

NEWS FROM INDONESIA: FOUNDING DOCOMOMO RI

On April 29, 2003, Docomomo Indonesia's working party was founded at Parahyangan University in Bandung. Given the size of the country, various chapters will be active. The first will be hosted by Petra University in Surabaya.

To serve both documentation and conservation, the WP RI will coordinate two projects: the establishment of a register of MOMO buildings throughout the archipelago in collaboration with local heritage societies and the conservation of the headquarters of the Bandung PDAM (water company) built between 1954 and 1956. In addition, Docomomo RI will publish a bi-annual newsletter.

Indonesia has a fair share of MOMO architecture. As business opportunities increased after 1870 thanks to a law amendment and European traders increasingly set sail for the Dutch East Indies. As a result, the colony promptly underwent radical demographic, economic, cultural, social, and, last but not least, physical changes. By 1910, the need for housing and office spaces, and extension areas was crucial and offered ample opportunities for architects and planners. Those who set out to work in Indonesia had all been educated in Europe. Most of them remained faithful to contemporary Western architectural styles and town planning principles. However, some of them developed a typical 'Indian' style based on local customs and respectful of native traditions which resulted in a combination of styles ranging from almost pure functionalism to *Art Deco* and fusions of traditional indigenous and Western typologies and techniques. "Almost pure" as adaptations with regard to the tropical climate were necessary and inevitable. After Indonesia gained its independence, architects and planners used the various opportunities offered by the government and other commissioners to design buildings and to plan towns which were essential to the images of this 'new' country. In celebration of the newly obtained independence and vitality of the country, many Indonesian architects of the 1950s and 1960s designed buildings in a specific International Style.

The amount and variety of MOMO architecture in Indonesia definitely legitimizes the establishment of a national WP which will also play a leading role in the campaign against ignorance and lack of interest of many Indonesians regarding this specific and distinctive part of their cultural heritage.

Creating awareness and appreciation among politicians and the public have long been keywords for local heritage societies. The modern Asian Architecture Network (mAAN) has already set up a network of international scholars to define and analyze the characteristics of modern architecture in Asia. In this context, the establishment of a WP Docomomo RI is precious, as it will address the issue of modern architecture and town planning in Indonesia.

The keynote speech that Maristella Casciato, chair of Docomomo International, delivered during the Third mAAN seminar in Surabaya on August 28, 2003 is a first sign of this fruitful cooperation.

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For more information on the mAAN seminar in Surabaya go to: www.m_aan.org

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