

## Cultural Acculturation Study of Visual Form of Facades and Spatial Organization of Glodok's Shophouses, Jakarta Barat, Indonesia

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**Abstract.** Ethnic Chinese is ethnic that can preserve their culture from foreign influence from time to time. China has undergone several diasporas, leading to many ethnic Chinese that we can see in various countries today, including Indonesia. The Chinese immigrants then lived together in an area called 'Chinese town' or, in Indonesian, called 'pecinan,' whose shophouse (Rumah Toko) is the town's landmark. It asks how the architecture and interior of the shophouse in Chinatown in Indonesia (one of the Dutch colonies) were shaped and how the cultural acculturation happened in this historic building. This research is trying to study the cultural acculturation of the shophouse in one of the famous Chinatowns in Indonesia, Pecinan Glodok, in the visual form of facades and spatial organization. This research uses a comparative method by analyzing the details of every sample with the variable contrary to cultural acculturation. The study's results reveal the cultural acculturation in the visual form of the facade and the organization of the Pecinan Glodok shophouse from Dutch, Chinese, and Betawi cultures on each building element.

Keywords: *cultural acculturation, chinatown, shophouse*

### 1. Introduction

A shophouse (*Rumah Toko/Ruko*) is a two or three-story building that extends backwards with a width of about 3-5 meters facing the road. The shophouse can be regarded as a landmark in Chinatown (Roesli and Rachmayanti, 2014). This type of house can be found in China and Southeast Asia, especially in multicultural commercial cities (Han and Beisi, 2015). This building illustrates the influence of Chinese, Malay, Indian and European styles that blend with local.

One of the frequently heard Chinatowns in Indonesia is Glodok. Glodok is a well-known Chinatown in Jakarta and the largest in Indonesia. At first, this place consisted of Chinese immigrants that the Dutch Government grouped in 1740 to ease the control after the massacre of ethnic Chinese by the Dutch Government at that time (Fatimah, 2014). Then a bustling market arose in this area, making this place a trading centre for approximately two centuries in Jakarta. Glodok is the oldest community in Jakarta that still exists and has shaped the city since the era of Batavia in Indonesia; it can be called a 'living museum'.

Glodok has a high potency to be a tourist town regarding its unique cultural history. Unfortunately, now, little to see visual architecture in Glodok that reserve a Chinese detail (Purwantiangning, Mauliani and Aqli, 2012). A historical culture in the appliance of visual culture has faded and is substituted with a new modern piece. A visual culture comprehension is needed to revitalize and rebuild that can be used in making a tourist area.

Moughtin (1992) explains that the facade is crucial in showing the visual experiment's richness to the viewer or the observer. A facade as a visual form that reflects a town's culture

is essential to develop the region's identity. The hierarchy of the folk is also usually shown by their house's facade to show their social status to the people. The culture also influences the forming of the spatial organization of the building, where the humans construct their building by looking at the owner's activities and behaviour. Moreover, the spatial organization as one of the architecture's aspects in the building is formed by the cultural design of the owner. Therefore, this study focuses on how cultural acculturation occurs in the visual form of the facade and spatial organization of the shophouse in Glodok, West Jakarta.

## 2. Methods

The research uses qualitative research methods by looking at the cultural acculturation in the shophouse in Glodok, West Jakarta, on the visual form of the facade and spatial organization. The study tries to answer the issue using the comparative method to compare variables of two or more populations, a sample or a time or all (Sugiyono, 2018).


Primary and secondary data were taken as the source to complete this research. Preliminary data were taken by direct field observations in Glodok and its surroundings using a purposive sampling technique. The criteria needed to be fulfilled for the primary facade data to be taken: the building is in good condition, can be examined and was estimated to have been built during the Dutch colonial era. On the other hand, the criteria for primary spatial organization data are: in good condition, can be examined with clear evidence, an inhabited building of Chinese descent, and was estimated to have been built during the Dutch colonial era. At the same time, the secondary data is taken from trusted websites and literature studies. The facade samples were taken from old digitized photographs and the archives of the Dutch institute on its official websites.

## 3. Discussion

### 3.1. Facades

Facades are studied by old photos found in Dutch archives and field surveys by capturing buildings that still maintain their cultural characteristics in their building detail. The portrait can be seen in Table 3.1 below.

