



# Heritage Transformation and Identity Construction: Peranakan Chinese Architecture in Lasem's Cultural Landscape

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## ABSTRACT

Heritage areas in historic cities face complex challenges balancing cultural preservation with contemporary development pressures. This study examines how Peranakan Chinese communities in Lasem, Central Java, construct and negotiate architectural identity within Indonesia's evolving cultural landscape. Using Bakhtin's chronotope theory integrated with Berry's acculturation framework and interactive assimilation theory, this research analyzes heritage transformation as temporal-spatial cultural negotiation. Through case study methodology employing intensity sampling and theory-based construct sampling, twelve heritage buildings were examined using architectural analysis, visual documentation, and field observations. The findings reveal three distinct transformation patterns—adoption (direct replication of traditional forms), adaptation (contextual modification integrating Chinese, Javanese, and colonial Dutch influences), and adeption (creative reinterpretation combining historical elements with contemporary functional needs)—that often operate simultaneously within individual buildings. The findings demonstrate how Peranakan Chinese architecture embodies an identity of becoming through spatial chronotope where Chinese, Javanese, colonial Dutch, and modern Indonesian influences engage in ongoing intercultural negotiation across different historical periods. These insights have significant implications for heritage conservation policy, suggesting that effective preservation strategies must accommodate cultural evolution while maintaining historical authenticity. The research offers guidance for developing inclusive urban planning approaches recognizing heritage transformation as ongoing negotiation between past traditions and contemporary needs in multicultural contexts.

**Keywords:** Heritage Transformation; Peranakan Chinese Architecture; Cultural Landscape; Identity Construction; Heritage Conservation.

## INTRODUCTION

Heritage areas in historic cities face complex challenges in balancing cultural preservation with contemporary development pressures. Heritage conservation in urban areas involves complex systems often faced with the dilemmas of maintaining the built form's historical character, improving infrastructure, and managing development through stakeholder cooperation (Abdul Huq & Puthuvayi, 2024). As urbanization accelerates, this growth and transformation of the urban area can pose a significant threat to urban cultural heritage, which is a sensitive component of the urban environment (Fatorić & Seekamp, 2017). This tension between preservation and progress raises fundamental questions about how heritage communities negotiate their cultural identity through built environments, particularly in multicultural contexts where architectural forms embody multiple layers of historical dialogue. International conservation standards have established principles for heritage protection that must be adapted to specific cultural contexts and contemporary pressures. The Burra Charter provides guidance for heritage conservation that emphasizes understanding cultural significance before intervention, supporting

approaches that recognize heritage value as culturally constructed rather than objectively determined (Lesh, 2017). These principles prove particularly relevant for understanding Peranakan Chinese heritage, where architectural significance emerges through complex intercultural negotiations rather than adherence to singular cultural traditions.

Peranakan Chinese architecture represents a unique manifestation of intercultural heritage, emerging from centuries of cultural exchange between Chinese immigrants and local populations across Southeast Asia. The history of the Baba Nyonya community stretches back to the fifteenth century, when male Chinese traders in Southeast Asia intermarried with local Malay women and formed an ethnically and culturally hybrid population of Peranakan peoples (Teoh, 2016). Their cultural practices, from language to religion to architecture, fused Chinese, Malay, English, and local influences, creating a community whose adaptability helped them survive the upheaval of imperialism, decolonization, and nation building. Unlike pure architectural transplantation, this architectural hybridity serves as a material record of cultural negotiation, preserving not static tradition but dynamic processes of cultural becoming. Southeast Asia has remarkable cultural diversity as home to various ethnic groups, with Indonesia alone hosting more than 600 distinct ethnic communities (Rudolph, 1998). The advancement of information technology, communication, and transportation has transformed Southeast Asian cities into dynamic locations for cultural exchange between various ethnic groups, including Chinese culture, through work relations, business, trade, friendship, marriage, and education.

Lasem, Central Java, provides an exceptional laboratory for understanding heritage transformation. Known as "Little China," this historic port city contains one of Indonesia's most significant concentrations of Peranakan Chinese architecture, spanning multiple historical periods from the 13th century to the present. Chinese immigrants initially comprised male traders, farmers, laborers, and political refugees from Fujian and Guangdong Provinces. Since the Tang Dynasty (618-907 AD), cities on the southeast coast of China, such as Guangzhou and Fuzhou, functioned as busy trading ports whose merchants sought direct access to spice traders in Java and Sumatra (Tan, 1988). Initially settling temporarily while awaiting monsoon winds, these traders eventually established permanent residences and Chinese community villages. Throughout its history, the Chinese population of Lasem was influenced by local Javanese, Hindu-Indian, Islamic-Arabic, Dutch colonial, and modern Indonesian cultures. The recent government designation of Lasem's Heritage Area in 2021-2022 has intensified contemporary pressures on traditional building forms, as tourism development and economic opportunities create new demands for architectural adaptation. Unlike museum-piece preservation, Lasem's heritage buildings continue to serve living communities, making them sites of active cultural negotiation.



**Figure 1.** View of Lasem City from Provincial Highway (Pantura Road), showing the urban landscape where Peranakan Chinese heritage buildings are integrated within the contemporary city fabric. The image illustrates the geographic context of Lasem's Heritage Area, designated in 2021-2022, where multiple temporal layers coexist within the northern Java coastal setting. Source: Author's own elaboration.

Current heritage studies often treat architectural preservation and cultural change as opposing forces, leading to policy frameworks that struggle to accommodate the dynamic nature of living heritage, where the conflict between sustainable development and heritage conservation is a balancing act between preserving the importance of heritage and allowing sustainable development (Fouseki & Cassar, 2014). This binary approach fails to capture how heritage communities actively engage with their built environment as a medium for cultural expression and identity negotiation, leaving a significant gap in understanding how architectural transformation strategies reflect different modes of cultural engagement with heritage, particularly in contexts where multiple cultural influences

intersect across different temporal periods. The complexity of Peranakan Chinese cultural identity construction requires understanding that encompasses multiple dimensions: race, place of birth, socio-cultural practices, citizenship, and nationality. In Lasem's context, Peranakan Chinese identity emerges from marriages between ethnic Chinese and local populations, characterized by individuals born in Java who use local Javanese language and Indonesian in daily life, practice hybrid cultural traditions combining Chinese and local elements, and trace their ancestry to pre-twentieth century Chinese migration (Chee-Beng, 1981). This multidimensional identity construction challenges conventional approaches to heritage preservation that assume static cultural categories.

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### **Research Question and Objectives**

How do Peranakan Chinese communities in Lasem construct and negotiate architectural identity through heritage transformation strategies, and what are the implications for heritage conservation policy in multicultural urban contexts? To address this research question, the study pursues three specific objectives: (1) To develop a classification framework for architectural transformation patterns based on the systematic analysis of heritage buildings in Lasem's Heritage Area. (2) To analyze the relationship between architectural transformation strategies and cultural identity construction processes by examining how building owners and communities negotiate historical heritage elements with contemporary functional and aesthetic requirements. (3) To evaluate the implications of these transformation patterns for heritage conservation policy in multicultural urban contexts, particularly regarding how preservation frameworks can accommodate living heritage while maintaining cultural authenticity. This research provides empirical evidence for understanding heritage transformation as an active process of cultural identity negotiation, offering theoretical and practical insights for heritage conservation in Southeast Asian multicultural contexts.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

This study develops an integrated analytical framework by synthesizing three complementary theories: cultural acculturation theory, cultural assimilation theory, and Bakhtin's chronotope theory. These theories provide three analytical dimensions—identity, power, and temporal-spatial—that together explain heritage transformation as a multidimensional negotiation process.

### **Cultural Acculturation Theory: The Identity Dimension**

Cultural acculturation represents a fundamental concept in understanding intercultural contact and change. Acculturation is "an unfolding process of change arising from intercultural contact" that involves both acculturative stress management and "the acquisition, maintenance, and change of cultural behaviors, values and identities associated with heritage and settlement cultures" (Ward & Geeraert, 2016). This contemporary definition emphasizes acculturation as a dynamic developmental process rather than a static outcome, highlighting how individuals and groups actively negotiate multiple cultural influences over time within specific ecological contexts. Berry's seminal bidimensional model of acculturation has emerged as the most influential framework for understanding cultural adaptation processes (Berry, 1997; Berry et al., 2006). This model conceptualizes acculturation along two independent dimensions: heritage culture maintenance and receiving culture adoption, creating four distinct acculturation strategies—integration, assimilation, separation, and marginalization. In the context of Peranakan Chinese architecture in Lasem, acculturation theory illuminates how centuries of continuous contact between Chinese immigrants, Javanese communities, Islamic traditions, Dutch colonial influences, and modern Indonesian culture have created layered transformations in built environments.

