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Table of Contents

Editorial Team

Table of Contents

A Cognitive Linguistic Approach to Life Metaphor in Tetralogy *Laskar Pelangi*(1)

Merry Lapasau, Sulis Setiawati

Chinese Culture in The Cirebon Sultanate: Symbolic and Philosophical Meanings(15)

Mukhoyyaroh, Didin Saepudin, M. Ikhsan Tanggok

Islamic Book and Islam in Indonesia: a Historical Perspective(29)

Jajat Burhanudin

Multilingualism in Sunan Ampel Tomb Complex: A Linguistic Landscape Study.....(43)

Kartika Nuswantara, Hurrotul Firdausiyah, Zuliati Rohmah, Diana Nur Sholihah

Representation of the Self and Other in Joe Biden’s Democratic National Convention Speech(57)

Ingrit Vianica, Trisnowati Tanto

The Study of Mosque Management in Indonesia and Spain: Majority and Minority Muslim Factors(71)

Sukron Kamil, Zakiya Darojat

INSANIYAT

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Chinese Culture in the Cirebon Sultanate: Symbolic and Philosophical Meanings

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Abstract

This paper aims to explore the symbolic and philosophical meaning of the elements of Chinese culture in the Kasepuhan Palace, Cirebon. In this palace, there are many Chinese cultural ornaments that adorn this historical site. One of them is the Siti Inggil building, where there are walls pasted with Chinese ceramics. The primary data of this paper were obtained from the field by means of observation, documentation, and direct interviews. Data analysis used descriptive qualitative and semiotic methods with archaeological, anthropological, and socio-historical approaches. This article confirms that the Chinese ornaments in the Cirebon Sultanate prove the process of cultural acculturation between Chinese culture and Cirebon culture. In Chinese tradition, the dragon is a symbol of the Chinese emperor, while the image of the Phoenix bird is a symbol of the female emperor, peace and prosperity, and the image of the fish is a symbol of darkness and luxury.

Keywords: Keraton, Cirebon Sultanate, Chinese, Symbolic, Philosophical

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Introduction

Talking about ethnic Chinese in Indonesia is very interesting. In some respects, the issue regarding China has not been resolved until now. The problem is so complicated and complex (Suryadinata, 2002). The time span is quite long, making historical, cultural, political, and economic problems overlap each other (Setijadi, 2016). Ethnic Chinese have carried out trading activities in Southeast Asia, including in Indonesia long before Westerners arrived in the archipelago. This fact is emphasized by Azra that the relationship between the archipelago and the Chinese has existed since pre-Islamic times (Azra, 1994, 1998).

In the 16th and early 17th centuries, they exchanged goods from China such as silk, spices, medicines, and rare goods from Southeast Asia (MS.Heidhues, 2017; Wiryomartono, 2020). Before the arrival of the West to the archipelago, the relationship between the Chinese and the natives was very harmonious. The “intimate” relationship between the ethnic Chi-



nese and the Archipelago has left many important legacies in the history of the archipelago, especially in Cirebon. Cirebon is one of the big cities in West Java Province which borders Central Java. It also has a strong historical value as part of the map of the spread of Islamic history in the archipelago. The history of the Sultanate of Cirebon City began in the 15th century AD.

In the Cirebon Sultanate itself, there are actually several palaces, but the focus of this study is on the Kasepuhan Palace. The reason that the Kasepuhan palace is taken in the concentration of this research is because it is the oldest palace. It was the first palace to be established in Cirebon. It is directly related to the early history of the city of Cirebon. It was formerly the Padepokan Pakungwati. In addition, the Kasepuhan palace is very unique and has different characteristics from other palaces in the archipelago. The author considers that Keraton Kasepuhan Cirebon combines elements of religion and culture in its construction concept. This palace combines several cultural elements, namely Islam, Hinduism, Europe, and China (Anisa, 2009).

In various historical sites of Cirebon, especially the Kasepuhan Palace, Chinese ceramics are historical witnesses. Chinese ceramics adorn every corner of the Kasepuhan palace. This shows that there has been a harmonious social contact between the Chinese and the Cirebon people in the past, resulting in cultural acculturation. Chinese culture is found in the buildings of *Dalem Agung Pakungwati*, *Siti Inggil* (including *Mande Pendawa Lima*, *Mande Semar Tinandu*, *Mande Karsemen*, *Mande Pengiring*), *Kucung Kutagara Wadasan*, and *Pintu Buk Bacem*. However, the focus of this paper is on the Chinese ornaments that adorn the walls of *Siti Inggil's* building.

Studies on Chinese culture and Cirebon culture in Indonesia have been studied and written by several scholars with various perspectives. Muhaimin wrote about *The Islamic Traditions of Cirebon* (Muhaimin, 1995). He discussed the Cirebon people's beliefs about what they do and how they behave. According to Muhaimin, what they believe motivates what they do, and what they do reflects a verbal expression of what they believe in. Muhaimin found that all traditions that developed in Cirebon society is also found in the Islamic tradition, namely based on revelation or justification in Islamic legal literature, regardless of whether it is taken from the Qur'an, Hadis and Fiqh of the ulama. In contrast to the author's study, Muhaimin's study is more concentrated on non-material culture.

