

## **REVITALISASI KOMPLEKS SITUS BANTEN LAMA: MENANGANI WARISAN KOTA ISLAM DI INDONESIA**

### ***REVITALIZATION OF THE BANTEN LAMA SITE COMPLEX: ADDRESSING THE HERITAGE OF AN ISLAMIC CITY IN INDONESIA***

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#### **ABSTRAK**

Banten merupakan salah satu pelabuhan terkemuka di Asia Tenggara pada abad XVII, namun sejak awal abad XIX kota tersebut kehilangan fungsi utama dan hanya menyisakan runtuh bangunan penting di situs Banten Lama. Selama hampir tiga dekade, pemerintah telah membangun fasilitas publik tetapi hasilnya belum optimal bagi pemanfaatan cagar budaya. Kajian ini ditujukan untuk memahami kebijakan pelestarian cagar budaya dan kaitannya dengan program revitalisasi situs Banten Lama. Untuk menjawab permasalahan tersebut, pengumpulan data kepustakaan dan observasi lapangan telah dilakukan di situs Banten Lama. Dengan menggunakan metode deskriptif-analisis, kebijakan pelestarian cagar budaya baik secara nasional maupun daerah akan dianalisis dan diperbandingkan satu dan lainnya. Analisis arkeologi dan sejarah terhadap situs perkotaan, bangunan, struktur, dan objek warisan budaya lain seperti istana, benteng, masjid, pemukiman, dan kanal di Banten Lama menegaskan penerapan kebijakan ini. Kajian ini diharapkan menghasilkan faktor dominan yang menginspirasi penerapan *Cultural Resource Management* (CRM) sebagaimana diterapkan pada situs arkeologi di Indonesia. Dengan pengelolaan situs secara lintas-sector, model CRM memungkinkan menjadi pedoman standard bagi pengembangan dan pemanfaatan berkesinambungan situs arkeologi di Banten Lama.

**Kata kunci:** Banten Lama, situs arkeologi, revitalisasi, konservasi, CRM

#### **ABSTRACT**

*Banten was one of the leading port cities in Southeast Asia in the 17<sup>th</sup> centuries. However, since the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, the city has lost its primary function, leaving only the ruins of various important buildings at the Banten Lama archaeological site. For nearly three decades, the government has built public facilities, but the results have not been optimal for the utilization of cultural heritage. This study aims to understand cultural heritage preservation policies and their relationship to the revitalization program of the Banten Lama area. To address this issue, library data collection and field observations have been conducted at the Banten Lama site. Using descriptive-analytical methods, cultural heritage preservation policies at both the national and regional levels will be analyzed and compared with each other. Archaeological and historical analysis of urban sites, buildings, structures and other cultural objects such as palaces, fortifications, mosques, settlements and canals in Banten Lama confirms the implementation of this policy.. This study is expected to produce dominant factors that will inspire the implementation of Cultural Resource Management,*

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*as has been applied to several archaeological sites in Indonesia. With cross-sectoral site management, the CRM model can become a standard guideline for the sustainable development and utilization of the archaeological site of Banten Lama.*

**Keywords:** *Banten Lama, archaeological site, revitalization, conservation, CRM*

## INTRODUCTION

The historic Banten Sultanate has left valuable evidence in what is now known as Banten Lama, located in Banten Province, Indonesia. Most of the archaeological evidence consists of brick and coral walls and foundations, along with a variety of local and imported artifacts (Mundardjito et al., 19789). Archaeological deposits at the site of the former capital of the Banten Sultanate, about ten kilometers north of Serang, provide authentic evidence of the old city's existence, dating back to the Islamic period, built approximately five centuries ago.

Theoretically, archaeological evidence provides fundamental knowledge about Banten's history and civilization (Guillot, Ambary & Dumarcay, 1990). The archaeological values reflected in urban sites, settlements, monuments, and artifacts can increase awareness of the importance of the past, both in the form of visual objects and narratives integrated into historical facts (Ambary, 1977). In this context, the past is an important component in the social and daily life of the Bantenese people. Its connection to the present is evident in the strengthening of the Bantenese communal identity. As in

Europe, past and present identities are always associated with sites, building structures, and archaeological objects due to a sense of belonging to a place or a tradition (Cleere, 1990).

