

# Pecinan as an inspiration

## The contribution of Chinese Indonesian architecture to an urban environment

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### ABSTRACT

Since the abrogation of Presidential Instruction Number 14/1967 which banned Chinese customs celebrations and religion in public, there has been a revival in Chinese festivals, language, art, media, culture and not in the least in the field of architecture and urban planning. With increasing interest in heritage and the support of the Indonesian government for heritage cities programmes, several promising initiatives involving Chinese architecture have been launched in cities both large and small. A brief glance of the history of Chinese Indonesian architecture is given, as well as some recent initiatives in selected cities plus a discussion of the importance of public space in accommodating Chinese festivals. Study of old maps and photographs prompts reflections on the characteristics and development of Pecinan during the colonial era and of their later history. The analysis in this article and examples of recent developments in the cities discussed can be used as an inspiration in the revitalization of Pecinan, thereby contributing in an attractive and livable urban environment.

### KEYWORDS

Pecinan; urban revitalization; city branding; liveable city.

### INTRODUCTION

In the past few years, a renewed interest for Pecinan, Chinese wijk or Chinese Indonesian neighbourhood has been perceptible in various cities throughout Indonesia. The abrogation of Presidential Instruction (Instruksi Presiden) Number 14/1967 in 2000,<sup>1</sup> under which customary Chinese celebrations and

<sup>1</sup> In Presidential Decree (Keputusan Presiden) Nr 14/1967, issued under President Suharto,

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religion were banned in public, has sparked new interest in the rediscovery of them, and the characteristic neighbourhoods in which the Chinese lived, often called Pecinan (see Images 1 and 2).

As this interest has been growing, the “Program Penataan dan Pelestarian Kota Pusaka” (P3KP) or Management and Conservation of Heritage Cities<sup>2</sup> has been exerting more influence among municipalities and is stimulating communities to restore the neighbourhoods in which they live and/or work. Within the framework of P3KP, municipalities can apply for funding for certain heritage-related projects. This in turn stimulates parties to renovate parts of previously abandoned historical buildings and areas. These two facts have contributed to a number of interesting recent initiatives in Pecinan or Chinatowns. The current economic growth and the rise of the middle class in Indonesia are important factors in the renewed interest in heritage.



Image 1. Chinese procession in Surabaya, around 1900 (*Chinese optocht te Soerabaja*) (photo courtesy KITLV: image code 27462).

Chinese language, religion, celebrations, even Chinese names, were banned in an attempt to create a unified Indonesian identity. This decree was abrogated by President K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid in 2000 under Presidential Decree Nr 6/2000. See also: <http://www.hukumonline.com/>. By Decree Nr 13/2001, the Ministry of Religious Affairs declared Chinese New Year a facultative official holiday. Presidential Decree Nr 19/2002 issued under President Megawati Soekarnoputri finally declared Chinese New Year s an official holiday commencing in 2003.

<sup>2</sup> In 25 October 2008, the Indonesian Heritage Cities Network ((Jaringan Kota Pusaka Indonesia, JKPI) was founded in Surakarta. Currently, JKPI has 48 members and more are expected to join. In 2012, the Directorate General of Spatial Planning of the Indonesian Ministry of Public Works and the Indonesian Heritage Trust/Badan Pelestarian Pusaka Indonesia (BPPI) launched a programme to support JKPI. The purpose of this programme, Management and Conservation of Heritage Cities (Program Penataan dan Pelestarian Kota Pusaka, P3KP) is to offer training and capacity building to local governments involved.



Image 2. Ceremonial arch in the Chinese camp on the occasion of the wedding of Queen Wilhelmina and Duke Hendrik van Mecklenburg-Schwerin, 1903 (*Erepoort bij de Chinese kamp te Batavia ter gelegenheid van het huwelijk van Koningin Wilhelmina en Hertog Hendrik van Mecklenburg-Schwerin*) (photo courtesy KITLV: image 81336).

#### A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF CHINESE SETTLEMENT IN INDONESIA

The Chinese have been passing through and settling in the Indonesian Archipelago since as early as the second century CE after the establishment of the maritime trading route between China and India.<sup>3</sup> The coastal regions of Southeast Asia were the first places in which new cities appeared to service this international trading network. Of particular importance are the voyages of Admiral Zheng He between 1405 and 1433 CE.<sup>4</sup> Tangible traces can be found along the coastal regions in the form of Chinese trading-posts and colonies, situated near river estuaries and well integrated into earlier settlements alongside indigenous villages. Some of the early settlements grew into flourishing entrepôts,<sup>5</sup> as international maritime trading networks and activities flourished. Some of the trading hubs expanded into very large emporiums.<sup>6</sup>

Chinese architecture in Indonesia was introduced by Chinese traders and migrants who travelled to coastal places in the Indonesian Archipelago

<sup>3</sup> Johannes Widodo 2007.

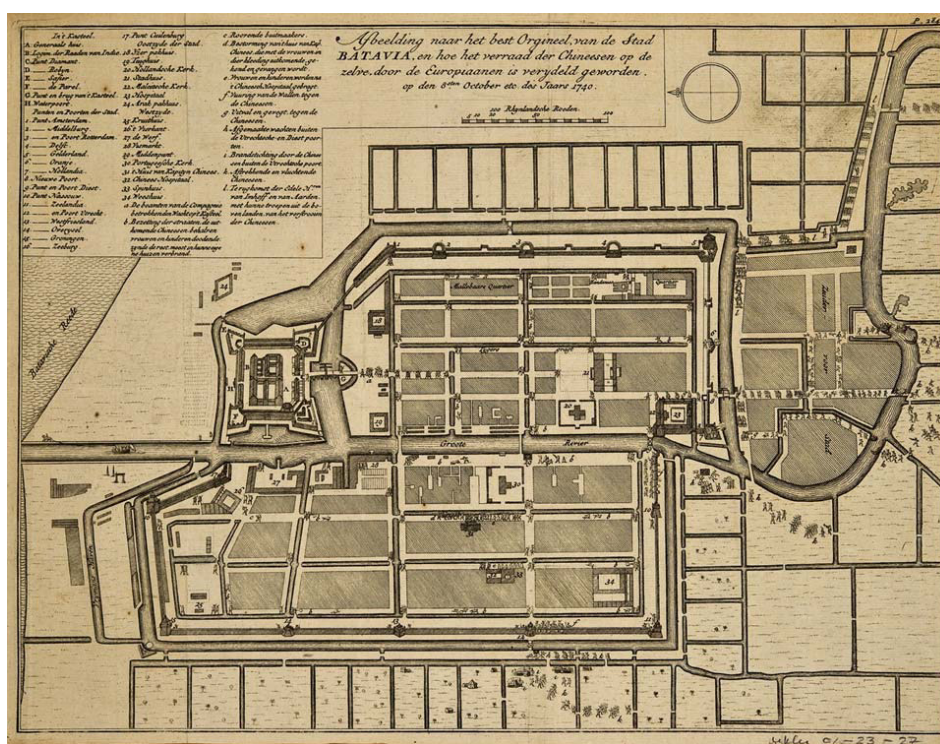
<sup>4</sup> See also Timeline (at the end of this article).