Recent scholarship has demonstrated the applicability of acculturation theory beyond individual psychology to architectural and spatial contexts. Acculturation processes operate differently across private and public domains, suggesting that architectural expressions of cultural identity may vary depending on spatial context and intended audience. Contemporary acculturation research emphasizes the dynamic and multidimensional nature

of cultural adaptation processes (Ryder et al., 2000). Traditional acculturation models must account for the complexities of modern multicultural societies where multiple cultural influences intersect across different temporal periods (Schwartz et al., 2010). This insight proves particularly relevant for understanding how Peranakan Chinese communities in Lasem negotiate their cultural identity through built environments that serve both private family functions and public tourism purposes, where the historical reality of Lasem demonstrates Chinese, Javanese, Islamic, Dutch colonial, and modern influences layering across centuries of cultural exchange.

Rather than viewing architectural change as cultural loss, acculturation theory recognizes these transformations as dynamic processes of cultural negotiation where heritage communities actively adapt their spatial practices while maintaining core cultural identities through modified expressions. The four acculturation strategies map onto architectural decisions about cultural element retention, adaptation, or replacement, revealing heritage transformation as cultural identity negotiation rather than technical preservation.

### **Cultural Assimilation Theory: The Power Dimension**

Cultural assimilation represents a more intensive form of cultural change than acculturation, involving the complete adoption of dominant cultural practices. Cultural assimilation is the process whereby individuals or groups "assimilate with a host culture" through the comprehensive adoption of the dominant society's values, behaviors, and cultural practices, often resulting in the gradual abandonment or significant modification of heritage cultural traditions (Angelini et al., 2015). While early assimilation theories conceptualized cultural change as a unidirectional process leading to complete cultural replacement (Gordon, 1964), contemporary scholarship has fundamentally reconceptualized assimilation theory. Modern assimilation theory now represents "a two-way process of mutual convergence between immigrant and nonimmigrant populations, whereby ethnic origins and other differences associated with it (linguistic, racial, religious, etc.) progressively cease to matter in the lives of immigrants and their descendants." (Drouhot, 2024). Flores further demonstrates how this bidirectional process operates, showing that "assimilation is a bidirectional process of ethnic change experienced by both the host society and the immigrant community, leading to an overall decline of ethnic distinction." (Flores, 2013). This reconceptualization acknowledges that institutions can "undergo ethnic change to become more like the minority communities they serve" while maintaining their core functions.

The work of Bourhis through their Interactive Acculturation Model highlights how host society expectations significantly influence heritage communities' cultural adaptation strategies, proving crucial for understanding how Indonesian government policies and tourism development pressures in Lasem create specific contexts that shape architectural heritage transformation (Bourhis et al., 1997). Research in heritage studies has increasingly recognized that preservation and adaptation are not mutually exclusive processes. Fouseki and Cassar (2014) argue that effective heritage conservation requires acknowledging the dynamic nature of living cultural traditions rather than treating them as static artifacts. Contemporary heritage conservation has evolved from monument-focused preservation to comprehensive approaches recognizing cultural landscapes as dynamic systems requiring adaptive management strategies (Smith, 2006). This perspective challenges binary approaches to heritage management that position cultural change as necessarily threatening to authenticity, revealing how heritage preservation efforts can simultaneously serve as forms of cultural resistance and tourism accommodation through bidirectional cultural influence.

### **Bakhtin's Chronotope Theory: The Temporal-Spatial Dimension**

Mikhail Bakhtin's theory of the chronotope provides a sophisticated framework for understanding how temporal and spatial dimensions intersect in architectural heritage contexts. Bakhtin (Bakhtin, 2010) defined the chronotope as "the intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships that are artistically expressed," emphasizing how meaning emerges through the dynamic interaction of time and space. While originally developed for literary analysis, chronotope theory has proven increasingly valuable for understanding architectural and urban heritage. The chronotope concept addresses a fundamental challenge in heritage studies: how to analyze architectural forms as simultaneously historical artifacts and contemporary lived spaces. Morson and Emerson demonstrate how chronotopic relationships function as organizing principles for understanding cultural meaning-making processes (Morson & Emerson, 1990), revealing that chronotopes operate not merely as background settings but as active agents in shaping narrative and cultural understanding. Contemporary chronotopic research demonstrates how "the social construction of space-time is dynamically interwoven with cultural, historical, and material aspects" of identity construction processes (Ritella et al., 2021).

Contemporary chronotope scholarship increasingly recognizes the concept's potential for analyzing material culture and spatial practices. Bemong (Bemong et al., 2010) show how chronotopic analysis offers sophisticated tools for understanding how spatial-temporal configurations generate meaning in real-world contexts, suggesting that architectural spaces function as chronotopic containers where different temporal layers coexist and interact dialogically. Vice and Dentith have contributed to understanding chronotope theory's dialogical dimensions

(Dentith, 2003; Vice, 1997), emphasizing how meaning emerges through ongoing interaction between temporal and spatial elements rather than through fixed cultural forms. This theoretical insight proves particularly relevant for understanding Peranakan Chinese architecture in Lasem, where buildings embody multiple historical periods while continuing to serve contemporary functions.

Recent applications of chronotope theory in spatial studies have demonstrated its utility for analyzing heritage landscapes. Lawson (2011) argues that chronotope analysis provides tools for understanding how spatial-temporal configurations generate meaning in real-world contexts beyond literary texts. Chronotopic analysis can reveal temporal stratification in cultural expressions, showing how different historical periods remain visible and active in current configurations (Perrino, 2015). Chronotopic analysis provides methodological tools for examining how cultural communities actively construct identity through spatial-temporal interventions responding to contemporary pressures while maintaining meaningful connections to cultural heritage (Holquist, 2003). This expansion of Bakhtinian theory suggests that heritage landscapes operate as chronotopic spaces where different temporal layers intersect to create complex cultural meanings that cannot be reduced to simple preservation versus change narratives.

### Integrated Theoretical Framework & Literature Gaps

The integration of these theories creates an analytical model overcoming single-theory limitations. Each theory provides one dimension of analysis: (1) Identity dimension (acculturation): Internal community choices about cultural maintenance, (2) Power dimension (assimilation): External forces constraining choices, (3) Temporal-spatial dimension (chronotope): Contextual meaning-making across time and space.

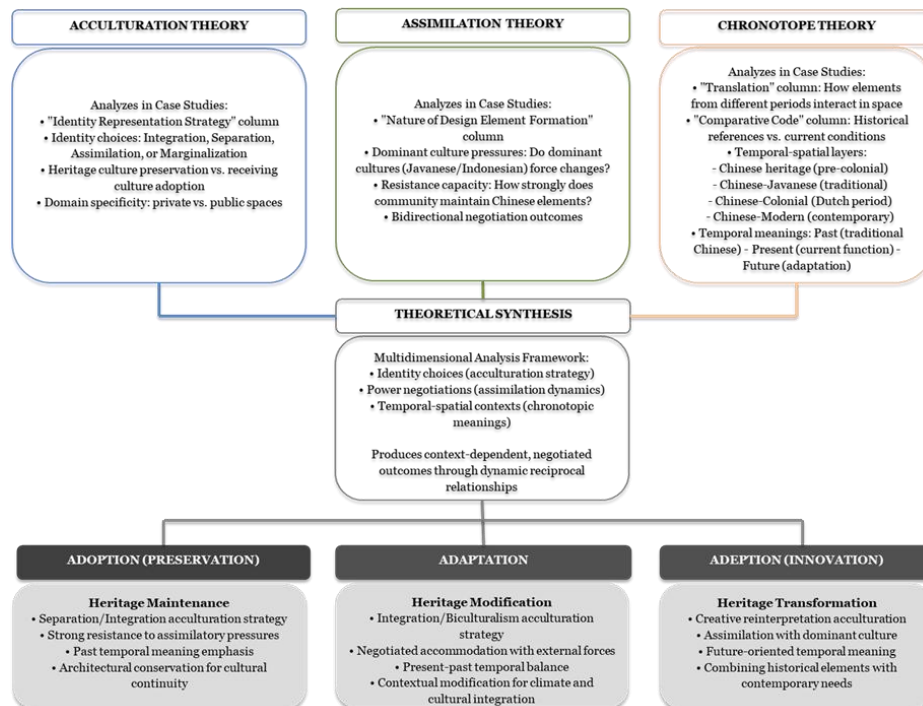


Figure 2. Integrated Theoretical Framework

Source: Author's own elaboration.