Table 3.1. Photographs of shophouses in Glodok (Author, 2022)

No	Images	Descriptions
1		<p><b>Title:</b> <i>Chinese woningen te Batavia circa 1875</i> (Chinese house in Batavia around 1875) <b>Year:</b> 1875 <b>Source:</b> <i>Nationaal Museum van Wereldculturen</i></p>

2



**Title:** Chinese kamp te Batavia (Chinese Camp in Batavia)  
**Year:** 1900  
**Source:** *Leiden University Libraries*, Leiden, Netherland

3



**Title:** Chinese kamp te Batavia (Chinese Camp in Batavia)  
**Year:** 1920  
**Source:** *Leiden University Libraries*, Leiden, Netherland

4



**Title:** *Gracht in Chinese wijk (Glodok) in Benedenstad Batavia* (Canal in Chinese Quarter (Glodok) in Lower Town Batavia)  
**Year:** 1946  
**Source:** *Nationaal Archief*, instansi arsip nasional Belanda.

5



**Location:** Toko Tiga Sebrang Street, Glodok  
**Year:** 2021  
**Source:** Field survey

6



**Location:** Toko Tiga Street, Tambora  
**Year:** 2021  
**Source:** Field survey

7		<p><b>Location:</b> Toko Tiga Street, Tambora <b>Year:</b> 2022 <b>Source:</b> Field survey</p>
8		<p><b>Location:</b> Kemenangan Raya Street, Glodok <b>Year:</b> 2022 <b>Source:</b> Field survey</p>
9		<p><b>Location:</b> Kemurnian I Street, Glodok <b>Year:</b> 2022 <b>Source:</b> Field survey</p>
10		<p><b>Location:</b> Kemenangan Raya Street, Glodok <b>Year:</b> 2022 <b>Source:</b> Field survey</p>

The cultural acculturation in the visual form of Glodok's shophouses is divided into five characteristics depending on each culture. The characteristics are the roof, balcony railing, and door window.

Almost all the pictures show a feature characteristic on their roof that offers one of the traditional Chinese roof styles, overhanging gable roof (Figure 3.1). They use this kind of roof because the shophouse in Glodok is permanently attached to the house next door, so this type of roof can make it more efficient than other Chinese roof types (Julianto, 2008). This application roof allows rainwater to flow to the front and back of the house without disturbing the other buildings. Implementing a Chinese type of roof in the building clarifies the urge of Chinese immigrants in Indonesia that wanted to show off their identity as ethnic Chinese.



Figure 3.1. (left) Photographs of Glodok's shophouses roof (right top) overhanging gable roof, one of the Chinese roof types in the Qing and Ming Dynasty (Huo et al., 2020) and (right bottom) Qiao's family Grand Courtyard roof with an overhanging gable roof ([http://en.chinaculture.org/chineseaway/2014-04/30/content\\_524082.htm](http://en.chinaculture.org/chineseaway/2014-04/30/content_524082.htm))

The exciting thing about the roof in Glodok's shophouse is the addition of the western style found in pictures 4 and 8. This addition is located at the front gable wall and covers the roof. The additional models can be seen in Figure 3.3, as illustrated by the writer, showing varieties of forms that resemble the western architectural style in the Dutch buildings in Indonesia in that era. These forms adopt the neo-classical style, which is symmetry, and firm shape, and use simpler geometry than ornaments. This case points out that some ethnic Chinese in Indonesia preferred to apply the western style in their house to show their identity. These forms can be found in colonial buildings in Batavia, such as Fatahillah Museum in Jakarta and several other colonial buildings in Kota Tua, Jakarta, which was once a Dutch-made city.



Figure 3.2. (top) Photographs of the front gable wall in GLodok's shophouses (bottom left) A Gable wall in Fathilah Museum ([https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Museum\\_Fatahillah\\_%28Museum\\_Sejarah\\_Jakarta%29.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Museum_Fatahillah_%28Museum_Sejarah_Jakarta%29.jpg)), and (bottom right) a gable wall in Wayang Museum that can be found in a colonial building in Jakarta ([www.mitramuseumjakarta.org/wayang](http://www.mitramuseumjakarta.org/wayang))

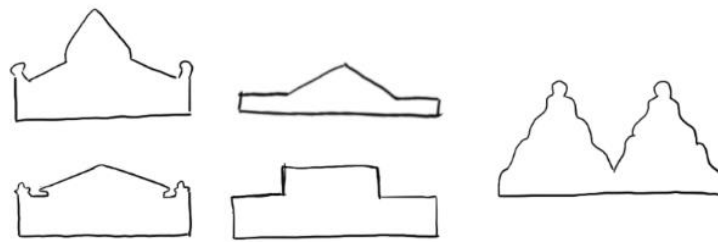


Figure 3.3. Neo-classical influence models at the front gable wall in Glodok's shophouses facades (Author, 2022)

Another similarity in almost every sample facade is that practically every shophouse in Glodok is a two- to the three-story building, with/without a balcony railing on the second/third floor. The fence on the balconies in every shophouse shows an interesting pattern showing the different cultural identities in every building. Betawi, western style, and undoubtedly Chinese pattern can be seen in the balconies railing in pictures 1, 3, 6, and 7.