<sup>5</sup> "An entrepot is a small port city with few local commodities, formed and developed in coastal regions of Southeast Asia because of international trading network between China, India, Persia, Arabia and Europe" (Widodo 2004: 67).

<sup>6</sup> "An emporium combined strong components of the indigenous city and the foreign settlements, while the market was the place of exchange of local commodities and international merchandise" (Widodo 2004: 67).

between the fifth and tenth century. However, since non-durable materials were used in these first settlements, nothing has been recovered. Between 1400 and 1600, Chinese traders established themselves in the independent Islamic states along the north coast of Java and the east coast of Sumatra. In the Chinatowns of these cities, usually in the vicinity of the harbour, Chinese stone-built temples were constructed. Initially the temples were dedicated to Dewi Mazu (also called Tian Hou), the patron of the sailors.

As the architecture of the temples developed, it was strongly influenced by the *feng shui* guidelines which prevailed in mainland China. One characteristic feature is the open square in front of the temple, which is used as an assembling place for processions, for *wayang potehi* (Chinese puppet show) and other purposes.<sup>7</sup>



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Image 3. Map of Batavia on the occasion of the Chinese rebellion in 1740 (*Plattegrond van Batavia naar aanleiding van de Chinese opstand van 1740*).<sup>8</sup>

From the seventeenth century, the Chinese community was an important part of the Dutch East India Company (Vereenigde Oost Indische Compagnie/VOC) harbour cities. In Batavia, until 1740 the Chinese live among the Europeans within the city walls. Many were active traders and members of the

<sup>7</sup> Leushuis (2011: 24).

<sup>8</sup> "Atlas of Mutual Heritage", (<http://www.atlasofmutualheritage.nl/nl/Plattegrond-Batavia-aanleiding-Chinese-opstand-1740.4439>).

community were directly appointed by the VOC to run the trade with China, but among them were also numbers of shopkeepers, craftsmen, tax collectors, etcetera. Because their chosen occupations, the Chinese lived strategically close to the Dutch military posts and the local markets. By around 1740 the economic malaise and the poor financial and administrative conditions prevailing under the VOC were also affecting the Chinese. Although Chinese immigration to Batavia had boomed in the years prior to 1740, most newly arrived immigrants failed to find work. Attempts by the Dutch authorities to limit immigration failed. The “illegal” Chinese population in and around Batavia swelled, leaving them a prey to extortion. In mid-1740, a decision was taken by Governor-General Adriaan Valckenier and member of the Council of the Indies, Gustaaf Willem Baron van Imhoff, to seize and deport all Chinese without valid documents. Rumours spread among the Chinese that the deportees were simply being thrown overboard. Riots stirred up by so-called Chinese rebels living in the countryside broke out. Although initially open to negotiations, the VOC soon decided that the city had to be cleared of the Chinese by violence. An estimated 10,000 Chinese fell victim during this massacre (see Image 3 depicting the riots).<sup>9</sup>



Image 4. Typical layout of the densely packed Chinezenkamp compared to surrounding neighbourhoods.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Heidhues 2009.

<sup>10</sup> “Map of Batavia” from Scott Merrillees as used in Pim Westerkamp’s presentation “Het Chineesche kamp” in Leiden 2014, presented at Chinese Indonesian Heritage Center Publieksdag, 11 April 2014. The presentation focused on Tropenmuseum’s collection of photos of the Chinese quarter in Batavia.

After the riots had subsided, the Chinese were forced to live in quarters called Pecinan<sup>11</sup> (Chinezenkamp or Chinatown), outside the walls of the VOC city (see Image 4). In 1821 the *passenstelsel* (pass system) was introduced by the Dutch to keep a check on the Chinese. This stopped them from travelling freely outside Chinatown. Contact with native residents was also discouraged by the Dutch. In 1841 the Dutch introduced the even stricter *wijkenstelsel* (quarter system), forcing the Chinese to live within the Chinatown (F. Colombijn 2013; Jo Santoso 2009). This eventually led to a stronger Chinese identity and characteristic neighbourhoods. The *passenstelsel* was abolished in 1906, and the *wijkenstelsel* followed in 1915 (Tio 2013).

Since their occupation was trade-related, the majority of Chinese houses consisted of a commercial space on the ground floor. The upper floors were used as living areas. These shop-houses had narrow facades often only around 3-5 metres wide, but were situated on a plot which could be 80 metres long. One explanation of these measurements could be the property taxes imposed by the VOC were, based solely on the width of the plot and not the overall size of the plot of land (Yap Kioe Bing 2011).

