

Lasem in the 13th-18th Centuries Global Cultural Crossroad

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Abstrak

Lasem, sebuah kota kecil di pesisir utara Jawa, telah lama dikenal sebagai titik pertemuan berbagai budaya global, terutama sejak masa kejayaan perdagangan maritim Nusantara. Artikel ini mengeksplorasi peran Lasem sebagai persimpangan budaya antara Tiongkok, Jawa, Arab, dan Eropa, yang terlihat dalam berbagai aspek kehidupan masyarakatnya, seperti seni, bahasa, kuliner dan tradisi lokal. Melalui pendekatan historis dan etnografis, penelitian ini menyoroti bagaimana interaksi dan asimilasi budaya di Lasem membentuk identitas lokal yang unik, sekaligus berkontribusi pada dinamika kebudayaan yang lebih luas di Indonesia. Artikel ini juga membahas tantangan yang dihadapi Lasem dalam menjaga warisan budaya di tengah arus modernisasi dan globalisasi, serta upaya komunitas lokal dalam melestarikan kekayaan sejarah dan kebudayaan mereka. Hasil penelitian ini diharapkan dapat memberikan kontribusi terhadap pemahaman yang lebih mendalam tentang persilangan budaya dan dampaknya terhadap pembentukan identitas lokal di kawasan Asia Tenggara.

Kata kunci: lasem, persilangan budaya, identitas global.

Abstract

Lasem, a small town on the north coast of Java, has long been recognized as a meeting point for various global cultures, especially since the heyday of the Nusantara's maritime trade. This article explores Lasem's role as a cultural crossroads between Chinese, Javanese, Arabs and Europeans, which is visible in various aspects of community life, such as art, language, cuisine and local traditions. Through a historical and ethnographic approach, the research highlights how cultural interaction and assimilation in Lasem shaped a unique local identity, while contributing to wider cultural dynamics in Indonesia. The article also discusses the challenges Lasem faces in maintaining its cultural heritage amidst modernization and globalization, as well as the efforts of local communities in preserving their rich history and culture. The results of this research are expected to contribute to a deeper understanding of cultural crossovers and their impact on local identity formation in the Southeast Asian region.

Keywords: lasem, cultural crossovers, local identity.

INTRODUCTION

Lasem, a small town located on the north coast of Java Island, has a long history as one of the important centers in the Nusantara's maritime trade network. Since the 14th century, Lasem has been an important stopover for traders from various nations, including Chinese, Arabs, Indians and Europeans. The presence of

these traders not only brought economic influence, but also encouraged complex cultural crossovers in the region. Evidence of this cultural crossing can be found in various aspects of Lasem people's lives, from building architecture, art traditions, language, to cuisine. Despite having diverse cultures, the people of Lasem are

able to live in harmony. (Nurhajarini et al., 2015).

Lasem is often dubbed as “Little China” due to the high influence of Chinese culture (Purwanto & Yulita, 2017). This is evident in the architecture of the old houses and temples that adorn Lasem. However, Lasem is not just about Chinese; the city is also a melting pot of other cultures that have intermingled over the centuries, creating a rich and diverse local identity. This intercultural interaction has shaped Lasem’s unique characteristics, making it an important example in the study of cultural acculturation and globalization in Indonesia.

In this modern era, Lasem faces great challenges in maintaining its cultural heritage. Increasingly strong globalization and urbanization threaten the preservation of cultural heritage that has been formed over centuries (Harsanto, 2023; Nahak, 2019). Many historic buildings are degrading, and some local traditions are being eroded by outside cultural influences (Zainuddin, 2015). This condition encourages the need for an in-depth study of the cultural dynamics in Lasem, especially how the cultural crossovers that have occurred over the centuries have shaped the city’s identity, as well as how the local community can maintain and preserve this cultural heritage in the midst of changing times.

This research aims to dig deeper into Lasem’s role as a global cultural crossing point, as well as understand its impact on local identity and the challenges of preserving cultural heritage in the era of globalization. Through a historical and ethnographic approach, it is hoped that this article can make an important contribution to the study of cultural dynamics and cultural heritage preservation in Indonesia, as well as provide insights for cultural preservation efforts in other regions that have a similar history of cultural crossovers.

