A Study of Cultural Acculturation in Architecture: Semarang Chinatown, Indonesia

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Abstract: The Semarang Chinatown is one of the Chinatowns that shows the strength of the cultural economy, diversity and multiculturalism. Economic and socio-cultural activities that form the background of spatial formations influence the development of the area both physically and non-physically, especially the exploitation of the area for recreation and tourism purposes. The result is a decrease in the physical condition of the area, both buildings and the environment. This is of course not in line with the local government's policy of establishing the Semarang Chinatown as a Historical District based on Mayor Decree No. 645/50/1992. The character of the Semarang Chinatown is the result of a cross-cultural mix of immigrants at the beginning of the formation of ethnic villages in Semarang and developed over time. The existence of cultural diversity and multiculturalism of the immigrants resulted in an architectural blend that colored the architectural formations. The focus of this research is to discuss an architectural formation in the Semarang Chinatown which has a correlation with the acculturation process. The aim of the research is to explore in depth an architectural formation of the Semarang Chinatown which is influenced by a process of acculturation of culture and reveal the background of the cultural system in the form of ideas, ideas, values, norms, regulations, and so on that influence the architectural formation of the Semarang Chinatown. This study uses a naturalistic qualitative research paradigm with a grounded theory approach and inductive qualitative methods. In this research data is grouped into four: interviews, observations, documents, audio-visual materials. The result is giving directions for Preservation of the Environment and Historic Buildings in Semarang Chinatown.

Keywords Architectural Characteristics; Cultural Acculturation in Architecture; Semarang Chinatown

Introduction

Nowadays Chinatowns are starting to be packaged for recreational and tourism purposes based on cultural economic values, diversity and multiculturalism in various cities in the world, especially in the cities of New York, San Francisco, Boston, Los Angeles and Chicago (Kurniati, 2018). The same goes for Chinatown areas in big cities in Indonesia. Semarang Chinatown is one of Chinatowns that shows the strength of the cultural economy, diversity and multiculturalism.

The characteristics and uniqueness of Semarang Chinatown as an Indonesian Heritage are shown in its architectural characteristics that differ between Chinatowns in one city and Chinatowns in other cities. The character of Semarang Chinatown is the result of a blend of Chinese architecture, Dutch East Indies architecture and local architecture. This combination is the result of cross-cultural arrivals from migrants at the beginning of the formation of ethnic villages in Semarang and developed over time. These immigrants were Indian Gujarats who entered Indonesia in the 8th to 14th centuries, Chinese entered Indonesia in the 13th to 14th centuries, Arabs entered the 15th to 16th centuries, and the Dutch Colonial entered the 19th century. 16th to 19th century (Fauzy, 2015). The existence of cultural diversity and multiculturalism of these immigrants resulted in an architectural blend that colored the architectural formations.

According to Kent (1990), the form of settlement, especially its spatial organization, directly reflects the associated communal social structure. Economic and socio-cultural activities that form the background of spatial formations influence the development of the area both physically and non-physically, especially the exploitation of the area for recreation and tourism purposes. The result is a decrease in the physical condition of the area, both buildings and the environment. This is of course not in line with the local government's policy of establishing the Semarang...
Chinatown as a Historic District by Mayor Decree No. 645/50/1992. Concerning the Conservation of Ancient/Historic Buildings in the City of Semarang. The condition of the buildings in the Chinatown area which represent certain styles that are already rare have also experienced a decrease in physical condition which has resulted in the loss of regional characteristics and identity. For this reason, it is quite important that the Chinatown Area be appointed as an object of study so that cross-cultural architectural formations that have cultural economic values, diversity and multiculturalism can be further optimized to support government policies that have been implemented.

The uniqueness of the shape and space of the Semarang Chinatown as a result of a cross-cultural mix of various immigrants at a certain time indicates the occurrence of cultural acculturation in the architecture of the Semarang Chinatown. To explore this uniqueness, a significant research focus is needed to be proposed as a guide in data mining activities, namely discussing an architectural form of the Semarang Chinatown that has a correlation with the acculturation process involving local/colonial culture and South Chinese culture brought by a group of people who came to Semarang.