Pictures 1 and 3 explicitly reveal the pattern of the balcony railing of a shophouse in Chinatown Batavia that figured the Chinese pattern with geometric motifs using wood and iron could be found in Chinese vernacular architecture. The Chinese lattice design has an interesting mathematical art structure and can also be found in Far East countries (Figure 3.4). Some patterns also have a small, simple pattern surrounded by cement which can be found in Chinese vernacular buildings in pictures 2 and 3.

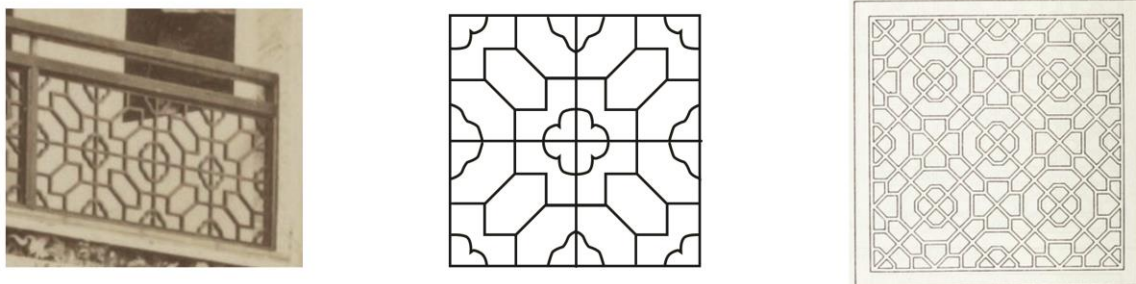


Figure 3.4. (left) Balcony railing in picture 1 that showing a Chinese pattern (middle) redrawing of the balcony railing pattern in picture 1 (Author, 2023) (right) One of the Chinese lattice designs in China similar to the pattern in picture 1 (Dye, 1974)

Furthermore, several balcony railing patterns in Glodok's shophouse also show a western influence that can be seen in picture 7 with a model called 'Balauster,' originating from the renaissance era in Europe. Meyer (1920) describes the shape of a 'Balauster' as a 'small squat columns of circular or square plan' with a symmetrical shape. Picture 7 shows a blue 'Balauster,' matched with the colour of the door and window of the building.

According to G. Liu (1989), the concept of symmetrical spatial organization, or axial planning, is one of Chinese architectural spatial planning. Symmetrical and orthogonal concepts on the floorplan and section of the architecture are the attribute of Chinese architecture as the local cosmology. The hall or courtyard is placed along a longitudinal axis or walkway in an

orthogonal series. The courtyard separates the rooms in the house, becoming the main area in the entire house composition. The longitudinal axis works as the primary axis, while the horizontal axis works as the secondary axis. On occasions, the formation has only one axis or none at all.

In contrast to Chinese vernacular architecture, Glodok's shophouse architecture emphasizes the concept of axial planning on its facade, not in the spatial arrangement of the building. The narrowness of the architecture of the shophouse because of the policy of the Dutch government leads to this syncretism, resulting in the side orientation in the spatial arrangement. The symmetrical characteristic of Glodok's shophouse facade can be seen in pictures 1, 3, 5, 6, and 7. The door is located in the middle, while the windows in the side of the door, showing the symmetric characteristic in the horizontal axis (Figure 3.5). According to Chinese beliefs, the openings on the facade (window-door window) indicate the symbol of good luck. Chinese people believe that odd numbers bring luck, while the number 4 is unlucky because four in the Chinese language means 'death.'



Figure 3.5. (top left) One of the façade photos of Glodok's shophouses (top right) A shophouse façade sketch showing its axis horizontally (Author, 2022) (bottom) Chen Clan Ancestor Hall façade in Guangzhou, China showing a symmetrical shape affecting Glodok's shophouses ([https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Guangzhou\\_Chen\\_Clan\\_Ancestral\\_Hall.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Guangzhou_Chen_Clan_Ancestral_Hall.jpg))

*Krepyak* is the most used door and window model in Betawi's vernacular architecture. It is made up of boards and has two leaf doors also an air vent on top of it. The leaf door has a rectangular shape with a louvered board, made up of thin straight panels, arranged with slanted positions inside the leaf. The arrangement makes the air entering the building easier through the opening, resulting in good air circulation (Sudarwani *et al.*, 2021) (Figure 3.6).