Besides Muhaimin, the next study was conducted by Dewi and Annisa (Anisa, 2009). These two scholars wrote about cultural acculturation in the development of the Kasepuhan Palace in Cirebon. The results of their research indicate that the cultural acculturation of the Cirebon Kasepuhan Palace occurred due to the influence of the strategic location and the open attitude of the Sultan of Cirebon. This makes Cirebon a centre of trade, a meeting place for various ethnic groups, religions and cultures between nations. It was further stated that the open attitude of the Sultan of Cirebon became an important point for the entry of several foreign cultural influences, such as: Chinese, Hindu, Buddhist, Javanese, European, Islamic and Arabic cultures in Cirebon society, especially in the Kasepuhan Palace building.

The latest study on Kesepuhan Cirebon was written by Dyah and Zein (Dyah. & Zein, 2020). They wrote about "*The Influence of Cultural Acculturation on Architecture of Keraton Kasepuhan Cirebon*". Dyah and Zein revealed that the acculturation seen in the architecture of the building shows the influence of European and Chinese cultures, as well as Hindu and Javanese cultures. Acculturation in Keraton Kasepuhan Cirebon is applied to various architectural elements. The architectural elements of the building structure are located on the pillars and roof of the building. In non-architectural building structural elements, cultural acculturation can be found in arches, walls, doors and windows. While elements of building decoration, cultural acculturation can be found in wall decoration and sculpture.

It can be seen that the study conducted by Dyah and Zein was focused on palace architecture (Dyah. & Zein, 2020), while Dewi and Annisa's (2009) study was focused on cultural acculturation. In contrast to the two studies, the author in this article focuses more on the relationship between Chinese and Cirebon cultures by exploring the symbolic and philosophical meaning of the Chinese ornaments found in the Kesepuhan Palace. In addition, their work only mentions the influence of outside cultures that are acculturated to the Kasepuhan palace. Moreover, previous scholarly studies did not exploit the images contained in these ornaments.

In contrast to this study, in this article, the author determined some external influences acculturated to the Kasepuhan palace, also reveals symbolic and philosophical meanings in depth of people and the Cirebon Sultanate. Even so, it must be admitted that their research helped the author in identifying the Chinese cultures that existed in the Kasepuhan palace.

Method

This article does not attempt to find new artefacts, but only explores the symbolic and philosophical meaning of the Chinese ornaments in the Kesepuhan Palace. Therefore, data collection was carried out by means of observation, documentation, recording, and interviews with those who were most familiar with the history of the Palace. In addition, data were also collected from library sources, especially secondary data relevant to the theme and topic of this article's discussion. Researchers recorded the data collected through various acquisition techniques. The researcher then re-recorded everything to be used as field notes. The data is then processed by means of data reduction in the inclusion and exclusion process. In addition, the researchers carried out the coding process in such a way that the data sources could still be traced quickly and easily. In the next step, the coded notes are processed by sorting, classifying, synthesizing, and summarizing. Along with these steps, the authors interpret and analyse the data with qualitative descriptive analysis methods. Technically, data analysis uses several scientific disciplines as approach methods such as semiotics and anthropology. In addition, because this study is included in the scope of history, it is specifically used an archaeological discipline approach that focuses on digging up artefacts and archaeological objects. Data analysis used several scientific disciplines as approach methods such as semiotics and anthropology. This study is included in the scope of history, so it is specifically used an archaeological discipline approach that focuses on digging up artefacts and archaeological objects. Data analysis uses several scientific disciplines as approach methods such as semiotics and anthropology.

Result and Discussion

The literature on the relationship between Indonesia and the Chinese is very limited (Tanggok, 2010).). As a result, it is difficult to clearly determine the beginning of the arrival of the Chinese to the archipelago. Vleming suggested that Indonesians and Chinese, especially in Java, only made contact at the beginning of the 5th century AD. This was marked by the arrival of a Chinese Buddhist priest named Fa Hian. Around the year 413, Fa Hian stayed in Java for five months on his way to India. According to his records, at that time there were no Chinese living in Java. In 991, several Srivijaya envoys went to China and stayed in Canton for a year (Mulyana, 2007). According to Chinese sources, when Srivijaya emerged and played its role as a metropolitan city, namely as a trade intermediary between the Far East and the Middle East, many Muslim ambassadors who were sent from Sriwijaya to the Chinese emperor (Qurtuby, 2003) from 10th century to 12 century.

Relations between the archipelago and the Chinese also existed during the period of the Mongolian Emperor Kublai Khan. In 1293, China sent troops to punish Kertanegara

who had disfigured the Chinese envoy Meng Ki with 20,000 soldiers. Relations between the archipelago and China also developed during the Ming Dynasty. This is evidenced by the dispatch of Zheng He to lead the muhibbah expedition. Zheng He was successful in his voyage mission was not only due to military strength, but also to his identity as a Muslim. Islamic identity was able to become social glue and create emotional solidarity in the “Muslim Network” area on the Indian Ocean coast at that time (Huan & Sheng-Ian, 1970).