All contemporary claims are manifestations of a cultural link to the past (Jones, 1997). Driven by this spirit, various intellectuals have developed what is known as inward awareness as a reason to rediscover a collective identity, by referring to historical facts and traditions as components of ethnic and national culture. From this semantic perspective, the Banten Lama site is a natural landscape offering cultural resources that require special management to maintain its vitality.

Therefore, the preservation of archaeological heritage should be based on the development of meaning from the material form of culture. The values that can be represented by the past include (1) symbolic value; namely the awareness of constructing identity in the spirit of returning to older values, (2) academic value; that artifacts and monuments are sources of information for various disciplines, (3) educational value; knowledge stimulates students' reasoning to understand local wisdom, (4) social and

economic value; as an attraction for various tourist destinations, especially cultural tourism (Cleere, 1990).

Currently, the preservation of archaeological heritage in Banten Lama is threatened by natural factors and human activity; both factors impact the vitality of sites and cultural objects (Yogaswara & Suartina, 2014). Based on our field observations (2022-2024), the Banten Lama site has undergone significant changes compared to thirty years ago. What is new is that over the past five years, through the Banten Lama Revitalization Program, the regional government has transformed Banten Lama into a cultural tourism destination. With its current quality, tourist visits to Banten Lama increased significantly in October–December 2019, but the motivation for these visits was mass tourism (BPS-Serang 2020, p. 236), thus missing the primary target of educational and cultural tourism. Lack of visitor management could threaten the preservation of cultural heritage. The formal revitalization program is only one aspect of cultural heritage management. The most crucial goal of revitalization is actually to reinterpret archaeological remains. Therefore, the question arises: what concept is the government implementing in managing archaeological sites in the Banten Lama area?

In the last three decades (1982), the UNESCO of United Nations supported by member countries has agreed on the need for every nation to preserve and utilize cultural heritage, both tangible and intangible. In the spirit of cultural preservation, Indonesia has issued legislation for the protection and preservation of cultural heritage as stipulated in Indonesian Law No. 11 of 2010 concerning Cultural Heritage as a result of the revision of Law No. 5 of 1982 concerning Cultural Heritage Objects.

Referring to Article 80 of Law No. 11 of 2010, revitalization encompasses three activities within the corpus of cultural heritage development activities that must be carried out sequentially, starting with research, revitalization, and adaptation. Therefore, revitalization must begin with research or studies first, which will later become the basis for sustainable utilization. Revitalization program without adequate research risks altering and damaging the site and its archaeological objects.

In this case, we want to obtain an explanation of the policies underlying the revitalization program for the Banten Lama area and how they impact the existence of archaeological sites and evidence. So what?

Therefore, this study focuses on several policies and their implementation,

namely the revitalization of the Banten Lama Area which has not been integrated across zones (core, buffer, and development) and ignores the stages of the cultural heritage preservation and utilization program based on Law of the Republic of Indonesia No. 11 of 2010. The importance of cultural heritage development policies is evident in the continuous management cycle. After archaeological research at the Banten Lama site resulted in recommendations to protect archaeological evidence (Ambarly, 1977; Mundardjito et al., 1978), this was followed by the protection, rescue, and preservation of all aspects of the historic city of Banten (Michrob, 1987), and should be followed up with development and utilization for the wider public.

Viewed from the planning cycle, there are at least three issues that require clarification. First, related to the lack of understanding of the complexity of urban archaeology in Banten Lama. Second, there was overlapping policy at the national and regional levels for more than three decades. And third, the implementation of the revitalization program did not have a coherent sequence with regulations on cultural heritage management.

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

Questions related to cultural heritage preservation are also found at other sites.

Several developed countries have implemented the CRM approach, an integrated and synergistic cross-sectoral model for cultural heritage preservation. The CRM model in Indonesia has been implemented at prehistoric sites in Sangiran, the Majapahit capital of Trowulan, and the Borobudur and Prambanan temple complexes. Some of these have indicated best-practice works (Suartina & Tirtosudarmo, 2013; Ramelan et al., 2015).

The spirit of this model rests on a paradigm shift in archaeological heritage preservation, from purely scientific to public outreach (McManamon & Hatton, 2012). Within the CRM framework, Banten Lama offers a potential model in which the integration of research, formulation of essential values, and determination of policies and strategies have been designed through input and output factor (Figure 1).

