

# Local Beliefs in Chinese Temples in West Java

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## Abstract

This article writes about an overview of local beliefs in Chinese temples in West Java. Existing local beliefs can be in the form of worship of local sacred figures represented in various forms. This research is a qualitative research method with the aim of providing an in-depth description of local beliefs in Chinese temple in West Java. The research was conducted in five temples in Bogor, Cibarusah, Jonggol, Cikarang. Besides that, it also conducted in Jakarta. Data collection techniques were carried out by in-depth interviews, observation and participant observations. The results of the study show that Chinese beliefs are inclusive and undergo a transformation from China to the archipelago by adapting local beliefs in the area where a temple is located. The purpose of adapting these local beliefs is to respect local sacred figures.

**Keywords:** Local Beliefs, Taoism, Temple.



## A. INTRODUCTION

Taoism entered Indonesia along with the arrival of the Chinese in archipelago. The traces of Taoism in Indonesia, can be seen in talismans or what is known as " hu paper" (符). Hu paper is a tangible form often encountered in daily life of the Chinese people. Additionally, calculations related to bad luck "ciong" (冲) and prayers to Taisui 太歲 can be observed in ceremonies associated with the Lunar New Year. Many of the deities found in temples are also closely linked to Taoism, such as Xuantian Shangdi and Taisui.

The talisman as a form of Taoism traces, it is said that the amulet paper changes from something profane to something sacred through a ceremonial process which is performed by spirit medium (*tangsin*) with the medium's blood that comes out in a trance, the medium then write a spell in the amulet /hu paper. The talisman then becomes sacred.

There are no official records of when Taoism entered the archipelago, aside from the estimated arrival alongside the Chinese immigrants. The architecture of temples and the prominent deities indeed showcase the influence of Taoism, evident in the use of the term 'gong/kiong 宮' and the main deities such as 玄天上帝 Xuantian Shangdi, 天上聖母 Tianshang Shengmu, and others.

The atmosphere of Taoism is prominently evident in the temple. Chinese temples in Indonesia are believed to have existed prior to 1650. This belief stems from records in the Plakaatboek, 1602-1811, which mention the destruction of a temple in the city area around 1650, following a request by the Religious Council during an anti-infidel campaign. A temple was constructed in Batavia in 1650 and became the central temple for the Batavian Chinese community. This includes the Jin De Yuan temple and the Ancol temple (Dabogong Miao). In the 17th century, additional temples for

merchants, which also served as hubs for merchant partnerships, were established. Examples include Dashi Miao or Fengshan Miao (Toasebio temple) in Glodok. Tian Hou Gong is a temple protecting traders and sailors, as it was built facing north toward the sea, such as the one on Jalan Bandengan Selatan. In the 18th century, a temple dedicated to Lu Ban, the patron deity of carpenters and shipbuilders, was built. This temple is also dedicated to the deities of agriculture, seasons, crops, and harvests.

The construction of temples has continued from the 19th century to the present. People worship the deities in these temples, which serve as centers for traditional, ritual, spiritual, social, and entertainment activities. Chinese temples have existed in the archipelago since the arrival of early immigrants from South China. These structures were collectively built by the first immigrants as an expression of gratitude to a figure regarded as their protector, for ensuring their safety during their journey across the vast ocean with basic transportation, allowing them to reach a new land to settle. Over time, various types of temples emerged, adapted to specific needs and particular groups.

The arrival of the Chinese people to the Nusantara region also brought their culture, beliefs, and knowledge. This includes the knowledge of craftsmanship, agriculture, and even more uniquely, the game of "jelangkung," ( 菜籃神/ 菜籃公 cailankong ) which has become a loanword in the Indonesian language. The game of jelangkung is a folk game originating from the ancient beliefs of the Chinese people, aimed at communicating with supernatural entities. "Fuji," 扶乩 as the origin of jelangkung, is a term recognized in both mainstream and folk Taoism.