The development of international heritage frameworks has established foundational principles for managing cultural transformation within conservation contexts. Contemporary conservation theory has evolved from focusing solely on tangible monument preservation to encompassing both material preservation and cultural practice continuity, reflecting a broader understanding of heritage significance (Ahmad, 2006; Waterton & Watson, 2015). Historical analysis reveals a shift from restoration-focused interventions toward conservation philosophies that accommodate change within historical continuity, with heritage theory increasingly recognizing cultural evolution as essential rather than threatening to authenticity (Harrison, 2012; Jokilehto, 2017). Heritage practice has simultaneously evolved from expert-driven conservation toward more inclusive frameworks that acknowledge diverse community values and meanings, with scholars demonstrating how interdisciplinary approaches can illuminate complex relationships between cultural identity, spatial practice, and temporal

meaning-making (Smith, 2006; Wesling, 2003; Zappen, 2012). These developments support policy frameworks that can accommodate ongoing cultural negotiation while preventing inappropriate transformation that undermines historical significance. Despite the substantial theoretical foundation provided by acculturation, assimilation, and chronotope theories, significant gaps remain in their application to architectural heritage contexts, as most acculturation research focuses on individual psychological processes rather than collective cultural expressions through built environments. While some studies have examined acculturation in spatial contexts (Hadži-Muhamedović, 2022), few have specifically analyzed how architectural transformation strategies reflect different acculturation approaches.

## METHODOLOGY

This study employs qualitative case study methodology integrating Bakhtin's chronotope theory, Berry's acculturation theory, and interactive assimilation theory. Following Yin (2018), this research investigates heritage transformation within real-life context, examining how Peranakan Chinese communities construct architectural identity in Lasem's evolving cultural landscape.

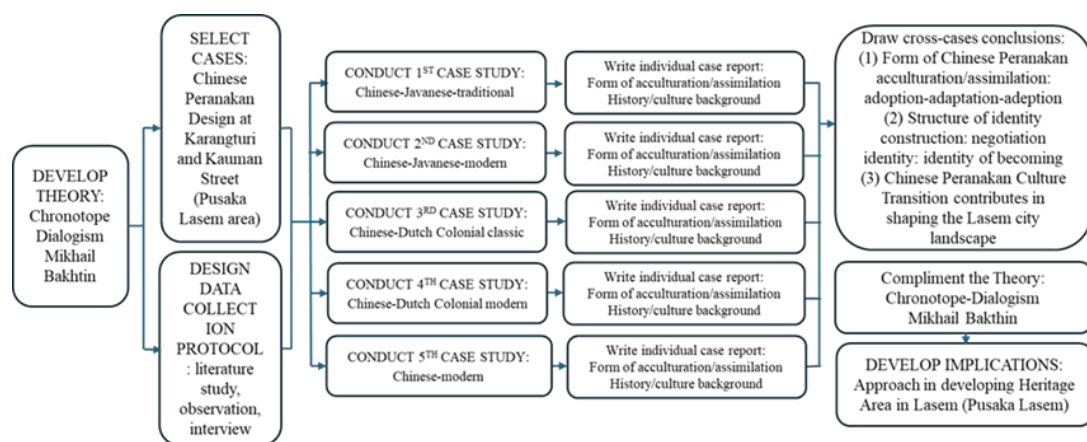


Figure 3. Research Method

Adapted from Case Study Research Model of Robert K. Yin (Yin, 2018)

A theory development stage precedes the case study research as discussed in Literature Review Section. After the theory development stage, the next stage in the case study research is the case analysis and then cross-case analysis. The study focuses on Lasem's Heritage Area, specifically the Chinatown sections along Jalan Karangturi and Kauman streets, designated by the Indonesian government in 2021-2022. This geographic delimitation was selected based on three criteria: (1) highest concentration of Peranakan Chinese architecture spanning multiple historical periods from the 13th century to present, (2) active heritage preservation initiatives creating contemporary transformation pressures, and (3) continued use by living communities enabling observation of ongoing cultural negotiation processes.

Case selection in this research follows intensity sampling principles (Patton, 1990), where cases are not primarily selected based on temporal or spatial boundaries, but rather because they represent: (1) excellent examples of the phenomenon under investigation (cultural acculturation and assimilation processes), (2) sources providing rich and relevant data, and (3) opportunities affording access for in-depth investigation (Morris, 2006). The cases follow theory-based construct sampling (Strauss & Corbin, 1998), where data collection is guided by its capacity to illustrate specific concepts or theories emerging from the data (Morris, 2006). The research analyzed twelve (12) heritage buildings as primary case studies: 5 cases: Chinese-Javanese hybrid architecture (Cases I-V) - Buildings integrating Chinese architectural traditions with Javanese spatial practices, 5 cases: Chinese-Colonial hybrid architecture (Cases VI-X) - Buildings synthesizing Chinese and Dutch colonial (Indische Empire) styles, 2 cases: Chinese-Modern architecture (Cases XI, XII) - Contemporary buildings negotiating Chinese heritage identity within modern Indonesian contexts. Buildings were selected based on five criteria: (1) heritage significance recognized by local authorities or community, (2) chronotopic complexity with multiple temporal-spatial layers, (3) observable transformation evidence representing adoption, adaptation, or adeption strategies, (4) accessibility for documentation, and (5) functional continuity enabling observation of living heritage practices. This approach ensures selected cases provide maximum theoretical insight rather than statistical representation,

aligning with qualitative case study methodology where theoretical saturation takes precedence over sample size (Eisenhardt, 1989). Following purposive sampling principles established in heritage research methodology "for studying architectural heritage projects" (Vafaie et al., 2023), the research identified buildings representing different transformation strategies and chronotopic periods.

The classification process employed structured analytical tables examining each case across five dimensions: (1) Hybrid space: Visual documentation of spatial interventions and architectural dialogues between cultural codes, (2) Translation Code: Identification of how original codes transformed through comparison with primary codes (traditional Chinese), general patterns (Javanese, colonial), and personal contexts (owner preferences, business), (3) Identity Representation Strategy: Analysis of how elements strategically represent cultural identity, (4) Formation Nature: Character of element relationships — syncretistic, hybrid. Analytical Criteria for each classification are (a) Adoption: Maintains a lot of traditional Chinese syntax with minimal modification; translation involves direct application without substantial reinterpretation; elements remain clearly identifiable. Examples: Case I (traditional courtyard syntax), Case II (symmetrical facade structure), (b) Adaptation: Preserves traditional elements while modifying for local contexts; intentional adjustments for tropical climate (verandas, eaves, wind doors); cultural compromise in spatial organization. Examples: Case IV (traditional mass with colonial terraces as batik workshop), Case VII (Indische Empire with modified central room for business), (c) Adeptation: Contains traditional elements with substantial creative reinterpretation; new chronotopic meanings through innovative synthesis; personal color symbolism or contested interpretations. Examples: Case V (yellow house with unconventional prosperity symbolism), Case VIII (modern house with flexible organization driven by business).

For architectural documentation, the research employs systematic photographic and measured documentation following International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) standards for heritage recording. Documentation processes combine "architectural photogrammetry and pictorial photography" which "help the architect-conservator examine the many details of architectural heritage, making the assessment of heritage characteristics easier" (Hamamcioglu-Turan & Akbaylar, 2011). This approach captures both overall architectural character and specific cultural elements indicating transformation processes. For visual documentation protocol, heritage documentation employs "systematic use of visual materials (especially plans and sketches)" as "a tool intrinsic to this methodology" for understanding "evolutionary process and particulars of each phase" (Blaise & Dudek, 2003). The documentation protocol includes (a) facade documentation capturing chronotopic layers across different historical periods, (b) spatial configuration analysis examining courtyards, prayer spaces, commercial areas, and family quarters, (c) architectural element cataloging identifying Chinese traditional features, local adaptations, colonial additions, and contemporary modifications. Each building is systematically documented across temporal dimensions, identifying layers of cultural influence through architectural elements. This follows recent methodological developments in chronotopic analysis where "units of analysis are selected and conceptualized" through "four dimensions of chronotopic units of analysis (foregrounding processes, dialogicality, material-discursive features of space-time, and interdependency of space-time)" (Ritella et al., 2021).

