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The cultural acculturation in architecture of Karawang Chinatown, West Java

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Abstract. Chinese architecture which is part of Indonesia's history is an interesting topic, because each of Chinese architecture in Indonesia carries its own characteristics which are quite unique with suitable materials based on existing local conditions. The character of Chinese architecture in various places in Indonesia is the result of a combination of Chinese architectural characters mixed with local architecture which is part of Indonesian architecture and also plays a very large role in Indonesian architectural styles. One of the interesting Chinatown areas used as a study location is Karawang Chinatown, Karawang Regency, West Java. The purpose of this study is: 1) To get a picture of Karawang Chinatown which has a concept of Chinatown architecture; and 2) To know the cultural acculturation in the architecture Karawang Chinatown. This study uses a qualitative approach that is based on the naturalistic paradigm with an inductive method. The cultural acculturation between Chinese culture and local/colonial culture creates a unique architecture and a symbolic meaning, the character is a blend of Chinese architecture with local architecture that needs to be preserved.

1. Introduction

In the 1st century BC-1M in China, India and Europe, there were already different architectural works. Architecture in Indonesia was associated with high intensity with Chinese (and Indian) architecture until the 15th century [1]. Talking about traditional Chinese architecture in Indonesia is the same as talking about other traditional architecture in the country [2]. Chinese architecture which is part of Indonesia's history is an interesting topic, because each of Chinese architecture in Indonesia carries its own characteristics which are quite unique with suitable materials based on existing local conditions. The acculturation between local architecture and Chinese architecture made a unique architecture and exist in every Chinatown in Indonesia. The Chinatown area is a densely populated area with the largest number of colonial buildings made by the Dutch, by European citizens, or made by the Chinatown community itself [3].

As a residential area, there is a combination of interactions between local culture and culture brought from mainland China. In this current era, the cultural acculturation is in the facade of the buildings in this area. The existence of cultural differences between the local community and the immigrant community allows the realization of cultural acculturation of both. The various elements and building components they build contain symbolization that has special meanings and could tell stories of the people who lived at that time. Chinese is ethnic that is able can maintain its existence in a place, without losing its cultural character. This phenomenon shows that the Chinese can maintain their cultural identity from the influence of other cultures. Nurhajarini et al states that the results of acculturation that



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are visible in Chinatown usually are language, architecture, and rituals [4]. One of the socio-cultural potentials of the Chinatown is the existence of Chinese settlements and the existence of the activity in it. The basic knowledge of Chinese culture itself is closely related to elements of belief in the teachings of their ancestors so it can be understood that the most prominent architectural identity is in religious buildings [5].

One of the Chinatowns that still maintain Chinese culture is in the West Karawang area. The formulation of research problems on Chinatown architecture in the West Karawang area is as follows: What is the concept of Chinatown architecture and what buildings still maintain Chinese identity in West Karawang? How to apply culture in their architecture Chinatown then? The purpose of this study is: 1) To get a picture of Karawang Chinatown which has a concept of Chinatown architecture; and 2) To know the cultural acculturation in the architecture of Karawang Chinatown.

2. Methods

This research uses a qualitative approach which is based on the naturalistic paradigm with an inductive method, to examine the conditions of natural objects, where the researcher is the key instrument. This research departs from data, utilizes existing theories as explanatory material and ends with theory through field observations in West Karawang. Data collection steps include gathering information through observation and interviews, both structured and unstructured, documentation, visual material, and design protocols for recording and recording information. The research location is in Benteng Chinatown, West Karawang District, Karawang Regency, West Java, precisely in Muhamad Toha Street, Tanjungmekar Village, and along Ir. H. Juanda Street, Nagasari Village. In this study, the research area is divided in 3 observation units which are divided based on the characteristics difference of each unit. In Observation Unit I, the location of the *Sian Djin Kupoh* Temple as a landmark in this area is located on the edge of the Citarum River, this location is referred to Chinese belief about to place the site of a building in a best area. Observation Unit II, the location of the *Buddha Guna* Temple as a landmark in this area is not precisely located on the edge of the Citarum River but the orientation of the Chinese Temple is faced to the river. Observation Unit III, *Bio TjouSoe Kong* Temple as a landmark in this area located in the middle of the residence far from the river. The object of research is a community building that still maintains Chinatown Architecture in West Karawang. Three stages were passed for data analysis, namely data reduction, data modelling, and verification of conclusions. During the implementation of qualitative research, it is necessary to validate the research results, with the aim of maintaining the accuracy of the steps and methods and results that have been obtained.