Temples are not like churches or mosques, people go to temples to ask for help from supernatural powers for daily needs such as healing illnesses, career advice, business, mate, fortune and so on. Temples as places of worship for Chinese people both in their own country of origin, China, and other countries in Southeast Asia as well as Indonesia. Temples are religious worship buildings for diffused religion and not as religious worship buildings for institutional religion. Chinese people have migrated to other countries, they still maintain these traditions and also try to combine their original traditions and local community culture, so that the celebrations carried out by Chinese people today have experienced acculturation with local culture (Desprosianasari & Hartati, 2019). This is because temples, as places of worship, tend to absorb elements of local beliefs. For example, in Bogor and Sukabumi, West Java, many temples honor Eyang Suryakencana as a revered figure, using incense and various flowers in their rituals. In addition to Eyang Suryakencana, temples such as Pan Ku Bio in Pulo Gelis, Bogor, West Java, also have altars dedicated to figures like Eyang Jugo, Imam Sudjono, Raden Mangunjaya, Eyang Jayadiningrat, and Embah Sakee, as well as containing the tombs of Uyut Gebok, the sacred site of Prabu Suryakencana, and the tomb of Embah Imam.

In Jonggol (West Java) area, the Shia Jin Kong temple includes figures like mbah Jago, mbah Surkat, mbah Nagawulung, mbah Jagakarsa, and mbah Sabin for worship. In Cileungsi (West Java), the Han Tan Kong temple features the palace of Embah Mega Mendung. There are also Chinese temples in Indonesia that venerate deities who are

not of Chinese origin, as seen in the Tridharma Temple in Weleri, Central Java, where the Spanish deity Baron Sekeber is worshipped.

The worship for the gods held at temple shows that the temple is a center of activities such as traditional, ritual, spiritual, social control, and entertainment. A creation tradition carried out in celebration of a god's birthday (sejit) is something new created by people in a society or specific social groups for various purposes. Traditions that are created and found within worship for the gods especially at the deity's birthday festival, is due to the absence of standard rules or standard in the Chinese belief system. This flexibility leads to a process of discovery the easy one. Existing power or authority, in this case the temple's management or foundation allows for the discovery of traditions. The discovery of this tradition also occurred in an attempt to attract people's interest or attention to become more popular in society. Temple community carry out the traditional discovery process so that the tradition of honoring gods becomes more interesting, and popularly preferred, through the appearance of entertainment acts at festivals (Hartati, 2020)

In China, there are Chinese rituals that have local beliefs influences. But there were controversies and conflicts in the process of promoting and protecting the local beliefs as intangible cultural heritage. These controversies are based on the notion that the local beliefs are a form of superstition. From this situation, it can be seen tha the local beliefs continue to play a central role in people's daily lives, and practices both in China and also worldwide. (You, 2020). Ritual practices, similar to other places, also has influence from local beliefs, such as Buddhism in Vietnam, also has local Vietnamese influences (Kimbonguila et al., 2019)

The influence of Taoism enters the foundations of belief in Chinese and non-Chinese communities. Taoism as a religion that prioritizes De 德 (powerful virtue) makes a positive contribution to world society. Indonesia also has its own uniqueness and this uniqueness also influences Chinese people in Indonesia. This article was written to describe local beliefs in temples in Indonesia, so that it can provide an overview to understand this uniqueness and develop Indonesia Taoism which also has Indonesian uniqueness.

Besides the rituals, local cultures also influence the development. For example in Macau city, there is the fusion of Chinese culture and western culture inside the development of Macau city. Macau city itself inherits Lingnan culture as a Chinese culture. That Chinese cultures combine with its island culture, and Western religious culture. The fusion of three elements is resulting the integration of diverse cultures manifested in architecture, language, and folk customs (Ma & Chen, 2023).

## **B. LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **1. Taoism**

Taoism is a school of philosophy originating from China. Like Confucianism, Taoism also has many adherents and was quite famous during the Chinese dynasties, especially the Han dynasty (5th century BC). However, Taoism still has differences

with other Chinese and East Asian teachings or philosophies, such as Confucianism, Shintoism, and Buddhism (Wang & Wang, 2021).

When placed in the span of the Chinese civilization line, Taoism does not exist per se. Taoism only emerged in Chinese thought after China shifted from a territorial system to a dynastic system. Even the definitive differentiation of Taoists from schools of thought such as Buddhism and Confucianism only occurred in the middle of the 5th century AD. However, in the early days of the unification of China under a single dynasty, much literature was found containing the basics of Taoist thought, although the authors did not want to be called the founders of new schools of thought (Liang & Segalas, 2024).