METHODS

This research discusses the history and process of cultural crossing in Lasem-Rembang from the 13th to the 18th century. The method used in this research is the historical research method with four stages to be carried out, namely: (1) heuristics, at this stage the researchers conducted a search for primary sources related to the history and process of cultural crossing in Lasem in the 13th century to the 18th century (Herlina, 2020). The researchers collected primary document sources such as Tome Pires’ *Suma Oriental* records, *Carita Sejarah Lasem* (CSL), and *Negarakeragama*. In addition, researchers also collected primary and secondary sources such as photo documentation of physical or material culture at sites and in the Lasem area. Then the researchers collected

secondary sources such as articles, books and previous research results to support this research process.

(2) Criticism; at this stage the researchers criticized the sources internally and externally, especially the primary sources of documents and physical culture documentation (Tosh, 2022). (3) Interpretation; after conducting source criticism, the researchers synthesized several primary and secondary sources use (Herlina, 2020). Researchers collaborate traces, evidence and historical facts from various historical sources that can explain the history and process of cultural crossing in Lasem in the 13th to 14th centuries which are then interpreted objectively.

(4) Historiography; the results of the interpretation of facts from various historical sources are used by researchers as narrative material or historical writing (historiography) that discusses the history and cultural crossing in Lasem from the 13th century to the 18th century and the results of the cultural crossing (Tosh, 2022).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Creating Lasem's Pluralism

Lasem is a subdistrict city that is part of Rembang Regency, East Java, on the north coast of Central Java. The Lasem area is a flat coastal plain but has a background of hills and plateaus called the Argopuro Mountains (Munandar, 2018). The region has ethnic diversity and a blend of

Chinese, Arab, European and Javanese cultures (Nurhajarini et al., 2015).

The name *Lasem* was mentioned as an area during the Majapahit era, especially during the heyday led by King Hayam Wuruk (Rajasanagara) memerintah pada tahun 1351-1389 M (Munandar, 2018). According to the book *Nagarakertagama* pupuh 5:1, Sri Rajasaduhitendudewi became Bhatarra I (Bhre) Lasem and had a husband who became the ruler of the Matahun area with the title *Bhre Matahun* Raja Sawarddhana or Raden Larang (Munandar, 2018).

Meanwhile, *Carita Sejarah Lasem* (CSL) states that in 1273 Saka (1351 M) the Lasem region was ruled by Dewi Indu who was the younger cousin of Prabu Hayam Wuruk, a king of Wilwatikta (Majapahit). Dewi Indu had a husband named Pangeran Rajasa Wardhana who became *Dhang Puhawang Wilwatikta* and also became Adipati Metaun (Bhre Matahun) who controlled the junks of warships in Kaeringan Harbor and Regol-Lasem Harbor (Kamzah, 1920).

King Hayam Wuruk deliberately visited the Lasem region with the aim of meeting the ajar (a person who is clever or astute in the field of Hinduism) and other religious people. According to *Nagarakertagama* pupuh:1, King Hayam Wuruk traveled to the Lasem region in 1276 Saka (1354 M) (Munandar, 2018).

In the 14th century, Java Island became the center of a shipping system that connected the islands in the archipelago, which was very sophisticated and advanced at that time (Lombard, 2005). One of them is the Lasem region, which is described as a fertile north coast port area of Java and never lacks water sources. At first, this area was just a fishing port. However, due to its strategic location, this area developed into a Majapahit port, especially the Kaeringan and Regol ports (Munandar, 2018). Between the two large ports, it can be indicated that there was a shipyard and repair workshop for trade and military vessels located in Dasun-Lasem (Alisetyonugroho, 2021).

The influence of Islam had spread when the influence and dominance of the Majapahit Kingdom began to weaken and was on the verge of collapse in the 15th century. At that time, Chinese ambassadors arrived in Java and witnessed local battles involving Javanese kings vying for power. These local battles became one part of the political turmoil during the transition of the Majapahit Kingdom to a new dynasty, as well as the beginning of the process of Islamization and the emergence of a new socio-economic order in Java (Lombard, 2005; Vlekke, 2023). By the 15th century, a strong Chinese Muslim network could develop in Java. The arrival of the first Chinese communities in the northern

coastal cities of Java during the 15th century marked the beginning of the revival of the northern coastal region and the process of Islamization (Lombard, 2005).

Under the leadership of Admiral Cheng Ho/Zheng He, the first Chinese Muslim community arrived on the north coast of Java, including in the Lasem area. The followers of Cheng Ho who settled in Lasem formed a settlement which is now called Kampung Pecina (Nurhajarini et al., 2015). However, researchers disagree with the assumption that Admiral Cheng Ho or Zhang He had stopped in the Lasem-Rembang area in the 15th century.