The use of the CRM model will address two related aspects: archaeological attributes on the one hand and preservation practices on the other. Collecting factual data is the initial step in the study. Relevant documents are needed to understand the latest research findings. The collected primary historical sources on Banten need to be supported by theoretical studies on the concepts, methodologies, and policies for cultural heritage management, which

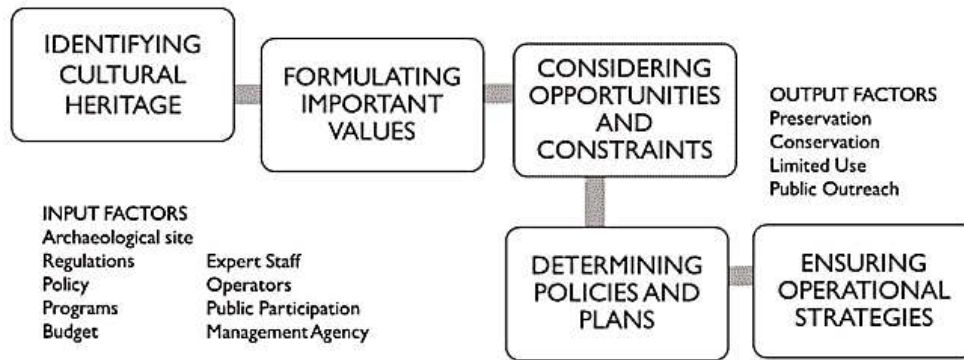


Figure 1. The CRM framework adapted from Pearson and Sullivan (1995)

have become part of archaeological work (Green & Doershuk, 1989). The next stage is observation at the Banten Lama site to obtain actual information on landscape changes throughout the covered areas.

The final stage is conducting interviews to obtain academic testimony from several archaeologists involved in conservation work including Juliadi and Adita Nofiandi from the Regional Office for Cultural Preservation VIII in Serang. Interviews are also conducted with government agents to obtain information on implemented policies i.e the Regional Development Planning Agency (Bappeda), the Public Works and Spatial Planning Agency (PUPR), and Public Housing and Settlement Agency of Banten Province. All collected data will be analyzed contextually to obtain a comprehensive scheme of cultural heritage management. This study focuses on how the CRM model can be applied and whether the

revitalization program for the Banten Lama area allows for its implementation.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### Banten Lama as the Heritage City?

A comprehensive examination of the Banten Lama site has identified the concentration and distribution of artifacts and other archaeological phenomena. Various archaeological evidence has become a historical narrative about the urban community that emerged and flourished there five centuries ago. The Surasowan Palace complex, the town square, the city walls and gates, the water installations, the canal network, and the ruins of other buildings (Mundardjito, Ambary & Djafar, 1978), as well as the luxurious artifacts on display at the Banten Lama site museum, represent the city's Islamic civilization in the 16th and 18th centuries (Lodewijksz, 1915; Cortemúnde, 1953).

Archaeological research has confirmed phases of prosperity, as well as

cycles of decline of the Banten Sultanate (Michrob, 1987; Ueda et al., 2016). This research has inspired efforts to reconstruct urban evolution, including understanding changes in Banten's urban landscape over approximately two centuries as a result of the black pepper trade (Guillot, 1989; Reid, 1990). The pepper trade also gave Banten its reputation in the Asian trade chain during the episode 'The Age of Commerce' in Southeast Asia (Reid, 1988, 1990).

During its heyday, Banten was a port with trade links with India, China, and the Arabian Peninsula. Trade intensification increased with the arrival of European traders in the following decades (Lodewycksz, 1915; Guillot, 1989). The involvement of European traders confirms that international trade stimulated Banten's cosmopolitanism. According to the testimony of Cortemunde in 1672-75 (1663) and Stavorinus in 1768-71 (1793), spatial evolution occurred, not only in terms of physical dimensions but also in the city's mental structure. Changes in the urban landscape appear to be in line with Banten's economic achievements as an ideal port on the Sunda Strait and the Strait of Malacca (Guillot, 1989; Hall, 2014).