Despite having significant differences, it seems that providing a clear demarcation in the form of a definition of Taoism is a bit difficult. This is due to the large amount of literature related to Taoism. And in these various literatures there are many thoughts that are also inconsistent with each other. This is because Taoism itself is not a teaching with a clearly structured system and methodology, like western philosophy. Therefore, it is more appropriate to say that Taoism is a collection of "doctrines" that teach about a way of life (Tan & Bao, 2024).

In terms of socio-political context, Taoism was born out of concern for the situation of society at that time. The imperial political system filled with legal rules made society less free and often felt constrained. The Chinese Empire at that time was marked by injustice, cruelty, arrogance, hypocrisy, misery, and physical and mental suffering due to incessant war. In addition, there were also many recommendations and intelligence and collectivism in the political and social world that were inspired by Confucianism (Zhang, 2021). Seeing this, it is possible that the Taoists realized that all of that - rules, intellectualism, and war - were not the characteristics of the nature of the universe (humans in it) which are innocent, calm and harmonious. Therefore, the longing for purity, innocence, simplicity, gentleness, and spontaneity (not artificial) is the orientation of Taoist philosophy. This kind of offer is what is thought to be a powerful antidote for the alienated society of that time. In addition, the accuracy of reading the situation of society at that time by the Taoists was what later made their philosophy popular in society and even became a new way of life during the Han dynasty (Sun & Sun, 2023).

Every thought must have its own pioneers or figures. Likewise with Taoism. Generally, Yang Chu is recognized as the founder of Taoist philosophy. Yang Chu's teachings were then continued and perfected by Lao Tzu. Lao Tzu himself later became the most important figure in Taoism (Jiefu, 2021). Especially thanks to his work *Tao Te Ching* which contains the main points of Taoist philosophy. However, some experts doubt that *Tao Te Ching* is the work of Lao Tzu. According to them, it is more accurate to say that *Tao Te Ching* is the writing of several authors who are thought to be Lao Tzu's students. Legend has it that during the Han dynasty, Lao Tzu was glorified (divinized) as "Master" (Lao Tzu) (Browne, 2022). This glorification was motivated by the public belief at that time that Lao Tzu brought about a change in imperial spirituality. In addition to Lao Tzu, there were also Chuang Tzu, Lieh Tzu,

and other figures including anonymous writers of Taoist teachings (Cahill & Halperin, 2021).

### C. METHOD

The research method which is used in this article is a qualitative descriptive method. Individual and focus group interviews, participant observation, ethnography are commonly a form of qualitative methods. Qualitative methods have been used across a variety of disciplines to describe how things are. Participant observation in early cultural anthropology, is documented the beliefs and practices of specific cultural groups (Hamilton & Finley, 2019). This qualitative descriptive method employs both case study and ethnographic approaches. The ethnographic method is chosen because it serves both as a means of understanding and a way to acquire knowledge. It functions as a method, a theoretical framework, and a writing style. At the core of each of these is an ethnographic sensibility, which encompasses an understanding of the lived experiences, complexities, contradictions, possibilities, and foundations of any given cultural group (McGranahan, 2018).

Ethnography is valued for its ability to uncover deep insights. However, transforming fieldwork data into a "design language" presents a complex challenge. In the persona creation process, there appears to be limited knowledge on how personas are developed, often leading to recommendations of an ad hoc approach. The literature highlights a methodological gap in generating personas from ethnographic studies (White & Devitt, 2021). The qualitative research method aims to understand phenomena in ways that do not require quantification or where precise measurement is not feasible. This method seeks a thorough understanding of phenomena, facts, or realities. Facts, problems, and events can only be fully comprehended when explored deeply, rather than superficially. This depth of exploration is a defining characteristic and strength of the qualitative method (Yusanto, 2020).

Case studies as research methods are employed to complement qualitative descriptive approaches. The ethnographic approach is used to describe and interpret cultures, social groups, or systems. While cultural meaning can be quite broad, ethnography typically focuses on patterns of activity, language, beliefs, rituals, and ways of life. Ethnographers concentrate on the details of local life, connecting them to wider social processes. The term ethnography is often used interchangeably with case study (Parker-Jenkins, 2018). In this study, case studies were conducted in Chinese temples across West Java. Data were gathered through field research at five temples, involving interviews with temple administrators and visitors, as well as observations and participant observations. The research took place both during deity birthday ceremonies and on regular days.



