

Visual Character Identification of Bengkulu China-Town

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Abstract. Bengkulu has a popular china town area that used as a settlement by local-Chinese for living. This area has unique visual character that should be preserved, because it has a potential for Bengkulu heritage tourism. This study is to find components that shaped the visual character of Bengkulu China town. Direct observation did to collect the data and information. Buildings, environment, and socio-culture character are the indicators that need to be identified. Result of the study showed that Bengkulu traditional architecture gives important influence for the visual character of shop-house building in Bengkulu China town. The genuine character of Chinese settlement can't be seen clearly because of the small road and the dense of the buildings. This area also lack on their commercial activity.

Keywords: Bengkulu, local-Chinese, Visual Character, Identification.

1 Introduction

China-town is an area that rooted by Chinese-cultured people based on the history. Not only the resident, but also the visual of residential, social order, even the environmental atmosphere there have Chinese culture characteristic [1]. Bengkulu also has a famous China-town named Kampung Cina. This area was exist since long time ago and now being a settlement by Bengkulu people that has the Chinese blood in them. Based on the history, [2] Bengkulu China-town was exist since England colonialism in 1600's. England who tried to control the market and trading, allowed Chinese people to come and stay at Bengkulu city in 1689. [3] On 1714, a lot of Chinese people stay and live in this part of Bengkulu old-town. They work as a plantation laborer, and few of them are a seller. Commercial and trading activity occurred at that time makes this area growth so fast, because Chinese citizen got special circumstance by England trading partnership East India Company. This China-town then became the first commercial activity center in Bengkulu city on that era. It's because of China-town location was so strategic, placed in front of England fort, that became a historic site now called Benteng Marloborough.

But now, the charm of commercial trading in this area began to fade since the arrangement of regional planning in Bengkulu city. The construction of government offices for Bengkulu city development makes the center of economy area in Bengkulu city moved to Suprpto street [4]. It also makes Bengkulu China-town deserted since 2000. The existence of the history and unique Chinese architecture on that area can make this location as an heritage tourism. Bengkulu city government also has assign this area as a cultural heritage area according to Bengkulu city and regional planning 2012.

Visual character study is an effort to control and giving guidelines for urban orientation, urban circulation and movement, and also urban signage that compatible to environmental character (Kristiadi (1994) in Misavan and Gultom (2013)) [5]. So that, visual character is one of important element to keep the heritage area become sustainable. The existence of unique visual character that still last enough on Bengkulu China-town area need to be preserved, so that the future development will not give a damage to the cultural heritage value of Bengkulu China-town area. To preserve the cultural heritage, we need to identify the visual character first to find the uniqueness of Bengkulu China-town. Visual character of architecture can show the distinctive appearance of the building that differ groups of building with others. This visual character is the study to find the image of architectural appearance on China-town area that shaped from the components that influenced each other. The result of this study are expected to become a consideration for Bengkulu city government in the development of the city, knowing the aspect or component that need to be preserved or developed for revitalization of Bengkulu city in the future.

1.1. Visual Character

Visual character are consists of two words, 'character' and 'visual'. Character is a feature or numbers of identity contained in individual or certain groups that makes and differentiate from others. While visual is an appearance that can be seen. So, visual character is the distinctive features of the building that differentiate them with other building. To identify the visual character of architectural building, some elements and components that formed visual character are needed. Khol (1984) in Khaliesh (2014) state that Chinese architecture in China-town has some special characteristic features [6], they are :

- a. Special characteristic of roof shape
- b. Open structure element
- c. Has special ornament
- d. Distinctive and striking colors
- e. Existence of courtyard

The authenticity of these Chinese characteristic features can be the beginning of building character identification to discover visual character of Bengkulu China-town. [7] Physical elements that formed the building character are consists of:

- a. Shaped of the building base
- b. Angle of the roof
- c. Building material
- d. Building signage
- e. Building colors
- f. Vertical element (column)
- g. Horizontal element (beam)

Another opinion by about physical element that related to formation of visual characters [8], are :

- a. Building mass and shape (building appearance)
 1. Building height
 2. Building solid-void
 3. Building height coefficient
 4. Building coverage coefficient

5. Building set-back
6. Building style
7. Building scale
8. Building material
9. Building texture
10. Building colors

b. Signage

Visual character can emphasize the image of the area so that can be seen clearly (Lynch, 1960 in Sudarwani, 2010). According to Cullen (1961) in Sudarwani (2010), visual character can be a reference in organize and arrange the building and environment because if an area has a good visual quality, it can support the visual of the whole city [9]. Smardon, Palmer & Felleman (1986) in Harani (2017) also said that visual quality is a special attribute on a visual system and a determined by cultural value and essential physical property [10]. So that, visual character can also be affected by building attributes.