Referring to archaeological, historical, and contemporary geographic evidence, Banten undoubtedly presents itself as a 'merchant city'. Despite its Islamic conversion, its rulers exhibit a classical

Javanese style with a distinctive spatial structure: palaces, mosques, town squares, markets, and noble residences within the fortified area (Guillot, 1989). The city center is flanked by two ports, Pabean to the west and Karangantu to the east, with various global trade facilities (Figure 2)

The complex archaeological footprint reflects the significant investment in modern urban development during its time. The city's physical appearance reflects the social and political integrity of the Javanese Islamic dynasty. The archaeological evidence, although fragmentary, holds significant historical value for both the local community and the government. From a modern perspective, Islamic cultural values, imbued with Banten's historical narrative, were crucial for the early Islamic civilization in Banten Province. It is therefore natural that the local government has made Banten Lama an iconic symbol of Banten's progress.

With its potential, the Banten Lama area makes a strong case for being a 'heritage city'; a product of Islamic civilization, where monuments, artifacts, and sites are components of an urban system that has undergone landscape changes over several periods of government and remains preserved in the collective memory of modern Banten (Michrob, 1987). Therefore, historical and archaeological arguments deserve

consideration in the planning and management of the historic city concept as a cultural heritage with the potential to become a source of historical knowledge, education, and a cultural tourism destination.

### Overlapping Policy in Cultural Heritage

The idea of archaeological heritage management has been discussed since 1982 at the SPAFA workshop, which recommended the need for conservation of

archaeological remains in Banten Lama (Miksic, 1982; Michrob, 1987). In the early 2000s, two studies identified potential conflicts in the use of cultural heritage (Rahardjo et al., 2006; Yogaswara & Suartina, 2012), but these studies were not considered in regional development policies. Instead, priority was placed on construction public facilities in the buffer zone rather than addressing the actual problems.

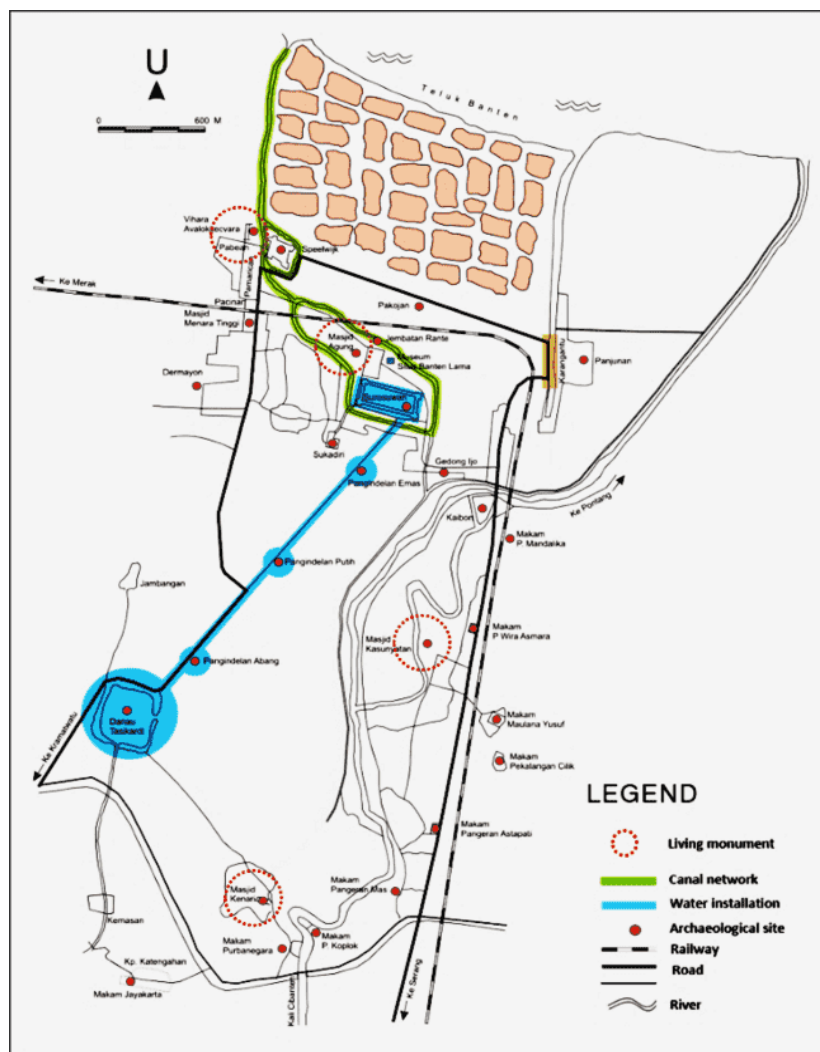


Figure 2. Distribution of sites in the Banten Lama site complex (BCPB / BPK VIII Banten, Serang, 2005).