## D. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### 1. Local Beliefs in Chinese Temples

Religion is a system of beliefs and practices adopted by a group or society to interpret and respond to what is perceived as supernatural and sacred. As a belief system, religion is characterized by its foundation on two key concepts: the sacred and the profane. Temple is a sacred place. The sacredness of the space can be seen in places of worship. A place of worship is a location of divinity, holiness, distinct from profane places, as this is where the higher beings reside. Behavior in such places is observed with regard to purity and respect, unlike in profane locations. Sanctity is not only linked to the past with revered individuals or specific deities, not solely holding particular commemorations, but primarily because the higher beings dwell there. Sacred places gain significance not only due to offerings or tributes made to honor the higher beings, but also because they are objects of divine power bestowed by gods or closely connected to a deity, often containing statues symbolizing gods or higher beings.

Religion is connected to sacred concepts, which are divided into sacred space and sacred time. In Chinese culture, sacred space often refers to mountain and water spirits. These sacred elements became part of state rituals as early as the earliest Chinese dynasties, eventually forming a system of five sacred peaks, five strongholds, four seas, and four waterways, largely shaped by Confucian ritual culture (Jia, 2021).

From the start, Chinese culture has distinguished between the spatial and temporal dimensions in its understanding of the sacred. In the context of ceremonies held at Chinese temples in Indonesia—such as Chinese New Year, the Lantern Festival, God’s Birthday Festival, Hungry Ghost Festival, Mid-Autumn Festival, and Winter Solstice Festival—these events represent popular religious beliefs. In these instances, the temporal dimension, rather than the spatial one, ultimately defines the sacred (Hartati & Tony, 2021).

Besides as a place to worship the gods, the temple is also a place to pray to the ancestors, who are usually people who are respected and have contributed greatly to the community in an area. For his services, the community then built a sacred place to respect, remember and preserve the values passed down by the ancestors. Activities of respecting the ancestors are generally recognized as functioning to uphold the authority and authority of the elders, support social control and maintain the stability of social values.

More specifically, it is in holy places that the divine manifests itself and enters into communion and relationship with humans and the world. By opening up communication between the divine and human, it becomes possible for humans to move from a profane to a sacred form of existence.

The temple as a sacred space, is influenced by local beliefs. Local beliefs can be understood as assumptions or convictions that something believed is true or real in a particular place. Local beliefs can be referred to as popular religion. Traditions that develop within a society are usually more than just cultural or hereditary customs. There are specific beliefs or motives behind the preservation of a tradition by the

community. Similarly, with the traditions that develop in the Nusantara community, they are generally intertwined with inherited beliefs, which underlie the local beliefs that thrive in the temple.

One of the local beliefs is the reverence for ancestors. This reverence is carried out as a cultural heritage that deserves to be preserved and upheld to become a valuable aspect of a culture. The reverence is directed towards local sacred figures. These sacred figures, or those who are sanctified, possess abilities beyond ordinary humans, enabling them to assist the community. Honoring these local sacred figures in the temple is an expression of gratitude from the temple's founder to the ancestors in the temple's region.

Ancestors are generally believed to possess certain powers somewhat similar to the powers of gods and goddesses, and as such, they are considered capable of influencing their living relatives in the world. Respected ancestors, honored through elaborate ancestor veneration rituals, are those who held significant positions during their lifetime, complete with a track record of good moral behavior, such as family heads, lineage leaders, clan chiefs, tribal leaders, royal heads, and leaders of other social groups.

## 2. Local Beliefs in Pan Kho Bio Temple / Vihara Mahabrahma

Pan Kho Bio temple, also known as Vihara Mahabrahma. Pan Kho Bio is the oldest temple in Bogor, West Java. This temple is believed to have been established around the years 1703-1704. True to its name, the Main Deity of this temple is Pan Kho (盘古 Pán Gǔ).



**Figure 1. Pan Kho Temple and Pan Kho Altar**

Within this temple, there are also several sacred sites dedicated to figures who had a significant role in the spread of Islam and individuals associated with the Padjajaran kingdom. On the right side of the room, there is a very large megalithic stone, a relic from ancient times, which has been turned into a sacred site for Raden Mangun Jaya. In the corner of the right side of the room, there is an altar for Eyang

Jugo. At the back of the temple, there is a room containing the sacred sites of Raden Mangun Jaya, Embah Sakee, and Uytut Gebok. This space is also used as a place for Muslims to pray. Additionally, on the outer right side of the temple, there are two sacred sites dedicated to Raden Prabu Surya Kencana and Embah Imam.

