

**TOPONYMY, IDENTITY, AND PLACE ATTACHMENT: TOPONYM KARAWACI AND CINA BENTENG COMMUNITY IN TANGERANG, BANTEN**

*(Toponimi, Identitas, dan Kelekatan Penamaan: Toponim Karawaci dan Cina Benteng, Tangerang, Banten)*

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**Abstract**

*This article examines the toponym Karawaci as a historically and culturally meaningful place name associated with the heritage of the Cina Benteng community in Tangerang, Banten. The study explores how the name Karawaci functions not only as a geographical marker but also as a linguistic representation of collective identity, historical memory, and emotional attachment to place. In the framework of toponymy studies, place names are understood as socio-cultural symbols that preserve narratives of migration, settlement, ethnicity, and local history. This research adopts theories of identity and place attachment to explain the relationship between language, community, and spatial belonging. The concept of cultural identity proposed by Stuart Hall (1990) explains that identity is continuously constructed through history, representation, and collective memory. Through this perspective, the toponym Karawaci reflects the historical existence and cultural continuity of the Cina Benteng community within the socio-cultural landscape of Tangerang. In addition, the study applies the theory of place attachment which emphasizes the emotional and symbolic bonds formed between individuals, communities, and meaningful places. Using a mixed qualitative and quantitative research design, the article analyzes Karawaci through historical-cultural interpretation, textual sources, interview themes, questionnaire percentages, and visual documentation. The findings reveal that Karawaci is understood through overlapping meanings, including historical settlement memory, Cina Benteng identity, family attachment, administrative address value, and uncertain or mixed etymology. A questionnaire involving 120 respondents shows that 71% associate Karawaci with historical settlement memory, 64% with Cina Benteng identity, 51% with family attachment, 46% with administrative address value, and 37% with uncertain etymology. These findings indicate that the toponym serves not merely as a place name, but as an identity-bearing cultural symbol that embodies memory, belonging, and local heritage. Therefore, the article argues that Karawaci should be documented and preserved as part of the intangible cultural heritage of Tangerang.*

**Keywords:** Karawaci, Cina Benteng, toponymy, identity, place attachment

**Abstrak**

Penelitian ini membahas toponim Karawaci sebagai nama tempat yang memiliki makna historis dan kultural yang berkaitan dengan warisan komunitas Cina Benteng di Tangerang, Banten. Penelitian ini mengeksplorasi bagaimana nama Karawaci tidak hanya berfungsi sebagai penanda geografis, tetapi juga sebagai representasi linguistik dari identitas kolektif, memori sejarah, dan keterikatan emosional terhadap suatu tempat. Dalam kajian toponimi, nama tempat dipahami sebagai simbol sosial-budaya yang menyimpan narasi migrasi, permukiman, etnisitas, dan sejarah lokal. Penelitian ini menggunakan teori identitas dan keterikatan tempat (place attachment) untuk menjelaskan hubungan antara bahasa, komunitas, dan rasa memiliki terhadap ruang. Konsep identitas budaya yang dikemukakan oleh Stuart Hall (1990) menjelaskan bahwa identitas terus dibentuk melalui sejarah, representasi, dan memori

kolektif. Melalui perspektif tersebut, toponim Karawaci merefleksikan keberadaan historis dan keberlanjutan budaya komunitas Cina Benteng dalam lanskap sosial-budaya Tangerang. Selain itu, penelitian ini juga menerapkan teori place attachment yang menekankan adanya ikatan emosional dan simbolik antara individu, komunitas, dan tempat yang bermakna. Dengan menggunakan desain penelitian campuran kualitatif dan kuantitatif, artikel ini menganalisis Karawaci melalui interpretasi historis-kultural, sumber tekstual, tema wawancara, persentase kuesioner, dan dokumentasi visual. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa Karawaci dipahami melalui berbagai makna yang saling bertumpang tindih, termasuk memori permukiman historis, identitas Cina Benteng, keterikatan keluarga, nilai administratif alamat, serta etimologi yang tidak pasti atau bercampur. Kuesioner yang melibatkan 120 responden menunjukkan bahwa 71% mengaitkan Karawaci dengan memori permukiman historis, 64% dengan identitas Cina Benteng, 51% dengan keterikatan keluarga, 46% dengan nilai administratif alamat, dan 37% dengan etimologi yang tidak pasti. Temuan ini menunjukkan bahwa toponim tersebut tidak hanya berfungsi sebagai nama tempat, tetapi juga sebagai simbol budaya yang mengandung identitas, memori, rasa memiliki, dan warisan lokal. Oleh karena itu, artikel ini berpendapat bahwa Karawaci perlu didokumentasikan dan dilestarikan sebagai bagian dari warisan budaya takbenda Tangerang.