Under the presidency of Suharto 1967-1998, most of the specific characteristics of the Pecinan were lost as external expressions of Chinese architecture were suppressed and the use of Chinese characters was forbidden. Generally speaking, because of these repressions and also because of road widenings (Pratiwo 2002) during this period, the characteristic traditional Chinese façades which had survived were altered to conform to a contemporary neutrality, transforming the appearance of the neighbourhood, in fact erasing the Chinese characteristics (Pratiwo 2007). Because of the riots in 1965 and 1998, in which Chinese-owned houses and/or shops were targeted, high fences were erected in front of houses as protection. The upshot was closed, defensive, unattractive façades. Despite these changes, in some cities the original nineteenth-century street layout and the existing temples still exude the characteristic atmosphere of the closed-off, densely populated character of Chinatowns. Up to the present, these Pecinan or Chinatowns have retained their specific identity. They are often situated close to markets and commercial districts and around one or more temples, with relatively high density buildings, small parcels, narrow alleys and few open spaces, all of which contribute to the special character of a neighbourhood within a city.

The turning-point came in the year 2000 when President Abdurrachman Wahid abrogated the ban on the outward expression of all things Chinese. From that moment, the Chinese again cautiously began to celebrate such festivals as Chinese New Year, at first within the precincts of shopping malls and in hotels. Finally in 2002, President Megawati Soekarnoputri declared Chinese New Year an official holiday commencing in the year 2003. Since then Chinese festivals have gradually been held in Pecinan or Chinatowns in various cities and towns. Consequently initiatives have been taken

<sup>11</sup> Raap 2015.

to restore and revitalize the surroundings of Chinatowns. Various examples in different towns across Indonesia will be discussed in the following pages.

#### YOGYAKARTA, CHINESE TIES WITH THE KRATON

In Yogyakarta, since 2005 the Pekan Budaya Tionghoa Yogyakarta (PBTY) or Chinese Cultural Week Yogyakarta has been held annually around Chinese New Year in the Ketandan area. Apart from Chinese New Year, the following festivals are also celebrated in Yogyakarta: Peh Cun<sup>12</sup> and Tiong Ciu.<sup>13</sup>

At the end of the eighteenth century, Sultan Hamengkubuwono II designated the Ketandan area, located close to the Beringhardjo Market and a side street of Jl. Malioboro,<sup>14</sup> as the Chinatown of Yogyakarta (see Image 5). The former residence of the well-known Chinese Captain Tan Jin Sing or Secodiningrat is also located in the area (Ngashim 2010). Apart from the Ketandan area, there are several other Pecinan: in Pajeksan, Dagen, Ngabean and Poncowinatan.

As the Chinese Cultural Week has gradually gained more popularity, in 2013 the Jogja Chinese Art and Culture Center (JCACC)<sup>15</sup> was founded for the purpose of building a Chinese gateway to mark the entrance to Kampoeng Ketandan (see Image 6) (Qomah 2016). The idea of building the gate marking Ketandan as a special destination was supported by the governor of the Yogyakarta region and the mayor of Yogyakarta. It is the intention of the city council to develop the area as a Chinatown in which new buildings should be constructed in Chinese style architecture, and existing Chinese buildings should be conserved. As usual, in Chinatowns most of the shop-houses are as the premises of gold and jewellery shops and of apothecaries selling Chinese medicine. The name Ketandan might be derived from ka-tanda-an or the place of a "tanda" or tax collector, referring to the erstwhile task of the Chinese of collecting taxes for the Dutch authorities (Winarno 2016).

<sup>12</sup> Peh Cun is celebrated on the fifth day of the fifth month and is also known as the Dragon Boat Festival.

<sup>13</sup> Tiong Ciu is celebrated on the fifteenth day of the eighth month and is also known as the Moon Cake Festival.

<sup>14</sup> Kampoeng Ketandan is the area north of Beringharjo Market bounded by Jalan Malioboro, Jalan Jen. A. Yani, Jalan Pajeksan, and Jalan Suryatmajan.

<sup>15</sup> Frista 2016 (e-mail conversation: JCACC is an umbrella organization of thirteen Chinese communities throughout Yogyakarta).

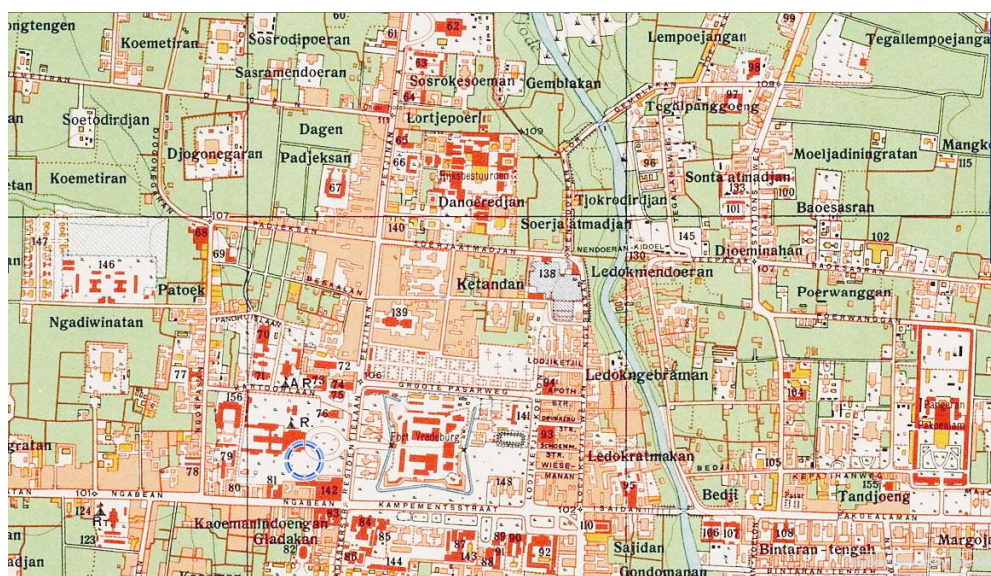


Image 5. Part of Yogyakarta city map, 1925 (collection of University Library Leiden: Jogjakarta city map 1925, original scale 1: 10,000).



Image 6. The Kampoeng Ketandan Gate, Yogyakarta (photo by the author).