The reason is because researchers have not found any information or historical evidence from the Ming Dynasty chronicles that can prove that Cheng Ho and his followers had stopped by the Lasem-Rembang area. This is reinforced by the theory of commercial shipping in the 15th century which is related to the economic activities of the Ming Dynasty (China) in *Nanyang* (Southeast Asia). This theory states that when the Ming Dynasty ascended the throne in 1368 and made a policy of prohibiting foreign trade activities. This policy was caused by many Chinese trading communities that were stranded in the South Sea region, and increased in number after the shipping expedition of Admiral Cheng Ho in 1405-1435.

These stranded Chinese trading communities formed trading fleets, one of which was in the northern coastal areas of Java, namely in Gresik and Demak, because they could not return to China after the Cheng Ho expedition. Therefore, they organized trading activities with the aim of obtaining tribute to be sent to China and forming a trade network in the region (Reid, 2011).

Based on the explanation of the Ming Dynasty commercial shipping theory in the 15th century above, it can strengthen the researcher's assumption that there is a lack of historical evidence and information that can prove the existence of a Chinese trading community under the leadership of Cheng Ho who stopped and settled in the Lasem-Rembang area in the 15th century.

However, the researcher indicates that the Chinese trading community who settled in Gresik and Demak had formed a trade network in the North Coast of Java which then developed to the Lasem-Rembang area. This is the researcher's hypothesis about the spread and influence of the Chinese community in the area in the 15th century.

The process of Islamization in the Lasem area began in the 15th century, this resulted in the rulers of Lasem who were descendants of Dewi Indu and Raden Larang converting to Islam (Munandar, 2018). According to the *Carita Sejarah Lasem* (CSL), in the 14th century when

Lasem was part of Majapahit's territory, the religions practiced by Lasem residents were Hinduism and Buddhism. However, in the 15th century, when Prince Wiranagara was appointed as the Duke of Lasem to replace his father, Prince Wirabajra, who was the son of Prince Badranala and Princess Campa named Bi Nang Ti.

Prince Wiranagara had studied Islam in Ngampelgadhing since childhood. Then Pangeran Wiranagara married Princess Malokhah (Nyai Ageng Maloka) and became the son-in-law of Sunan Ngampelgadhing Maulana Rohmat. In 1401 Saka (1479 M) Prince Wiranagara died and the government of Lasem was led by Princess Malokhah (Nyai Ageng Maloka). During the leadership of Princess Malokhah (Nyai Ageng Maloka), the Bonang area was held by her younger brother Makdum Ibrahim (Sunan Bonang) who had the title Shunan Walinegara, a figure who spread Islam in Bonang, Lasem and Tuban (Kamzah, 1920).

The maritime routes along the north coast of Java before the construction of the Daendels Highway in the 15th century can be said to have similarities, especially in the spice trade and cross-cultural activities. The land or inland route was still difficult for traders to pass through and did not allow for cultural crossovers like in the coastal areas. In addition, the influence of Islamic domination, the use of Malay language and the arrival of ethnic Chinese or Chinese

and Europeans in the northern coastal area at that time became supporting factors for the process of cultural crossing to form a real coastal culture in Java (Lombard, 2005).

During this period, the Majapahit Kingdom and its successors weakened in terms of strength and power. Therefore, local kings could freely do anything that impacted the trade sector in Java. The number of trading activities between Nusantara traders, India, China, Arabia and other parties increased rapidly during this period. This resulted in several previously unknown coastal areas of Java developing into wealthy ports. Javanese traders were helped by the trading experience of Gujarati and Malay traders (Ricklefs, 2005).

The existence of Javanese and Malacca trade relations and activities. This was the beginning of the settlement of Gujarati and Malay traders in the northern coastal areas of Java. There are several ships of Gujarati and Malay traders made in Java, namely the Rembang (Lasem) area, an area of the north coast of Central Java adjacent to Tuban and Gresik. This area had a port or dock and experienced shipbuilders at that time (Vlekke, 2023).

The port of Lasem (Rembang) is mentioned in Tome Pires' *Suma Oriental* (1512-1515) that in 1513, Lasem (Rembang) helped Pati Unus of the Demak Kingdom to produce a fleet of warships to

fight the Portuguese in Malacca. There were 300 warships sent from Demak to Malacca. These ships were built in Lasem at Dasun Harbor (Corteseo & Rodrigues, 1944). The Dasun shipyard in Lasem was an important factor in the progress of the Demak Sultanate in the 16th century. The existence of this shipyard enabled Demak to mobilize a fleet of warships for both sea expeditions and war. Before Demak's sea power fell after fighting the Portuguese in Malacca, Demak had 40 junks or ships to carry food supplies in Malacca (Lapian, 2017).