This research employs comprehensive triangulation procedures to ensure analytical rigor and validity. Triangulation occurs at four distinct levels:

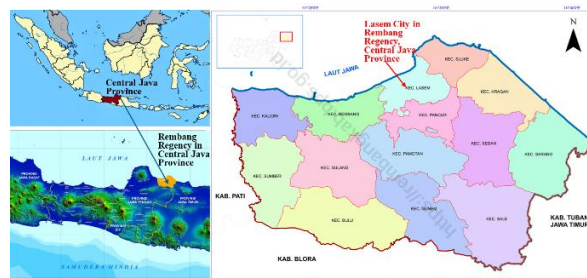
1. **Data Source Triangulation:** Multiple sources ensure comprehensive understanding. Architectural photographic documentation (primary visual data) is systematically triangulated with: (a) historical documentation of Lasem's urban development from colonial archives and local records, (b) building typology comparisons with traditional Chinese architecture in mainland China (Guangdong, Fujian provinces) and other Peranakan communities (Cirebon, Pasuruan), and (c) contextual documentation of contemporary tourism development pressures. This multi-source approach validates observed transformation patterns by cross-referencing physical evidence with historical context.
2. **Investigator/Analytical Triangulation:** Classification decisions undergo systematic verification through: (a) initial independent coding of architectural elements by cultural origin and temporal period, (b) periodic review sessions reexamining classification criteria application across all eight cases, (c) intercoder reliability checks ensuring consistent interpretation of adoption/adaptation/adeption categories, and (d) detailed analytical tables (presented in Results) documenting the decision-making process for each classification.
3. **Methodological Triangulation:** Different analytical methods verify findings: (a) visual architectural analysis identifying cultural elements and spatial syntax, (b) comparative analysis with documented traditional Chinese patterns and local Javanese influences, (c) chronotopic analysis examining temporal-spatial layering, and (d) syntactic analysis evaluating structural preservation versus transformation.

4. Theoretical Triangulation: Integration of three theoretical frameworks provides multiple analytical perspectives: (a) Bakhtin ’ s chronotope theory analyzing temporal-spatial dialogues, (b) Berry ’ s acculturation model examining heritage maintenance versus receiving culture adoption, and (c) interactive assimilation theory understanding bidirectional cultural influences. This multi-theoretical approach captures different dimensions of heritage transformation processes.

## RESULTS

This study examines twelve heritage buildings in Lasem's Heritage Area that represent the spectrum of Chinese-Javanese architectural hybridization. Data collection involved architectural documentation, owner interviews, and morphological analysis to understand how Peranakan Chinese communities negotiated cultural identity through building transformations. The cases are categorized into three hybrid types: Chinese-Javanese (Cases I-V) maintaining traditional configurations with tropical adaptations, Chinese-Colonial (Cases VI-X) demonstrating extensive personal translation through eclectic furniture and color symbolism, and Chinese-Modern (Cases XI-XII) showing complete functional transformations. Analysis reveals that heritage transformation operates through chronotopic processes where temporal connections to Chinese traditions continuously interact with spatial requirements of Javanese practices, colonial influences, and contemporary economic pressures, creating dynamic architectural identities that resist simple categorization as preservation or loss.

Urban morphology provides a fundamental framework for understanding how Lasem's spatial configuration emerged through successive chronotopic layers representing different temporal-spatial relationships between cultural communities and their built environment. Located on the northern coast of Central Java, Lasem exemplifies how heritage landscapes develop through chronotopic processes where temporal and spatial dimensions intersect to create complex cultural meanings. As an important regional center during the Majapahit Kingdom, Lasem was mentioned in several inscriptions as a core area ruled by Bhre Lasem, a close relative of the Majapahit King (Putranto, 2022). The transformation from the Hindu-Buddhist Majapahit period to the Islamic Mataram dynasty, and subsequently to Dutch colonial control, created distinct chronotopic periods that remain visible in the contemporary urban landscape.



**Figure 4.** Geographic Location of Lasem in Rembang Regency, Central Java Province, Indonesia. The map shows Lasem's strategic position on the northern coast (Pantura) trade route, illustrating its historical role as a port city that facilitated cultural exchange between Chinese traders, Javanese communities, and other maritime cultures across different temporal periods. Source: BPS (Central Bureau of Statistics) of Rembang (Rembang, 2024)

### Chronotopic Evolution Through Morphological Analysis

The morphological development of Lasem demonstrates how chronotopic layers accumulate through successive historical periods, creating complex spatial-temporal configurations that embody multiple cultural identities simultaneously. Each century brought distinct spatial interventions that established new temporal-spatial relationships while maintaining dialogue with existing chronotopic configurations.

**Table 1.** History and Morphological Changes in the City of Lasem

Source: Modified from (Mandaka et al., 2022); (Kurniati, 2016)

	<b>History</b>	<b>Streets</b>	<b>Plot</b>	<b>Buildings</b>
15th Century	Admiral Cheng Ho or Zheng He, a moslem	The beginning of the formation of the road	The number of plots remained minimal,	With the presence of this Chinese settlement near

	<b>History</b>	<b>Streets</b>	<b>Plot</b>	<b>Buildings</b>
	sailor and trader from mainland China, and his followers landed in Lasem Port and formed a settlement. However, Cheng Ho's Moslem is still controversial in Indonesia, both among the Chinese and Islamic communities. The large number of Chinese traders who engaged with locals eventually developed a settlement around the Lasem River.	was still linear, where there was a road that connected the Chinese settlement with the town square (Alun-Alun). The road in Dasun Village is a road that was formed at the beginning of the Chinese settlement	consisting of plots for Chinese communities and plots for the monarch and his family's dwelling where the Mataram kingdom still governed.	Lasem River, the first Cu An Kiong temple emerged as a site of devotion in Dasun Road. The form of Chinese buildings tends to be similar to traditional houses in North and South China, with a courtyard and a closed space structure set on a building plot. The building mass pattern is more oriented towards the south.
16th Century	There are already many Chinese residents who have settled in Lasem. They have also acculturated with the Indigenous population.	Still the same as the road that existed in the 15th century, only there was a small addition of a road to the East from the town square (Alun-Alun).	Plots were added to the Chinese settlement to the south, towards the future Grotepost-weg (Big Post Road/Main Highway) that will connect to the kingdom's town square.	The regent of Lasem embraced more adherents of Islam, there were additional plots for mosque buildings near the town square, as well as for indigenous settlements spread across the southern part of the town square (irregular). The position of the pier, Chinatown, town square, and the regent's house are still the same.
17th Century	The settlement of native Chinese and their descendants is growing; many native Chinese immigrants, particularly from Fujian Province, are moving to the Lasem Kingdom. The motive is to seek a better life, aside from the many relatives and friends who have resided in Lasem. The heyday of the Lasem Kingdom was until the end of 17th Century. The Dutch colonial initially intended to cooperate in trade but eventually carried out a mission to control the region.	There was no change.	Plots were added to the Chinese settlement to the south.	One new temple developed, Poo An Bio (at Karangturi), which is close to the Lasem River since religious rituals are typically done in front of the temple to the river.
18th Century	Lasem was attacked and controlled by the Dutch and the center of the Lasem government was moved to Rembang then the VOC monopolized the teak trade. The Dutch turned the river channel away	In the early 18th century there was an addition of a branching road forming a network connected to the South which later became Soditan Street. Next, road developments began to emerge in the	The addition of plots in the west, which remained at the edge of the Lasem river, called Babagan, accompanied the expansion of existing roads on Jalan Soditan.	The loss of the town square (Alun-Alun) which was the center of government due to the Dutch occupation. The Chinese settlements in Babagan have the same type of building as the one in Soditan. Soon

	<b>History</b>	<b>Streets</b>	<b>Plot</b>	<b>Buildings</b>
	<p>from the pier because the river flow was diverted (disodet), so the settlement in the area was called Soditan Village.</p> <p>In 1740, a mass massacre of Chinese citizens occurred in Batavia (10,000 Chinese citizens were killed on the instructions of the Dutch and VOC), prompting numerous Chinese refugees to settle in Soditan.</p>	<p>West where this road was still not connected to the road on the East side</p>		<p>after that, a new temple called Gie Yong Bio was built to serve as a place of prayer and a social hub in Babagan.</p>
19th Century	<p>Daendels (Dutch Governor-General) built Jalan Raya Lasem as part of the Post Road (grotepostweg) connecting Anyer and Panarukan. Since then, the Lasem River, which had grown shallow, has played little part in.</p>	<p>In the 1840s, the connecting road to the land route and the railway line had been formed as part of land transportation replacing the previous river transportation.</p>	<p>There are numerous other plots beginning to appear. The plots range in size from 300 to 2000m<sup>2</sup>, with the largest averaging 500 to 1000 m<sup>2</sup>.</p>	<p>Chinese settlements grew swiftly to the west, particularly in Karangturi Village. Karangturi's residential buildings are similar to those in Dasun, Soditan, and Babagan.</p>

The 15th century port city development established the foundational chronotopic configuration for subsequent cultural negotiations (Table 1, Figure 5). Admiral Cheng Ho's arrival and Chinese settlements around the Lasem River created the initial spatial framework where Chinese commercial practices encountered Javanese territorial organization. The linear road structure connecting Chinese settlements with the town square (Alun-Alun) established temporal-spatial relationships between river-oriented Chinese commercial activities and alun-alun centered Javanese governmental structure that continues to influence Lasem's urban morphology. The first Cu An Kiong temple in Dasun Road established religious spatial practices maintaining Chinese cultural identity within Javanese territorial frameworks, while south-oriented building masses reflect Chinese feng shui principles adapted to Javanese spatial contexts.