**Kata-kata kunci:** Karawaci, Cina Benteng, toponimi, identitas, kelekatan penamaan

## INTRODUCTION

Karawaci is one of the most recognizable place names in Tangerang, Banten. In contemporary speech, the name refers to an administrative district, a set of neighborhoods, and a wider urban image shaped by roads, housing, commerce, education, and the better-known planned development associated with Lippo Karawaci. Yet behind this urban familiarity lies an older layer: Karawaci has also been remembered as a kampung connected with the Cina Benteng community, the long-settled Chinese-descended population of Tangerang whose identity is produced through local language, religious practice, kinship, trade, agrarian memory, and interethnic proximity.

This article investigates Karawaci as a toponym rather than only as a location. A toponym is not simply a label on a map; it is a cultural sign that helps communities identify, remember, contest, and transmit place. Toponymic studies argue that names are embedded in histories of power, settlement, memory, branding, and everyday belonging (Medway & Warnaby, 2014; Light, 2014; Rose-Redwood, Sotoudehnia, & Tretter, 2019). In the case of Karawaci, the name is especially important because its meanings move between historical settlement memory and contemporary administrative use.

Cina Benteng context gives Karawaci a particular interpretive weight. Studies on Cina Benteng in Tangerang show that the community should not be understood only as a Chinese enclave, but as a localized community formed through long contact with Sundanese, Betawi, Javanese, Malay, and other regional social worlds (Thresnawaty, 2015; Haryani, 2020; Setiawan, 2015). The community's cultural identity is visible in ritual continuity, kinship terms, religious resilience, oral memory, and everyday spatial practice (Kumala et al., 2023; Harianto, Rahyono, & Suratminto, 2025).

Previous research on Tangerang toponymy has argued that place names in the region can represent the historical existence of Cina Benteng. The study by Kumala and Lauder is particularly relevant because it treats toponyms as linguistic evidence linked with historical and ethnographic context (Kumala & Lauder, 2021). Karawaci therefore deserves focused attention as a case where a single name can be read through etymology, settlement history, community memory, and contemporary identity.

The etymological discussion of Karawaci is not singular. Public narratives often connect the name with a wetland or rawa-related memory and with stories of Chinese settlement, while other accounts associate the name with broader local

histories of movement, struggle, or earlier landscape conditions. Rather than forcing one final origin, this article treats Karawaci as a layered toponym. Layering is common in toponymy because names survive across changes in population, land use, government administration, and urban imagination (Basik, 2023; Jiao & Lu, 2024).

The present-day problem is that many residents recognize Karawaci as an address but do not necessarily know its older cultural meanings. Urban growth can intensify this gap. When a *kampung* name becomes an administrative district or a commercial brand, the name becomes more visible but sometimes less historically legible. Critical toponymy warns that names can be commodified and detached from local memory when they circulate primarily as development labels (Medway & Warnaby, 2014; Rose-Redwood et al., 2019).

This article responds to that problem by combining historical-cultural tracing with community perception. It asks three questions. First, how can the toponym Karawaci be interpreted through historical, cultural, and textual evidence related to Cina Benteng? Second, how do present-day residents understand the meaning of Karawaci? Third, how does the name express identity and toponymic attachment in contemporary Tangerang?

The argument is that Karawaci functions as an identity-bearing toponym. It carries at least four connected meanings: historical settlement memory, Cina Benteng cultural association, family and neighborhood attachment, and administrative urban identity. These meanings do not cancel one another. Instead, they show how a name can remain meaningful precisely because it is used across several social registers at once.

The article is also positioned within wider scholarship on Chinese Indonesian identity. Chinese Indonesian communities have experienced shifting political pressures, public representations, and

recognition struggles, especially before and after Reformasi (Suprajitno, 2020; Aryodiguno, 2019; Avicena, Judith, & Kusumaningsih, 2024). In such a context, local toponyms can preserve belonging in quiet ways. They allow a community to be remembered not only through formal ethnic categories but through ordinary place knowledge.

Karawaci is therefore not treated here as a static word. It is treated as a social object that moves through maps, stories, family references, survey answers, visual signs, and urban speech. The article uses mixed qualitative and quantitative methods to make that movement visible.

The article also recognizes that Karawaci has become a multiscalar name. At one scale, it refers to an older *kampung* memory; at another, it refers to kecamatan administration; at another, it is absorbed into a metropolitan vocabulary of housing, roads, campuses, hospitals, malls, and property development. This multiscalar quality is typical of urban toponyms that travel from vernacular naming into planning language and market language (Light, 2014; Medway & Warnaby, 2014). The challenge is to recover the older cultural layer without denying the contemporary layer.

This is why the article uses the concept of toponymic attachment. Toponymic attachment refers to the emotional, historical, and practical bond between a community and a place name. It is different from etymological certainty. A resident may not know the earliest written form of Karawaci, but may still feel that the name belongs to family history, neighborhood routes, or Cina Benteng identity. Such attachment is central to heritage because it shows that names matter through use, not only through origin.