As in Betawi culture, *Krepyak* can be seen in picture 9 on the building's door and picture 10 on its windows. The tropical climate in Indonesia leads to this window's application in Chinese immigrant shophouses, which allows the air to enter easily and cools the building. To conclude, this case proves that natural factors cause the acculturation in Glodok's shophouse to survive as locals do



Figure 3.6. (Top left) Façade Photos 9 with Krepyak door (top right) Façade Photos 10 with Krepyak window as in Betawi façade (bottom) A traditional Betawi façade at Lenggang Jakarta with Krepyak window and door model proofing that some of Glodok's shophouses façade apply Betawi visual acculturation (<https://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2017/10/09/jakarta-owned-hotel-to-undergo-renovation-ahead-of-asian-games.html>)

To summarize, the cultural acculturation in the visual form of Glodok's shophouse façade can be concluded in Figure 3.7.



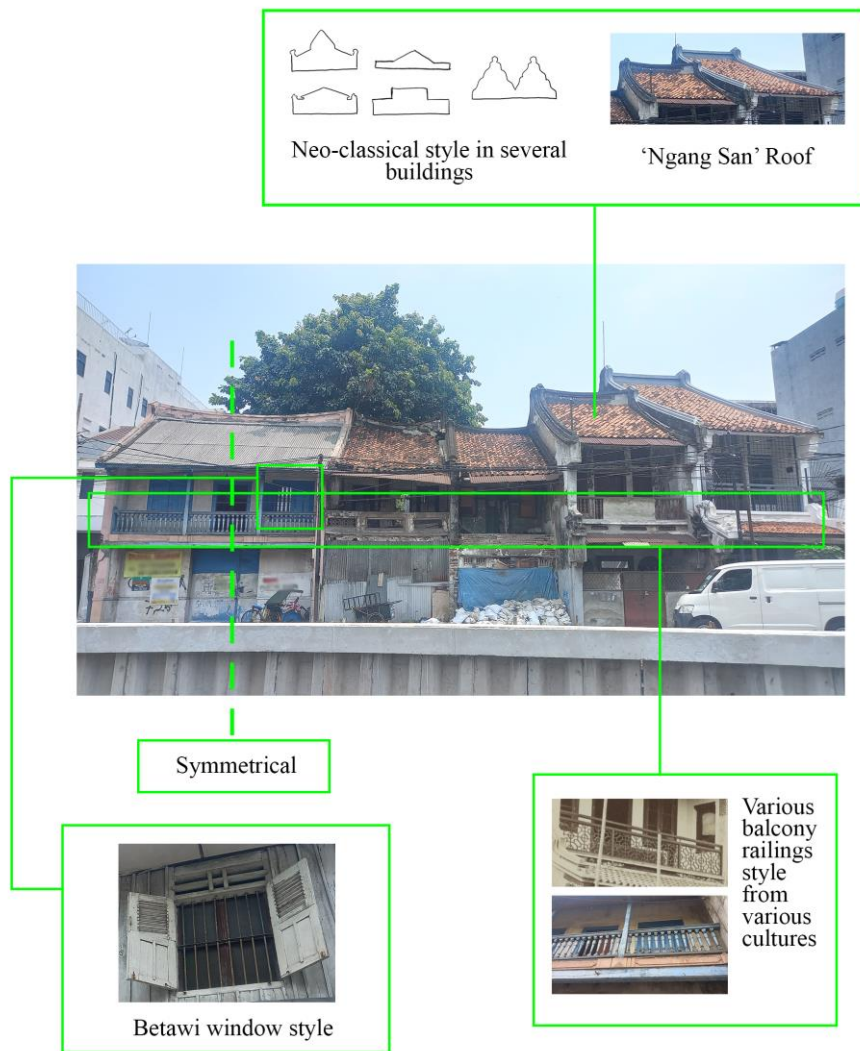


Figure 3.7. The cultural acculturation of the visual form of Glodok's shophouse façade (Author, 2022)

### 3.2. Spatial Organization

The spatial organization study of Glodok's shophouse is taken from three samples of spatial organization in Glodok. These samples can be seen in Table 3.2.