The architect of the Chinese gate is the chairman of JCACC, Mr Harry Setia. The eleven-metre high and seven-metre wide gate is a symbol of acculturation, incorporating Yogyakarta/Javanese and Chinese symbols. In its construction, it includes the colours red and green, as green is the predominant colour of the Yogyakarta palace (*kraton*), the curved roof of Chinese buildings and dragons, the symbol of authority, fearlessness and honesty. Other specific features used in the gate are phoenixes and bats. The Chinese Cultural Week Yogyakarta has been very successful and not only showcases specifically Chinese lion and dragon dances but also incorporates traditional and modern Indonesian performances. The success of the Cultural Week is also attributable to the support of Yogyakarta local government and the Indonesian Ministry of Tourism.

#### A MULTICULTURAL ENTRANCE GATE TO BOGOR'S CHINATOWN

In Bogor, following a grant from the Ministry of Public Works and Public Housing to conserve the city's heritage sites as part of the Kota Pusaka (Heritage City) programme the city administration has initiated the urban revitalization of busy Jalan Suryakencana, also known as the heart of the Pecinan.<sup>16</sup> During the colonial period, Jalan Suryakencana, also known as Handelstraat (see Image 7) was part of the 1,000 kilometre Daendels' Great Post Road, built in 1808, running from Anyer in West Java to Panarukan in East Java. The street is located north of the Botanical Garden (founded in 1817) and the Presidential Palace (the former Governor-General's palace built in 1745) complex (see Image 8).



Image 7. Part of a 1920 Bogor Map, at the top the densely populated area of Chinatown (collection of University Library Leiden: Map of Bogor 1920, original scale 1:5000).

<sup>16</sup> The Heritage City Programme or Program Penataan dan Pelestarian Kota Pusaka (P3KP) is currently followed by 45 kabupaten and cities, an initiative of Ditjen Cipta Karya, Ministry of Public Works and Public Housing. Under the programme the Ministry collaborates with the Indonesian Heritage Board or Badan Pelestarian Pusaka Indonesia (BPPI).



Image 8. Bogor typical shop-houses (*Chinese kamp te Bogor*) around 1880 (photo courtesy KITLV: image 87344).

Apart from improvements to the pavements for pedestrians along Jalan Suryakencana, a gate marking the entrance of Chinatown has been built, the Lawang Suryakencana (Gate to Suryakencana, see Image 9).<sup>17</sup> The gate is also intended to be a symbol of acculturation. Mr Mardi Lim, a Chinese and Sundanese cultural expert, contributed to the design of the gate, which blends Chinese and Sundanese features. On both sides of the mainly red coloured gate, stand a white tiger and a black tiger (Maung Putih and Maung Hitam, Sundanese symbolic guardians), while at the top a black cleaver or “kujang” (an ancient magical weapon from the time of the Padjadjaran Kingdom) occupies a prominent position. Hence, by combining Sundanese and Chinese elements, the new gate represents the history of city of Bogor. The gate is situated next to the Hok Tek Bio Temple, built in 1672, from which it can be deduced that the Chinese have been in Bogor for three and a half centuries at least. The improvements to the area have encouraged shop-owners along the street to repaint their premises, and a new garden planted with yellow bamboo has been laid out in the temple. Initially, some Chinese Indonesian shop-owners were apprehensive about the project because of their traumatic experiences in racial attacks which had affected them in the past.

<sup>17</sup> “Local residents welcome Bogor’s *pecinan* revitalization program”, *Jakarta Post* 4-1-2016.



Image 9. Bogor opening ceremony of the Lawang Suryakencana by Mayor Bima Arya Sugiarto.

#### AN INSPIRATIONAL RENOVATION IN JAKARTA

In 2013 the Jakarta Endowment for the Arts and Heritage (JEFORAH) and the Jakarta Old Town Revitalization Corporation (JOTRC), a private consortium, were set up because a number of people had become concerned about the dilapidated condition of many buildings and the stagnation of the revitalization in Kota Tua (Wardhani and Dewan 2015). Since then many buildings have been renovated. One of the most challenging projects has been the renovation of the former pharmacy, Apotheek Chung Hwa, built in 1928 located in Jalan Pancoran, opposite Pasar Glodok.

The building now houses the Pancoran Tea House, completed in 2015 (see Image 10). The inspiration for the tea house came from the Chinese officer, Kapitein der Chinezen Gan Djie, who was famous for his benevolence. As the Kapitein's office was in this area of Kota Tua, where in earlier days it had been hard to find drink- and food-sellers, he provided complimentary tea for visitors. Eight teapots and cups were placed in his office porch, where travellers could rest and have a drink while (Palilingan 2016).

<sup>18</sup> Photo courtesy Farhan, *detikcom*, (<http://news.detik.com/foto-news/3138447/peresmian-lawang-surya-kencana-bogor>).



Image 10. Pancoran Tea House (former Apotheek Chung Hwa) (photograph by Liandro N.I. Siringoringo).<sup>19</sup>

The architects involved in the challenging renovation are Ahmad Djuhara and Wendy Djuhara (Affan 2016). When they commenced the renovation of the building, there was only one façade intact. Several constraints had to be faced, not least budgetary ones and, from the point of view of proportion, it was also hard to retrieve the shape of the original building as road widening has affected the original façades and composition of the building. Nevertheless, it is a noteworthy example of putting one of the most striking buildings back on the map, and linking this to the history of a well-known Chinese officer.

#### THE MINING TOWN OF MUNTOK

After 1998, during the reformation era decentralization has stimulated smaller towns and regencies (*kabupaten*) to develop their local economies. One example is the town of Muntok the capital city of West Bangka regency. It had been a thriving administrative town, set up principally by the Dutch colonial government to support the tin-mining and smelting industries on the island. Rich deposits of tin contributed in the creation of the morphology of a very distinctive city. The harbour and many buildings built by the Bangka Tin Mining Company (*maatschappij*) are some of the remarkable assets of the town. In the past few years, however, the town has seen a decline in its development as the administrative capital of the Bangka-Belitung province was moved to Pangkalpinang. The number of residents decreased and, because of its isolated location and limited development budget, conditions in the town have deteriorated and given rise to various environmental problems like flooding

<sup>19</sup> Palilingan 2016.