Pan Kho temple, also known as Vihara Mahabrahma, is not only used by followers of the Chinese belief but also by Muslims to carry out their religious activities. This temple provides a dedicated space right next to the ancestral shrine of Eyang Gebok for performing prayers and reading the Quran. It even offers facilities for performing ablution (wudhu). Muslims also utilize this space for pilgrimage, Thursday night gatherings or Tawassulan, and traditions related to celebrating the Prophet's birthday, as well as for joint iftar (breaking of fast) or sharing of takjil during each month of Ramadan.

A "petilasan" is a "remnant (usually historical) site, palace, burial ground, and so on." The form of a petilasan often resembles a tomb, with scattered stones on top, complete with a tombstone or name inscription. In most petilasans, there are artifacts or items related to famous or influential figures from the past, such as spears, keris (traditional dagger), treasures, and even body parts that are buried within these sites. In addition to burying various objects, petilasans also serve as places of meditation or solitude for individuals in ancient times. As a result, these places are considered sacred due to the positive energy left behind by those who engaged in meditation there.

Inside the Pan Kho temple, also known as Vihara Mahabrahma, there are seven petilasan (sacred sites) relics of figures who spread the Islamic faith and individuals related to the Padjajaran kingdom, situated alongside the temple's altars of gods and goddesses. The reason for the presence of these petilasans in the temple, as stated by the sources, is that the Chinese people have always been deliberate in constructing their places of worship. They have at least two primary criteria for establishing a place of worship: it must be sacred and strategically located.

The existing relics within the Pan Kho temple were constructed because the community wished to pay homage to these figures for the services and contributions they rendered to the surrounding area of the relics. Additionally, considering that the location was once a place where members of the Padjajaran kingdom and certain figures who spread the Islamic faith rested and resided, the community regarded the site as sacred. As a result, these relics were erected as reminders and symbols of respect for these ancestors.

These relics are situated within the Pan Kho temple because the location was formerly utilized by revered figures as a resting place, a stopover, and also as a site for meditation. Not only that, these ancestors were individuals who made significant contributions to the community and the surrounding region. They possessed charisma and were respected during their lifetimes. It is for these reasons that the community constructed these relics as a form of homage to their ancestors and also to uphold and preserve the values and teachings of these revered ancestors.



The reverence for the local sacred site is demonstrated through the practice of "tawassulan," which takes place beside the Uyt Gebok relic. The tawassulan activity at the Pan Kho temple is regularly conducted every Friday night. Prayers typically involve recitation of short chapters from the Quran, including Surah Yaasin, and conclude with supplications for deceased relatives and elders, beseeching Allah SWT for their peace. Additionally, they offer prayers for the aforementioned ancestors as a gesture of respect towards them.



**Figure 2. Petilasan Eyang Jugo and Imam Sudjono; and Petilasan Embah Raden Mangun Jaya**



**Figure 3. Petilasan Eyang Jayadiningrat and Embah Sakee; and Petilasan Uyt Gebok**



**Figure 4. Petilasan Prabu Surya Kencana and Petilasan Embah Imam**

As occurred at the Pan Kho Bio temple, when the Chinese people arrived at Pulo Geulis, Bogor in the 17th century and sought to establish a place of worship, the location already contained relics of figures from the Padjajaran kingdom and Islamic missionaries respected by the local community. Rather than relocating these existing relics, the Chinese individuals incorporated them alongside the deities they brought, showing their respect by juxtaposing the revered ancestral relics of the local community with their own deities within the premises of the Pan Kho Bio temple. This allowed the surrounding community and temple congregants to come and pray, as well as pay homage to these revered ancestors.

Local beliefs can also be seen in the offerings, namely in the form of perfumes, coins, oil candles, village eggs, betel leaf, flowers, bitter and sweet coffee, jugs and some snacks and side dishes. Each of these objects has its own meaning as a sign of respect for this sacred figure.