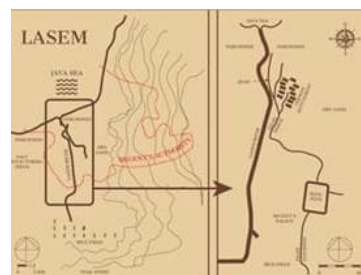
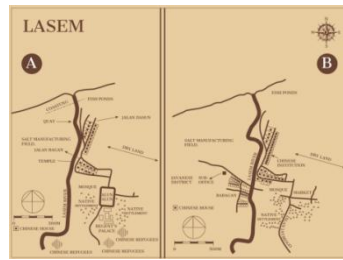


Figure 5. Redrawing of Morphology of Lasem in 15th Century

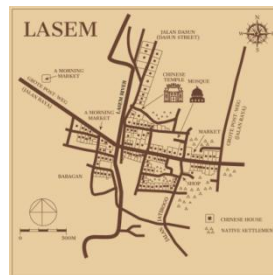
Original Source: Pratiwo Sketch (Pratiwo, 2010)

The 16th Century is Islamic integration (Table 1). The 16th century demonstrated how chronotopic configurations evolve through cultural dialogue rather than replacement. While maintaining the existing Chinese-Javanese spatial relationships, the addition of Islamic religious plots near the town square created new temporal-spatial layers. The regent's embrace of Islam resulted in additional mosque buildings and indigenous settlements, but the existing pier, Chinatown, town square, and regent's house positions remained unchanged, illustrating how chronotopic evolution preserves earlier spatial relationships while accommodating new cultural influences.



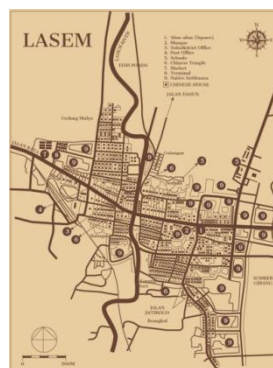
**Figure 6.** Redrawing of Morphology of Lasem in 18th Century (1740 – Figure 3A), (1750 – Figure 3B)  
Original Source: Pratiwo Sketch (Pratiwo, 2010)

The 17th-18th Century is Dutch Colonial intervention period (Table 1, Figure 6). The Dutch colonial period created significant chronotopic disruption and reorganization. The 18th century Dutch attack and control resulted in government center relocation to Rembang and VOC monopolization of teak trade. The critical spatial intervention involved river channel diversion (disodet), creating the Soditan settlement area. This period demonstrates how political power changes create new chronotopic configurations through infrastructure control. The branching road network formation connected to the south (Soditan Street) and westward expansion created new spatial connections while the loss of the town square (Alun-Alun) as government center represented significant chronotopic disruption. New temples like Gie Yong Bio emerged to serve expanded Chinese communities in Babagan.



**Figure 7.** Redrawing of Morphology of Lasem in 19th  
Original Source: Pratiwo Sketch (Pratiwo, 2010)

The 19th Century is transportation infrastructure development period (Table 1, Figure 7). Daendels' construction of Jalan Raya Lasem as part of the Post Road (grotepostweg) connecting Anyer and Panarukan created major chronotopic reorganization. The shift from river to land transportation systems established new temporal-spatial relationships between Lasem and regional trade networks. Chinese settlements expanded westward, particularly in Karangturi Village, while maintaining architectural similarity with earlier settlements in Dasun, Soditan, and Babagan, demonstrating chronotopic continuity within expanded spatial configurations.



**Figure 8.** Redrawing of Morphology of Lasem in 20th  
Original Source: Pratiwo Sketch (Pratiwo, 2010)

The 20th-21st century modern urban development era reveals how chronotopic layers interact within contemporary pressures (Table 1, Figure 8). The Lasem Town square transformation from governmental center to market and sub-terminal represents functional chronotopic adaptation, while trade and accommodation services around the Pantura road demonstrate how historical infrastructure continues to influence contemporary spatial organization. Indigenous residential buildings added around Karangturi Village while Chinese residential buildings remained relatively unchanged illustrates selective chronotopic preservation within broader urban transformation. The designation of Lasem's Heritage Area in 2021-2022 represents a contemporary chronotopic moment where tourism development pressures create new temporal demands on historical spatial configurations, intensifying cultural negotiation as heritage buildings must simultaneously preserve historical identity and accommodate modern economic functions within tourism-oriented development.

### Comparative Analysis of Heritage Transformation and Identity Construction Strategies

The morphological analysis reveals how chronotopic layers accumulate through successive historical periods in Lasem's urban landscape. To understand how individual buildings operationalize these chronotopic processes through specific architectural interventions, a systematic comparative analysis across twelve heritage cases identifies distinct patterns of heritage transformation and identity construction. Table 2 presents the comprehensive analysis examining each case across five analytical dimensions: design combination, general pattern, personal translation, combination strategy, and identity representation strategy.

Table 2. Comparative Studies of Chinese Hybridity in Lasem. Source: Author's own elaboration.

Case	Design Hybridity	General Pattern	Personal Translation	Transformation strategy	Identity Representation Strategy
I Chinese Javanese Colonial	Chinese courtyard house with wide front and back verandas as communal space (influenced by Javanese culture), typical colonial spatial syntax, Chinese symmetrical structure with green and yellow colors (green is Islamic-Javanese coastal symbolism), hybrid ornaments (Chinese-classic European styles)	Traditional Chinese: symmetry, central double doors, vertical barred windows, ancestor prayer room, tailiang construction Wide verandas	Chinese ancestor prayer room is located not in the back but in the front building, coloured in certain green and yellow with Chinese-classic European ornaments Ancestor grand Cemetery	Spatial syntax correspond to tropical climate, Javanese communal culture, Dutch colonial building spatial organization, Colour related to religion	Adaptation Adeption
II Chinese Javanese Colonial	Chinese house with wide front and back verandas as communal space (influenced by Javanese culture), typical colonial spatial syntax, Classical Chinese gate with Chinese calligraphy but with Javanese typical low wind door and painted green	Traditional Chinese: symmetry, central double doors, ancestor prayer room, tailiang construction, painted ceramics Wide verandas	Painted in certain green, filled with classic European furnitures and decorations Back verandah was used as a kitchen extension for cooking activities with family and relatives	Spatial syntax correspond to tropical climate and Javanese communal culture, Dutch colonial building spatial organization Colour, related to religion	Adaptation
III Chinese Javanese Colonial	Chinese courtyard house with wide front veranda and inner courtyard, tropical-Javanese wind door. Double doors with Chinese calligraphy, painted in gold colour. Front gate and back façade wall are painted in green	Traditional Chinese: symmetry, central double doors, vertical barred windows, tailiang construction Wide verandas	Painted in certain green, high wind door (the typical pattern is low wind door)	Spatial syntax, correspond to tropical climate and Javanese communal culture, Dutch colonial building spatial	Adaptation

Case	Design Hybridity	General Pattern	Personal Translation	Transformation strategy	Identity Representation Strategy
				organization Colour, related to religion	
IV Chinese Javanese Colonial	Chinese house with wide front veranda as a communal space (influenced by Javanese culture), typical colonial spatial syntax, Javanese typical low wind door, traditional Java style furniture made from local materials (wood and rattan)	Traditional Chinese: symmetry, central double doors, vertical barred windows, tailiang construction Wide verandas Traditional Java style furniture made from local materials (wood and rattan)	Painted in certain brown Front veranda is used for seating lounge and traditional dance practice Back veranda is used as a working area for batik craft	Spatial syntax, correspond to tropical climate and Javanese communal culture, Dutch colonial building spatial organization, Colour related to traditional batik colour	Adaptation Adeption
V Chinese Javanese Colonial	Chinese house with typical colonial spatial syntax, traditional Chinese gate and natural colour. Wide front and back verandas. Javanese typical low wind door	Traditional Chinese: symmetry, central double doors, vertical barred windows, Wide verandas	Bedroom is used for ancestor and family memorabilia Front veranda is used for café and back veranda is used for restaurant	Spatial syntax, correspond to tropical climate and Javanese communal culture Functions are changed into gallery and restaurants	Adoption Adaptation
VI Chinese Colonial	Indische empire house with floor, gate, doors, columns, ceiling are painted yellow as a symbol of gold colour as a symbol of prosperity (Chinese background influence)	Indische empire style	Painting Indische empire in yellow	Spatial syntax, correspond to tropical climate Color translation	Adeption
VII Chinese Colonial	Non-distinctive façade, art deco style decorative elements, green color, eclectic furnitures: classical style, art deco style, simplified art nouveau style, traditional Java style furniture made from local materials (wood and rattan)	Art deco style furnitures and decorative elements Traditional Java style furniture made from local materials (wood and rattan)	Certain green color, painted at wall, doors, windows, simplified art nouveau style asymmetry, non-functional and narrow front veranda, wide back veranda	Color translation (using green but not related to Islam religion but related with nature), Eclectic furnitures	Adaptation Adeption
VIII Chinese Colonial	Indische empire with expanded back veranda, surrounded by spacious garden, filled with art deco style furnitures, traditional Java style furniture made from local materials (wood and rattan)	Indische empire style Painted ceramic classic European style, classic ornaments balustrades Art deco furnitures Classic floor pattern	Personal decoration Doors, windows, colums are painted in light pale yellow	Color translation, owner is Chinese but using European style from building to furniture, from classic to art deco	Adoption