In 1590 Lasem became an important shipbuilding center in the North Coast of Java. This was also supported by Lasem's geographical location near the best teak forests in Jepara. Therefore, part of the fleet of ships in Jepara was made in Lasem. This is reinforced by a report from the Dutch on the instructions of the Turks in Banten who stated that the galleys or ships of the Banten war fleet were made from Lasem, a port and shipyard located on the North Coast of Java and adjacent to the teak forest (Reid, 2011).

Later, during the reign of the Islamic Mataram Kingdom led by Sunan Amangkurat I in the 17th century, the Lasem region was under the rule of Tumenggung Pati. Amangkurat I sent Tumenggung Pati to build a ship in Lasem-Rembang in 1657 (Alisetyonugroho, 2021). This can prove that the shipbuilding

industry in Dasun Lasem-Rembang was very important, strategic and had economic value and its existence influenced the power of Demak to Islamic Mataram.

In 1671-1672, ships belonging to the Zheng Group from China sailed the South and North Seas of Java and anchored in the north coastal ports of Java, especially Lasem-Rembang, to repair their ships or junks (Salmon, 2020). Later, since the VOC conducted trading business in Java (Batavia), this increasingly attracted Chinese immigrants to come to Java, especially in 1683 after the fall of the Ming Dynasty (1368-644) (Winarni, 2009).

The first wave of Chinese immigration to the north coast of Java, especially Lasem-Rembang, was in 1679-1680, which caused many Chinese to leave Batavia. In 1693, there were around 122 Chinese in the Lasem-Rembang area at that time (Winarni, 2009). In 1740, when there were more and more Chinese immigrants in Batavia and Java, many Chinese people could not find work and were considered a threat to the VOC (Winarni, 2009).

Then there was a massacre and pursuit of ethnic Chinese in Batavia, known as the Geger Pecinan event. Therefore, the ethnic Chinese fled to the north coast of Java, one of which was Lasem-Rembang. When they arrived in Lasem, they were welcomed by Raden

Panji Margana and Oei Ing Kiat (Daradjadi, 2013).

Various opinions regarding the causes of the rebellion and massacre of ethnic Chinese in Batavia in the 18th century (*geger pecinan*) are believed to have originated from problems when the arrival of ethnic Chinese from China to Batavia was increasing in number within half a century. Then, the economic conditions in Batavia at that time weakened so that this strengthened problems such as uncontrolled population growth, increasing unemployment and high crime rates, especially among ethnic Chinese at that time (Rommelink, 2001).

According to the *Carita Sejarah Lasem* (CSL), Chinese refugees living in Lasem began to rebel in 1741 led by Raden Panji Margana and assisted by Tan Ke Wie, Babah Oei Ing Kiat or Raden Ngabehi Widyaningrat and Kiai Baidlawi (Kamzah, 1920). The alliance of Chinese troops and Lasem students was known as "Laskar Dampo Awang Lasem". This alliance of forces rebelled against the VOC and the Rembang legion. This rebellion is known as the Yellow War (Unjiya, 2014).

The battle lasted for three months and claimed many lives on both sides (Wijaya et al., 2023). Then in 1751 after the Yellow War, Lasem was fully controlled by the VOC, so that the areas of Rembang and Lasem were divided into Rembang Regency while Lasem was only a duchy and the implementation of its

government was under the authority of the Rembang Government (Munandar, 2018).

Ports in the north coast of Java, especially Lasem, each had different dynamics caused by the ebb and flow of trade, relations with inland areas and with maritime cities that were their rivals at that time (Lombard, 2005). This process of cultural crossing or assimilation and accommodation continued until the majority of the Javanese population, especially in the Lasem-Rembang area, had embraced Islam (Ricklefs, 2005).

Lasem Cross-Culture

The arrival of immigrant groups, especially in Lasem-Rembang, such as the Arab, Chinese and European communities who admired Javanese culture and even tried to imitate its style, so that they became Javanese in their development. This can be considered as the beginning of the process of cultural crossing or assimilation between Islam and the ancient Javanese, Chinese, and even European cultures that were strong at that time (Ricklefs, 2005).

Nowadays, Lasem is known and designated as a "Heritage City" considering that the largest sub-district city in Rembang Regency has many historical sites and relics (Wirya, 2018). Therefore, Lasem Subdistrict is known as a spatial space that bears witness to cross-cultural exchanges across generations. Seeing the social pluralism that exists in

Lasem such as the Arab, Chinese, Dutch (Europe), and Javanese communities who interact and exchange cultures with each other, this results in a mixed culture and signifies the cross-cultural process.