**Figure 5. The Offerings Given During the Tawassulan**



### 3. Local Beliefs in Ngo Kok Ong Temple



**Figure 6. Ngo Kok Ong Temple**

The Ngo Kok Ong temple is located in Cibarusah, a sub-district in Bekasi Regency, West Java Province. This temple was founded in 1684. The main god in this temple is Shen Nong 神农. This temple also characterized with the influence of local beliefs, with the presence of Peng An Well (平安 Píng'ān), situated at the rear of the temple. This green-colored structure houses a well known as the Peng An Well (平安 Píng'ān). Inside the Peng An well room, there is an altar for Eyang Surya Kencana and also for Ibu Ratu Nyilarasati. Both of them are revered by the local community as Sundanese ancestors. The figure of Ibu Ratu Nyilarasati is depicted as a combination of a dragon and a buffalo, it symbolizes the fertility of the land. The well at this temple never dries up, even during extended dry periods, that makes this temple attracts many people.



**Figure 7. Altar of Eyang Surya Kencana and Ibu Ratu Nyilarasati**

The altars for Eyang Surya Kencana and Ibu Ratu Nyilarasati serves as a place to honor the ancestors and maintain the beliefs of the local community. The ceremonies conducted in this temple show the influence of local culture or local beliefs. The ceremonies in this temple gets the influence of Sundanese culture (Widya & Hartati, 2024).

#### 4. Local Beliefs in Shia Djin Kong Temple



**Figure 8. Shia Djin Kong Temple**

There are local figure such as Mbah Jago, Mbah Sukat, Mbah Nagawulung, Mbah Jagakarsa and Mbah Sabin in Jonggol, west Java are known as a local character to worship (Hartati et al., 2020). Shia Djin Kong temple is the oldest temple in the Jonggol area, Bogor Regency, West Java. This temple has petilasan (sacred sites) dedicated to notable figures from West Java, namely Embah Jago, Embah Sukat, Embah Nagawulung, Embah Jagakarsa, and Embah Sabin. They were revered individuals who were believed to possess mystical knowledge in the Jonggol area during ancient times. Additionally, they were instrumental in spreading the Islamic religion in the surrounding regions of Jonggol. Embah Jago is one of the descendants of Prabu Siliwangi, and he played a significant role in the establishment of the Jonggol region in the past.

The sacred site/petilasan of Embah Jago is located beside the temple and is part of the same structure. Within this petilasan, various heirlooms can be found, such as keris (traditional daggers), spears, and swords. Additionally, there are decorations adorned with Arabic script. Many temple-goers come here to pay their respects. The site also features offerings like seven-colored flowers, biscuits, incense, frankincense, and water. Both the Chinese and Sundanese communities frequently visit this temple to pray at this petilasan. Furthermore, Shia Djin Kong Temple regularly holds celebrations during the commemoration of the Birthday of the Prophet Muhammad SAW.

On the left side, there is an additional building consisting of two separate rooms. On the left is a small chamber, while on the right is a special room designated for honoring the ancestors of Jonggol, namely the petilasan of Embah Djago, Embah Jagaraksa, Embah Surkat, Embah Sabin, and Embah Nagawulung. Inside this room, there are four platforms. These four platforms are made of white ceramic.

The first platform holds a clay structure used for burning frankincense. The second platform features a hiolo 香炉 made of brass. The third platform is a place for offerings to be placed. The fourth platform contains two small structures resembling miniature houses covered with white curtains, inside of which lies the Quran. Furthermore, within the fourth platform, there are numerous heirlooms such as keris,

spears, swords, and on its walls, there are decorations featuring Arabic script from the Quran.

During the ceremony, it was very clear that Chinese culture and local or Sundanese Buhun culture had similarities, namely that they both worshiped ancestral spirits and made offerings or offerings as an expression of gratitude and respect for their ancestors. Even though the Sundanese cultural tradition of buhun is visible in the birthday celebration ritual of the Shia God Djin Kong, it still does not eliminate the original cultural elements. One of the local cultural acculturations can also be seen from the existence of a special place to pray to the ancestral spirits of Embah Jago, Embah Surkat, Embah Nagawulung, Embah Sabin and Embah Jagakarsa in which there are heirloom objects such as keris, spears, swords, lafadz Allah. There are similarities between local culture and Chinese culture in ancestor worship. Every day, even though it is not a celebration day, they always change the offerings or offerings for the gods in the temple, also for these sacred figures. (Desprosiarasari & Hartati, 2019)

Judging from the offerings contained in the god's birthday ceremony there are influences of local beliefs (Sundanese culture), such as frankincense, rice cone, seven kinds of flowers, green coconut, lime betel, tobacco, stone plantain, coffee.