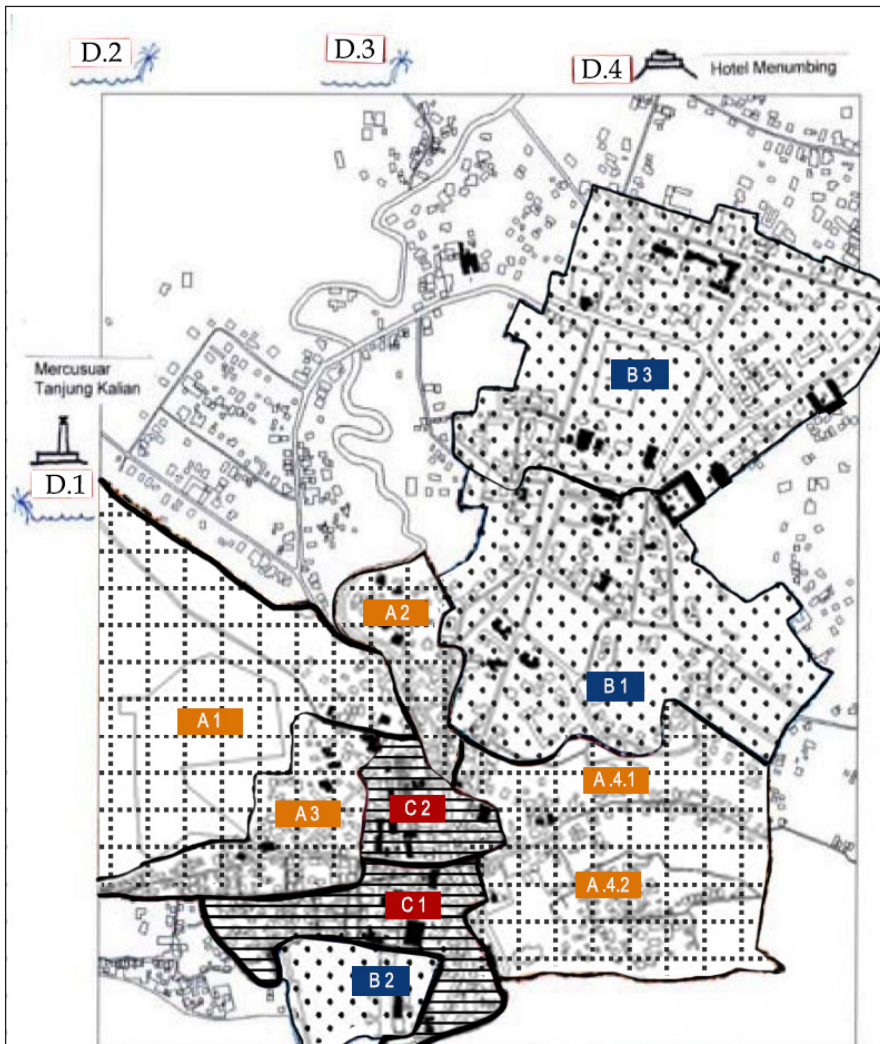
in the rainy season, water shortage in the dry season, lack of organized waste collection, and of a proper water treatment system). As the town has had to face these blows, many heritage buildings and their surroundings have become dilapidated. Muntok has always been a harmonious multi-cultural, multi-ethnic city. One of the ideas put forward by the town council is to promote its rich heritage and turn it into a tourist destination. The government's Kota Pusaka programme is one of the means to achieve this purpose. Under the terms of the Indonesian Law of Cultural Conservation,<sup>20</sup> the West Bangka regency registered forty-six valuable historical buildings (including several Chinese heritage buildings)<sup>21</sup> in 2015 so that they are safeguarded in the future.

Around 1930 the Chinese made up nearly half of the population of the island of Bangka. When tin was found at the beginning of the eighteenth century, many Chinese went to Bangka attracted by the economic opportunities it offered.<sup>22</sup> Spurred by the Industrial Revolution in Europe, swelling numbers of Chinese workers arrived from southeastern China. Most of them were so-called guest-workers as it was not their primary goal to stay in Indonesia. After Indonesia's independence, a large number of these labourers left Bangka. The majority of the Chinese who remain on Bangka are people known as Peranakan with strong local roots. The Peranakan in Bangka usually still speak a dialect of Chinese. At present, both Chinatown and several Chinese-related buildings are featured in Muntok Heritage alongside Malay and European clusters and buildings (see Map 1). The presence of these three clusters next to each other is seen as an outstanding asset and demonstrates a harmonious relationship between the various groups of residents. This relationship is also seen in the location of the Kong Fuk Miao Temple (dating from 1820-1830s), alongside the oldest mosque, Masjid Jami (see Image 11), in the centre of the town. The Chinese here still annually celebrate the Cap Go Meh (the fifteenth day after Chinese New Year), Sembahyang Rebutan (the fifteenth day of the seventh month of the Chinese calendar) and Sembahyang Bulan (the fifteenth day of the eighth month) festivals. Other Chinese heritage buildings include the Chinese major's residence, the Chinese captain's residence, the Holland Chinesesche School, the graves of Chinese officers as well as the shop-houses located between the harbour and the local market.

<sup>20</sup> "Law of Cultural Conservation or Undang-Undang Cagar Budaya Nr 10/2010: The regulation for heritage conservation", (Retrieved from: [www.hukumonline.com](http://www.hukumonline.com), accessed on 13-02-2017).

<sup>21</sup> Putranta 2015.

<sup>22</sup> Heidhues 1992.