Case	Design Hybridity	General Pattern	Personal Translation	Transformation strategy	Identity Representation Strategy
IX Chinese Colonial	Dutch Colonial building with roman doric columns, terraces, Chinese prayer room (Konghucu belief system), eclectic furnitures with hybrid ornaments Wide front and back verandas	Dutch Colonial building	Red boundary wall, main gate is painted in red-yellow-black-white colors Colonial style doors' bouvenlicht are combined with personal logo decoration and Chinese proverbs	Spatial syntax, correspond to tropical climate and Javanese communal culture Functions are changed into homestays	Adeption
X Chinese Colonial	Indische empire with front and back wide verandas eclectic furnitures with hybrid ornaments	Indische empire	Colonial style furniture with traditional Javanese ornaments	Spatial syntax, correspond to tropical climate, A private house has been transformed into a batik gallery	Adaptation
XI Chinese modern	The front area is used as a shop, protective mirror (Taoist belief), cross (Christian belief), no aligned doors (Feng Shui)	Colonial style spatial organization pattern: central room, 2 bedrooms, symmetry	Combining colonial style building with Feng Shui belief (aligned doors to no aligned doors)	Partial shop function	Adaptation
XII Chinese modern	No pattern, occupational needs, standard design (functional), mix modern and traditional Javanese furnitures	Modern: one room-one function, no communal space	Bird nest business, open sleeping area, traditional fabric decoration in ancestor prayer room	Modern functional but still maintaining tradition in prayer room and furnitures	Adaptation

The comparative analysis presented in Table 2 reveals three distinct identity representation strategies employed by Peranakan Chinese communities in Lasem: adoption-adaptation, adeption, and hybrid-syncretic formations. The patterns demonstrate varying approaches to maintaining Chinese cultural heritage while accommodating Javanese social practices, colonial architectural influences, and contemporary functional requirements.

### **Adoption: Chronotopic Preservation Strategies**

Adoption represents the most temporally conservative approach to heritage transformation, involving direct replication of historical architectural forms without modification for contemporary needs. In Bakhtin's chronotope framework, adoption strategies attempt to preserve specific temporal-spatial configurations from the past, maintaining both physical forms and their associated cultural meanings within contemporary contexts. Within Lasem's Heritage Area, however, pure adoption proves virtually impossible due to the inherently hybrid nature of Peranakan Chinese architecture. The research reveals that no buildings employ purely Chinese architectural forms without local adaptations, reflecting the historical reality that Chinese cultural practices underwent immediate transformation upon encountering Javanese spatial traditions and tropical climate conditions. This finding demonstrates how chronotopic analysis illuminates the dynamic nature of cultural identity construction, where even apparently "traditional" forms represent ongoing negotiations between multiple temporal influences.

Adoption strategies in Lasem primarily occur through restoration activities aimed at returning buildings to

previous chronotopic configurations. These interventions seek to strengthen temporal connections to specific historical periods while maintaining spatial arrangements that enable continued residential or commercial use. However, the restoration process itself represents a contemporary chronotopic layer, as current preservation techniques and tourism-oriented functions create new temporal meanings within historical spatial forms. The absence of pure adoption strategies reveals the fundamental insight that heritage identity construction operates through dialogical processes rather than static preservation. Even when building owners attempt to maintain historical authenticity, the contemporary context of tourism development and economic pressures creates new temporal demands that interact with historical spatial configurations to generate hybrid chronotopic meanings.

### **Adaptation: Climate and Cultural Integration Through Chronotopic Modification**

Adaptation strategies demonstrate how Peranakan Chinese communities in Lasem actively negotiated between heritage culture maintenance and local environmental requirements, creating chronotopic syntheses that preserve cultural identity while accommodating contextual necessities. These modifications reveal sophisticated approaches to cultural translation that maintain temporal connections to Chinese traditions while establishing spatial relationships appropriate to Javanese social practices and tropical climate conditions. Rather than viewing adaptation as cultural compromise, the chronotopic analysis demonstrates how contextual modifications can strengthen cultural identity by enabling continued practice of core cultural values within appropriate spatial-temporal configurations.

The most significant adaptation involves the development of wide front porches with extended eaves, absent in traditional Chinese architecture but essential for tropical climate comfort (Figure 9a-f). This modification creates new chronotopic relationships where Chinese family-oriented spatial organization accommodates Javanese communal cultural practices. The front porch functions as a transitional space that enables social interaction with neighbors while maintaining the courtyard-centered Chinese domestic arrangement, demonstrating how adaptation strategies can strengthen rather than weaken cultural identity through contextual responsiveness. Wind door installations represent another critical adaptation that reflects chronotopic negotiation between Chinese familial privacy concepts and Javanese communal openness. Traditional Chinese houses employ solid, high entrance gates that create exclusive family compounds. The adaptation to low, ventilated wind doors maintains the symbolic function of domestic boundary definition while accommodating tropical airflow requirements and Javanese social expectations for neighborhood interaction. When families are present, the wind door enables greeting neighbors who pass by, creating inclusive social relationships that reflect Javanese communal culture influence on Chinese familial practices.

The research identifies similar adaptations in Chinese-Colonial houses following the Indische Empire style (Figure 9g-i). These buildings demonstrate chronotopic adaptation where Chinese families, seeking association with Dutch colonial social circles, adopted European spatial arrangements while modifying them for tropical climate conditions. The large front and back terraces characteristic of Indische Empire style represent adaptations of European Empire architecture to tropical environmental requirements, creating hybrid chronotopic forms that accommodate multiple cultural influences within single architectural expressions. These adaptation strategies reveal how heritage communities actively engage with environmental and social contexts to create sustainable approaches to cultural identity maintenance.



**Figure 9.** Adaptation. The case studies of adaptation are Chinese-Javanese traditional houses (a,b,c,d,e,f) and Chinese-Colonial one in Indische Empire style (g,h,i). Source: Author's own elaboration.

### **Adeption: Creative Reinterpretation and Contemporary Identity Construction**

Adeption represents the most creative approach to heritage transformation, involving the strategic combination of historical cultural elements with contemporary needs through innovative spatial-temporal syntheses. Derived from the Latin adeption meaning "achievement through effort," this strategy demonstrates

how heritage communities actively construct new chronotopic meanings that honor historical identity while addressing contemporary cultural and economic requirements. The yellow-painted Peranakan Chinese house in Indische Empire style exemplifies positive adeption where color symbolism creates new chronotopic relationships between Chinese prosperity concepts and colonial architectural forms (Figure 10a-d). The owner's decision to use yellow as a symbol of gold reflects Chinese cultural associations between gold and prosperity, but applies this traditional meaning within a colonial architectural framework and contemporary tourism context. This creative interpretation maintains temporal connections to Chinese cultural values while establishing spatial relationships appropriate to heritage tourism functions. The gate in Karangturi Village demonstrates sophisticated adeption through architectural fusion that combines traditional Chinese duogong construction with Islamic-influenced architrave forms (Figure 10e). This synthesis creates chronotopic dialogue between Chinese structural traditions and Islamic decorative practices, reflecting the multicultural historical experience of Lasem's Peranakan Chinese community. The miniature duogong construction maintains temporal connections to Chinese architectural heritage while the architrave arch acknowledges the spatial influence of Islamic architectural traditions within Lasem's cultural landscape.

The Rumah Merah entrance gate represents another adeption example where traditional Chinese-Javanese architectural forms receive contemporary reinterpretation through color application and symbolic additions (Figure 10f). The owner's use of red, black, and yellow creates new visual relationships while the guardian lion statue adds protective symbolism that bridges Chinese spiritual traditions with contemporary tourism presentation needs. This intervention demonstrates how adeption can serve dual functions of cultural identity expression and economic tourism accommodation. The Cu An Kiong Temple's pink coloration illustrates problematic adeption where surface cultural modifications lack deeper meaning connections (Figure 10g). The administrator's interpretation that pink represents feminine identity appropriate to the temple's female deity (Makco) demonstrates superficial cultural reinterpretation that lacks connection to Chinese temple color traditions or spatial symbolism. This example reveals how adeption strategies can become merely decorative interventions that fail to maintain meaningful chronotopic relationships between temporal cultural meanings and spatial architectural expressions.