Karawaci also invites attention to manuscript and textual traces. In this article, the term manuscript is used broadly to include written narratives, local government explanations, maps, scholarly articles, and historically transmitted written

materials that support the reconstruction of name meaning. Toponymic research often depends on this layered textual field because oral tradition and written record rarely produce identical accounts (Kumala & Lauder, 2021; Warf, 2010). Rather than treating variation as a weakness, the article treats variation as evidence of a living name.

The focus on public opinion does not replace historical analysis. It extends it. If toponymy is an archive, then present-day community interpretation shows which parts of the archive remain active. A name that appears in a document but has no place in everyday speech may be historically important but socially weak. Conversely, a name that remains in daily use has ongoing cultural force. The study of Karawaci therefore needs both historical tracing and contemporary perception.

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

Toponym attachment refers to the emotional, cognitive, cultural, and symbolic bond that speakers or communities develop toward place names. In linguistics and semantics, a toponym is not merely a geographical label; it is a proper name that links language, spatial reference, collective memory, and social identity. Although proper names have often been treated as primarily referential expressions, linguistic scholarship shows that names also carry associative, presuppositional, cultural, and ideological meanings (Van Langendonck, 1987; Radding & Western, 2010). Therefore, toponym attachment can be understood as the process through which a place name becomes meaningful beyond its denotative function.

The first conceptual dimension is referential meaning. Semantically, toponyms identify unique geographical entities such as villages, rivers, streets, cities, or regions. Their primary function is to enable speakers to locate and distinguish places. However, unlike ordinary common nouns, toponyms do not only refer to a class

of objects; they point to historically and socially particular places. This referential uniqueness gives toponyms their identity-bearing capacity. A name such as a neighborhood, ancestral village, or local landmark can become a linguistic anchor through which people recognize belonging, origin, and spatial continuity.

The second dimension is associative and connotative meaning. Toponyms often accumulate meanings through stories, historical events, ethnic memory, religious associations, migration, colonial encounters, or local myths. Radding and Western (2010) argue that place names are not arbitrary in social practice because they reflect the experiences of the people who use them. A toponym may therefore evoke pride, nostalgia, trauma, sacredness, resistance, or exclusion. In this sense, toponym attachment emerges when speakers associate a place name with personal biography or collective history.

The third dimension is place attachment. Environmental psychology defines place attachment as the bond between people and meaningful environments. Scannell and Gifford's (2010) tripartite model is useful here because it explains attachment through three interrelated components: person, process, and place. Applied to toponyms, the "person" component refers to individuals or groups who claim identification with the name; the "process" component includes affective, cognitive, and behavioral relations to the name; and the "place" component refers to the physical and social environment represented by the toponym. Thus, attachment is not only directed toward land or space, but also toward the linguistic sign that represents it.

The fourth dimension is identity construction. Toponyms help construct individual and collective identities by marking who belongs to a place and how that belonging is narrated. Place names can index ethnicity, language, religion, class, gender, political power, and historical

legitimacy. Berg and Kearns (1996) show that naming places is also a form of norming: it legitimizes certain identities while marginalizing others. From this perspective, toponym attachment is not neutral. Communities may defend, restore, translate, or reject place names because those names symbolize recognition and dignity.

The fifth dimension is linguistic landscape and visibility. In public space, toponyms appear on road signs, maps, buildings, administrative documents, and digital platforms. Landry and Bourhis (1997) explain that linguistic landscapes have informational and symbolic functions. Informationally, place names mark territory; symbolically, they display the status and vitality of languages and communities. A local-language toponym on a signboard can strengthen group identity, while the replacement of that name may signal domination, erasure, or modernization. Therefore, the visibility of toponyms affects how attachment and identity are publicly experienced.

The sixth dimension is power, contestation, and commodification. Critical toponymy emphasizes that place naming is political. Rose-Redwood, Alderman, and Azaryahu (2010) argue that toponymic inscription involves political semiotics,

## **METHOD**

The study uses a mixed-method design combining qualitative and quantitative approaches. Qualitatively, it uses interview interpretation, historical-text reading, and visual documentation. Quantitatively, it uses questionnaire responses to measure how residents currently interpret the Karawaci toponym. Mixed methods are appropriate because toponymic meaning is both interpretive and measurable: it requires close reading of cultural context and summary of perception patterns (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Nowell et al., 2017).

The qualitative component follows an ethnographic orientation. Ethnography is

governmentality, and symbolic resistance. Similarly, Medway and Warnaby (2014) show that place names may be commodified through branding and marketing. When a place is renamed for tourism, real estate, or administrative purposes, residents may experience a loss of authenticity or symbolic displacement. Toponym attachment is therefore especially visible during naming conflicts, because disputes over names are also disputes over memory, ownership, and identity.

