Persistence of primary elements at Pasar Lama Chinatown in Tangerang

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Abstract. Pasar Lama Tangerang area is one of the several old Chinatowns in Java Island, Indonesia which has been growing since the 16th century. This area is important to be studied due to the presence of some elements which form an urban area observed to be more or less three centuries old. The primary elements which are one of the most important aspects form the core of the city's aggregation and main artifacts while other elements are ensuring the survival of the area and those that have changed or disappeared completely. This research is focused on discussing the problem of the surviving primary elements in the Chinatown area of Pasar Lama Tangerang to determine the factors making them sustainable. A qualitative approach was employed through descriptive and interpretative research methods and the results showed the primary elements were supported by ritual activities and cultural festivals. This study is expected to enrich the knowledge of the people on the sustainability of primary elements in an urban area with cultural heritage.

1. Introduction

Pasar Lama Tangerang Chinatown is located in Tangerang City, Banten Province, Indonesia on the bank of the Cisadane River (see fig.1). It is one of the oldest Chinatowns on Java Island and has been developing since the 16th century due to the importance of the Cisadane River as a water transportation route in Tangerang before the 17th century. It is, however, important to know that some other Chinatown settlements also grew along the banks of this river and spread to the hinterland of Tangerang. In 1684, the Boen Tek Bio temple was built in the Pasar Lama Tangerang area and five years later, in 1689, the Boen San Bio (Nimmala) temple was developed in the Pasar Baru area, Tangerang, to the north of the Pasar Lama area. These two temples are historical witnesses that the Chinese people have lived in Tangerang for more than three centuries.

It is, therefore, important to study this Chinatown due to the fact that it is one of the places where cities started in Indonesia [1]. The area has unique tangible and intangible elements with the tangibles being the primary elements such as buildings with distinctive architectural forms, building blocks, urban axis, and pattern [2] while the intangibles are ceremonies, traditions, arts, culinary, and science. These elements have formed Chinatown for hundreds of years and the typical buildings, elements, and layout...
which form the area lead to a significant pattern considered applicable as an input for the preservation and development of cultural tourism areas. Chinatown has been reported to be unique and has the potential to be used in strengthening the elements of city identity through adequate preservation [3]. This is possible due to the fact that cultural identity can be supported by urban historic area which provides vitality and diversity to the city [4] and the Chinatown in Pasar Lama Tangerang is believed to have this potential due to its nature as a historical area.

The primary elements are certain urban elements which are the core of urban aggregation, dominance, and participation in the evolution of the city over time in permanent ways and are often identified as the major artifacts which form the overall physical structure of the city [5]. It is possible for a building or city to survive based on external influence such as the character quality formed due to the pattern of certain events occurring in the place [6]. Other events such as festivals also contribute to the conservation and sustainable management of cultural resources to protect local heritage [7]. This study, therefore, examines the relationship between permanent or persistent primary elements and the pattern of activities occurring in the Chinatown area. Moreover, empirical and theoretical phenomena were used to discuss the persistence of the primary elements in Pasar Lama Chinatown Tangerang and this was formulated through the research question “what are the primary elements in Chinatown, Pasar Lama Tangerang and why do these elements survive?”

This study aimed to determine the aspects leading to the survival and preservation of the primary elements and to propose the enrichment of the knowledge on the persistence of primary elements in urban cultural heritage. Several similar studies have been previously written in journals on topics related to the primary elements of a city and these include the persistent element in the old urban fabric in Iraq [8], changes in the meaning of primary elements in Medan City, Sumatra Island, Indonesia [9], and exploring identity’s aspect of continuity of urban heritage tourism [10]. Some other studies have been conducted on Chinatown in Indonesia with the most focused on those in Tangerang and these include traditional Chinese architecture and urban development [11], a review of identity, cultural character and existence of traditional Chinese architecture [12], people's perceptions and preferences of facades of buildings in Jalan Ki Samaun corridor, Tangerang City [13], Peh Cun festival in Tangerang City [14], and Fort City in Tangerang Indonesia [15]. It is, however, important to note that these articles did not discuss the persistence of primary elements in the Chinatown area.

2. Methods
A qualitative method was used to explore the primary elements and their relationship with the events continuously occurring in the study area due to the emphasis of this method on interpretive and descriptive research. Moreover, the research questions designed to obtain qualitative data needed for analysis were open-ended and exploratory [16]. Each of the primary elements and events was identified using field data collection methods such as photographs, films and videos, building drawings, aerial photography and mapping, and historical data.

The primary elements descriptively analyzed include the building form and function with the form observed to be made up of the styles, elements such as the shape of windows, doors, and openings as well as the structures, details of ornaments, materials, and colors. Meanwhile, the building function focuses on its use at the time of the research in the form of a shop house or home industry, residential house, or place of worship.

The activities and events such as those associated with religions, traditions, cultures, trade, and tourism were analyzed using literature and field data collection. These activities were reviewed based on their uniqueness which makes them specific to the Chinatown area. Some other factors evaluated include economic activities such as trading in traditional markets, shops, cafes, and restaurants as well as those related to tourism such as culinary tours and cultural tourism. This was followed by the analysis of the surviving primary elements and their relationship with the activities or events always occurring in them after which conclusions were made.

3. Results and discussion
3.1. Analysis of the primary elements’ persistence in Pasar Lama Chinatown Tangerang

The sustainability and persistence of the Chinatown area are observed from the continuity of the building functions and forms based on their present statuses such as the shop-houses, houses, and buildings for worship. The buildings discovered to be new or to have changed function include the museum, swallow house, and café with the museum observed to be serving as a place to preserve the Peranakan cultural heritage and this also supports the sustainability of the building style. The unchanged, intact, original, and authentic building forms and elements are, however, significant to the continuity and sustainability of urban heritage conservation.