The analysis reveals that successful adeption requires maintaining substantive connections between historical cultural meanings and contemporary spatial applications. Creative reinterpretation that honors the temporal dimensions of cultural identity while establishing appropriate spatial relationships for contemporary functions can strengthen heritage identity construction. However, superficial modifications that apply historical elements without understanding their cultural significance risk reducing heritage transformation to tourism-oriented decoration that weakens rather than supports ongoing identity negotiation processes. The tripartite framework of adoption, adaptation, and adeption thus represents different chronotopic strategies for managing the temporal-spatial relationships that enable heritage communities to construct and negotiate cultural identity within evolving political, economic, and social contexts. Each strategy offers distinct approaches to the fundamental challenge of maintaining cultural authenticity while accommodating contemporary pressures and opportunities within Indonesia's multicultural landscape.



**Figure 10.** Adeption. The case studies of adeption are Chinese-Colonial house (a,b,c,d), Road gate in Karangturi Village (e), Entrance gate of Rumah Merah Lasem Heritage (f), Cu An Kiong Temple (g). Source: Author's own elaboration.

## DISCUSSION

The empirical findings from Lasem reveal how heritage transformation operates within what Liu conceptualizes as a "borderless world" where cultural flows create transnational and translational strategies for

survival (Liu, 1996). Peranakan Chinese identity construction in Lasem demonstrates both transnational characteristics through historical multicultural exchanges and translational dimensions through contemporary reinterpretations shaped by global cultural interactions and tourism pressures.

### **Construction of Chinese Peranakan Identity in Lasem: Identity of Becoming**

Lasem's architectural transformation processes provide substantial evidence for conceptualizing Peranakan Chinese identity as "identity of becoming" rather than "identity of being" (Hall, 1993). The tripartite model of adoption, adaptation, and adeption revealed through architectural analysis supports contemporary theoretical developments recognizing cultural identity as dynamic and multidimensional (Schwartz et al., 2010). This challenges traditional preservationist approaches treating cultural identity as fixed essence requiring protection from change.

The intervention of modern and postmodern culture reflects tourism industry influence, where traditional heritage buildings undergo transformation to meet international accommodation standards while maintaining cultural identity through architectural interventions. This creates "cultural translation" mechanisms where heritage communities interpret ancestral traditions through contemporary perspectives shaped by global cultural exchange and economic pressures from heritage tourism development. Cultural identity influences tourists' perceptions, satisfaction, and engagement with cultural heritage, demonstrating how identity construction shapes heritage tourism experiences and destination loyalty (Tian et al., 2020).

The chronotopic analysis reveals how architectural spaces function as temporal-spatial containers where multiple historical periods coexist and interact dialogically, supporting Bakhtin's assertion that meaning emerges through the intersection of time and space rather than through static cultural forms. Chronotope analysis enables understanding of "how spatial-temporal configurations generate meaning in real-world contexts beyond literary texts," revealing heritage landscapes as sites where "different temporal layers intersect to create complex cultural meaning" (Lawson, 2011). The Peranakan Chinese architecture in Lasem exemplifies this chronotopic complexity, where buildings simultaneously embody Chinese traditions, Javanese influences, Islamic practices, Dutch colonial legacies, and modern Indonesian culture. This identity construction operates through cultural translation mechanisms where heritage communities interpret ancestral traditions through contemporary perspectives. Research demonstrates that "buildings that preserve common memories can become symbols of local cultural identity for residents" while "revitalized architecture has the potential to reinforce cultural identity differences between local residents and other communities, stimulating the development of local attachments." The adaptive mechanisms observed in Lasem support this framework by showing how architectural modifications serve dual functions of maintaining cultural distinctiveness while enabling contemporary functionality.

### **Theoretical Dialogue with Other Hybrid Heritage Studies:**

The heritage transformation patterns observed in Lasem resonate profoundly with Homi Bhabha's concept of "Third Space" as articulated in *The Location of Culture* (Bhabha, 1994). Bhabha argues that "all cultural statements and systems are constructed in a contradictory and ambivalent space of enunciation," making "hierarchical claims to the inherent originality or 'purity' of cultures untenable." The Lasem findings empirically validate this theoretical position—the tripartite transformation strategies demonstrate how heritage architecture functions as a site of cultural hybridity rather than preservation of pure cultural forms.

The adeption transformation strategy particularly exemplifies Bhabha's third space as "an ambivalent site where cultural meaning and representation have no primordial unity or fixity." The *Indische Empire* colonial houses analyzed in this research embody what Bhabha describes as hybrid cultural formations emerging from colonial encounters, blending European architectural grammar with Chinese spatial organization and Javanese decorative preferences.

The Lasem research also reveals critical tensions within hybridity frameworks. The problematic transformations documented—particularly superficial tourism-oriented modifications like the pink Cu An Kiong Temple—illustrate how hybrid cultural forms can emerge from unequal power dynamics rather than genuine cultural negotiation. These cases suggest that not all forms of cultural hybridity are equally empowering, and that economic pressures can produce what might be termed "inauthentic hybridity" lacking meaningful cultural grounding.

Néstor García Canclini's *Culturas Híbridadas* (Canclini, 2005) provides complementary theoretical insights by foregrounding the material and economic dimensions of cultural hybridization. García Canclini conceptualizes hybridization as representing "ongoing condition of all human cultures, which contains no zones of purity because they undergo continuous processes of transculturation (two-way borrowing and lending between cultures)." This directly supports research findings that Peranakan Chinese architecture in Lasem has never been a pure cultural form but rather has always been characterized by cultural mixing.

The adaptation transformation strategy observed in this research exemplifies García Canclini's concept of "strategies for entering and leaving modernity." Heritage building owners who install modern amenities while maintaining traditional facade elements, or who incorporate contemporary commercial functions into historic spatial configurations, engage in what García Canclini describes as selective appropriation of modernity. These actors navigate between preservation and modernization through hybrid strategies that enable economic participation while maintaining meaningful connections to cultural heritage.

García Canclini's framework is particularly valuable for understanding the problematic transformations identified in this research. His analysis of how globalization and neoliberal markets shape cultural production provides critical context for understanding superficial heritage modifications driven by tourism commodification. These represent what García Canclini terms the "damaging effects of globalization" on cultural identity, where market forces pressure communities toward inauthentic cultural representations that prioritize visitor expectations over community meanings. Contemporary tourism development pressures in Lasem create new contexts for cultural negotiation requiring more sophisticated acculturation strategies than traditional models anticipate. The influence of cross-cultural awareness and tourist experience on authenticity, tourist satisfaction and acculturation" creates complex dynamics where "acculturation strategy people use can differ between their private and public areas of life (Zhang et al., 2018). The dual functionality of heritage buildings in Lasem—serving both private family functions and public tourism purposes—exemplifies this contextual complexity.

The research findings have significant implications for heritage conservation policy, particularly in multicultural contexts where multiple cultural influences intersect across different temporal periods, as the empirical evidence from Lasem challenges policy frameworks treating preservation and adaptation as opposing forces, instead supporting approaches that accommodate cultural evolution while maintaining historical authenticity. Contemporary heritage conservation recognizes that "the conservation of architectural heritage in urban spaces is not only about preserving the historical buildings of the past but also about uniting stakeholder groups, identifying architectural heritage, gaining a collective cultural identity, finding a sense of place and civic pride for residents," and the Lasem case study demonstrates how effective heritage conservation requires policies accommodating the tripartite transformation strategies identified in this research, enabling communities to maintain cultural identity through adaptive responses to contemporary pressures.

The morphological analysis of Lasem reveals critical challenges in heritage area management extending beyond individual building conservation to encompass comprehensive urban spatial planning approaches. The absence of clear regulations governing transformation levels within the Heritage Area has resulted in contrasting architectural expressions undermining the cultural landscape's coherence. Modern commercial buildings intermixed with traditional Chinese-Javanese and colonial architecture create visual discord contradicting Lasem's positioning as "Little China" and its tourism marketing as a heritage destination (Knapp, 2013). The study identifies specific urban design challenges requiring policy intervention: (1) lack of facade design guidelines accommodating the tripartite transformation strategies within conservation frameworks, (2) absence of zoning regulations distinguishing between conservation, semi-conservation, and development areas, and (3) insufficient integration of public infrastructure elements with heritage architectural character. The contrast between traditional building facades and modern infrastructure elements demonstrates the need for comprehensive urban design standards extending beyond individual building preservation. Figure 10 illustrates how modern buildings in the conservation area create visual discord. The existence of modern buildings for commercial purposes in the midst of traditional Javanese Chinese and Colonial Chinese Houses in Karangturi Village creates views that are not harmonious with surrounding buildings. Figure 11 demonstrates contrasting views between manholes and buildings, where the iron plate drain covers on streets in the Lasem Heritage Area bear words "Lasem Heritage City Planning, Rembang Regency," yet the term 'Heritage City' does not match the modern buildings in front of it.