The aim of the research is to contribute knowledge concepts by building substantive theories related to cultural acculturation in the architecture of the Semarang Chinatown which can be described as follows: 1) To explore in depth an architectural formation of the Semarang Chinatown which is influenced by a process of acculturation of culture and reveal the background of the cultural system in the form of ideas, ideas, values, norms, regulations, and so on that influence the architectural formation of the Semarang Chinatown; and 2) Finding Directions for Preservation of the Environment and Historic Buildings in Semarang Chinatown. The map of the core of Semarang Chinatown can be seen in Fig.1.

**Fig 1. Map of The Core of Semarang Chinatown**  
(Source: Tunjung, Wijayanti, & Nugroho, 2016)

**Method**

Based on the research objective, which is to contribute to the concept of knowledge by building a substantive theory related to cultural acculturation in the architecture of Semarang Chinatown, an appropriate research paradigm is determined. The choice of this inductive-qualitative approach means that the data/information is grouped into four: interviews, observations, documents, audio-visual materials. Acculturation research in the architecture of Semarang Chinatown uses a grounded theoretical approach that focuses on researchers' techniques in carrying out an abstract analysis of a phenomenon, in order to produce a particular theory that can explain phenomena specifically. In the study of cultural acculturation in the architecture of the Semarang Chinatown, the research materials used are as follows: a) Literature, namely research material in the form of literature related to the theory used in the theoretical basis so that it is compiled into new theories, and other appropriate theories; b) Data from survey results, namely research material in the form of field survey results that describe the Semarang Chinatown; and c) Interview, namely research material from the results of the interview. Field data collection techniques in the form of: 1) primary data, namely data obtained from physical measurement data at the research location; and 2) secondary data, namely observation data during observations and interviews.
Results and Discussions

1. The History of Semarang Chinatown

In November 1740 the Dutch killed +10,000 Chinese people in Batavia on the grounds of preventing the arrival of further Chinese. Furthermore, the Chinese then fled to Semarang with Captain Kwee An Say who built a fort made of beams and wooden planks around Kulon Chinatown. Chinatown Kulon is the most vulnerable area in Chinatown to attacks from outside Chinatown (now this area is called Beteng). That same year the beteng fell and Captain Kwee was captured by the VOC. Finally in 1742 the VOC succeeded in controlling the situation in Java after the rebellion of the Chinese people was suppressed.

After the war ended, the population of the Chinatown grew with the influx of Chinese immigrants to Semarang. On September 9, 1811, Java Island was controlled by the British. In Semarang there was panic, so that many Semarang including Chinatown fled to nearby cities such as Demak, Kudus, Welahan and Jepara. As soon as the situation calmed down and it was safe again, they returned to Semarang and in Chinatown held thanksgiving celebrations at five existing temples (Sioe Hok Bio, Tek Hay Bio, Tay Kak Sie, Tong Pek Bio, Hoo Hok Bio temples).

In 1816, the Government of the United Kingdom surrendered the Dutch back to power. After the Prince Diponegoro war in 1825 was over, Lieutenant Tan Tiang Tjing asked the Dutch for permission to install four Kota doors at mutual cooperation costs, the four Kota gates were at the ends of Sebandaran-Jagalan, Tjap Kauw King-Beteng Gang Warung and Pekojan. The city wall consists of the Kulon Chinatown Gate, the Wetan Chinatown Gate, the Lor Chinatown Gate, and the Kidul Chinatown Gate. The city wall is to guard against robbers. The walls were quite thick, and the Chinese community patrolled them for protection and it was only after dark that the city gates were closed and only opened after six in the morning.

The Chinatown area continues to develop. Starting in 1825, the area that was still empty, in the central part of the area, was filled with plots of houses and formed the pattern of the road as it is today. On the land of Tan Tiang Thjing in 1835 an Administration Office was established for the Chinese community known as Kongkoan. This institution was not formal before 1885 and was only abolished in 1931. In 1837 Kongkoan was moved to Gang Lombok, placed next to the Tay Kak Sie temple. Another large plot located in the Gang Pinggir owned by Captain Belng Tjioe is known as the Kebon Dalem complex (1839-1841). Around 1850 due to unstable political conditions in the PRC, a wave of immigrants came to Indonesia, which led to the development and expansion of the Chinatown area.