**Malay zone:**

- A1** Kota Seribu and Kampung Kaoeman
- A2** Kampung Hulu (Kampung Pemuhun)
- A3** Kampung Tanjung
- A4.1** Kampung Petenun and Teluk Rubyah Dalam
- A4.2** Kampung Rubyah Pesisir

**Europe zone:**

- B1** Military complex
- B2** Harbour
- B3** Bangka tin mining company complex

**Chinese zone:**

- C1** Mayor House
- C2** Market

**Nature reserve zone:**

- D1** Tanjung Kalian
- D2** Teluk Menggeris
- D3** Tanjung Ular
- D4** Gunung Menumbing

Map 1. Muntok heritage map.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>23</sup> Based on the map from “Dinas Pekerjaan Umum Kabupaten Bangka Barat” 2015.



Image 11. Kong Fuk Miao Temple and in the background the Mesjid Jami in Muntok (photo by the author).

#### LASEM, LITTLE CHINA IN CENTRAL JAVA

The town of Lasem, located on the north coast of Central Java, is often called *Le Petit Chinois* (Little Chinese), because of its many Chinese heritage buildings. During the Majapahit era (thirteenth to fifteenth century), Lasem was a port town of considerable importance. It became a “*regentschap*” or *kabupaten* during the colonial period. In 1750, it was downgraded to an “*onderdistrict*” or sub-district or *kecamatan*, when the neighbouring town of Rembang became the *kabupaten* town.

One possible reason for this demotion is the suspicion of the colonial government that many Chinese had fled to Lasem in the aftermath of the Chinese massacre in Batavia in 1740. The colonial government suppressed the growth of the town, by downgrading it to a sub-district. The fact that Lasem has three Chinese temples<sup>24</sup> is quite extraordinary and indicates that it was an important town. As in the case of Muntok, in Lasem the Chinese lived harmoniously with the indigenous residents. During the reign of Sultan Agung, Cik Go Ing was appointed Adipati Lasem (1632-1679) and in 1727 Oei Ing Kiat was appointed Tumenggung Lasem by Sunan Pakubuwono I (Handinoto 2015).

The Gie Yong Bio Tempel (see Image 12), built in 1780, is dedicated to the three heroes<sup>25</sup> of Lasem who fought against the VOC during the wars in

<sup>24</sup> The three temples in Lasem are respectively the Cu An Kiong Temple - Jalan Dasun 19, the Po An Bio Temple - Jalan Karangturi VII/13, and the Gie Yong Bio Temple - Jalan Babagan 7.

<sup>25</sup> The three heroes are respectively: Raden Ngabehi Widyadiningrat (Oey Ing Kiat) - Adipati Lasem 1727-1743, Major of Lasem 1743-1750; Raden Mas Panji Margono Putrotejokusumo

1742 and 1750 respectively. Inside the temple a room is dedicated to the most remarkable of the three heroes: Raden Panji Margono, the adipati of Lasem in the period of 1714-1727 (see Image 13). This is tangible proof of the harmonious relationship between the indigenous and the Chinese residents of Lasem.



Image 12. Gie Yong Bio Temple, Lasem (photo by the author).



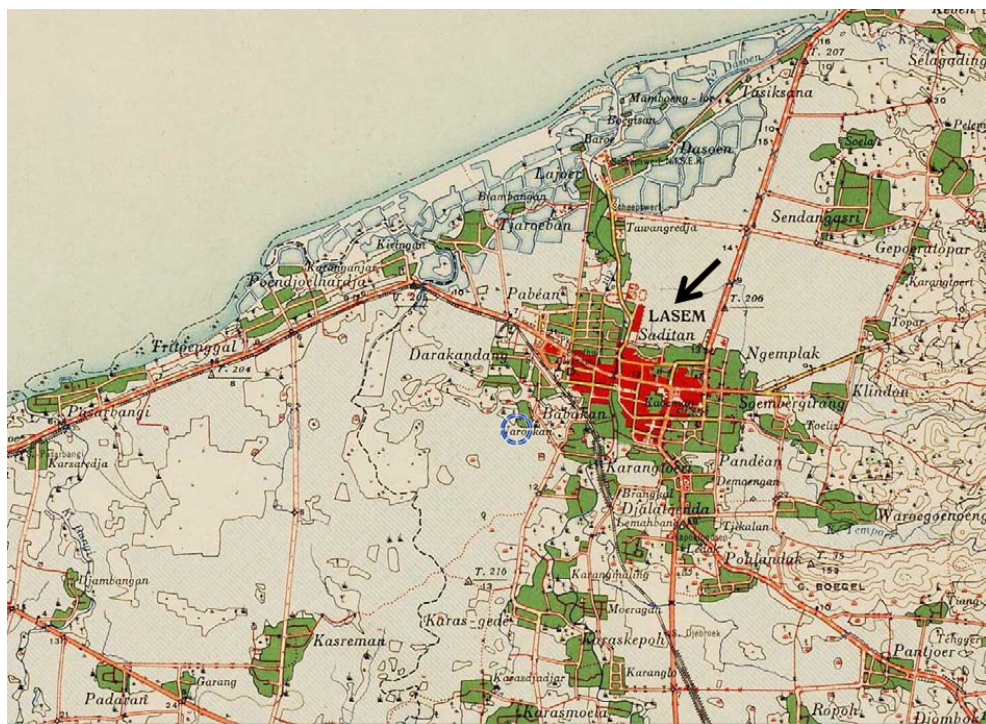
Image 13. Panji Margono in the prayer room in the Gie Yong Bio Temple, Lasem (photo by the author).

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- Adipati Lasem 1714-1727; and Tan Kee Wie. They fought against the Dutch in the Perang Kuning or Perang Lasem between 1742-1750.



As in the case of Bogor, the construction of the *Groote Postweg* (Great Post Road) initiated by Governor-General Daendels (18018-1811) through Lasem resulted in great changes in the town and gave a new impulse to its development (see Map 2). However, several factors led to the decline of the town, important among them the economic malaise in the 1930s which led to the closure of a sugar factory in Lasem. Subsequently World War II left its impact on the town, as the Japanese took over the existing local naval industry. The momentum of the decline of the town of Lasem after Indonesia's independence was aggravated by the giving out of "Peraturan Pemerintah Nomor 10" in 1959 (PP 10/1959), which prohibited the Chinese to become involved in trading activities in rural areas. Deprived of their means of livelihood, more than half of Lasem's population migrated to big cities. Many houses were abandoned and left unoccupied.



