significant pressure on heritage buildings such as Warenhuis. According to Nasution et al. (2021), over 70% of colonial-era buildings in Medan have experienced degradation due to a lack of conservation and high rates of urbanization. This situation is exacerbated by a lack of public awareness of the importance of preserving historic buildings. (Shelly, 2025). Warenhuis is one of the iconic historical buildings in Medan City, this building is evidence of the legacy of the Dutch nation that still exists and stands today. Not only the Warenhuis building in Medan City, there are traces of heritage from the Dutch colonial era that still stand intact today, namely the Post Office, the London Sumatra

Building, the Bank Indonesia Building, Tjong A Fie, and many more. This article will explore the history of the Dutch legacy, namely Warenhuis, a building that holds a million stories, which continues to change ownership, until it is abandoned and not maintained, and in 2025 this building has been revitalized by the local government to become a magnificent, beautiful building and has aesthetic value.

II. METHOD

In the context of research, research methods refer to the procedures and approaches applied to guide a study so that it can be carried out effectively and produce appropriate data. One type of research used in this paper is literature research, which falls into the category of "library research." Literature research is a method that involves data collection through in-depth understanding and a comprehensive review of various theories related to the research subject being conducted. The stages in this literature research include more than simply accessing relevant sources; they also include a careful analysis process to gain a deep understanding. In continuing this research, the approach method in this study uses a historical method with a descriptive approach used to create a picture of an event or event. Writing history not only records events in chronological order but also requires in-depth analysis supported by relevant theories. According to Kuntowijoyo (2005:90), historical research involves five main stages: topic selection, source collection, verification (including historical criticism and assessment of source authenticity), interpretation (the process of analyzing and integrating information), and the final stage, historiography. The data collection technique used literature studies as a reference for data collection based on articles, books, and journals. The literature studies were sourced from scientific papers, research reports, journals, and books. The literature studies relate to the study of Warenhuis as a National Cultural Heritage Site, a trace of civilization during the Dutch colonial period in Medan.

III. DISCUSSION RESULTS

The History of the Establishment of Warenhuis, a Supermarket from the Dutch Colonial Era

In its time, Medan Warenhuis was a shopping destination for the elite. Only those with high status and wealth could afford to shop here. The shop's design is similar to today's malls (Nasution, 2018). Warenhuis is a building that has been abandoned in recent years. Judging by its shape, it would fit the needs of a functional space for an arts performance hall and a gallery of historical objects. Therefore, the new function expected for Warenhuis is a combination of an arts performance hall and a gallery of historical objects. The Warenhuis building is located at the intersection of Jalan Ahmad Yani and Jalan Hindu. The building's facade is curved to follow the shape of the road, and the tower on this building emphasizes the entrance. The interior of the building resembles a shopping complex selling various types of goods, with a chandelier in the center of the building symbolizing the building's grandeur.

Most of the historic buildings still standing today have become cultural heritage sites and must be preserved. Five of these buildings are the Warenhuis building and the former Borsumij office on Jalan Hindu. Currently, the buildings are in disrepair and no longer in use. Therefore, revitalization is necessary to preserve them and restore them to their original function. Construction of a new building on the site is also intended to support the Warenhuis building's continued use.

Adaptive reuse is a revitalization concept in reactivating historic buildings with new programmed developments that benefit current urban needs and economies (Brooker & Stone 2018). This concept applies the principles of building adaptation to increase resource efficiency. Lower construction costs, and shorter construction phases (Aigwi et al., 2018). In addition, these adaptation principles are also used to integrate resources effectively, lower construction costs and shorten the restoration phase (Bullen 2007). Warenhuis have become an important part of the economic scene.

Medan since the Dutch colonial era. Its presence within the Old City of Kesawan makes us interested in understanding its historical characteristics and reasonable ways to preserve its existence as the city grows. As one of Medan's historic buildings, its condition is quite concerning. This historic building has been neglected and its condition worsened after a fire in 2013. Efforts to reuse cultural heritage buildings strengthen their existence as part of the urban public space (Birer & Çalışur Adem, 2022). The relationship

between historic buildings and modern needs can build a different quality in the urban environment. Efforts to restore its historical value are also carried out in conjunction with increasing awareness of the urban community (Assi et al. 2020). This means educating people about perceptions around the historic complex and the importance of coexisting with historic buildings.