In practice, the work remains ego-sectoral, particularly between preservation and site utilization. Consequently, the CRM model proposed in the 'Cultural Conservation Management Seminar in Indonesia' held in Banten Lama site museum (2016) has not yet been implemented. Assuming CRM is a standard guideline in the cycle of research, preservation, and utilization, in accordance with the spirit of the Law No. 11 of 2010, the revitalization program has not yet gained public legitimacy. In the CRM model, public legitimacy is measured by the planning cycle, stakeholder involvement, and broad-reaching beneficiary targets (Rieth, 2007). However, program integration is hampered by overlapping policies.

Overlapping policies can be viewed from at least three perspectives: systemic, synchronic, and regulatory. First, the revitalization program represents a stage in the development of a cultural heritage area based solely on technical policies, bypassing the protection and preservation phases of cultural heritage. From this perspective, revitalization has not been implemented systematically in accordance with the work stages of preservation, development, and utilization in the Law No. 11 of 2010 which is now outlined in Government Regulation No. I of 2022

concerning National Registration and Preservation of Cultural Heritage.

In practice, revitalization has the potential to damage the site, such as covering areas with new floors in front of Surasowan palace without taking into account the original surface of the site and increasing the vulnerability of brick structures that have not been thoroughly investigated (Figure 3).

Second, in terms of time and spatial priorities, planning and implementation do not demonstrate integration between research, preservation, and development (utilization) of cultural heritage. For example, restoration work from 1915 to 1974 still relied on the 1931 *Monumenten Ordonantie* of colonial regulation (Yogaswara & Suartina, 2012). Similarly, systemic archaeological research activities in 1976 and 1977, although important for scientific evidence (Mundardjito et al., 1978), except for inspiring the establishment of a museum site in 1985 (Michrob, 1987), were more independent than integrated into the preservation and utilization process.

Third, national regulations require a comprehensive study, including zoning determination as the basis for implementing revitalization in the buffer zone and utilization in the Banten Lama area. However, the revitalization program does not adhere to the provisions of the



Figure 3. Aerial photography of the Banten site during the revitalization process  
(Aerial Photograph: BPK VIII, Serang, 10 October 2018).

stages as stipulated in Article 4 of the Law No. 11, 2010 about Cultural Heritage Law, which states that "The scope of Cultural Heritage Preservation includes the Protection, Development, and Utilization of Cultural Heritage on land and in the air," as well as Articles 33 and 34 regarding the division of authority and in national registration of cultural heritage. Based on this regulation, the revitalization program is the final stage after determining cultural heritage status in the national register (Articles 19, 31, 33), conservation and preservation (Articles 56, 57, 61).

From these three points, it appears that the overlapping policies are inseparable

from changes in national regulations. First, it relates to changes in regulations on the preservation of cultural heritage from Law No. 5 of 1982 concerning Cultural Heritage Objects to Law No. 11 of 2010 concerning Cultural Heritage. These changes in national regulations have an impact on technical policies in the regions, especially the division of central and regional authority in the management domain of the Banten Lama area (Yogaswara & Suartina, 2012, 19). Second, the decentralization and regional autonomy policies since the enactment of Law No. 23 of 2000 concerning the Establishment of Banten Province and Law No. 32 of 2007

concerning the Establishment of Serang City, have become obstacles in preservation work, especially due to the division of territory from Serang Regency to the Serang City Government.

The implications of changes in national policy in practice influence regional policies in determining the Master Plan for the Development of the Banten Lama Cultural Heritage Area. Therefore, the implementation of the master plan does not show a significant impact, instead, conflicts between stakeholders become increasingly sharp, especially in the use of monuments that are still functioning (Rahardjo et al., 2006; Yogaswara & Suartina, 2012). As a result, for more than three decades, planning, research, conservation work, including the construction of public facilities are not based on priorities and targets of their locus and temporality (Figure 4).

This problem was only resolved after the Banten Provincial Government and Serang City conducted a study for revitalization, environmental impact analysis, and boundary determination. Progress was demonstrated by the zoning through Governor's Decree No. 437/Kep.160-Huk/2018 concerning the Zoning of the Banten Sultanate Cultural Heritage Area (Figure 5).