The revival of Semarang as a modern city began with the opening of a railroad network that connected Semarang with the three corners of Central Java (South, East, West). In 1863 there were 16 Wijkmeeters in Semarang. Seven of them are located in the Chinatown area, namely Gang Pinggir, Gang Warung, Gang Besen. Central Alley, Gambiran Alley, Baru Alley and Tjap Kauw King (Wot Gandul Timur Street) In 1866, the eighth Liong Hok Bio temple was built south of Besen Alley. The construction was initiated by Liem Giok Sing, a Wijkmeester. In 1890 the gates at the mouth of Chinatown were finally destroyed on January 17 1904, the Tiong How Hwee Koan school was founded in Gang Tengah.

The Cultural Acculturation in Architecture

Acculturation is a word that comes from the Latin word “acculturare” which means to grow and develop together. Acculturation is the noun form of the word acculturate which means learning to live successfully in a different culture; help someone to do it (Dictionary, 2015). Basically the notion of acculturation is a blend of cultures that continues to produce a new culture without eliminating the original elements of that culture, for example, the process of mixing the two cultures can even meet over a long period of time causing mutual influence on one another. Complete Indonesian Dictionary (Budiman, 2005), the term acculturation is defined as the process of mixing two or more cultures that meet and influence each other.

Koentjaraningrat (1981) in the book Introduction to Anthropology also argues that: acculturation is a social process that arises when a group of people with a particular culture is confronted with elements of a foreign culture in such a way that the elements of foreign culture are gradually accepted and processed into their own culture without causing the loss of the cultural personality itself. According to Harisah, Sastrosasmito & Hatmoko (2007), the basis
of acculturation is the existence of certain cultural elements confronted with foreign cultural elements, two or more cultures that influence each other, different cultures.

Cultural acculturation occurs when newcomers enter with cultural values and elements, then mix with the local culture. The process of cultural acculturation occurs when several cultures interact intensively with each other for quite a long time, then each of these cultures changes to adapt to one another to become one culture.

The meaning of a building seen from a cultural perspective, will be juxtaposed from two aspects of perspective, namely customs/culture and its shape (Koentjaraningrat, 1981). The 'customs' in question include abstract ideas, ideas, norms, advice, speech which constitute the social system of society. While the "form" in question is the physical form of that culture which is concrete. The form of the embodiment of cultural acculturation is one of the results of human activity in carrying out the process of cultural integration. Cultural acculturation influences local architecture through its variety, spatial patterns, and arrangements, so that the results of the cultural mix will form a new image of the local community (Fauzy, 2012).

According to Honigman in Koentjaraningrat (2005), the ideal form of culture is culture in the form of a collection of ideas, ideas, values, norms, regulations, and so on which are abstract in nature, that is, they cannot be touched or touched. The forms of culture that occur in the process of acculturation are divided into three: 1) Ideas and ideas are abstract in form, so they cannot be seen with the sense of sight. This form exists in the minds of the people and lives a lot with the people. The linkages between each of these ideas are called systems (cultural systems); 2) The social system, as a whole human activity or all forms of human action that interact with other humans; and 3) Physical culture. This is in line with Soekiman (2000), that the form and content of culture that occurs in the acculturation process there are at least three kinds, namely in the form of: a) cultural system (cultural system), namely "cultural order of behavior"; b) social system (social system), namely "behavior"; and c) artifacts, namely objects.

**The Character of Chinese Architecture**

Character means nature/quality. All the qualities and characteristics that make people, groups of people, and places different from one another (Dictionary, 2015). The visual character of an area is indicated by the physical quality formed by the relationships between relations and between visual elements in a city (Smardon, 1986). The socio-cultural characteristics of the community become the background for the physical formation of an environment, where one of the variables of the socio-cultural characteristics is religion. In order to see the visual character of the area, it is necessary to briefly examine the non-physical characteristics underlying the physical formation and then examine the components of the physical character of the architecture (Rapoport, 1969). The characteristics of Chinese architecture can be seen in: layout patterns, stages and front terraces, building structural systems, Tou-Kung, roof shapes, use of color, and arches. This architectural character can be seen in houses and temples in Semarang's Chinatown area.

