LOCAL DEITIES AS SYMBOL OF ACCULTURATED
CHINESE DIASPORAS TEMPLES IN INDONESIA

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ABSTRACT

Migrants of Chinese diasporas have long history in Indonesia. To survive as new settlers they should adapt to local situation as a process of acculturation. This paper pursued to find the proofs of acculturation in existing old Chinese temples. The research process is done through extensive field surveys, explanation of symbols by anthropological background of Chinese cults, and semiotic interpretation of symbols. Temples as open public places showed their expression and attitude of acculturation appearing through adoption and worshipping local symbols. The result showed that there are two groups of adopted local symbols: first, indigenous figures and objects, and second local Chinese diasporas figures.

Key words: Indonesia; Chinese temples; deity; cult; acculturation, architecture.

INTRODUCTION

Locations mentioned in this research are: Bogor, Pacet–Cipanas-Cianjur, Bandung, those three places located on mountainous area at the centre of western Java province, while Cirebon is located at northern seashore of West Java. And Tegal is located on the northern coast of Middle Java.

When those early Chinese emigrants left their hometown they planned someday will return again to their birth place. But for some who were lucky and able to build fortune in new places, they finally lived as settlers. They built temples as symbol of gratefulness to the deities who have protected them through the dangerous voyage from China and then blessed them with better living [1,2].

Chinese temples as historical cultural heritages, presumed should have some indication of community expression and attitude to the new settlement [3]. This research aimed to study existing honored deity statues or objects in the old Chinese temples as symbols of acculturation with local communities.

There was never has any such research with the same subjects published before, the result showed one aspect of acculturation is through practical cultural flexibility of Chinese diasporas effort adapted to local contextual situation, as well as an effort to survive and be accepted by society. The novelty of this knowledge will contributed to future research related to the interpretation of temple function as cultural heritage record.

CASE STUDIES.

The Chinese temples: 1./ Mahabrahma at Bogor, 2./ Hok-Tek-Bio at Bogor, 3./ Sakyawanaram at Pacet (Cipanas–Cianjur), 4./ Giritoba at Bandung, 5./ Talang temple at Cirebon, 6./ Tek-Hay-Kiong at Tegal. These six temples are chosen in the part of western and central Java only, based on their specific deities or objects inside, the honored subjects are local indigenous or local Chinese settlers. (There are more Chinese temples with similar condition spreading across Indonesia.) [4]

RESEARCH STEPS.

Since there is no information available regarding such intended temples, field surveying trips have been done several times extensively, pictures documentation have taken, sorted and finally found these specific temples. Further the background information were collected from published materials [5,6,7], verbal information, local people are questioned and information consolidated. The analysis are done based on Chinese cultural anthropology, then semiotics interpretation of objects as cultural symbols are presented as results. [8,9]
1. CHINESE TEMPLE MAHABRAHMA, BOGOR.

Mahabrahma Temple is located at Bogor around two-hour drive South of Jakarta, The other old Chinese temple in Bogor is Hok-Tek-Bio located at the main road crossing the city. Not far to the south; in the middle of Ciliwung River on a small island, connected by pedestrian steel-suspended bridge to both riversides there is a small Chinese temple dedicated to Pan-ku 盘古 (as host deity). When was the earliest temple built has not known, once there was an oldest wooden tablet dated 1867. The current existing temple is entirely new building from 1970s. The old traditional temple building had totally demolished. Temple to honor Pan-ku is very rare in Indonesia, this temple named Vihara Mahabrahma.

Fig. 1. Vihara Mahabrahma.Temple front elevation.

Inside the temple is a name plate on the altar with Arabic calligraphy representing “Eyang Raden Surya Kencana Dinata Mankubumi”. Local people believe he is the lord of local areas, living at nearby Gede mountain and married to a goddess. On the altar lay the Chinese censer with incense sticks on.

Other name plate and altar with censer of “Eyang Jugo”, his source temple is at Kawi mountain Malang, Eastern Java province. Mount Kawi people legend tells he was a fugitive from China after Dai-ping rebellion, therefore never used his Chinese name again. He is treated as an indigenous holy person by people. (“eyang” means “great grandfather”)

In separate room is “Buyut Gebok”, with the Arabic writing on paper at the upper part of the object (it is big stone, “buyut or uyut” means “the sacred ancestor”), together with them are “Eyang Jaya-Ningrat” and “Embah Sakee”. Some of these objects (big stones) are moved from other places which were cleared for construction of a highway project (Jagorawi). These are animism cult objects of local people. Also “Embah Raden Mangun-Jaya”(big stones), with a “kopiah” Muslim hat on its top, and two packed of “sarong” (fabric used by Muslim when praying), on the ground are two pairs of sandals for man and woman; also a censer available.