Map 2. Part of Lasem map, 1942 (collection of University Library Leiden: Map of Lasem 1941, topographic map scale 1:50,000).

In the last five years there have been positive developments in the appreciation of Lasem's heritage, sparked by the interest from the academic world in researching the history of this multi-ethnic, multi-cultural town as well as the re-appreciation of the local communities. Positive signs have been the renewed interest in the special batik of Lasem, the many programmes initiated by several communities plus initiatives of home-owners to renovate and re-use the abandoned houses. The role of social media in promoting

Lasem has been especially indispensable. “Kesengsem Lasem” is one of the active platforms encouraging residents to re-tell their stories about Lasem. Its vision is to raise resident’s awareness of Lasem’s precious heritage, to strengthen interactive networking in the local community and in promoting their heritage town as a tourist destination.<sup>26</sup>

Local initiatives include a museum of the history of batik manufacturing and trade, the Museum Nyah Lasem<sup>27</sup> and the renovation of several other prominent houses, restoring them to their former grandeur. These are good examples of what is known as city branding. The enthusiasm of the young people of Lasem certainly gives new hope for a bright future of the town in which many heritage buildings as well as intangible heritage have a well-deserved place.<sup>28</sup>

#### THE ROLE OF NGOs, COMMUNITIES, AND INDIVIDUALS IN PRESERVING CHINESE HERITAGE BUILDINGS AND EXPECTATIONS FOR FUTURE DEVELOPMENT

Generally speaking, heritage conservation in Indonesia is regulated by Law of Cultural Conservation or Undang-Undang Cagar Budaya Nr 11/2010 supplemented by additional local regulations. Nevertheless, despite the regulations and the responsibility taken by the local government to preserve heritage buildings or areas, it is usually the individual property owners and community who take the lead in conservation, since there are usually no subsidies available for private properties.

The Jakarta-based Kecapi Batara (Kelompok Pecinta dan Pemerhati Bangunan Lama Nusantara) is a non-governmental organization (NGO) run by young volunteers who are committed to documenting and promoting Chinese heritage architecture and to raising awareness among the younger generation. Their activities include documenting heritage buildings throughout Indonesia (including schools, temples, shops and houses), giving lectures, and workshops (Wara, Roesli, and Attahiyat 2015). In their view, many buildings were unnecessarily lost in the aftermath of the 1965 and 1998 riots, as owners were afraid to keep their premises in their original state. In 1993, many temples in Jakarta were excluded from the list of heritage buildings because of a controversial discussion. Sadly this resulted in the loss of a number of buildings. Kecapi Batara is one of the communities actively striving for the conservation of Chinese Indonesian architecture.

Earlier in the article the “Kesengsem Lasem” platform was mentioned. Its enthusiasm in promoting Lasem’s heritage has been crucial in motivating local communities to organize activities and individual property owners to renovate and re-purpose their buildings/properties. Many other initiatives to preserve Chinese buildings in cities, other than those mentioned above, can

<sup>26</sup> The Kesengsem Lasem Community was initiated by Agni Malagina, Feri Latief, Ellen Kusuma, and Astri Apriyani, when they visited Lasem to do research for articles in National Geographic Indonesia; [www.kesengsemLasem.com](http://www.kesengsemLasem.com).

<sup>27</sup> Setyonugroho 2016.

<sup>28</sup> Malagina 2016.

be cited. These include the preservation of several ancestral houses or “rumah abu”<sup>29</sup> of the families Han, The, and Tjoa in Surabaya and the renovation of family homes in, for instance, Lasem.<sup>30</sup> In Lasem various heritage home-owners (among whom several Chinese homes) were given awards by the provincial government through the Cultural Heritage Agency (Balai Cagar Budaya) to acknowledge their dedication and achievements in preserving their residences.

The conclusion has to be that there is certainly hope that the preservation of Chinese heritage buildings will continue, as long as individual owners, communities and local governments collaborate well and share the same vision.

#### THE IMPORTANCE OF OPEN SPACE FOR FESTIVALS

It is unthinkable to have cities and towns without well-designed open public space. Public space can be the setting in which celebrations are held, exchanges both social and economic take place, in which friends bump into each other and cultures mix. “When cities and neighborhoods have thriving civic spaces, residents have a strong sense of community; conversely, when such spaces are lacking, people may feel less connected to each other”.<sup>31</sup>

The examples in Yogyakarta and Bogor demonstrate that the presence of public space acts as an impulse in the urban revitalization of the neighbourhood and are catalysts in empowering communities and bringing people with diverse cultural backgrounds together, setting the stage for positive social interaction. The revitalization of the Pecinan in these cities contributes to the identity and the desirability of the city. A city with a strong identity in which its residents contribute strongly to its continuity will in the end be embraced by all residents.

#### THE HAGUE’S CHINATOWN: AN EXAMPLE FROM THE NETHERLANDS

One of the famous Chinatowns in The Netherlands is that in The Hague. Before the Second World War the area was known as the Jewish quarter. In the seventies the City Council renovated the buildings in the neighbourhood and this attracted many Chinese to open shops in the area. In 2004 the city council designated the area bounded by Wagenstraat, Gedempte Gracht, and Gedempte Burgwal Chinatown.<sup>32</sup> In 2006 a design competition was

<sup>29</sup> “An ancestral house is not to be confused with a temple (*klenteng*), a place to worship the gods. An ancestral house is the place where rituals are held on behalf of the ancestors of the family. During the praying the family lit and burn incense sticks. After honouring the ancestors these incense sticks are placed upright in an ash bowl on the altar and left to burn down entirely while the ashes remain in the ash bowl. So ash (*abu* in the word *rumah abu*) refers to the collected ash of the incense sticks and is therefore not the ash of the deceased. In many cases the family will also keep ancestral tablets (called *sin tji*) inside the ancestral house” (From: Ancestral house or Rumah Abu, 2012 note prepared by Chinese Indonesian Heritage Center (CIHC) for CIHC Facebook page).