Not only character in appearance and architectural form, social character and people's culture also participate in shaping the physical environment, as stated by Rapoport (1969) in Sudarwani (2010) [9]. Social-culture character of society can be grouped in non-physical character that shaped the visual character of the area. Non-physical characters become the background of physical formation, environmental use, and the relation between human and urban physical..

2 Methods

Qualitative approach is used as research methods. Some data and information were collected by observation and documentation study of architectural appearance of Bengkulu China-town. Some details of indicators used showed by this table:

Table 1. Research indicators

Visual character component		Indicator
Architectural physical character	Building character	Building-base shape Opening shape (door and window) Roof angle Building material Building colour
	Environmental character	Building mass and shape (appearance quality) : a. Building height b. Building solid-void c. Building height coefficient d. Style e. Material f. Texture g. Colour h. Signage

Visual character component		Indicator
Non-physical character	Socio-culture character	Social character of the people Culture character of the people

Research limited only to identify building character component and environmental character component that formed and affect visual character of Bengkulu China-town. Observation area is only in Bengkulu China-town with the boundary:

- a. North : Jl. Pariwisata
- b. East : Benteng Marlborough
- c. South : Jl. A. Yani & Jl. Mazairi
- d. West: Pasar Baru Koto 2

3 Results and Discussion

There're some indicators that become the result of the study, location, building character, environmental character, and socio-culture character.

4.1. China-town Location

China-town located at Tapak Paderi beach area, Malabero, Bengkulu city. This is a cultural heritage area based on government regulation, Perda RTRW on 2012. Bengkulu China-town located near urban historical site such as Benteng Marlborough (fort), Pasar Baru Koto (traditional market), and Tugu Thomas Pass monument.

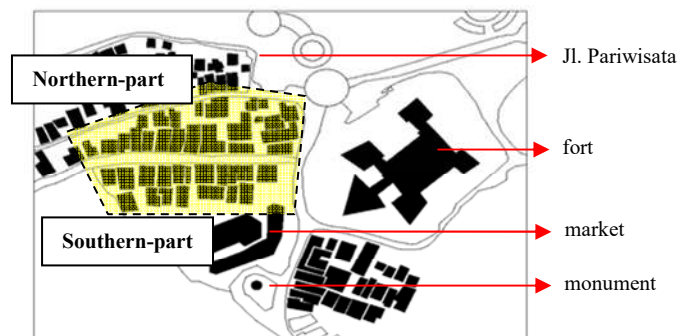


Fig. 1. Research boundary location.

Identification of this China-town divided into 2 areas, northern-part of the road and southern-part of the road.

(a)





Fig. 2. (a) Building on the northern-part of the road; (b) Building on the southern-part of the road;

4.2. Building character

Building character is one of physical architectural component that formed the visual character of Bengkulu China-town. Result details of the identification on building character consist on several indicators, they are building-base shape, doors and windows shape, angle of the roof, building material, building signage, and building colors.

Table 2. Building character identification

Building-base shape	
	<p>Persegi panjang</p> <p>Persegi</p>

Fig. 3. Building-base shaped analysis;

Analysis of building-base shaped did by identify the building plan and top view of the building. It can be seen that 80% of the building have rectangular shape that extends to the back side of the building. While 20% of the building in this area is a square shaped building. Most of the buildings are lined shop-houses.

So, Building-base shape character of Bengkulu China-Town is rectangular shape that extends to the back side of the building because it's a shop-house that used for commercial activity.

Doors and Windows shape

Doors and windows are physical elements that formed building character. Identification of the doors and windows are also did by observing the building on northern-part of the road and southern-part of the road.

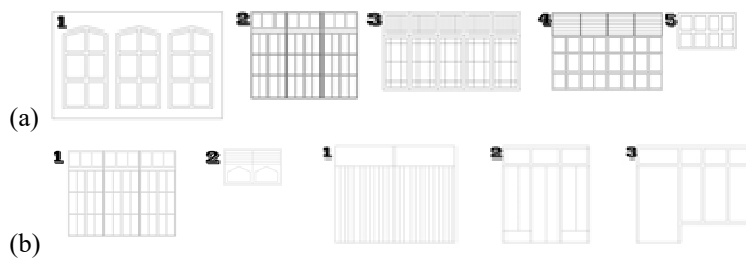


Fig. 4. (a) Northern-part windows shape; (b) Southern-part doors and windows shape

Observation result showed that the building on the northern-part have 5 types of windows category :

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1. Square shape with pointed shape on the corner of upper right and left side.
 2. Consist of 6 rectangles, and every each rectangle is divided into two segments.
 3. Rectangular shape, while 1 rectangle is divided into 9 squares, 2 big rectangles in the middle and 7 small rectangles in the rear side.
 4. Rectangle shape that divided into 4 or 6 small square inside.
 5. Rectangle that extends to the side that consist of 6 small squares.