The results of the cross-cultural process in Lasem include: a); Marriage between Javanese and Chinese (Chinese) ethnicities in Lasem which formed Chinese-Javanese *peranakan* or *Sino Javanese*. b); Material Culture or architecture such as; Sunan Bonang's Pasujudan, Nyai Ageng Malokah's Tomb, Jami Baiturrahman Mosque, Islamic Boarding School, Chinatown residential area, Chinatown House, Gie Yong Bio Temple, Cu An Kiong Temple, Regol Harbor and Dasun Shipyard, and Chinese Cemetery. c); Batik of the three lands. d); Language and Dialect. e); Culinary.

a. Chinese and Javanese Marriage (*Sino Javanese*)

When Majapahit reigned, Lasem became a major city as well as a home for domestic and foreign travelers and traders. The decline of Majapahit did not make Lasem lose its visitors. Javanese residents and traders soon joined the Islamic network of the XV century. They not only embraced Islam but also gained Islamic political and trade networks. It was only natural that an Islamic Chinese couple, Bi Nang Un and Na Li Ni, felt comfortable and chose to settle in Lasem around 1413 (Aziz, 2014).

During the 15th to 18th centuries, Lasem became an important trading port

and dockyard area in the North Coast of Java. The strategic geographical location and the availability of natural resources such as water and teak wood made the port and shipyard always visited by various traders from outside the region, especially ethnic Chinese. In this period, the North Coast of Java was the only “trans-Java” trade route, which facilitated cultural exchange between various ethnicities through interactions or commercial relationships (Lombard, 2005).

One of the cultural interactions between Javanese and Chinese in Lasem can also be seen in social aspects such as mixed marriages. Mixed marriages between Javanese and Chinese ethnicities in Lasem not only bind the two families, but also combine cultural traditions and customs between them. This phenomenon results in a *Sino-Javanese* culture. Due to centuries of experiencing a process of cultural crossing with the Javanese ethnic group, one of which is through marriage, the Lasem Chinese ethnic group is physically no different from the physical characteristics of the Javanese ethnic group (Hadi, 2020).

Historically, the Chinese-Javanese or *Sino Javanese* played an important role in trade activities and even held political positions in the Javanese Kingdom, especially the Islamic Mataram. In the 17th century, Sultan Agung of Mataram appointed a Chinese merchant and courtier of Lasem regent Singawijaya

named Cik Go Ing as Regent of Lasem to replace Singawijaya as a reward for his services during the Islamic Mataram war against Surabaya in 1620-1625. Cik Go Ing was then given the Javanese name and title Tumenggung Mertaguna. Many of Cik Go Ing's descendants became Regents of Lasem as well as in other areas such as Tuban, Kudus, Blora and Bojonegoro who then allied themselves with Chinese-Javanese (*Sino Javanese*) *peranakan* families through marriage (Carey, 1984).

b. Material Culture in Lasem

The breath of Islam is increasingly embedded in the lives of the people of Lasem. Sunan Bonang managed to touch the hearts of the people. Today, the Lasem community preserves the traces of Sunan Bonang in Lasem, such as the Tomb and Pasujudan of Sunan Bonang. The traces of Islam in Lasem are even more evident when looking at the fact that Lasem is the sub-district with the most Islamic boarding schools in Central Java Province.

1) Pasujudan Sunan Bonang and the Tomb of Nyai Ageng Malokah in Lasem

There are archaeological remains of the Islamic period, one of which is the Pasujudan Sunan Bonang Site. Pasujudan Sunan Bonang is located in Alas Kemuning-Lasem, Rembang Regency. This Pasujudan site was used as a place of contemplation by Sunan

Bonang or Makdum Ibrahim in the past (Riyanto et al., 2020).



Figure 1. Sunan Bonang's Pasujudan (Source: Personal Documentation, 2024).

Sunan Bonang or Makdum Ibrahim was a figure who spread Islam in the Bonang, Lasem and Tuban areas in the 15th century who had the title Shunan Walinegara. He was the younger brother of Princess Malokhah (Nyai Ageng Maloka) a leader or duke of Lasem in 1479 (Kamzah, 1920). Sunan Bonang's influence in the Lasem and Bonang areas was very significant, especially in the process of Islamization in the 15th century. He successfully spread the influence of Islam and played an important role in the development of Islamic boarding schools in the area (Nurhajarini et al., 2015).