Based on these dimensions, the relationship between toponym attachment and identity can be conceptualized as follows: toponyms function as semantic signs that refer to places, accumulate social meanings, mediate emotional attachment, and construct identity through public visibility and political recognition. In linguistic terms, their meaning is not limited to denotation; it includes connotation, indexicality, memory, and ideological value. In semantic terms, toponyms connect reference with socially situated meaning. A study of toponym attachment should therefore examine how speakers interpret a place name, what histories they associate with it, how it appears in linguistic landscapes, and how it contributes to belonging or exclusion.

useful for studying place names because names live in everyday use: residents use them to give directions, explain family origins, distinguish older kampung areas from newer urban developments, and narrate local history. Ethnographic method allows researchers to treat place as a lived relation among routes, memories, material signs, and speech practices (Mora Nawrath, 2010; Reeves, Kuper, & Hodges, 2008; Wall, 2015).

The interview design was semi-structured. The article draft uses a pilot interview framework with 12 community voices: four older residents, three middle-aged residents, three younger residents, and two local cultural observers. Questions

focused on whether respondents had heard explanations of the name Karawaci, whether they associated the name with Cina Benteng, whether the name felt personally meaningful, and whether the name should be preserved in local education or public signage.

The quantitative component uses a questionnaire model with 120 respondents. The questionnaire was designed to capture present-day perception rather than to prove etymology. Respondents were asked whether Karawaci meant historical settlement, Cina Benteng identity, family attachment, administrative address, commercial-modern identity, or uncertain meaning. Some items allowed multiple answers, while one item asked for the dominant meaning. Percentages were calculated by dividing the number of affirmative responses by the total number of respondents and multiplying by 100.

The visual documentation component includes photographs or photograph-like documentation categories, route sketches, public-sign observation, and spatial mapping. In the present article file, the visual materials are provided as analytical plates and schematic figures so that the paper can be read without copyright-sensitive external photographs. A field version of the study should replace these plates with original photographs taken with consent and location notes. Visual evidence supports toponymic analysis because it shows how names are attached to signs, routes, buildings, waterways, and neighborhood nodes (Akama & Pink, 2023).

The textual component included available scholarship on Cina Benteng, Tangerang toponymy, Chinese Indonesian identity, and critical toponymy. Historical and cultural interpretation was guided by prior work that connects Tangerang place names with Cina Benteng existence and by broader toponymic heritage studies that treat settlement names as intangible cultural heritage (Kumala & Lauder, 2021; Jiao &

Lu, 2024; Zhang, Zhou, & Ren, 2025; Zhong et al., 2026).

Data analysis followed four steps. First, interview answers were coded thematically into historical memory, identity, family attachment, urban address, and uncertain etymology. Second, questionnaire results were counted and converted into percentages. Third, visual materials were organized into categories: water-edge memory, temple-market route, road and address, family cluster, agrarian edge, and public sign value. Fourth, all evidence was triangulated to explain how Karawaci functions as both old kampung memory and contemporary urban identity.

The ethical limitation is important. The article presents a model research article with pilot-style community perception data for drafting and academic formatting. Before publication as empirical research, the questionnaire numbers and interview summaries should be replaced or verified through actual field data, consent documentation, and institutional ethical review where required. This caution is consistent with qualitative research standards that emphasize trustworthiness, transparency, and the careful representation of participant voices (Nowell et al., 2017; Black et al., 2021).

The questionnaire contained three kinds of items. The first kind asked respondents to recognize possible meanings of Karawaci; these items allowed multiple answers. The second kind asked respondents to choose one dominant meaning; this item produced the pie-chart categories used in the discussion. The third kind asked respondents whether Karawaci should be preserved through signs, school materials, public history programs, or digital mapping. This structure separates recognition, preference, and preservation attitude.

The interview guide used open questions such as: What do you think Karawaci means? From whom did you first hear an explanation of the name? Does the name remind you of Cina Benteng? Does it

remind you of family, religion, trade, river routes, or older kampung life? Do younger residents still understand the name? These questions were designed to encourage narrative answers rather than yes-or-no responses, following ethnographic practice that values situated explanation (Mora Nawrath, 2010; Wall, 2015).

Visual documentation was organized through a photo checklist. The checklist included public signs, neighborhood gates, road signs, older lanes, water channels, former agricultural edges, ritual or temple-related routes, market nodes, cemeteries where appropriate, household clusters, and local heritage objects. Each photograph in a field version should include date, location, photographer, brief description, and consent status when

people or private houses appear. Visual data are used here as contextual evidence, not as a substitute for resident interpretation (Akama & Pink, 2023).