Table 3.2. Samples of Glodok's Shophouses Spatial Organization; 1 = Bathroom, 2 = Kitchen, 3 = Dining room, 4 = Bedroom, 5 = Living room, 6 = Terrace, 7 = Family Room, 8 = Balcony, 9 = Utility Area, and 10 = Shop Area (Author, 2022)

No	Sample	Descriptions
1	 <p>FIRST FLOOR    SECOND FLOOR    THIRD FLOOR</p>	<p><b>Owner:</b> Liong Kok Chung  <b>Location:</b> South Pasar Glodok Street II 15, Glodok, Taman Sari  <b>Year:</b> 2021  <b>Source:</b> Field survey</p>
2	 <p>FIRST FLOOR    SECOND FLOOR</p>	<p><b>Owner:</b> Nini  <b>Location:</b> Kemenangan Street Gang II 30, Glodok, Taman Sari  <b>Year:</b> 2021  <b>Source:</b> Field survey</p>
3	 <p>THIRD FLOOR    SECOND FLOOR    FIRST FLOOR</p>	<p><b>Owner:</b> Baeng (Santoso Kurniadi)  <b>Location:</b> West Pasar Glodok Street 57, Glodok, Taman Sari  <b>Year:</b> 2021  <b>Source:</b> Field survey</p>

The sample is then characterized as a prototype in Figure 3.8 to reflect the whole sample. The prototype shows a floorplan of a one-story building with a shop/ living room in the front of the building, then goes to the hallway and bedroom, then the kitchen and toilet at the back of the building. The front room can be told as a public space, and then the middle to the end of the construction works as a private space, while the semi-public area is usually located on the second floor (usually a family room). Moreover, the circulation of human movement is oriented on the hallway, which is always located at the side of the building.

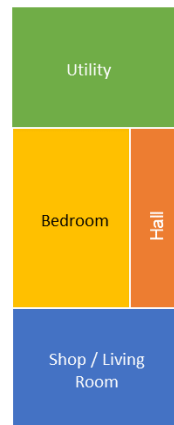


Figure 3.8. A prototype of Glodok's shophouses (Author, 2022)

At first glance, the spatial organization of Glodok's shophouse reflects the form of the western city house. The Amsterdam canal houses are used as a comparison for this research, as we know that this building represents the houses that the Dutch planned to build in Batavia.

Canal houses/ grachtspan is a 3-5 meters wide house that faces the canal or artificial water channel. The narrow building with a basement and attic as a storage place and steep stairs are the icons of the Amsterdam canal house. The ground floor is usually used to welcome guests and also the workplace. The second floor is a private space or bedroom, while the third floor works as a place for staff (Canno, 2016). In the 14th century, some canal houses were extended to the back, sometimes to the backyard. This extended building is called *achterhuis*, while the front building is called *voorhuis*. Amsterdam canal house is a result of the golden era of the Dutch in the 17th century, which made Amsterdam a port and capital city of the Dutch that was always crowded with merchants.

The spatial composition of Amsterdam Canal House and Glodok's shophouse shows a significant similarity. One of the striking similarities is the existence of a narrow dark alley about one meter wide adjoining the wall with bedrooms on either side (Figure 3.9). This hall is used as a circulation system from the front of the house (shop area or living room) to the back of the house (kitchen or toilet). The hallway is parallel to the house's entrance, facilitating human articulation.

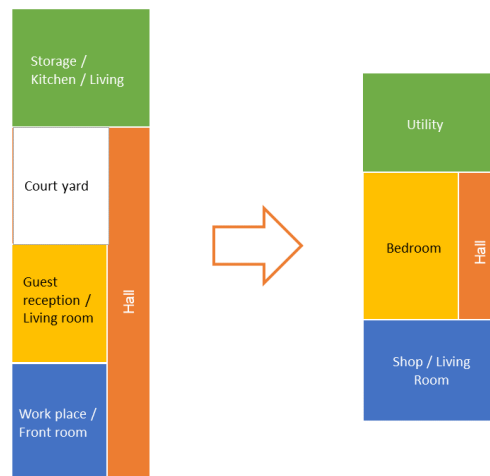


Figure 3.9. The transformation of Amsterdam Canal House (based on (Canno, 2016)) to Glodok' shophouse (Author, 2022)

In his book, 'Chinese Residences, Youyi (n.d.) describes the spatial organization of Chinese vernacular architecture focused on the courtyard. The spatial organization of Chinese architecture is focused on the 'inner court,' usually called the 'courtyard,' as Confucius believed. As the Chinese usually believed, Feng Shui creates a small world for its residents as a private space. Qi (breath) is exposed to the void as a reflection of the building in houses. A geometric simple spatial organization then shows a rectangular courtyard. All the buildings on the first floor, large or small, are built with specific rules around the courtyard, with the most important buildings in the back of the site. The courtyard, the core of every activity, is also a social place, while the reception area around the courtyard is private.