The shape of the building where the Chinese people live, especially the temple, is very distinctive and the shape of the building is similar everywhere. Traditional Chinese houses in Indonesia are historical buildings and have social and cultural functions and are based on the harmonious values contained therein. The existence of cultural differences between natives and immigrants makes for a blend of cultures. The uniqueness of the Chinese community wherever they are still carrying their original culture. The similarity in the characteristics of traditional Chinese architecture in various places illustrates that the level of existence of Chinese architectural identity is still maintained. This is manifested in the ancestor worship space in their homes. This is proven in every Chinatown there is always a temple, even though the temple was always standing before the Chinatown stood. In every Chinese house in Semarang, there is always an altar room as the most sacred and religious center of the house.

The architectural identity of Chinese buildings is manifested through layout, shape, color and ornament. In arranging the layout of worship buildings, the principles used are axial and symmetrical planning. They are also still applied but adapted to the function of the building space. The use of axial and symmetrical planning principles is related to their belief in natural balance. Natural balance is also shown by applying the courtyard concept to the building layout.
There are three characteristics of Chinatowns in Southeast Asia: 1) The clear boundaries of the area, namely in the city center with a character that is different from the surrounding environment. In addition, Chinatown has the highest population density compared to other areas in the same city; 2) It consists of a very solid Chinese population group and there are no other ethnic groups living in it. Nearly all Chinatowns in Southeast Asia have a regular grid pattern of streets and continuous lines of shophouses; and 3) It is a part of the city where the pattern of life and living is focused on the traditions of the Chinese community so that it becomes a separate world in the city (Jackson, 1975).

Khol (1984) provides a kind of guidance, especially for ordinary people, how to see the characteristics of Chinese architecture, especially in Southeast Asia. These characteristics are as follows: 1) The existence of a “courtyard”; 2) Emphasis on the distinctive shape of the roof; 3) Open structural elements (which are sometimes accompanied by decorative ornaments); and 4) Use of different colors typical.

**The Character of Semarang Chinatown Architecture**

The character of Chinese architecture can be seen in the courtyard, the shape of the roof, the building structure system / Tou-Kung, the gate, and the use of colours. Several characters can be seen in houses, shophouses, and temples in the Semarang Chinatown.

a. The Courtyard

The houses in the Chinatown area are built around a courtyard which is located in the middle. A courtyard or open space is a space between buildings that is square. An ambitious household has two interconnected yards. This courtyard has a variety of meanings and rules and functions, for example: as a barrier, ventilation, to facilitate air movement, and to enter the light. This is adapted to the view of the life of the ethnic Chinese community, namely close to the ground (close to the earth). This means that if humans are close to the earth or land, their health will be guaranteed (Puspa, et.al. 2000). Usually above the courtyard there is a sky well. See Fig. 2.

![Fig 2. Sky Well above the courtyard of Tay Kak Sie Temple](image)

(Source: Sudarwani, Pasaribu, & Eni; 2023)

b. The Shape of The Roof

The roofs of Chinese architectural buildings are divided into five types of traditional roofs. 1) Wu Tien: a roof used for palaces as well as halls; 2) Hsuan Shan: triangular sidewalls of buildings with sloping roofs; 3) Hsieh Shan: combined gable roofs with sloping roofs / lower shields; 4) Ngan Shan: a type of roof that is supported by walls at the edges (See Fig. 3); and 5) Tsuan Tsien: this type of roof is rarely used in Indonesia (Handinoto, 2008).
Fig 3. The Ngan Shan Roof Type
(Source: Sudarwani, Pasaribu, & Eni; 2023)

The shape of the roof of the Semarang Chinatown uses some of the most often used Chinese architecture in Indonesia, namely a gable roof with an upward curved tip called the Ngang Shan type and curved ridges. The top of the roofs are generally made higher, exceeding the arch of the roof, and have full ornaments either in the form of paintings or carvings and are usually terraced, so they are referred to as matou qiang or horse head walls. The most commonly encountered omamen gunungan are geometric or floral motifs. The coloring also has a symbolic meaning such as red which represents happiness. There are five type of the top of the roofs: Gold Type, Water Type, Wood Type, Fire Type, and Earth Type. See Fig. 4.