Rather than being a policy capable of resolving substantive issues, core zones,

buffer zones, and utilization, further planning for the specifications of each zone is required. Furthermore, a number of sites are still in the process of being designated as cultural heritage by the Serang City Government that have not been integrated into the core i.e Kenari and Kasunyatan.

Therefore, the revitalization program still needs to be reconsidered by decision-makers. The main problem lies in the mindset of cultural heritage preservation, which tends to be oriented towards increasing economic value. This tendency can be seen in the designation of Banten Lama as a strategic tourism area, as stipulated in Regional Regulation No. 6 of 2019 concerning the 2018-2025 Tourism Development Master Plan, an implementation of Law No. 10 of 2009 concerning Tourism.

This chronological overview demonstrates a tendency to capitalize on cultural heritage as a tourist destination. Symptoms can be seen in programs that prioritize mass tourism. Meanwhile, there are no operational regulations referring to the Cultural Heritage Law, and to date, the Banten Provincial Government does not yet have a Regional Regulation on cultural heritage to guide implementation within the province. Instead of establishing cultural heritage management options, plans emphasizing research, protection, and preservation programs have not been

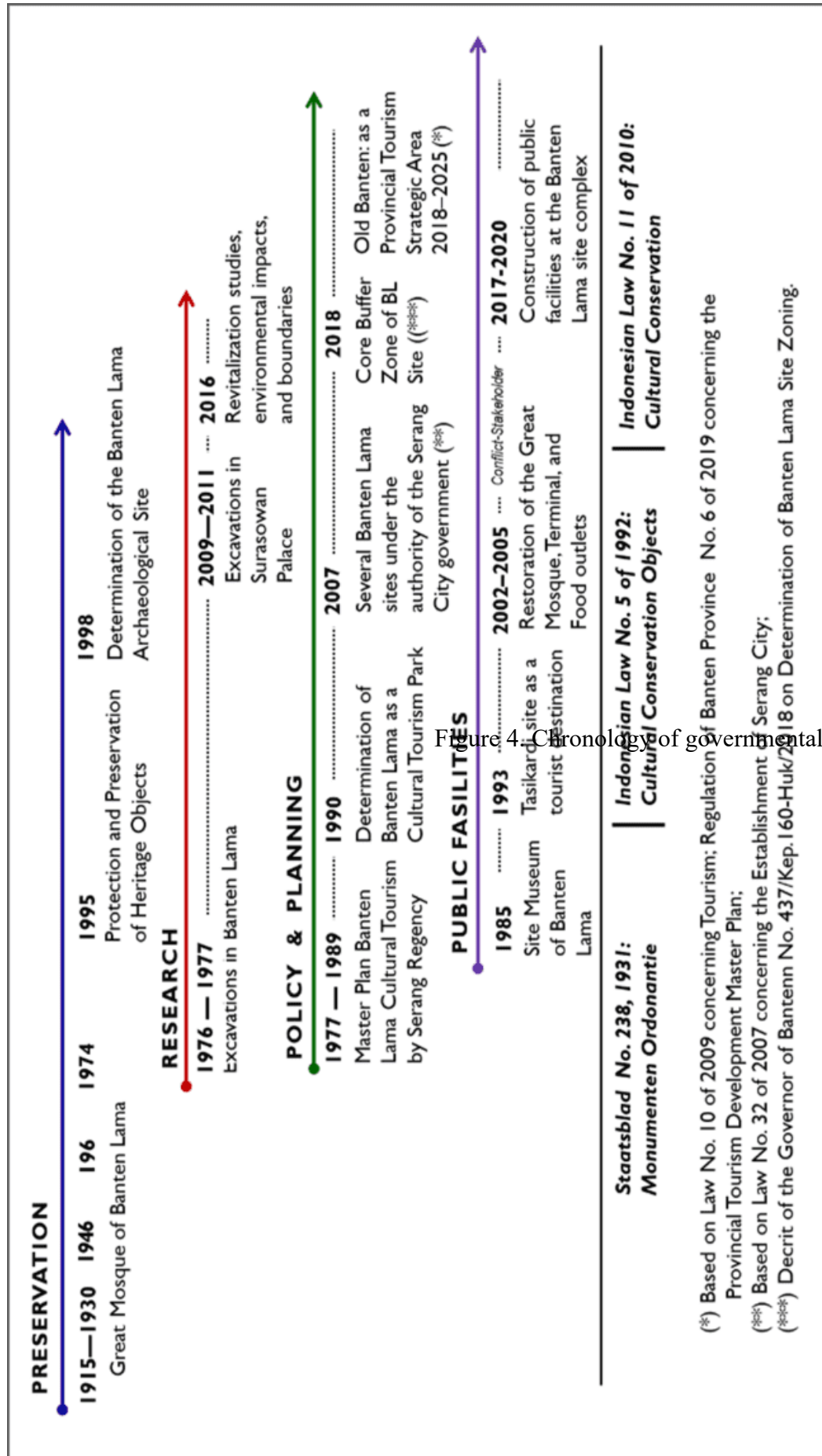


Figure 4: Chronology of governmental policy on the management