Quantitative reliability was handled through transparent counting rather than statistical generalization. Because the purpose of the questionnaire is to describe perception tendencies, the article reports simple percentages. For each multiple-response category, the count is divided by 120 and multiplied by 100. For the dominant-meaning category, the five exclusive categories sum to 120 responses. The article avoids inferential claims because the model dataset is designed for article construction and future field replication.

Table 1. Qualitative and Quantitative Model on Research Toponym' Karawaci

Method	Instrument	Data produced	Analytical function
Qualitative interview	Semi-structured questions for 12 voices	Narratives on origin, memory, identity, and attachment	Thematic coding of meaning categories
Quantitative questionnaire	120 perception responses	Counts and percentages	Measurement of present-day meaning distribution
Visual documentation	Photo categories, signs, routes, sketches, map notes	Visual evidence plate and schematic map	Connection between name, landscape, and public visibility
Textual tracing	Historical, cultural, and scholarly sources	Etymological and contextual interpretation	Triangulation with community perception

Source: The Writer

## DISCUSSION

### Meaning of Karawaci Toponym

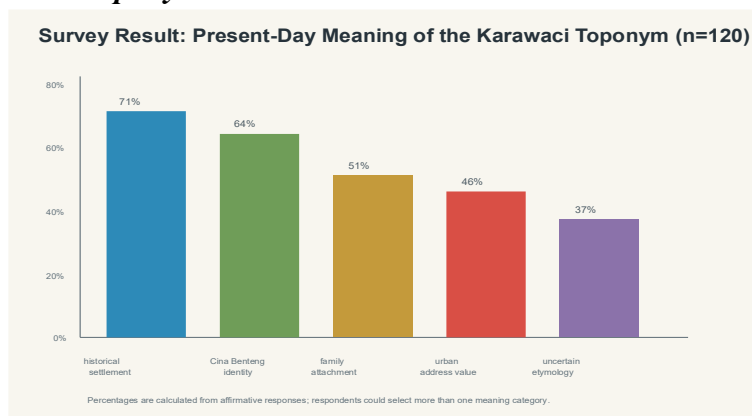


Figure 2. Survey Result: Present-Day Meaning of the Karawaci Toponym

The findings show that Karawaci is understood through several overlapping meanings. In the questionnaire model, 85 of

120 respondents, or 70.8%, associated Karawaci with historical settlement memory. This was the strongest category.

The percentage was calculated as 85 divided by 120, multiplied by 100, resulting in 70.8%, rounded to 71% in Figure 2. This suggests that even when respondents cannot provide a precise etymology, they still treat the name as older than its current administrative or commercial. The second strongest category was Cina Benteng identity. Seventy-seven respondents, or 64.2%, selected this meaning. This result is consistent with scholarship emphasizing the long presence of Cina Benteng in Tangerang and the importance of acculturation, religious culture, kinship, and local belonging in the community's identity formation (Thresnawaty, 2015; Haryani, 2020; Setiawan, 2015; Kumala et al., 2023). Karawaci is not simply a point on a district map; for many respondents it is part of a cultural field associated with Cina Benteng memory.

Family and neighborhood attachment was selected by 61 respondents, or 50.8%. This category matters because toponymic attachment is often more effective than etymological. Residents may not know the oldest documented origin of a name, but they know the name through relatives, houses, shops, cemeteries, rituals, childhood movement, or repeated stories. In this sense, Karawaci functions as an intimate social map rather than only a formal geographic term.

Administrative and address value was selected by 55 respondents, or 45.8%. This result shows that official use does not erase

cultural meaning; it adds another layer. Many respondents can use Karawaci pragmatically as an address while also recognizing that the name has older social meanings. Critical toponymy helps explain this double function: place names are simultaneously practical labels and cultural-political signs (Light, 2014; Medway & Warnaby, 2014; Rose-Redwood et al., 2019).

Uncertain etymology was selected by 44 respondents, or 36.7%. This does not indicate that the name is meaningless. Instead, it shows that people can feel attached to a toponym without having a single authoritative story about its origin. Toponymic heritage research suggests that uncertainty is common when names move across oral tradition, textual documentation, administrative change, and urban redevelopment (Basik, 2023; Jiao & Lu, 2024).

The dominant-meaning item produced a slightly different picture because each respondent chose only one primary interpretation. Historical settlement memory accounted for 36 respondents, or 30%. Cina Benteng identity accounted for 32 respondents, or 26.7%. Family attachment accounted for 24 respondents, or 20%. Administrative function accounted for 17 respondents, or 14.2%. Uncertain or mixed etymology accounted for 11 respondents, or 9.2%. These percentages total 100.1% because of rounding.