**Figure 10.** Modern Buildings in Conservation Area (a). The existence of a modern building for a billiards sports business in the midst of Traditional Javanese Chinese and Colonial Chinese Houses in Karangturi Village (b), Lasem Heritage Area creates a view that is not harmonious with the buildings on the opposite, left and right (c).

Source: Author's own elaboration.

The research reveals critical policy gaps in heritage area management, particularly regarding regulatory frameworks accommodating cultural evolution while maintaining conservation objectives. The contrast between successful heritage businesses (Rumah Merah Lasem Heritage) and problematic modern interventions illustrates the need for sophisticated policy approaches providing clear guidelines for acceptable transformation strategies while enabling community economic participation. Heritage transformation success depends critically on community ownership and economic participation, as residents lacking economic benefits from heritage tourism often pursue building modifications prioritizing individual business needs over conservation objectives. The sustainability of cultural heritage resources is strongly linked to effective community participation in conservation and management, emphasizing that effective heritage building revitalization requires recognizing that "architecture and culture contribute to a sense of place, social traditions and cultural identity spanning centuries of history" while acknowledging that "local sustainability behavior is influenced by built heritage projects, where locals can enhance their sense of cultural identity through the atmosphere of the place and the quality of the environment" (Oladeji et al., 2022). This indicates the necessity for inclusive approaches involving local communities in heritage area management while providing economic incentives for appropriate transformation strategies. The Lasem findings support policy recommendations for inclusive heritage management involving local communities in conservation decision-making and providing economic incentives for appropriate heritage transformation strategies, as effective heritage policy requires frameworks distinguishing between different types of transformation interventions while supporting community economic participation in heritage conservation activities (Yeoh, 2003), ensuring that tourism-oriented business development balances visitor expectations with authentic cultural representation while avoiding superficial cultural modifications lacking meaningful connections to historical identity.



**Figure 11.** Contrasting Views between Manholes on the Road and Buildings (a,b,c). The iron plate drain cover on the streets in the Lasem Heritage Area has the words "Lasem Heritage City Planning, Rembang Regency" (d). The term 'Heritage City' does not match the modern buildings in front of it. Source: Author's own elaboration.

The research demonstrates how heritage transformation strategies must balance preservation objectives with community economic needs to achieve sustainable conservation outcomes, where effective heritage preservation requires "integrating modern needs with traditional preservation, involving communities in conservation efforts, and leveraging advanced technologies" while recognizing that "by investing in heritage preservation, communities can create sustainable economic opportunities that enhance cultural heritage." The findings support theoretical developments emphasizing community participation in conservation planning. Community participation is vital to enhance long-term sustainable heritage management, while recent research identifies that "the conservation of cultural heritage is not an easy task which cannot be undertaken by a single actor such as the government or heritage destination managers" and requires addressing "lack of stakeholder involvement" as a primary challenge hindering effective conservation (Landorf, 2009). The Lasem case study reveals both successful examples and significant challenges in achieving inclusive heritage development, where limited community involvement in planning and management has resulted in uncoordinated development undermining conservation objectives. Tourism-oriented heritage development creates both opportunities and risks for cultural identity construction: while heritage tourism provides economic incentives for preservation activities, it also creates pressures for superficial cultural representations prioritizing visitor expectations over authentic community identity expressions, with problematic adoption examples (such as the pink Cu An Kiong Temple) illustrating how tourism pressures can lead to heritage transformations lacking meaningful cultural connections.

The pink Cu An Kiong Temple transformation and uncoordinated development undermining conservation objectives stem from multiple converging factors. Temple administrators lacked expertise in traditional Chinese color symbolism, leading to superficial interpretations disconnected from established cosmological systems, while tourism pressures prioritized visual distinctiveness over authenticity, creating competitive dynamics favoring attention-attracting modifications. Regulatory gaps in heritage management lacked clear criteria to distinguish culturally meaningful adaptations from superficial changes, enabling interventions that preserved structures but neglected cultural significance. Additionally, fragmented governance distributes heritage management across multiple agencies without effective coordination, creating conflicts between tourism development and architectural preservation priorities, while top-down conservation approaches limit community participation,

positioning residents as regulation subjects rather than active stakeholders. Inadequate economic incentives fail to align community interests with conservation, as absence of financial support mechanisms (tax incentives, maintenance subsidies) creates pressures favoring short-term tourism revenue over culturally appropriate transformation, and insufficient heritage management expertise within local agencies prevents sophisticated assessment frameworks, resulting in reactive regulation rather than proactive guidance.

Limited community involvement results from three interconnected factors. First, institutional barriers embed communities as passive conservation objects rather than active participants; regulations focus on restricting actions (prohibiting modifications, limiting commercial activities) rather than creating participatory mechanisms. Second, socioeconomic disparities between building owners and external investors create unequal power dynamics, where actors with greater financial resources exercise disproportionate influence over heritage development directions. Third, limited trust between communities and authorities stems from historical top-down projects that displaced residents or constrained livelihoods, creating skepticism where regulations are perceived as property restrictions rather than heritage preservation frameworks.

## CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that Peranakan Chinese communities in Lasem construct architectural identity through three distinct chronotopic strategies—adoption, adaptation, and adeption—that often operate simultaneously within individual buildings. Analysis of twelve heritage buildings reveals these transformation patterns as concurrent processes rather than mutually exclusive categories, where communities maintain cultural connections while responding to contemporary pressures including tourism development, economic modernization, and regulatory constraints.

This research advances heritage studies by operationalizing Bakhtin's chronotope concept for architectural heritage analysis, providing the first systematic methodology for examining how temporal-spatial configurations generate meaning in built environments beyond literary application. By integrating chronotope theory with Berry's acculturation model and interactive assimilation theory, this research creates a multidimensional analytical framework capturing identity construction (acculturation), power dynamics (assimilation), and temporal-spatial meaning-making (chronotope) simultaneously, demonstrating how architectural transformation strategies correspond to specific cultural negotiation patterns shaped by internal community choices, external structural pressures, and chronotopic meaning-making processes. The research empirically demonstrates that Peranakan Chinese identity operates as "identity of becoming" rather than "identity of being," where transformation enables ongoing cultural negotiation rather than representing cultural loss, challenging binary preservation frameworks that treat preservation and change as opposing forces while providing empirical evidence that effective heritage conservation requires accommodating cultural evolution while maintaining historical authenticity.

The tripartite model provides heritage practitioners and policymakers with concrete tools for distinguishing between transformation types and evaluating their cultural appropriateness: adoption strategies emphasizing preservation of historical forms and cultural continuity, adaptation strategies enabling contextually appropriate modifications balancing heritage maintenance with contemporary functions, and adeption strategies representing creative reinterpretations that either maintain cultural meaning through innovative synthesis or constitute problematic alterations lacking cultural grounding. The contrast between successful heritage transformations (Rumah Merah Heritage Lasem achieving economic viability through culturally grounded adaptation) and problematic interventions (pink Cu An Kiong Temple representing superficial tourism-driven adeption disconnected from traditional Chinese temple color symbolism) demonstrates the critical importance of cultural knowledge in transformation decisions, supporting policy recommendations requiring heritage impact assessments evaluating proposed interventions based on their contribution to ongoing identity construction rather than static authenticity standards. The research reveals that effective heritage transformation requires systematic community participation mechanisms enabling stakeholders to engage in conservation decision-making, as building owners and communities possess essential cultural knowledge for distinguishing between meaningful adaptations and superficial modifications, while sustainable heritage conservation depends critically on aligning community economic interests with preservation objectives through appropriate financial incentive structures (tax incentives, maintenance subsidies, heritage business development support) that enable culturally appropriate transformations. The morphological analysis identifies specific policy needs: facade design guidelines accommodating the tripartite transformation strategies within conservation frameworks, zoning regulations distinguishing between conservation and development areas, and integration of public infrastructure elements with heritage architectural character, addressing real implementation challenges faced by heritage authorities in

managing heritage areas within multicultural contexts.

This research demonstrates the analytical value of combining morphological analysis, chronotopic analysis, and comparative case study methods for heritage transformation research. The morphological mapping of Lasem's development from the 15th to 21st centuries provides temporal context revealing cultural accumulation through dialogue rather than replacement, while chronotopic analysis of twelve heritage buildings demonstrates how systematic architectural documentation reveals transformation patterns across building typologies and historical periods. This integrated methodology offers a replicable framework for heritage transformation studies in other multicultural contexts where multiple cultural influences intersect across different temporal periods.

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