manage cultural heritage without systematic procedures? If CRM has become a best practice model, there's reason for the government to immediately conduct a CRM implementation study in Banten Lama. The opportunity appears to be wide open, but several key indicators need to be considered.

### Strategic Issue of Revitalization

As of the 2020s, at least 18 sites containing objects suspected of being cultural heritage still require cultural heritage designation, but only nine sites are under the direct management of the *Balai Pelestarian Kebudayaan* Wil. VIII (Tabel

1). This numerical data indicates that the management of the Banten Lama Site has not been integrated into a unified system. Therefore, the revitalization program should be based on strategic issues in cultural heritage management at the provincial and national levels.

According to the Law No. 11, 2010, revitalization is an integral part of protection, preservation, and development efforts. While its importance is crucial, it must be prioritized, focusing on buffer zone development and utilization. However, it is possible to integrate revitalization programs into the CRM system.

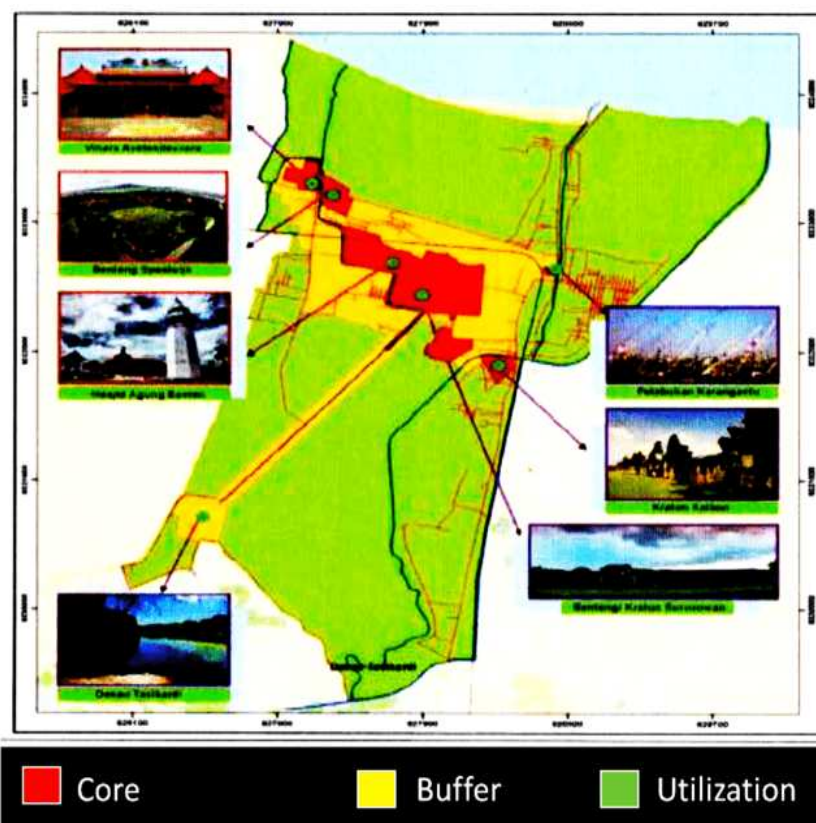


Figure 5. Division of zones (core, buffer, development) of the Banten Lama site (Decrit of Banten's Governor No. 437/Kep.160-Huk/2018)

The CRM determinants include: (1) archaeological resources, (2) government and community, (3) national and regional regulations, (4) the community as beneficiaries, and (5) budgets and programs already available within the governance of the Banten Lama area. These five elements can be elaborated as the basis for implementing the CRM model, which can then be transformed into national and regional policy priorities.