Archaeological remains that represent another period of Islamic development are the Nyai Ageng Malokah Tomb Site. The grave complex of Nyai Ageng Malokah is a burial area for figures spreading Islam in Lasem (Riyanto et al., 2020). According to the *Carita Sejarah Lasem* (CSL), Nyai Angeng Malokah or Putri

Malokah was the daughter of Maulana Rohmat Sunan Ngampelghading, and the older sister of Sunan Bonang or Makhdum Ibrahim. In addition, she was the wife of Pangeran Wiranagara, a Duke of Binangun who served for five years.

Nyai Ageng Malokah was appointed Duke of Binangun after the death of her husband Prince Wiranegara in 1479. She was given the title Sri Adipati Putri Malokhah. At the beginning of her reign, Putri Malokhah was assisted by Prince Santipuspa who served as an advisor. During her tenure as duke, she moved the *Dalem Kadipaten* from Binangun to Lasem. After that, Putri Malokhah ran the government in Lasem until her death at the age of 39 (Kamzah, 1920).

2) Lasem Jami Baiturrahman Mosque and Kyai Baidhlawi Cemetery Complex

Jami Baiturrahman Mosque is the oldest mosque in Lasem District, Rembang Regency, Central Java. This mosque was founded in 1588 on the pardikan land by Mbah Sambu or Sayid Abdurrahman Basyaiban. The pardikan land was given by the then Duke of Lasem, Tejakusuma I, to Mbah Sambu for his services in defeating a group of rioters who disturbed the stability of the Lasem government at that time (Hadi, 2020).



Figure 2. Masjid Jami Baiturrahman-Lasem (Source: Personal Documentation, 2024).



Figure 3. The Tomb of Kyai Baidhlawi (Source: Personal Documentation, 2024).

The Jami Baiturrahman Mosque in Lasem historically has a significant influence, especially in the Yellow-Lasem War in 1741 as a gathering place for santri troops and the announcement of war sabil *jihad fisabilillah* against the VOC after the Friday prayer which was imamed by Kyai Ali Baidhlawi (Kamzah, 1920). In the area of the Jami Baiturrahman Mosque, there is a cemetery complex for Islamic figures in Lasem, one of which is the Tomb of Mbah Sambu or Sayid Abdurrahman Sasyaiban and the Tomb of Kyai Baidhlawi (Atabik, 2016).

3) Chinatown and Chinese House Architecture

One of the Old Chinatown settlements in Lasem is located in Karang Turi Village (Kusdiwanggo et al., 2021).



Figure 4. Old Chinatown Settlement Complex Karang Turi-Lasem Village (Source: Personal Documentation, 2024).

The Chinese house is still intact with the characteristic kupu tarung door at the front gate and the tall and sturdy jedela. The altar table is neatly arranged in the front main room. Wells with round culverts located behind the house are also characteristic of Chinese houses (Wirya, 2018).



Figure 5. Front Door Gate of Chinese House-Karang Turi Lasem (Source: Personal Documentation, 2024).

According to Chinese belief, the gate has a meaning as a distributor of

good energy (chi) related to the health and well-being of the residents of the house, therefore it is not uncommon for this gate to be equipped with a pair of lion statues as guards. The gate leaf also has a knocker made of iron in the shape of a circle. The two leaves of the gate are colored in a certain color as a manifestation of goodness. In addition, the more beautiful and larger the gate, the higher the social status of the resident of the house (Kusdiwanggo et al., 2021).



Figure 6. The roof of the Lasem Chinatown Han House.
(Source: Personal Documentation, 2024).

One of the architectural characteristics of Chinese houses in Lasem is the shape of the roof. The roof of a Chinese house is in the form of a gable roof with an upward curved tip and this roof model is called the Ngang Shan model (Sudarwani, 2019). In addition, the roof of the Chinese-Lasem house is also decorated with ornaments that function to protect the roof from the sun and rain. At the end of the roof bubugan, it is finished

with a speck in the shape of a swallow's tail or a lotus flower stem which symbolizes happiness and prosperity (Kusdiwanggo et al., 2021).

4) Gie Yong Bio and Cu An Kiong Temple

Javanese-Chinese social harmony was further cemented when the dominance of the Dutch Trading Company became more widespread, especially after the defeat of the Yellow War that took place in 1740-1743. The war took place not only in Lasem but also throughout Java. Uniquely in Lasem, the defeat further strengthened Chinese and Javanese relations.