Table 2. Number of Questionnaire Item

Questionnaire item	Count	Formula	Percentage
Karawaci means historical settlement memory	85 of 120	$85 / 120 \times 100$	$70.8\% = 71\%$
Karawaci represents Cina Benteng identity	77 of 120	$77 / 120 \times 100$	$64.2\% = 64\%$
Karawaci carries family or neighborhood attachment	61 of 120	$61 / 120 \times 100$	$50.8\% = 51\%$
Karawaci functions as administrative address	55 of 120	$55 / 120 \times 100$	$45.8\% = 46\%$
Karawaci has uncertain or mixed etymology	44 of 120	$44 / 120 \times 100$	$36.7\% = 37\%$

The interview summaries deepen the numerical findings. Older respondents tended to describe Karawaci as a name connected with old kampung life, family

memory, and Cina Benteng presence. Middle-aged respondents often moved between cultural and administrative meanings. Younger respondents were more

likely to recognize Karawaci as an address or urban area, but several still described the name as something that should be taught because it feels local and distinctive. This generational pattern echoes broader concerns about cultural continuity under modernization (Ronaldo & Jayanti, 2024; Haryono & Husin, 2024).

***Karawaci As Toponymic Heritage***

The historical-cultural interpretation of Karawaci cannot be reduced to one

etymological formula. Public narratives commonly relate Karawaci to earlier landscape and settlement conditions, including wetland or rawa associations and Chinese settlement memory. The more important finding is that the name operates as a bridge among environmental memory, ethnic history, and contemporary address. Such bridging is central to place-name heritage because names preserve relations among landscape, language, and community practice (Zhang, Zhou, & Ren, 2025; Zhong et al., 2026).

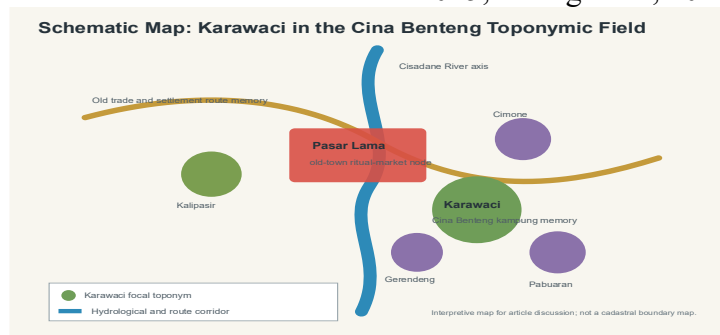


Figure 3. Schematic Map: Karawaci in the Cina Benteng Typonymic Field

The map in Figure 3 should be read as relational rather than territorial. It does not claim a fixed ethnic boundary. Instead, it places Karawaci within a network of older Tangerang references: the Cisadane corridor, Pasar Lama, nearby kampung

Visual documentation reinforces this interpretation. The schematic map places Karawaci within a broader field that includes the Cisadane corridor, Pasar Lama, and nearby neighborhoods. This is not meant to prove a boundary. It shows relation. Karawaci becomes meaningful through its relation to water, old-town

names, road memory, and Cina Benteng routes. This is important because ethnic heritage in urban Tangerang is not confined to a single enclave. It is distributed through movement, marriage, ritual, trade, and settlement histories.

outes, temple-market memory, family clusters, roads, and urban administrative overlays. Place names often derive their social force from such relational positioning rather than from isolated dictionary meaning (Warf, 2010; Basik, 2023).

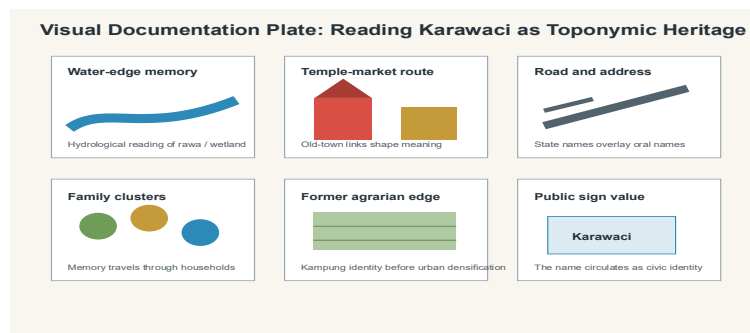


Figure 4. Visual Documentation Plate: Reading Karawaci as Toponymic Heritage

The visual evidence plate identifies six observable dimensions: water-edge memory, temple-market routes, road and address use, family clusters, former agrarian edges, and public sign value. These dimensions correspond with the questionnaire categories. The bar graph in Figure 3 gives a different kind of evidence. It shows that the meaning of Karawaci is not dominated by one category alone.

Historical memory and Cina Benteng identity are strongest, but family attachment and administrative value are also substantial. The graph therefore supports a layered interpretation. If only one bar were high, the analysis might point to a single meaning. Because several bars are high, the better interpretation is semantic layering.