The elaboration of determining factors must be based on the spirit that cultural heritage is a development resource that is important for conservation and its impact on the 'broader society' (Rieth, 2007; McManamon, 1991). The main objective is in line with the spirit underlying the CRM concept, with more

specific applications such as archaeological resource management or 'public archaeology' (Rieth, 2007). That archaeological work is focused on the preservation of cultural objects, meaning that this stage requires archaeological description, methodology, and interpretation (Binford et al., 1970). However, because of its urgency to realize strategic issues, CRM is part of archaeological resource management (McManamon, 1991; Hansen & Fowler, 2007).

The implementation of CRM is still an experiment in Indonesia. Except for the Borobudur, Prambanan, and Sangiran sites, the city of Majapahit, a national cultural heritage site, also faces challenges (Turmudi & Biantoro, 2013; Ramelan et

Table 1. Archaeological sites of Banten Lama area managed by different institutions

RESPONSIBLE INSTITUTION	TARGETED SITES	MANAGED BY	
Representative of National Government (Banten's Cultural Heritage Preservation office (BPK VIII), Government of Banten Province, Government of Serang City	Surosowan Palace	BPK VIII Banten	
	Kaibon Palace		
	Pakojan Mosque		
	Pacinan Mosque		
	Watu Gilang		
	Jembatan Rante		
	Gedong Ijo		
	Old water installation		
	Fort Speelwijk		
	Banten Lama Mosque [*]		
	Tombs of the Sultans		Mosque management agency and local community
	Benjol's house		
	Tombe of Maulana Yusuf		
BPK VIII, Serang Regency	Kasunyatan Mosque [*]	Vihara Foundation Private company	
	Kenari Mosque [*]		
	Tomb of Sultan Abdul Kadir		
	Avalokitesvara temple [*]		
	Tasik Ardi lake		

(Source: Yogaswara & Suartina 2012, p. 58-60. Note: [\*] Living monument)

al., 2015). However, CRM implementation is highly feasible in Banten Lama. The local government has designated this place Banten as a regional strategic area with a distinct cultural tourism profile. Similarly, the Serang City Government has designated the Banten Lama site as a Cultural and Scientific Conservation Area. In this context, the Site Museum in Banten Lama serves as a new home for the preservation and utilization of cultural objects for the wider public.

Considering these potentials, there should be no significant challenges in implementing CRM at the Banten Lama site if all actors involved in cultural heritage management can address strategic issues such as relevant research, compliance with laws and regulations, regulatory effectiveness, integrated planning, and archaeological knowledge and local cultural values (Green & Doershuk, 1989; King, 1987). If all factors can be elaborated as elements of a controlled system within a cross-stakeholder management body, the possibility of meaningful cultural heritage management can be realized in the Banten Lama site complex (Fig. 7).

## **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION**

The Banten site provides archaeological evidence that Islamic

civilization reached its peak in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Based on archaeological and historical arguments, the tangible cultural heritage in the area represents a potential cultural resource as a cultural heritage with urban characteristics dating back to the Islamic period. Therefore, its entire archaeological potential meets the standard requirements for designating Banten Lama as a national cultural heritage area.

From this perspective, the Banten Lama area is worthy of being a policy object at both the national and regional levels, but overlapping planning and implementation must be avoided. In this context, the revitalization program must be viewed from a broader perspective, based on the degree of urgency following three decades of neglect. The regional government's initiative should receive attention from archaeologists, who can contribute their expertise and innovation to find long-term solutions.

The CRM success story represents a valuable experience in combining the performance of academic archaeology and management archaeology for two outcomes: regulatory compliance and management efficiency. Therefore, CRM priorities are directed at reducing policy gaps. Considering that the Banten Lama site complex is also a densely populated residential area, the involvement of government agencies and local

communities is essential in developing long-term plans for research, conservation, and sustainable use.

The policy analysis requires a paradigm shift and stakeholder contributive actions, namely: (1) Revitalization is carried out in the spirit of preserving cultural heritage based on Government Regulation of the Republic of Indonesia No. 1 of 2022 concerning National Registration and Preservation of Cultural Heritage, (2) Banten Lama becomes a model for developing archaeological resources for education, research, and social welfare, (3) Long-term efforts begin by recruiting human resources to accommodate various interests based on the tasks and dedication require

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