Surprisingly, the concept focusing on the courtyard in Chinese architecture is not implemented in Glodok's shophouse. Deculturation occurs because of some factors. The main factor is the city's limited space and the influence of the western 'city house' architectural style. The necessity to survive in a foreign nation is also one of the factors that cause deculturation to happen, as the concept of glorious in Chinese architecture would be hard to be implemented in the bustling city of Batavia. However, the courtyard-centred concept in Chinese architecture can be seen in one of the old cities in Central Java, Lasem City.

According to an interview with Liong Kok Chung (2022), one of the RT heads in Glodok, Glodok's shophouse had a small courtyard like the shophouse in Singapore (Figure 3.10). However, this shophouse can no longer be found in Glodok because almost all of the shophouses have been renovated into modern houses. The mingling of ethnic Chinese in Indonesia with locals and their indifference caused this deculturation.

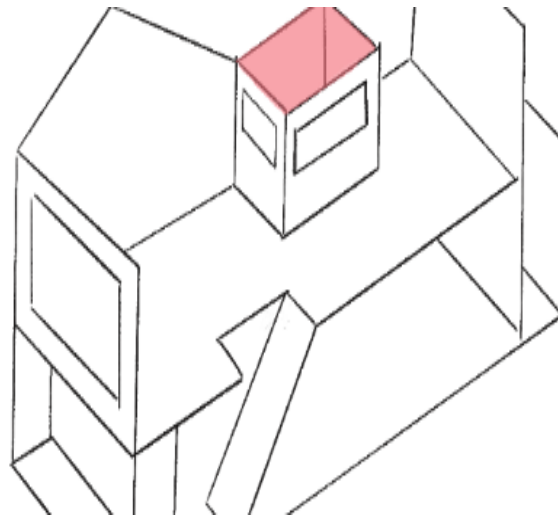


Figure 3.10. A Shophouse with a Courtyard That Can be Found in Singapore (Author, 2022)

Putri and Panjaitan (2013) explain several characteristics of spatial organization in Betawi architecture are

1. orientation is based on practical reasons and no Feng Shui application.
2. has a symmetrical inclination which an axis in the middle and is usually used as the central circulation in the building while other rooms on its side,
3. divided into three areas: the front room (public), the middle room (private), and the back room (service).

One of the interrelated characteristics of Betawi and Glodok's shophouse's spatial organization is the zoning arrangement which is divided into three different parts, where Glodok's shophouse always starts with a public area, such as a shop/ living room, then goes to a more private room or bedroom, then towards the back as the service room, such as the toilet and kitchen. Besides that, the Glodok shophouse's spatial organization does not signify other Betawi characteristics other than the facade. This case is consistent with the fact that ethnic Chinese preferred to apply Dutch culture rather than the locals during the Dutch colonial era. Thus, it has a high chance of being the reason why local elements were not too acculturated in Glodok's shophouse.

It can be underlined that the spatial organization of Glodok's shophouse is experiencing a rapid fading of culture towards modernity. The prominent culture of using the courtyard, which is thought to be still stored in Chinese architecture, has faded away. This research proves the fading culture of Glodok's shophouse to modernization. As Purwantiasning, Mauliani and Aqli (2012) state, Glodok Chinatown constantly changes according to the needs of its residents and the needs of space and style.

#### 4. Conclusion

The visual form of the facade and spatial organization of Glodok's shophouse shows significant acculturation on its facade. In contrast, its spatial organization does not indicate a bold cultural mix but a tendency to western style. Chinese, western and Betawi cultures are seen in the visual forms of shophouse facades, such as the roof, style, balcony railings, and apertures, with different applications in every house. The spatial organization of Glodok's shophouses resembles the 'city house' model of Amsterdam canal houses, attesting to the inclination towards western culture due to the limited area in Batavia during the Dutch colonial era and caused the magnificent Chinese architecture seems unsuitable to be applied

in the central city. Cultural fading also occurs due to modernization factors where people put the functional aspects up rather than cultural ones.

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