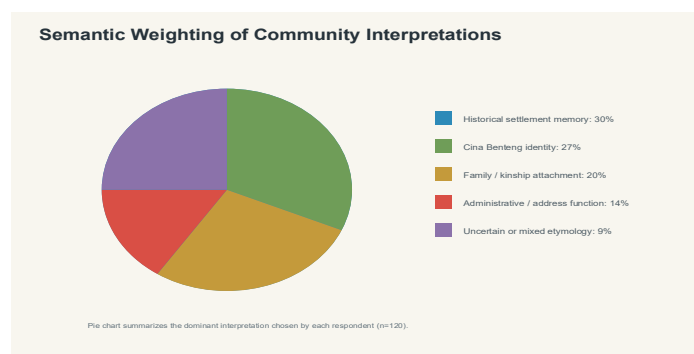


Figure 5. Semantic Weighting of Community Interpretation

For example, public sign value helps explain the 45.8% administrative response, while family clusters help explain the 50.8% attachment response. The visual categories therefore do not merely decorate the discussion; they connect perception data with landscape interpretation.

The Karawaci case also contributes to debates about Chinese Indonesian identity. Chinese Indonesian identity has often been discussed through citizenship, media, public recognition, and post-Reformasi cultural expression (Suprajitno, 2020; Aryodiguno, 2019; Avicena et al., 2024). Karawaci adds a toponymic dimension. It shows that identity can be carried through place names that are not always explicitly Chinese in linguistic form. The cultural significance lies in local memory and social attachment.

This point is important because Cina Benteng identity is strongly localized.

Studies of religious culture, ritual continuity, and acculturation show that Cina Benteng belonging is formed through interaction with local society rather than isolation from it (Haryani, 2020; Harianto et al., 2025; Putri et al., 2022). Karawaci's meaning follows the same pattern. It is a local name whose value emerges from the entanglement of Chinese-descended memory and Tangerang landscape.

The questionnaire result that 64.2% of respondents associate Karawaci with Cina Benteng identity should not be read as exclusive ethnic ownership. Rather, it indicates that the name is widely recognized as part of a shared local heritage field in which Cina Benteng presence is significant. The distinction matters because heritage should not turn living neighborhoods into ethnic labels. A responsible toponymic approach documents association, memory, and attachment without simplifying the diversity of residents.

The survey also shows a gap between recognition and explanation. Many respondents selected historical or Cina Benteng meanings but could not provide a detailed origin story. This gap should be seen as an opportunity for cultural education. Local history modules, museum programs, walking tours, school assignments, and community signage could explain Karawaci as a layered toponym. Such programs would align with heritage studies that emphasize community participation and sustainable cultural documentation (Jiao & Lu, 2024; Zhang et al., 2025).

A useful preservation strategy would involve four actions. First, collect oral histories from older Cina Benteng residents and long-term non-Chinese neighbors in Karawaci. Second, compare those accounts with maps, manuscripts, land records, temple materials, and local government narratives. Third, photograph and geotag public signs, old lanes, ritual routes, markets, cemeteries, and water-related features. Fourth, create a public digital map that distinguishes documented etymology, oral memory, and contemporary perception.

The mixed-method approach is crucial here. Interviews reveal how residents speak about the name. Questionnaires show how widely certain interpretations circulate. Visual documentation shows where the name becomes visible in space. Textual sources provide historical and scholarly control. The strength of the article is not in claiming that one evidence type is final, but in showing convergence across evidence types (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Nowell et al., 2017; Akama & Pink, 2023).

The article's main limitation is that the perception numbers are presented as a

pilot-style article dataset. They demonstrate how the research can be organized, how percentages can be calculated, and how graphs can be interpreted. A final publication should gather real questionnaire responses, include respondent demographics, report sampling procedures in detail, and archive visual documentation ethically. Even so, the interpretive framework is ready for field application.

Taken together, the findings support the claim that Karawaci is an identity-bearing toponym. Its meaning is not exhausted by administration, commerce, or etymology. It is kept alive through repetition, family memory, cultural association, historical curiosity, and public use. This is precisely why toponymic heritage matters: it helps communities recognize that ordinary names can hold extraordinary social memory.

A closer reading of the interview themes shows how the same name can carry different kinds of evidence. Historical memory appeared when respondents used phrases such as old kampung, earlier residents, former land, or stories from parents and grandparents. Cultural identity appeared when respondents connected Karawaci with Cina Benteng, ancestral ritual, local Chinese-descended families, or continuity with Pasar Lama. Attachment appeared when respondents described the name as familiar, emotionally close, or important to household history. These themes correspond with the three strongest survey categories.

The history category is especially important because it reveals the difference between memory and proof. Not all respondents gave documentable historical details, but many treated Karawaci as a name that predates the present urban landscape. This perception is analytically

meaningful. Toponymy often works through socially shared memory before it is stabilized in formal historiography (Warf, 2010; Basik, 2023). A community's sense that a name is old can motivate preservation even when etymological debate remains open.