**Figure 9. The Chamber of Mbah Jago Contain Heirlooms Such as Keris**





**Figure 10. The Offerings Are Placed in a Container Crafted from Banana Sheaths That Are Woven with Small Bamboo Rods**

### 5. Local Beliefs in Vihara Padilapa 油米庙”

Padi Lapa was founded in 1901, after being moved from the Pintu Kecil area. The Padi Lapa was originally located in the Toko Tiga area (Jakarta), around 1823.



**Figure 11. Vihara Padi Lapa 油米庙” and The Exterior of the Backyard Building (Surau)**

About Padi Lapa temple, there is a research conducted by Susilo Junus. She stated that temples are formally used for entertainment and have ample spaces for conducting big crowd festivals. In the past Chinese people using temple to organize wedding reception. In modern time, the trend shifted to function room at restaurant, hotel, or convention centre. Vihara Padi Lapa have big dining room to provide mass dining.

The back courtyard of the temple features a building that houses tombs and heirlooms spanning four generations. According to information provided by the previous temple caretaker, these tombs belong to the lineage of a figure referred to as Mbah Wali Sanga. These tombs are frequently visited by worshippers who come to the temple to offer prayers and seek blessings. The back courtyard also hosts a

separate building, distinct from the main temple structure, with a design resembling a surau (prayer room for Moslems). The color scheme of the ornamental decorations on the front courtyard and the main temple building is dominated by gold, yellow, and red. In contrast, the building in the back courtyard is characterized by shades of green and black.

In this backyard, this surau inside there is a special offering place for wali sanga which is only open on Thursday nights. There is a statue above the altar, the statue is a statue of Sunan Gunung Jati's grandson, namely Prabu /King Siliwangi who is depicted with a tiger. In addition to the statue of the incarnation of Prabu/ King Siliwangi, what is different from the temple in the main building is the form of offerings that are very Javanese, such as lisong, seven kinds of flowers and frankincense.



**Figure 12. Tiger as the figure of Prabu Siliwangi**

At the Padi Lapa Temple apart from Chinese festivals there are also events to commemorate Islamic festivals. There are three times of ceremony which are held, namely Eid al-Adha (Islamic festival of sacrifice), Eid al-Fitr (Islamic festival marking the end of Ramadan), and the Birthday of the Prophet Muhammad SAW. The ritual that is carried out is a ceremony which in Javanese culture is called a slametan. Slametan is the Javanese version of what is perhaps the world's most common religious ceremony, the communal feast. As almost everywhere it symbolizes the mystical and social unity of those who participate in it. Friends, neighbors, co-workers, relatives, local spirits, dead ancestors, and almost forgotten gods, sit together and are therefore bound into a particular social group that vows to help and work together. The slametan itself can be held to respond to almost any event that wants to be commemorated, redeemed, or sanctified.

A "slametan" is conducted during Eid al-Adha by inviting several people to enjoy a communal "tumpeng" meal. During this "slametan" event in the celebration of the Prophet's birthday (Maulid), purification of heirloom objects is also carried out, following the Javanese calendar system. However, the local belief in Padi Lapa because it is believed that in the past, one of the "wali sanga" did indeed take a rest around this temple. Different from other Chinese temples in general, this temple is

numerous people every Friday night and this space is only open at this time which is a sacred time where people pray in the wali sanga worship room.



**Figure 13. Inside Wali Sanga Cult on Friday Night and the Offerings Chamber**

#### **6. Local Beliefs in Tek Seng Bio Temple 德圣庙**

Tek Seng Bio is located in Cikarang, West Java founded in 1899. This temple, devoted to Liem Tay Soe Kong as its primary deity, is noteworthy for being owned by the Tjio Lo Weh family. Tek Seng Bio oriented towards Confucianism in terms of its style and practices (Farinuddin & Pradjoko, 2024). This temple honoring the revered local figure at the Tek Seng Bio temple is a manifestation of gratitude from the temple's founder to the ancestors in West Java. There are four revered local sacred figures who are also worshipped at the Tek Seng Bio temple, namely Embah Raden Suryakencana, Aki Jenggot (Tay Lao Soe), Imam Soedjono (Dji lao Soe), and Embah Sabin. These altars are situated at the back and adjacent to, or side by side with, the Chinese deities worshipped in the temple.