In 1905, the Tapanuli Residential Area was separated from the West Coast of Sumatra Province. Since then, some successful Mandailing and Angkola entrepreneurs in Padang, Sibolga, and Padang Sidempuan shifted their investments and began to look to Deli and Medan. Since then, the presence of Tapanuli entrepreneurs has been increasingly felt in Medan, while the population of Tapanuli, particularly Mandailing and Angkola, has been growing in Laboehan and Medan since the late 1870s.

In 1911, Huttenbach & Co. began building a *warenhuis* (department store) located on Huttenbach straat. The name of this department store was Huttenbach *Warenhuis* (see De Sumatra post, 26-08-1911). This news quickly spread to Batavia (Het nieuws van den dag voor Nederlandsch-Indie, 04-09-1911) and Bandung (De Preanger-bode, 09-09-1911). Huttenbach *Warenhuis*, department store, was perhaps the largest, most complete, and most luxurious in the Dutch East Indies. This is understandable because Medan was the largest concentration of Europeans from various nations, such as Germans, Italians, French, British, and others, including, of course, Belgians and Dutch.

In 1915, Huttenbach & Co. felt the need to build a new building for a new department store to replace the Huttenbach *Warenhuis* and compete with the Maison Duson shopping center. In the construction of this new building, the first stone was laid by Helena Ersthoven, Mr. Huttenbach's daughter. The architect of this department store building was Mr. Metz. This luxury store building was so large (at that time) that it was 70 meters long and 12 meters wide (see De Sumatra post, 13-12-1915). This new department store was called Medan *Warenhuis* which was considered a shopping center for ETI (European/Dutch) people in Medan (De Sumatra post, 03-04-1916). Jalan Huttenbach became a kind of shopping center for European people, while Kesawan was a shopping center generally managed by Chinese people. Japanese people were concentrated not only in Huttenbach straat but also in Japansch straat. Medan Directors.

In 1919, Huttenbach & Co. built a new, more luxurious and elegant department store. The first stone was laid by the mayor of Medan, Mr. D. Baron Mackay (De Sumatra Post, 13-02-1919). In addition to the seven mayors, Mr. Cornfield and the architect, Mr. G. Bos, were also present at the ceremony. The mayor began laying the first stone using a silver trowel. In his remarks, Mackay stated that he hoped the new building would beautify the Medan neighborhood and become a center for trade exhibitions. The new *Warenhuis* would be a center for groceries and retail. Mr. Cornfield, speaking for his initiative, expressed his hope that the new building would add beauty and image to Medan's rise as a business city. A plaque was also presented at the event, signed by the mayor, witnessed by all present. This plaque would be affixed to the wall. Guests then toured the exhibited images of the new building (De Sumatra Post, 17-02-1919).

Warenhuis' Contribution in Describing the History of Trade and the Dutch Presence in Medan

Since 1918, Medan has become a city where capital owners and users of capital converge, from nearly every nation in the world and ethnic group in Indonesia. Various elements have played their part to maximize the new form of the Deli region. Arabs, Punjabis, and Chinese, for example, harmoniously advanced Medan's economy with their trading expertise. Several Chinese groups also became experts in the woodworking sector in this new city. Javanese, Tamils, and several Chinese groups became the driving force behind the advancement of plantation businesses in Medan as laborers. All these elements merged into a unified whole with a new identity: "Medanians."

Once upon a time, the grand *Warenhuis* building was a supermarket and department store selling groceries and household goods. The inscription on the *Warenhuis* entrance read, "On 16:2:1919, werd voor dit gebouw, de eerste, steen gelegd door, Daniel Baron Mackay Burgermeester Van Medan," which roughly translates as: "Laying the first stone of *Warenhuis* by the Mayor of Medan, Daniel Baron Mackay, on Sunday, February 16, 1919." The *Warenhuis* on Jalan Hindu is very interesting to re-examine.

Initially, the building served as a Dutch chamber of commerce, then converted into an opera house and, after Indonesian independence, became an office building. This supermarket sold a wide variety of goods, from food and clothing to electronics. Previously, only wealthy natives, aristocrats, Europeans, and

Chinese could shop at this department store. This building serves as a witness and evidence that Medan's trade system had long been advanced. However, the Medan Warenhuis was eventually displaced once the Japanese entered Medan. "This supermarket only lasted about 23 years. Because around 1942, the supermarket owner returned to the Netherlands because conditions in Medan were becoming less conducive, colonized by the Japanese," said Erond (Secretary of the Center for History and Social Sciences Studies (PUSSIS) Unimed).