Buildings are usable as primary elements because they are a dominant part of the urban elements functioning as the core of urban aggregation. They have the potential to become the icons to represent the Chinatown building form as indicated in Fig.1 and Table 1. The primary element building is the main artifact of the area due to its ability to have stayed permanently for a very long time maintaining its form and function.

![Figure 1. Primary element at Pasar Lama Chinatown Tangerang.](image)
Table 1. Analysis of the building objects used as the primary elements.

| No | Object                        | Function     | Signification of Object                                                                 | Integrity and Originality of the Object |
|----|-------------------------------|--------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------|
| 1  | Boen Tek Bio Temple           | Temple for Worship (Klenteng) | The oldest temple in Tangerang was found to be approximately three centuries old. Its authenticity is continuously maintained in the form of Chinese architecture. | The building is complete, intact, well maintained, and authentic. |
| 2  | Benteng Heritage Museum       | Peranakan Tionghoa Museum (Cina Benteng) | A residential building or shop house which has been converted to a Chinese Peranakan museum. The building is approximately three centuries old and has been restored | The restored building is intact and has been repaired to be strengthened and more durable. Several additions and changes have been made to the interior. |
| 3  | Roemboer Museum               | Museum and cultural house | It is previously a residential building converted into a swallow house and later restored to be a museum and venue for the Peranakan Chinese cultural arts festival. | The restored building is intact and repaired to become more strengthened and durable. Several additions and changes have been made to the interior. |
| 4  | Jami Mosque and Kalipasir Tomb| Muslim worship buildings and tombs | The mosque is estimated to be three centuries old and almost as old as Klenteng Boen Tek Bio. It has the acculturation of both local and Chinese forms (in minaret) | The building is intact and original with the style of acculturation associated with Chinese local architecture. |
| 5  | Oey Koen Ho's house on Cilangkap street 15 | Shop house | Chinese architecture with ornament paintings on the building columns, carvings, roofs, and windows. | The building is original and intact but not maintained. |
| 6  | Oey Kim Tiang's house         | Residential | Chinese architectural characteristics and combined with several modern building elements in the window and door openings. The owner of the house is Mr. Oey Kim Tiang (OKT), a writer of Chinese martial arts stories. | The building is intact, original, and well preserved. |
| 7  | The old soy sauce factory     | Soy Sauce Home industry | Chinese architectural character observed from the form of the roof and the opening areas. This building has historical value as the oldest soy sauce factory in Indonesia. | The building is well maintained and authentic. |

3.2. Analysis of events and activities in Pasar Lama Chinatown Tangerang
The activities in the Pasar Lama Tangerang area observed not to have changed much are religious and cultural traditions which are held regularly, daily, annually, or every few years. The religious activities
are held in Boen Tek Bio Temple and Tangga Jamban Pier (Toa Pekong Air) while the major cultural traditions are held annually at the Dragon Boat Festival and Pehcun Tradition Ceremony (Duanwu Jie) to commemorate the legendary character of Qu Yuan. Moreover, a Gotong Toa Pekong parade ceremony is also observed every 12 years.

Several other new events are also being held at Pasar Lama Tangerang Chinatown and they include Cultural Festival with different themes such as the Tempe, Chili, and Kebaya at the Roemboer Cultural House and in the corridor of Jalan Cilangkap. These thematic cultural festivals involve the invitation of many visitors, cultural observers, and tourists to reinforce the primary elements existing in this place. Another new event observed is the Culinary Night Market which is usually held along the Ki Samaun Street every Sunday night and on holidays and reported to attract a lot of visitors and tourists.

The activities conducted on the waterfront promenade along the banks of the Cisadane river on the west side of the Pasar Lama Tangerang area include river tours by boat, fishing, culinary tours, relaxing, and recreation for children's games. These activities attract large numbers of visitors or tourists and also have the potential to revitalize the Tangerang Old Market area (See Figs 2-4).

**Figure 2.** Map of the distribution of activities in Chinatown, Pasar Lama Tangerang.

**Figure 3.** Religious ceremony at the Boen Tek Bio Temple.  
**Figure 4.** Peranakan culture festival at Roemboer Museum and Cilangkap Street.
3.3. Relation analysis of the primary elements and activity elements in Pasar Lama Chinatown Tangerang

The relationship between primary elements and specific activities in the Pasar Lama Chinatown Tangerang area is observed to have manifested in the form of thematic corridors for religious, traditional, and cultural activities, traditional markets, trade, and culinary tourism activities as well as tourist corridors for waterfront promenade of the Cisadane River. The layout of these activities forms a regional pattern as observed from the corridors with the core zone observed to be based on religious activities, cultural traditions, traditional market trade, and shops. They are the primary elements found to be most authentic or in the first layer which form the specific layout strengthening the pattern of the Pasar Lama Tangerang Chinatown area.

4. Conclusion

Pasar Lama Tangerang Chinatown area has several persistent primary elements which are surviving up to the present time due to their significant values which are based on special form and function as well as historical value. The local community is supported by the activities conducted in the buildings and corridors which are associated with religions, traditional ceremonies, cultural festivals, traditional market, culinary night market, and Cisadane River waterfront promenade tourism. The primary elements and activities are the two aspects used in creating a mutually supportive relationship.

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