Raden Panji Margono (Java), who was supposed to be the Duke of Lasem, gave his position to Oei Ing Kiat. He realized that only Oei could counterbalance the Dutch forces. Oei was seen as understanding the war strategy and territoriality of Lasem. From the Javanese-Islamic side, Kiai Baidlawi assisted in the war and mobilized social capital from the Kia-Santri alliance (Wijaya et al., 2023). The harmony of their struggle is immortalized in historical dioramas at the Gie Yong Bio Temple and Cu An Kiong Temple.



Figure 7. Gie Yong Bio Temple
(Source: Personal Documentation, 2024).



Figure 8. Panji Margana statue at the Gie Yong Bio
(Source: Personal Documentation, 2024).

There is a statue of Panji Margana in the Gie Yong Bio-Lasem Temple as a form of respect by the extended family of people of Chinese descent (China) for the three Lasem fighters in the Yellow War in 1740-1743 who were nicknamed *Janget Kinatelon* namely Panji Margana, Oey Ing Kyat, Tan Kie Wie (Atabik, 2016; Kamzah, 1920).

Cu An Kiong Temple is the oldest temple in Lasem which was built in 1838 on the initiative of Kapitan Lin Changling (Ayuningrum, 2017). Near the temple, there is a Diorama monument of the Yellow War-Lasem

1740-1743 as a reminder of the struggle of Lasem's ethnic Javanese and ethnic Chinese alliance against the VOC during the Yellow War in the 18th century. This monument is also considered a symbol of harmonization and tolerance between Javanese and Chinese in Lasem (Mahmudi, 2020).

5) Regol Port and Dasun Shipyard

Lasem is historically known as a famous trading port and shipyard area since the 14th century during the Majapahit rule, namely the Kaering and Regol ports and the shipyard at Dasun (Alisetyonugroho, 2021; Munandar, 2018).



Figure 9. Ancient boat site-Punjulhardjo
(Source: Personal Documentation, 2024).

Lasem is also known for its shipbuilding and shipyards. Knowledge of boat and shipbuilding in Lasem is thought to have developed in the 7th century as evidenced by the discovery of archaeological objects of Ancient Boats in Punjulhardjo in 2008 (Pratama & Merina, 2023). In the period from the 15th century to the 17th century, Lasem shipyards and ports were increasingly recognized

and influential in their existence, especially shipyards in Dasun. One proof is that in 1590, the shipyard in Lasem became an important shipbuilding center at that time (Reid, 2011).

6) Chinese Cemetery



Figure 10. Tan Sin Ko Tomb
(Source: Personal Documentation, 2024).

Tan Sin Ko Cemetery is one of the Chinese cemeteries in Lasem. This Chinese tomb is located in the middle of a rice field area. Tan Sin Ko was one of the warlords who led an alliance of Javanese and Chinese troops in the Yellow War in the 18th century.

c. Batik

The arrival of Europeans as rulers who formed imperialism and colonialism on the island of Java resulted in a process of meeting two cultures, namely western culture (Europe), and East (AsiaNusantara). These two cultures are each supported by different ethnicities and have different social structures which are then assimilated or acculturated to produce new cultures and identities (Soekiman, 2011).

Likewise in Lasem, when the Dutch domination did not necessarily make Lasem residents anti-colonizers. They concocted a wastra, Batik Tiga Negeri, whose colors reflect the harmony of the three ethnicities. The red color represents Chinese culture. If the brown (soga) color depicts Javanese culture, then the blue color depicts European culture.

In 1870, batik production had a significant development as a contribution of Chinese traders, and at the turn of the century the written and stamped batik business was experiencing a heyday (Elliot, 2013). According to Kwan Hwie Liong, the daughter of Bi Nang Un is said to be a pioneer in making batik cloth in Lasem (Wei & others, 2016).

Batik in Lasem has its own characteristics by presenting the colors of the three ethnicities that settled there. The bright red color known as “abang getih pitik” or chicken blood red is inspired by the red color in Chinese tradition (Perdana, 2012). This color symbolizes luck, prosperity, and describes Chinese culture.

Furthermore, the brown color (*sogan*) is adapted from Javanese culture. Javanese batik generally has geometric patterns and natural motifs such as plants, leaves and birds. In Lasem batik, these motifs are not lost, but combined with Chinese elements. Examples of Javanese motifs that are often used are *sekar jagad*, *mega mendung*, or *kawung* motifs,

which contain the philosophy of harmony and order in life.



Figure 11. Batik Tiga Negeri Lasem
(Source: Personal Documentation, 2024).