In the temple main room area placed several Chinese deities altars together with the local cult objects side by side, in front of each is a censer with incense sticks.

2. CHINESE TEMPLE HOK TEK BIO, BOGOR.

This temple was mentioned in some historical travel reports of several European writers during early 1800s, the exact year of its construction is not known. The host deity is Hok-Tek- Ceng- Sien, or Fu-De-Zheng-Shen 福德正神.

Fig. 2. Chinese temple Hok-Tek-Bio, Fu- De-Miao 福德廟.

In the temple building there is a shrine for “Embah Bogor” means the old man from Bogor. (“Embah” means “respected old man or grandparent” sometimes related with mystic old guru) with Chinese censer and incense sticks. In another room there is a name plate for “Eyang Raden Surya Kencana Dinata Mangkubumi”, honored with censer and incense sticks on a small altar table, people believe he is the lord of local area;
currently still living at Gede mountain nearby Bogor. This subject maybe related with other historic person with the same name: Prabu Surya Kencana, the last king of Pajajaran Buddhish kingdom. In the mid of 16th century he was defeated caused by a joint attack by sultans from Cirebon and Banten who have converted to Muslim.

3. CHINESE BUDDHIST TEMPLE SAKYAWANARAM, PACET, CIPANAS, CIANJUR, BOGOR.

This Buddhist temple was established started early 1970s by Bhiksu Ashin Jinarakkhita (born as The Boan An, 23 January 1923) built at the Cipendawa-Pacet valley of a mountainous area, he tried to blend the Buddhist teaching with local cults in an effort to set up Buddhist religion with local roots [10]. Bhiksu Ashin Jinarakkhita mentioned as the first Indonesian Buddhist monk ordained after centuries of elapse emptiness in national Buddhism. The Pajajaran and Tarumanegara kingdoms in western Java, the Majapahit kingdom in Eastern Java, and the Sriwijaya kingdom in South Sumatra are those last Buddhist kingdoms in Indonesia. [11, 12, 13] When these kingdoms collapsed, then the Buddhism also disappeared totally from national history.

![Fig.3. Landscape view to the vihara(=Buddhist temple) Sakyawanaram complex.](image)

In this temple are several areas which placed with local symbols, besides the major host sculptures of Buddhist. To honor “Eyang Suryakancana” they put a symbol represented by an empty wooden chair and a small altar. The temple location is at the slope of Mount Gede, people believe this area is a territory of “Eyang Suryakancana”. In the other room they placed the figure of Semar and his three sons, Those characters appears in people legends, Javanese called the group as “punakawan” (=servants of royalty in “wayang” stories). The group consists of Semar, Petruk, Gareng, and Bagong. There is also a shrine with a couple statues wearing complete Javanese custom cloths and a small altar, but unfortunately their name is not available.

To suit with local people custom visit, this temple will open up to 3.00 AM morning during the night before Friday which fall together with Kliwon-day (Javanese-named system of week days: Jumat Kliwon). The other days the temple opened from 6.00 AM to 4.00 PM.

4. CHINESE TEMPLE GIRITOB, BANDUNG.

This temple was started as a private family temple Xiu Shan Tang 修善堂. Currently open as public temple.

![Fig.4. The entrance gate to Giritoba temple.](image)

There are some altars inside this temple which specifically assigned for local subjects. A name board representing “Eyang Semar” with a wayang figure made from leather. This figure made for the wayang show. He is a dominant figure in the group of “punakawan”, as father to 3 sons. Story tells him as a powerful being and has supernatural abilities. He has philosophical thinking and sometime appears as advisor to the Pandawa family. For some “Javanese Kejawen Muslim” Semar becoming a honored subject. There are also some “Keris” Javanese style blade, treated as sacred objects. Javanese people believe these old historical wavy knives have supernatural power, which can be utilized by the owner.
Then a figure with illustration of “Wali Songo”, the first Javanese group of nine Muslim evangelist (da’wah). Contrary to the orthodox Islam teaching which prohibit drawing picture of any living person. This figures are honored in the temple with specific altar table.