Out of these four revered local sacred figures, two were instrumental in spreading the Islamic religion. Embah Raden Surya Kencana and Embah Sabin are local sacred figures from West Java who propagated the Islamic religion in the Sunda Land. On the other hand, Aki Jenggot (Tay Lao Soe) and Imam Soedjono (Dji Lao Soe) were spiritual advisors to Prince Diponegoro and played a role in disseminating Islam in the Land of Java. These local sacred figures continue to be remembered by the Indonesian community to this day.

The prayer of homage to the revered local sacred figures for Muslims is conducted on important days in the Islamic religion. The timing of these ceremonies is chosen by the temple's founder in accordance with existing traditions, such as during the celebration of the Prophet Muhammad's birthday (Maulid Nabi Muhammad) and on the day of Satu Suro or Satu Muharam.





**Figure 14. Tek Seng Bio temple and Altar of Local Sacred Figures**

The existence of respect for sacred figures at the Tek Seng Bio temple is a form of Sundanese culture which was preserved by the founder of the Tek Seng Bio temple, with the aim that people can live side by side and together with the surrounding community wherever they are, and also respect West Javanese community leaders and West Java scholars. The temple founder also honored the sacred figure who spread Islam in Central Java, with the aim of preserving the ancestors who lived on the island of Java. All the offerings have certain symbolic meaning in Sundanese culture.



**Figure 15. The Offerings Contains Eggs and Betel Leaf and Burning Lisong/ Cigarettes as an Offering**

The presence of Sundanese culture in Chinese temple ceremonies highlights the influence of local beliefs. Integrating local wisdom into these ceremonies is essential for fostering community engagement. Such ceremonies can enhance community knowledge and promote multicultural understanding. This influence is particularly evident in the deity's birthday ceremonies held at temples in West Java. These ceremonies, considered one of the most important in Chinese tradition, demonstrate how Chinese culture in Java must adapt to and depend on Javanese culture for acceptance. Unlike in China, certain elements such as the keris cult tradition and washing the god's statue with flowers are incorporated into the ceremonies. This borrowing of external elements by the Chinese community in Java has led to a diminishing of traditional Chinese cultural practices, with Javanese culture becoming more prominent in the temple birthday ceremonies (Hartati, 2023).

Javanese Muslims continue to uphold the ritual because it reflects both Javanese and Islamic values. The core of this idea is the alignment between Islamic teachings and Javanese traditions, particularly concerning the respect and honor given to ancestors and parents. Maintaining these relationships is important throughout

one's life and is symbolically expressed even after death (Nasir, 2019). Similarly, Chinese cultural practices highlight the importance of maintaining connections between individuals and their ancestors, which is evident in their rituals.

## E. CONCLUSION

One of the cultural practices in Java is the reverence for ancestors. This act of reverence is carried out as a cultural heritage that needs to be preserved, maintained, and developed to remain a significant asset to Javanese culture. The West Javanese community that pays homage to ancestors includes the Sundanese people. The homage performed by the Sundanese community is directed towards local sacred figures. These revered figures possess qualities beyond those of ordinary humans, enabling them to assist the community. The revered local sacred figures in the Sundanese community have made significant contributions to the West Java region in the past. These ancestors are usually individuals who have displayed exceptional merit, charisma, and are revered by the local population. The locations that were once used by these ancestors as resting places, stopovers, and places of meditation are respected. Furthermore, these ancestors have also played important roles in the society and the surrounding area, and they are respected and charismatic figures during their lifetimes. It is for these reasons that the community has constructed ancestral shrines as a form of reverence and to uphold and preserve the values and teachings of these ancestors. The veneration of deities and ancestors takes place in temples, serving as centers for activities with traditional, ritual, spiritual, social control, and entertainment functions. The Chinese community in Indonesia has merged their beliefs with local beliefs because the foundational beliefs of the Chinese people are polytheism, reverence for ancestors, and pragmatism. It shows that Chinese beliefs are inclusive and undergo a transformation from China to the archipelago by adapting local beliefs in the area where a temple is located. The local belief in Chinese temples shows the ritual that do not exist in China such as bathing the keris with flower water for purification.

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