Building on the southern-part have 2 types of windows category :

1. Consist of 6 rectangles, and every each rectangle is divided into 2 parts.
2. Consist of 2 square with triangle in the middle.

There're 3 types of doors category which dominated by rolling door because this China-town is a shop-house building own by Chinese-blood residents. 3 types of doors category, are:

1. Rolling door
2. Middle door with windows on left and right side.
3. Middle door with three windows besides door.

Roof angle and shape

Analytical studies showed that roof angle on Bengkulu China-town has 3 types:

1. Shield roof with triangle shape on the front
2. Shield roof with China authentic ornament on the corner
3. Shield roof with square shape on the front



Fig. 5. 3 types of roofs in Bengkulu China-town

Building Material

Some of the buildings in this China-town area is a semi-permanent with zinc material on the roof, while windows using glass and timber as the frame, and doors using timber and rolling doors.



Fig. 6. (a) Zinc roof ; (b) Rolling doors ; (c) glass windows with timber frame

Building signage

There're 6 houses that use Chinese architecture roof and ornament on the corner of the roof. While most of the buildings using carving ornament on the roofs' list-plank.



Fig. 7. (a) Bengkulu authentic ornament on list-plank ; (b) Chinese authentic ornament on the roof

Building Colors

After new regulation for arrangement of this area in 2017, façade of the building in Bengkulu China-town become more colorful. Green, yellow, red, and blue dominate the color of the building. There're 18 houses using green color, 8 housing using yellow color, 7 houses using pink color, 6 houses using blue color, and 2 houses using blue and yellow color at the same time.



Fig. 8. Building existing color

From several analysis did above, it can be conclude that building character on Bengkulu China-town is having rectangular shape that extend to the back of the building because it's a shop-house. Most of the doors are using rolling door, while window is a glass that has rectangular shape with 9 small square inside and timber frame material. Roofs' characteristic is dominated by shield roof with triangle shape on the front and using Bengkulu traditional carving on the roofs' list-plank. Zinc material is mostly used for the roof. Green color is dominate the color of the building in Bengkulu China-town.

4.3. Environmental character

Result details of the identification on environmental character consist on several indicators, they are building height, style, and building typology.

Table 3. Environmental character identification

Building height

Most of the building in Bengkulu China-town have 2 storeys with 10-12 meters height including roof. There're 17 houses that consist of 3 storeys, 8 houses have 4 storeys, while the rest is 2 storeys house. Southern-part of the road is dominated by 3 storeys building, and some of them are 2 and 4 storeys building. Ground floor of the building mostly used for commercial area, while second floor is for living area, and 3-4 floor is for swallow nest.





Fig. 9. Building height (a) northern-part of the road ; (b) southern-part of the road

Style

Building style used in this area is Chinese architecture style that showed by using of Authentic Chinese roof, and Bengkulu traditional Architecture style that showed by using of traditional ornament on the roof. But, most of the buildings are dominated by Bengkulu traditional architecture style.



Fig. 10 (a) Vihara is the typical religious building for Chinese architecture ; (b) Typical roofs for Chinese architecture ; (c) Bengkulu traditional roofs with carving ornament on the roofs' list-plank

Typology

Most of the buildings are lined shop-houses.

According to several analysis that already did above, it can be conclude that environmental character on Bengkulu China-town is having more height for the building in the southern-part of the road that have 3 to 4 storeys than the building on the northern-part of the road that dominate by 2 storeys building. Most of the buildings are also using Bengkulu Traditional architecture style. And building typology is a shop-house.

4.4. Socio-culture character

Most of Bengkulu China-town residents are Chinese-blood people who still keep Chinese cultural tradition. Residents in this place always held an event to celebrate Chinese new year annually. Besides that, most of residents' occupation is a seller whose run their merchant here. But, commercial activity nowadays in this area is not as live as the past era. Only some small shop-house still run their business even almost all of the buildings is still a shop-house though.



Fig. 11 Chinese new year celebration in Bengkulu China-town

4 Conclusion

The conclusion of this study is that visual character of Bengkulu China-town is mostly formed and affect by the combination of Chinese architecture and more on Bengkulu traditional architecture. Architectural visual authenticity can be seen by the existence of ornament carving on the list-plank of the roof. Meanwhile, building character is dominate by shop-house type building that lined side-by-side on the northern and southern part of the main road. Chinese original character is not strong enough to fill the atmosphere of the area because the road has small scale and the buildings are so dense with vertical building that consist of 2 to 4 storeys. Commercial activity also lack and not growth rapidly, even deserted.

In the end, the result and finding of visual character of Bengkulu China-town in this study can be a reference for development of this area that won't destroy the original character of Bengkulu China-town value to keep the heritage of Bengkulu city be sustainable. Further research can also be done by comparing visual character of other china-town in Indonesia, to understand more the authenticity of every each china-town in every different place in Indonesia.

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