Fig 4. Five type of the top of the roofs
(Source: Sudarwani, Pasaribu, & Eni; 2023)

The Building Structure System/Tou-Kung

The character of Chinese architecture can be seen in the building structure system/Tou-Kung, Tou Kung is the most prominent feature of Chinese architecture. Tou Kung is open structural elements (which are sometimes accompanied by decorative ornaments). Carvings and wooden constructions which are part of the building structure in Chinese architecture can be seen as characteristics of Chinese buildings. Constructive details such as roof supports (Tou Kung), or the meeting between columns and beams, and even the roof trusses are so beautifully crafted that they do not need to be covered. Even shown naked, as part of the skill of good carpentry. (Handinoto, 2008: 4). The salient feature of the structure of the Semarang Chinatown house lies in the same Tou Kung element as the traditional Chinese house structure which functions to support the cantilevered roof (See Fig. 5).

Fig 5. Structure of Tou Kung at Tay Kak Sie Temple of Semarang
(Source: Sudarwani, Pasaribu, & Eni; 2023)

d. The Gate

The traditions and culture of Chinese society are indeed interesting to study. One of them is the house gate which is a symbol of social status of the owner. Social status is usually given based on a person's occupation. The better the job, the higher the social status. To show its social status, Chinese society has a unique way. The social status of a family will be seen at the gate of the house. The higher the status at that time, the higher the barrier to the gate of his house. Like the one in the Forbidden City. Usually at the entry of the temple there is also the gate (See Fig. 6).
Fig 6. The Gate of Hoo Hok Bio Temple  
(Source: Sudarwani, Pasaribu, & Eni; 2023)

e. The Use of The Colours

Chinese culture is full of symbolism that contains a very deep meaning which is manifested in the form of color. This can be seen from the use of color in the spiritual building of Chinese architecture, especially kelenteng. Besides having an appeal as an element of beauty, color also contains meaning and symbolization. The color red is for happiness, green is for peace and eternity, white is for peace and sometimes for sorrow, the color gold is for royalty, strength, and wealth. The color character of religious buildings is dominated by red and yellow and a new color that is different from the color character of Chinese architecture in general, this is related to local cultural influences.

The Shop Houses of Semarang Chinatown

The shop houses are typical buildings of the Chinese community where these buildings are used not only for residence but also for places of business (trading). According to Khol (1984) shop houses are the cornerstones of 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 which are typically similar to the rows of Chinatown shop houses in Indonesia. A typical row house in Suzhou, which is an old city, could be a form of row house adopted by the Chinese community as a form of shop houses in some of the 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 the row of Chinatown shop houses is the roof which has a curved roof (See Fig. 7).

Fig 7. Rows of Shop Houses in Semarang Chinatown  
(Source: Sudarwani, Pasaribu, & Eni; 2023)

The architectural character of houses in the Semarang Chinatown can be explained as follows: 1) Early Shop House which is a single module. The design of these houses is still dominate with Chinese architectural characteristics where the roof is gable, the roof is coiled, the consul tou kung is visible on the support of the 2nd floor porch and on the porch roof there is a purlin curtain supported by the roof consul embedded in the boundary wall of the site.; 2) Early Shop House which is a combined module (2-3 modules). Prominent Chinese architectural characteristics are also seen in the large combined residence of several modules; and 3) Transformation Shop houses to Indies house (Sudarwani, Pasaribu & Eni, 2023).