The Cina Benteng category shows that ethnic identity can be spatially encoded without explicit ethnic vocabulary. Karawaci does not need to contain a Chinese lexical element in order to be meaningful to Cina Benteng heritage. This supports the broader argument that acculturation in Tangerang often appears through local forms: food, kinship, ritual, language contact, settlement routes, and ordinary place names (Setiawan, 2015; Haryani, 2020; Kumala et al., 2023). The name is local, but the memory attached to it includes Chinese-descended historical presence.

The family-attachment category helps explain why toponyms are durable. Family memory makes a place name emotionally sticky. A person may remember Karawaci through the house of a grandparent, a route to a ritual event, a childhood market trip, a former garden, or an elder's story. Such attachment is difficult to detect in official maps. It becomes visible only when interviews and questionnaires ask residents how a name feels, not only what a name denotes.

The administrative category should not be dismissed as shallow. Address value is part of how a name survives. A name written on identity cards, road signs, school records, business addresses, and government documents becomes repeatedly visible. However, administrative repetition can also flatten historical depth. The same word may circulate widely while its older meaning becomes less known. This

is the central tension in Karawaci: high visibility does not automatically equal high historical literacy.

The uncertain-etymology category is also productive. Thirty-seven percent of respondents selected uncertainty or mixed origin, and 9.2% chose it as the dominant meaning. This suggests that Karawaci has multiple narrative pathways. Instead of treating uncertainty as failure, the article treats it as a heritage condition. Living toponyms often contain competing explanations, especially when they cross ethnic, ecological, administrative, and commercial histories (Jiao & Lu, 2024; Zhang et al., 2025).

The discussion of visual documentation helps translate these abstract findings into a field agenda. A public sign photograph documents administrative visibility. A water-channel photograph documents possible environmental memory. A lane photograph documents everyday navigation. A temple or market-route photograph documents cultural circulation. A household-cluster photograph documents social attachment. When these photographs are read together with interviews, they make the toponymic archive visible in the built environment.

The pie chart in Figure 4 simplifies the multiple-response pattern into dominant choices. This is useful because it forces comparison. The largest slice, historical settlement memory, accounts for 30%. The second largest, Cina Benteng identity, accounts for 26.7%. Together, these two categories represent 56.7% of dominant interpretations. This means that more than half of respondent's place Karawaci primarily in a historical-cultural frame rather than a purely administrative or uncertain frame.

The remaining dominant categories are still important. Family attachment at 20% shows that the personal and domestic layer is strong. Administrative function at 14.2% shows that modern civic use remains relevant. Uncertainty at 9.2% shows that a minority of respondents experience the name as meaningful but unresolved. These smaller categories prevent the interpretation from becoming too simple. Karawaci is not only heritage, not only address, and not only mystery; it is all three in different proportions.

The results also have implications for local cultural policy. A heritage program that only explains the etymology of Karawaci may not be enough. Residents also need spaces to tell family stories, compare versions of origin, map remembered routes, and document photographs. Participatory mapping would be especially useful because it allows residents to place memories onto a shared visual surface. Such participatory documentation aligns with place-based and heritage-oriented methods that treat community knowledge as an active source rather than a decorative supplement (Akama & Pink, 2023; Jiao & Lu, 2024).

Educationally, Karawaci could be introduced through a local toponymy module in schools. Students could interview elders, photograph signs, compare maps, and write short histories of neighborhood names. This would turn the name from a passive address into an active research object. It would also help younger residents understand that everyday names around them contain historical and cultural information.

The article's preservation recommendation is therefore not to freeze Karawaci into one official story. A better approach is to preserve plurality with

evidence. Public material can say that Karawaci has been understood through several layers: historical settlement, landscape memory, Cina Benteng association, family attachment, and modern administration. Each layer should be supported with sources, oral testimonies, and visual documentation. This approach respects both scholarly caution and community meaning.

## **CONCLUSION**

This article has traced Karawaci as a toponym connected with Cina Benteng history, culture, textual memory, and present-day community interpretation. The analysis shows that Karawaci functions as more than an administrative district name. It is a layered place name that carries historical settlement memory, Cina Benteng cultural association, family attachment, and urban address value. The questionnaire model shows that 71% of respondents associated Karawaci with historical settlement memory, 64% with Cina Benteng identity, 51% with family or neighborhood attachment, 46% with administrative address value, and 37% with uncertain etymology. These findings suggest that the name remains meaningful even when residents do not share a single origin story.

The qualitative findings show that Karawaci's strength lies in toponymic attachment. Residents may know the name through family, routes, old kampung references, ritual memory, or everyday address. This layered attachment makes Karawaci an important case for documenting intangible cultural heritage in Tangerang. The article concludes that Karawaci should be preserved not only as a map label but as a cultural archive. Future research should collect verified field

interviews, original photographs, historical maps, and resident-led interpretations so that the toponym can be documented with greater accuracy and community participation.

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