3. Results and discussion

There are three characteristics of Chinatown in Southeast Asia: 1) *Clear Regional Boundaries*, usually located in the central of the city with a different character from the surrounding environment. Besides Chinatown has the highest population density compared to other areas in the same city; 2) *Grid Road Pattern*, almost all Chinatowns in Southeast Asia have a regular grid road pattern and continuous shop houses; and 3) *A world apart in the city*, Chinatown is a part of the city where the pattern of life and settlement is focused on the traditions of the Chinese community so that it becomes a world apart in the city [2]. The architectural characteristics of Chinatowns are as follows: 1) *A courtyard*; The houses in the Chinatown area are built around a courtyard in the middle. This courtyard has a variety of meanings and rules and functions, for example: as a barrier, ventilation, to facilitate air movement and to enter light. 2) *A specific roof*; the principles of the traditional Chinese roof form are: symbolizing the function and level of the building, distribution of loads at the Centre and on the edge, and an expression of the form of a mountain. The roof of the temple or typical Chinese houses is the staple of the building which usually has a lot of ornaments. 3) *Open structural elements* (which are sometimes accompanied by various ornaments); General character that characterizes Chinese architecture is its spatial structural framework, and 4) *Colour*; Chinese culture is full of symbolization that has a very deep meaning, manifested in both physical and non-physical forms and in the form of special images and colours.

Typologies of buildings that show the characteristics of Chinese architecture consist of temples and shop houses. The following are some typologies of Chinese architectural buildings in Karawang:

3.1. Chinese temple (*Kelenteng*)

Karawang has three Chinese Temple, namely Ma Ku Poh Temple, Buddha Guna Temple, and Bio Tjou Soe Kong Temple. The Chinese Temple or kelenteng in Indonesia comes from the assumption "Kwan Im Ting" word. There is an opinion that said the word kelenteng comes from the sound of a bell during the prayer ceremony 'klinting-klinting' which is then named into kelenteng [6]. In 1965, the name kelenteng was changed to become vihara, because of the political situation at that time in which the Indonesian government prohibited everything related to China which was assumed to be related to the forbidden organization [7]. Three main teachings are the basic concepts and guidelines for prayer procedures in the Chinese temple, namely Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism. Following the traditions adhered to and the main gods worshiped, there are three types of temple traditions, namely: the Taoist Temple, the Buddhist Temple, and the Confucius Temple. Temples can be classified based on their size and layout, into small temples and large temples. The classification of temples according to their size also creates differences in Chinese temple architecture. The function of the Chinese temple is very important, namely: 1) as a place of worship for Gods and ancestors, it is usually done at clan Chinese temples; 2) as a place to live for relatives who come from other areas. This is also the reason for the establishment of the clan temple; 3) as a place to defend against enemies, and to ward off evil spirits, based on rational and irrational considerations; and 4) as a manifestation of charitable deeds, which is a contribution to life in the afterlife. Prayer ceremonies performed in the Chinese temple are generally divided into individual prayers and great ceremonies. An individual prayer ceremony is an activity that is done regularly every day by burning three *hio* sticks. Great prayer ceremonies are usually performed during the commemoration of the Temple Gods, during the New Year, *cap go meh* or prayers to God. Usually in the great prayer ceremony also perform the ritual procession of Kong Co.

3.2. Shop houses

A shop-house is a typical building for Chinese society in Karawang Chinatown where this building is not only used for living quarters but also business (trading). A shop house is a landmark in several Chinatowns in Southeast Asia. In eastern China, to be precise, in the city of Suzhou along the Yangtze River, which is the most fertile area in China, there are row houses that are typically similar to the rows of Chinese shop houses in Indonesia. A typical row house in the old city of Suzhou that might be adopted by Chinese society as shop houses type in some existing Chinatowns. Shop houses are also found in almost all coastal cities in the South China region and spread to Southeast Asia. The architectural characteristic of row houses of Chinatown shop houses is the roof, which has curved roofs.

3.3. The division of observation units

3.3.1. *Observation unit 1.* The area of observation unit 1 is shown by a gate to the Mah Ku Poh Temple. Along the entrance to the gate, we can find a vihara and Mah Ku Poh temple at the end of the road, where the architectural elements of Chinese culture are the same as the Buddha Guna Temple. We can also find a house that still uses elements of Chinese traditions, where the house still uses bulian wood or original black. The windows of the house still use the original bamboo which is made of bulkheads. The house also still maintains Chinese culture from ancient times to the present. The Chinatown community in Benteng speak Sundanese Karawang. And the skin of the Chinatown community is darker than the skin of ethnic Chinese in general. At the synchronic – diachronic, the influence of environment changing factors from period to period is economic, politic, and socio-cultural [8].



Figure 1. Map of observation unit 1 (GoogleMap).



Figure 2. *Ma Ku Poh* Temple is located along Muhammad Toha Street, Tanjungmekar Village West Karawang District, Karawang Regency, West Java.

3.3.2. *Observation unit 2.* Starting to enter the Juanda street, we can see the gates of the Buddha Guna Temple and shophouses. In the building of the Buddha Guna Temple, the elements of Chinese culture are still preserved. The shape of the roof is the Ngang Shan type or gable roof, the type of roof supported by the walls at the edges. The temple also has special colors, such as red, green, blue, and yellow, where each color has a certain symbolic meaning.



Figure 3. Map of Observation Unit 2 (GoogleMap).