The Architectural Style of Semarang Chinatown

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The cultural acculturation in architecture formed the unique architectural style in Semarang Chinatown as follows:

**a. Indo-Chinese Architecture**

The types of temples in Chinatown still show many similarities with temples in China, namely traditional Chinese architecture. The most dominant feature of the Chinese house is the gable roof which is like a coil at the top. Another feature lies in the existing openings, for example doors and windows made of wood and decorated with iron nail ornaments. The existence of a console is also a feature of traditional Chinese architecture. For residential buildings there are many things that reflect the creativity of acculturation of Chinese and local culture. For example, most of the houses in Chinatown have coiled roofs, but their facades have local influence, manifested in panel openings in the form of panel doors. The architectural characteristics of Chinatown are also the result of a combination of Chinese architecture combined with Malay architecture. This architectural combination can be seen in the building typology in the form of row houses, both shop houses and residential houses. The shape of the roof of the building is characterized by Chinese architecture, but in the details of the facade, there are architectural variations that influence it. Some of the buildings in Gang Tengah and Gang Besen, for example, have their facades influenced by the architecture of the Malacca Strait, which is often found in Medan.

**b. Indies-Chinese Architecture**

The Indies-Chinese architecture is seen in the shop-house type where there is usually one Dutch door (the leaf is divided into two, above and below) each of which can be divided separately. Next to it is a wide window, split in two horizontally as well and each opened by sliding it up and down. The type of the roof still used Chinese character with Ngan Shan type.

**c. Indies Architecture**

At the end of the 19th century the Chinese community began to build with the influence of Dutch East Indies architecture. The initial transformation was the use of neoclassical columns and facades in the style of neoclassical walls.

**The Socio-cultural Life of Semarang Chinatown**

Apart from being one of the most important trading centers in the city of Semarang, the area is also the center of the social and cultural life of the Chinatown which has recently been reviving. The interaction that occurred between the Chinese community and the local community, especially the Javanese tradition that occurred, shows that the characteristics of Chinese culture are still dominant or prominent in this area. This prominent feature of Chinese culture is marked by both objects and behavior. Almost all houses have altars, both offerings for gods/taapekong, as well as for ancestors. Only now, the jian of the house has reduced the size of the room for that purpose. This shows that the socio-cultural activities that occur in the Semarang Chinatown are good, because people of different religions and cultures (ethnicity) respect and support each other in carrying out their respective activities in Chinatown.

The socio-cultural life of the Chinese community in Semarang Chinatown can be seen in cultural activities which are a blend of Chinese culture and local culture, for example Pekojan culture and Malay village culture. This shows that the characteristics of the Semarang Chinatown show a blend of cultures in Chinese society for generations. The uniqueness of Semarang Chinatown can also be seen in the existence of temples which are buildings of worship for the Chinese community and are landmarks of Semarang Chinatown.

Activities of worship and respect for their ancestors are carried out not only in temples, but also in homes. This can be seen by the number of places of worship in each resident's house which are the same as Confucius and Buddha, even though they are small and are just tables. And what is unique, even though they have different religions, is that the place for honoring the ancestors of the ebut is still provided as a storage place for Lisien tji. Many religious activities or annual celebrations/festivals are celebrated in Chinatown. The biggest celebration is the commemoration of Sam poo Kong (Admiral Cheng Hoo) called Big Sam Poo.
Conclusion

Semarang Chinatown environment consists of fixed feature elements (buildings, floors, walls, open spaces, sidewalks, etc.), semi-fix feature elements (furnishing, interior, exterior, such as lamps, street furniture, seats, street vendors, etc.), and non-fix feature elements (humans with their activities and behavior). The environment or building is an embodiment of the culture of the community, so besides physical elements, non-physical elements also contribute to the image of Semarang Chinatown in shaping the identity of the Semarang Chinatown District. The cultural acculturation in Architecture of the Semarang Chinatown community can be seen in the architecture of residential houses and religious buildings (the temple). The architecture of the houses have a Indies architecture, Indies-Chinese architecture, and Indo-Chinese architecture. Related to area revitalization efforts, preservation is not enough just to physically preserve the building but also needs to consider the non-physical activities in it, so that elements that can provide an image as forming regional identity can be maintained. For the revitalization of the Semarang Chinatown, things to consider are: the need to maintain the regional spatial structure as one of the forming regional identities and the need to make design guidelines for the construction and development of buildings in the area that refers to the matters mentioned above if it is necessary to make binding regulations.

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