The blue color (indigo) found in lasem batik depicts the Netherlands. Lasem batik motifs have their own characteristics, some of which come from the original Lasem residents, some come from the acculturation of Chinese culture. Tan (1981) confirms that typical Chinese motifs can be seen in the images of Hong birds, Kilin, Liong, Goldfish, and partridges. In addition, there are also other batik motifs such as *latohan*, which is a small circle motif; *watu pecah*, shaped like broken pebbles inspired by development during the Dutch colonial period; *gunung ringgit*, which is a mountain image inspired by *gunungan* in puppetry.

The uniqueness of Lasem batik lies not only in the motifs, but also in the use of colors and manufacturing techniques. Lasem is known as one of the batik centers with unique natural dyeing techniques, especially in the use of red and blue colors. Red is produced from natural dyes derived from *mengkudu* root,

while blue is obtained from indigo leaves (Ishwara et al., 2011). The combination of these two colors, along with other colors, produces a soft yet strong gradation, showcasing the skill of Lasem batik artisans in creating high-quality batik.

d. Language (Dialect)

One of the most prominent results of cross-cultural encounters in Lasem is the incorporation of elements of Hokkien (Fújiàn) and Cantonese into the daily language of the community. The Chinese community in Lasem, which has been settled since the 14th century, brought with them their language, which was then mixed with Javanese. For example, many words of Chinese origin became part of the local vocabulary, especially in the context of trade, cuisine and daily life. Some examples of loan words such as “*hauce*” (meaning delicious), “*goceng*” (five thousand), “*ceban*” (one thousand) are still in use today.

In addition, in everyday language, especially among the Chinese community in Lasem, there is a unique mixture of Hokkien dialect and Javanese language structures. This results in a kind of linguistic *creole* that adds to the richness of language variation in Lasem. The known dialects of the Lasem community are as follows:

- a) *em/-nem= mu* (Indonesian language). *Nggonem/Nggonanem= Yours*; (the “e” in *em* is read like

the “e” in boat or Tuesday)
(Nurhajarini, et al., 2015).

- b) leh = toh (Indonesian language).
Example: *Piye leh iki?* = How is it
Sampeyan ape ning ndi leh? = You
want/will go where toh? (the letter
“e” in the word ape is read like the
“e” in the word tempe or cafe)
- c) ugung/gung (Java language:
durung) = not yet (Indonesian
language). Example: *Aku ugung
mangan/Aku gung mangan* = I
haven’t eaten yet, and many more
(Nurhajarini et al., 2015).

The cross-cultural process in Lasem has resulted in a rich language mix. At the market or in homes, people will speak a mixture of Javanese with inserts of Chinese, Arabic or even Dutch words. This phenomenon does not only occur among people of Chinese descent, but also among the local Javanese population. This process of linguistic assimilation shows how the language in Lasem developed through mixing and adaptation.

e. Culinary

Culinary culture was also affected by the arrival of the Chinese and Dutch communities. One of the most famous results of this cultural crossing is the dish Lontong (Astuti et al., 2019). Lontong tuyuhan has become a culinary icon of Lasem. It is said to be the food of the Yellow War fighters.



Figure 12. Typical Lasem Lontong Tuyuhan Culinary
(Source: Personal Documentation, 2024).

Then besides culinary, there is a typical Lasem drink called Kawista Syrup. This drink is a typical souvenir of Lasem Rembang. This syrup is made from processed kawista fruit processed with water and sugar. Therefore, the taste of kawista syrup is sweet like cola, so locals usually call this drink *cola van java* (Bakhtiar & Haryanto, 2018).



Figure 13. Kawista syrup, a typical Lasem drink
(Source: Personal Documentation, 2024).

The result of cultural crossovers in Lasem can be seen not only in the ingredients and flavors, but also in the way food and beverages are cooked, made and served. Many Chinese cooking techniques, such as steaming, stir-frying

and grilling, were adapted into Lasem cuisine.

CONCLUSION

This research shows that Lasem acts as a pivotal point in the crossing of global cultures in Southeast Asia, particularly in the archipelago. The interaction between Chinese, Javanese, Arabic and European cultures in Lasem has created a unique and dynamic local identity, which is reflected in the architecture, art, language and traditions of the local community. Through a historical and ethnographic approach, this research reveals that the process of cultural assimilation in Lasem not only enriches the socio-cultural life of the community, but also contributes to the dynamics of Indonesian culture more broadly.

However, urbanization and globalization have brought their own challenges to Lasem in maintaining its cultural heritage. This challenge encourages local communities to take the initiative in preserving their rich history, so that Lasem remains a symbol of cultural diversity and unity. This research offers important insights into how cultural crossovers can shape strong and sustainable local identities, and serves as an example for cultural preservation efforts in the modern era.

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