The location of this building, when viewed from the development along Kesawan Street, might be considered somewhat odd, as it is positioned somewhat hidden behind other large buildings such as the Lonsum (London Sumatra) building. However, from a business perspective, the Warenhuis building's position is perhaps perfectly appropriate, right on the banks of the Deli River. The building's location is considered appropriate because river transportation was still an important part at that time, alongside land transportation modes such as trains operated by DSM (Deli Spooweg Maatschapij). Warenhuis, which was founded on February 16, 1919, and its foundation stone was laid by the first mayor of Medan, Baron Daniel Mackay, then developed into a capitalist center for economic actors and activists in Medan, along with several similar businesses around Kesawan.

Warenhuis as a Legacy of Dutch Colonial Architecture Influences Local Identity in the Contemporary Era

If we look closely, the Warenhuis building is very rich in artistic inspiration in the field of architecture, the facade of the building is shaped like the letter 'L' is very rich with classical European style. In addition, on the two towers that also function as entrance paths, we can see the art deco style at the top. In some of the windows at the top, we can also see stained glass windows, a technique that was greatly admired at that time, this form can also be seen in the corridors of the Medan Grand Mosque and several other large Dutch heritage buildings in the city of Medan. If we enter the building from the north side, we will immediately be greeted by a wooden staircase altar to the second floor with a simple pattern but does not lose its impression of European grandeur, then walking on the second floor we will also be presented with a row of doors (no longer perfect) shops that stand independently between one shop and another.

From the second floor if we look down we will see a large area in the middle of the building maybe it was also used as a place to buy and sell as we often see in shopping centers today using small stilts, looking up we will be more amazed to see the ceiling of this building spread wide full of stained glass remains, how beautiful this ceiling was in its time when it was still intact. The full impression of the building is a triumph of Medan civilization in its fertile land which became the center of foreign investment at that time, the building which previously appeared in white plus its marble pillars added to the perfection of the glory of Medan people at that time enjoying the results of their own land.

The Warenhuis Building is a historic landmark in the development of civilization in the center of Medan as we know it today. Originally owned by a Dutch company called NV Hü'tenbach, the building was commissioned by G Bos, a renowned German architect, to design the building, and construction began in 1916. The building was inaugurated by Medan's first mayor, Daniel Baron Mackay, in 1919. The building's design resembles that of European buildings of the time. Large pillars line the sides of the building, with the entrance located at the corner.

The Warenhuis building has two floors and many large windows. The existence of Warenhuis is a testament to the rapid development of trade and the economy in Medan at that time. At that time, Warenhuis thrived as a supermarket for 23 years. The supermarket's glory days collapsed after Japan conquered the Netherlands in 1942. The supermarket finally ceased operations after Japan took control of Indonesia at that time. Until Indonesia's independence in 1945, Warenhuis remained in operation. However, in the 1970s, the building reopened as a supermarket, but for a short time. After that, the Warenhuis building was also used as a government office. The Warenhuis building once served as the Office of Education and the Office of Manpower.

Currently, Warenhuis has been taken over and managed by the government. During its revitalization period, which will be transformed into the Medan City Painting Education Center and Gallery, it will facilitate the main facilities, namely work studios, painting course studios, seminar rooms (workshops), and a

painting gallery. In addition, there are supporting facilities such as a painting equipment shop, a café and restaurant, a library, and a co-working space that can be visited and rented by the public. These supporting functions, besides supporting the main function, also make the building feel more alive. The painting education center becomes a place for artists to interact with the community through educational media for teaching painting. The painting education center in this design is a non-formal education in the form of courses and workshops organized by artists, to provide knowledge to registered students. In addition, the painting education center also offers offers to the public and tourists who are visiting and want to try painting. This aims to provide a pleasant impression and experience for visitors after visiting the gallery. The painting art gallery is temporary and in addition to functioning as an exhibition space for works made by local artists, is also open to the public.

IV. CONCLUSION

Warenhuis has been a vital part of Medan's economic scene since the Dutch colonial era. Its presence within Kesawan Old Town makes it interesting to understand its historical characteristics and consider reasonable ways to preserve it as the city grows. As one of Medan's historic buildings, its condition is quite concerning. This historic building has been neglected, and its condition worsened after a fire in 2013. Efforts to reuse heritage buildings strengthen its presence as part of the urban public space. In its time, Medan Warenhuis was a shopping destination for the elite. Only those with high status and wealth could afford to shop there. The shop's appearance is similar to today's malls (Nasution, 2018). Warenhuis is one of the buildings that has been abandoned in recent years. Judging by its shape, it would fit the needs of a functional space for an arts performance hall and a gallery of historical objects. Therefore, the new function expected for Warenhuis is a combination of an arts performance hall and a gallery of historical objects.

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