<sup>30</sup> Kesengsem Lasem 2016.

<sup>31</sup> “Great Public Spaces: what makes a place great”, ([https://www.pps.org/reference/public\\_space\\_benefits/](https://www.pps.org/reference/public_space_benefits/)).

<sup>32</sup> “Ontwikkelingskader en ontwerp openbare ruimte Chinatown Den Haag: Website Ligtfoot

held among Chinese designers for the design of two Chinese gates.<sup>33</sup> Besides the elaborately decorated Chinese gates (see Image 14), the following street furniture was designed: canopies with bright red coloured Chinese lanterns, street names signage using Chinese characters, Chinese proverbs carved in curbstones. Nowadays the area is known as a vibrant part of The Hague's popular city centre. During Chinese New Year, the area is the bustling heart of the festival's celebrations.



Image 14. Chinese Gate in The Hague's Chinatown (photo by the author).

## CONCLUSION

An analysis of the cases in the five cities Yogyakarta, Bogor, Jakarta, Muntok and Lasem shows that positive developments are taking place in Indonesia's Pecinan or Chinatowns. The abrogation of Presidential Instruction Nr 14/1967 by President Abdurrachman Wahid certainly gave an important impulse to rediscovering Chinese identity. The fact that Chinese festivals can again be celebrated in public space has led to the positive transformation of public

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Regtop Architecten", (Retrieved from: <http://www.regtoparchitecten.nl/?portfolio=beeldkwaliteitsplan-en-openbare-ruimte-chinatown-den-haag> accessed on 24-06-2016).

<sup>33</sup> "Chinatown Den Haag krijgt Chinese poorten", (Retrieved from: [http://www.architectenweb.nl/aweb/redactie/redactie\\_detail.asp?iNID=8024](http://www.architectenweb.nl/aweb/redactie/redactie_detail.asp?iNID=8024) accessed on 24-06-2016).

space. The placement of Chinese gates to mark the entrance of Chinatowns is a remarkable sign that the Chinese are an indisputable part of Indonesian society. It should also be noted that the Chinese festivals are of a multi-cultural and multi-ethnic character, attracting not only the Chinese but also residents of other ethnicity. The acceptance of the Chinese festivals by residents of other ethnicities has been great. This is a huge asset that should be cherished and encouraged.

In the five cities it is obvious that, when the local government, the residents and local businesses collaborate smoothly, this produces a prolonged and sustainable co-operation, in the end resulting in an attractive multi-cultural urban environment. In this context, it is important to embrace NGOs and for communities to collaborate harmoniously as they have a crucial role in motivating the residents. Of course, the role of social media cannot be overlooked as they are a wonderful means by which to encourage communication and education, even promotion, in an approachable way.

As the government of Indonesia is striving to raise its income from tourism, it is imperative to maintain the diversity in towns. One possible way is to preserve the lively and characteristic Pecinan/Chinatowns. Indonesia's Chinatowns have very distinctive qualities through the admixture of local Indonesian influences (for instance, the temple in Lasem). It is hoped that many more Pecinan/Chinatowns will be rediscovered and redeveloped, thereby contributing to a harmonious and tolerant Indonesia.

Timeline	
between fifth-tenth century	Chinese merchants travel to Indonesian archipelago.
after tenth century	First Chinese settlements.
1400-1600	Chinese merchants settled in independent moslem states on Java's north coast and Sumatra's east coast. First Chinese neighbourhoods located near the harbour, temples were built here; based on fengshui.
1405-1433	Voyages of Admiral Cheng Ho /Zheng He to Southeast Asia.
around 1416	Admiral Cheng Ho/Zheng He landed in Semarang.
1603	First trade office of VOC in Banten.
1619	VOC moved from Banten to Sunda Kelapa.
1672	Indirect rule towards Chinese community through Captains, lieutenants.
Seventeenth century onwards	Chinese community gained importance within VOC harbour cities, for example Batavia, Semarang, Surabaya. Until 1740 the Chinese lived among the Europeans.
1740	Chinese massacre in Batavia, after which the Chinese had to live outside the city walls in a specific neighbourhood, the so-called Pecinan. This led to a strong Chinese identity, temples and the so called shophouses were developed.
1809	Daendels initiated construction of Groote Postweg; demolition of Batavia old city by Daendels ⇒ move to Weltevreden. Opening up of new Pecinan in Batavia: Pasar Baru, Tanah Abang, Senen.
1811	British conquered Java.
1825-1830	Diponegoro war: the Chinese sided with the Dutch.
1821-1906	Introduction of <i>passenstelsel</i> .
1830 (approximately)	Introduction of Chinese officers, ended in 1934 in Java and in 1942 outside Java.
1840's-1915's	Introduction of <i>wijkenstelsel</i> ( <i>Staatsblad</i> 1919 no. 150).
1850- 1865	Taiping rebellion against Manchu dynasty; increased migration of Chinese to Indonesia due to political unrest in mainland China this led to overpopulation and deterioration of living conditions in Pecinan.
1870	Introduction of Agrarian law prohibiting the Chinese to buy new agricultural land.
1907	Introduction of special schools for Chinese.
1919	Abolition of <i>wijkenstelsel</i> ; Chinese allowed to live in European quarters.
1959	Introduction of PP 10 /1959, a decree forbidding Chinese to be involved in trading in rural areas, resulting in a migration by the Chinese to large cities.
1967	Presidential Decree Nr 14/1967 issued by President Suharto, banning Chinese language, religion and celebrations in public space.
2000	Withdrawal of Presidential Decree Nr 14/1967 by President KH. Abdurrahman Wahid, under Presidential Decree Nr 6/2000.
2001	Ministry of Religious Affairs declared Chinese New Year as facultative official holiday, through Decree Nr 13/2001.
2002	President Megawati Soekarnoputri declared Chinese New Year as an official holiday starting 2015, through Decree Nr 19/2002.

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