5. CHINESE TEMPLE TALANG, CIREBON.

This temple in the beginning was “public ancestral temple” Yi-ci 義祠 where public was allowed to put their passed away family members name board (sin-ci, shen-zhu-pai 神主牌) to be cared and honored. The earliest building was built during 1790 on the nearby Tiao Kak Sie temple, then rebuilt 1846 on this current place. In 1937 this temple was dedicated to Confucius. [4] Thus the host deity inside today is Confucius. Inside there are other people name boards, one focal board representing Tan Sam-Cay Kong is put in a special altar and censer, which shown people treated him as a honored person (Kong is a honored Chinese title). At other part of Cirebon city there is still exist the grave of Tan Sam-Cay who was granted nobility title from the Sultan Kasepuhan Cirebon, as Tumanggung Adipati Aria Wira Cula (his Muslim name: Muhammad Syafi’i) and granted a land at Sukalila area. He died in 1739 and buried at that place. Tan was an immigrant from China, Fujian. He became the financial staff to the Sultan Kasepuhan Cirebon. [4] Together with his grave there are also other Muslim graves; people believed they were assistants to Tan Sam-Cay.

This Talang temple together with Sam Po Kong temple at Semarang were claimed by Parlindungan in his book that Portman (a Dutch colonial administrator) has found and moved three buffalo-carts of old Chinese documents. This finding supported a theory that the first Muslim kingdom in Java set up at Demak were established by Chinese ethnic kings. [14] Thus they becoming well-known places as discussion objects for Indonesian historians.

6. CHINESE TEMPLE TEK HAY KIONG, TEGAL

The Ze-Hai-Gong 澤海宮 temple is dedicated to Ze-Hai-Zhen-Ren 澤海眞人, “The deity who favors the sea” he is the host deity in this temple. Placed at the centre of the main hall. People says this temple was built in 1760 as Zhen-Ren-Miao 眞人廟. The prominent person is Kwee Lak-Kwa, Guo Liu-Guan 郭六官 who came from China about 1737, landed at Muara Rejo, Tegal. During the Chinese Batavia massacre in 1740 he joined in the fight against the Dutch. Afterward he disappeared, then he was seen again near Kramat (means sacred spot). Some other temples are also dedicated to him at: Semarang, Pekalongan, Indramayu, and shrines in several other Java temples.[4]

Other version of the legend told Kwee Lak-Kwa, Guo Liu-Guan 生六官 as a merchant sailing to Tegal, and his boat was attacked by pirates but he and assistants could escaped by walking on the sea and disappeared. Later people reports he sometime came to help merchants who has invoked him. [4] His story appears in an old Chinese travel report (1849) written by Ong Tae-Hae (Wang Da-Hai 王大海). [15]
CONCLUSION

The Chinese diasporas treat local cults with respect and joint to believe in them (as in Bogor and Cipanas / Cianjur). Some are even involved with majority religions (in Bandung). They put these local subjects and objects as honored guest in the temple. Some other temples nominated as the host deity a local Chinese person, such deity does not exist in popular Chinese pantheon and he was known only in Java island (in Tegal). Other prominent Chinese person maintain a good relationship with local authorities (such Cirebon Sultan), and he is remembered in an old temple while his historical grave still exists in the city.

Above six temples have shown that as new settlers in new place Chinese immigrants have proved very adaptive to local condition and situation, practical and flexible in acculturation process adoption of local culture was smoothly done.

Chinese traditional cult consist of Taoism, Buddhism, and Confucianism, these few samples of traditional Chinese temple (in Indonesian language called “klenteng”) shows that each Chinese traditional cult can coexistence to stay together amiably with local cults and religion. Those existing Chinese host deity statues and local subjects or objects are placed in the same building, their communities can held their ritual peacefully together without any objection to each other.

This research concluded that old Chinese traditional temples can be treated as artifact to study cultural history of Chinese immigrants. Those six temples proved that at the grass root people can live together quite friendly without any prejudice or suspiciousness, unfortunately until a negative provocateur came and created situation sparking intolerances and conflicts between ethnics and believes.

<table>
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<td>Unknown in China</td>
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<td>Ze-Hai-Zhen-ren 澤海真人</td>
<td>Unknown in China</td>
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</tbody>
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Table 1. Temples with additional local cult and religion (as resume).
REFERENCES