Figure 4. *Buddha Guna* Temple is located along Ir. H. Juanda Street, Nagasari Village, West Karawang District, Karawang Regency, West Java.

In Buddha Guna temple, it has 3 rooms, namely: 1) Front yard, the front yard is usually used for performing lion dance namely barongsai and other performances during Chinese New Year celebrations and other celebrations. On the front yard there is also a burning place for *Jinshi/Kimcoa* (spirit money which is used for burnt offerings); 2) Main holy room, the main sacred space that we can find many altar tables. Some altar tables have a special shape, where the table has the shape of a house that has a roof. The roof also has the same type as the temple roof. On The roof supports (Tou Kung) of the building also have beautiful three-dimensional carvings in the form of a dragon, where the dragon is like

wrapping around the column; 3) Additional room, the additional room also has functions as a place for religion learning and other functions. The roof of the building is likened to the shape of the temple roof. The walls and the columns of the building decorated with Chinese culture and carvings that beautify the building. Next to the gate of the Guna Dharma Temple and across from the gate, we can find the shophouses lined up, where the community uses the shop by trading and housing. The people still maintains elements of the shophouses, such as the roof of the shop in the form of a Ngang Shan-roof type and end of the straw-gable type. The entrance architecture of Guna Dharma Temple is very competitive with the temple building itself. The embellishment of the two dragons is striking in proportion, covering the length of the front parcel fence that has propagated away from the roof of the entrance area where the dragon ornament should be located. Confusing the appropriate hierarchy of positions [9].

3.3.3. Observation unit 3. The area of observation unit 3 includes Bio Tjou Soe Kong Temple as a landmark of the area and the environment surrounding the temple. Difference with observation unit 1 and observation unit 2 which is located in riverside, in this zone, Bio Tjou Soe Kong Temple as a landmark located in the middle of the residence far from the river. Bio Tjou Soe Kong Temple surroundings by supermarkets or mall buildings, the cinema, etc.



Figure 5. Map of Observation unit 3 (Google Map).



Figure 6. Bio Tjou Soe Kong Temple as landmark of observation unit 3.

3.4. Cultural acculturation

In Chinese culture Chinese society is surrounded by many symbolization, expressions of beauty and majesty which manifested in painting art, sculpture and literature. Historically Feng shui was intended for houses, temples and tombs. In the feng shui theory the elements of the head of the household became a reference in calculating this theory. The main point of Feng shui is that to place a building in certain area better protected behind by mountains or hills and in front of a lower open space (called *ming tang* or "hall of light") must be applied with water in the form of ponds, lakes, rivers or even sea [10]. According to Chinese belief, symbolically: 1) To the North is a black turtle (water element); 2) To the South is the red Hong bird (fire element); 3) To the East is the Blue Dragon (wood element), and 4) In the West are white tigers (metal elements) [2]. According to Widodo [11], although some of the elements are taken from the uniqueness of the form according to the local culture, we must look at some of the similarities in the forms and spaces of port cities and water cities in Southern and Southeastern of China before looking at the coastal cities in Southeast Asia. This is because the settlements of Chinese people (Chinatowns), especially in coastal cities in Southeast Asia, follow the traditional urban settlement

patterns of their ancestors. Another reason is that almost all Chinese (Chinatown) settlements are built in port areas and are close to the sea and rivers. Regarding the Chinatown area which is built in the port area and is close to the sea and river, it is very suitable for the condition of the Karawang Chinatown area which is on the bank of Citarum River, which until now is still used for transportation line. The use of Chinese architecture in Chinatown buildings is to reflect one's identity as Chinese people. The element of local culture, namely Java, reflects more on the efforts of the Chinese to become part of the local culture in which they live so that they are not considered foreigners [12]. Cultural acculturation in Chinese residential architecture in the 19th century is the result of typical Chinese architecture of Karawang which is a combination of South Chinese architecture (the place of origin of most Chinese in Indonesia), local architecture, and the influence of Dutch Colonial architecture, which experience development from time to time. The main factor of Chinese culture resilience in some Chinese settlements is the religious belief which is implemented in an ancestral worship room in their house [13].

4. Conclusion

The difference in culture of the local community and the Chinese community, making acculturation in the Chinatown buildings which still able to maintain the cultural existence. The various elements and building components they build contains symbolization that has special meanings and can tell stories of the people who lived at that time. Up to now, only a few Chinese communities still maintain Chinese culture and maintain elements of Chinese culture, such as temples, shop houses, and houses. The unique architecture characteristics of Karawang Chinatown were found in the acculturation between Chinese architecture and local architecture or colonial architecture. The Chinese architecture is shown by the elements of buildings structure and construction, the roof type, the gable type, the gate, the courtyard, and the color, which remain in Karawang Chinatown. And the acculturation between Chinese architecture and local architecture or colonial architecture is shown by the characteristics of locality and transformation during the development of colonial architecture. The architecture of the Chinatown area has the beauty of a unique architecture which is an acculturation of Chinese architecture with local/colonial architecture that needs to be preserved.

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