There were at least three stages of the arrival of ethnic Chinese in Cirebon, starting with the arrival of Zheng He and his troops totalling approximately 27,000 people at the port of Muara Jati in 1415 AD. Raden Ahmad Rafan Safari Hasyim explained, Cheng Ho stayed in Cirebon for seven days. In a short time Zheng He’s troops carried out a marriage with the Cirebon residents. So, the relationship between Cirebon and Chinese had existed long before the Cirebon kingdom (Radar Cirebon, 2017). Even Zheng He and his army built a Lighthouse. This visit is also found in the book *Purwaka Caruban Nagari* which mentions the term Cirebon comes from the word “Caruban”, then “Carbon” and finally Cirebon (Atja, 1972). According to MA Huan’s report in his book *Ying Yai Sheng Lan*, Cirebon is written under the name Che Li Wen. According to Ibn Bathutah, Zheng He placed in every port and in every place of Chinese political consuls and warehouses. Because the Cirebon Kingdom was not yet established at that time and Muara Jati port was only a small port, Zheng He only placed people who wanted to live in Cirebon. In the book “Chinese Muslims in Java in the 15th and 16th Century, De Graaf relates that Haji Kung Wu Ping, who was a subordinate of Zheng He, founded the Hanafi Chinese Muslim community in Sembung, Sarindil and Talang. Then Haji Tan Eng Hoat alias Maulana Ifdhil Hanafi alias Prince Adipati Wirasanjaya developed Chinese Muslim settlements (Graaf HJ de, 1998).

Second, around the end of the 15th century with the arrival of Princess Ong Tien. The relationship between ethnic Chinese and the people of Cirebon occurred again more intensively during the period of Syarif Hidayatullah (1479-1568). The relationship between them became more intimate with the marriage of Ong Tien’s daughter as one of Sunan Gunung Djati’s wives. Ong Tien was the daughter of the Emperor of the Ming Dynasty. It is said that this princess fell in love with Sunan Gunung Jati after her first sight. Princess Ong Tien came to Cirebon to look for Sunan Gunung and wanted to marry her (Huang, 2006). Princess Ong Tien’s goal was to find Sunan Gunung Jati to cure her pregnant stomach. The beginning of the story is that Sunan Gunung Jati went to China to preach. There, Sunan Gunung Jati is known as a powerful person and often heals diseases. Finally, the King of China tried Sunan Gunung Jati’s magic by telling him to guess his daughter’s stomach, which at that time looked bloated because of a bundle of cloth that was deliberately worn by the princess on the king’s orders. When Sunan Gunung Jati replied that her stomach was distended because of her pregnancy, the King of China immediately laughed and immediately ordered Sunan Gunung Jati to leave China (Hidayat, 2008).

Third, many ethnic Chinese refugees from the Batavia area came to the Cirebon area in the 18th century, precisely after the *Chinesenmoord* incident. Hadinoto in Mahdun’s work explains that ethnic Chinese already existed in Cirebon before Europeans came to the area. This is evidenced by the presence of a Chinese settlement in front of the VOC fort “de Bescherming” which was built in the city of Cirebon (Hadinoto, 2017).

Since the Chinese first arrived in Cirebon, they have mingled with the local community in various fields of life. The result can be seen in the natural integration of their lives. Ethnic Chinese have united with the local population and have experienced acculturation, one of which is through marriage. Therefore, most of the population has become *peranakan* and settled in Indonesia, especially Cirebon (Radar Cirebon, 2020). Various arts and traditional ceremonies continue to be maintained and preserved by the Chinese community or ethnic

group in Cirebon. One example is the Chinese New Year ceremony which is enlivened with various kinds of arts or performances such as lion dance, lion, and others.

The struggle of Chinese and Cirebon culture in the Cirebon Sultanate has resulted in cultural acculturation that can be found in the Kasepuhan Palace and other historical artefacts. The author notes that historical buildings such as the Kasepuhan Palace and the various artefacts that exist have their own uniqueness and characteristics compared to other palaces and artefacts. Kasepuhan Palace and some of its relics are so rich with decorations from the outside, especially Chinese decorations. The strong Chinese decoration can't be separated from the role of the ethnic Chinese present, especially the Chinese princess named Ong Tien Nio, Ong Tien Nio is a very meaningful figure for the ruler of Cirebon, namely Sunan Gunung Jati because she is one of his wives.

Cirebon Sultanate Profile

Kasepuhan Palace was once the palace of Pakungwati. However, because it was occupied by Sultan Sepuh, the name was changed to Keraton Kasepuhan. Kasepuhan Palace covers an area of 18.5 hectares. The border of this palace is a wall that extends from north to south. To enter the first courtyard there is the *Pangrawit* Bridge, and the door with a wall that surrounds it. Before entering the first courtyard, there is a *Pancaratna* building on the west side of the entrance and a *Pancaniti* building on the east side of the entrance. The first courtyard on the east side is the *Siti Inggil* complex and the *Penggada* gate. To enter the second courtyard, there are two *Paduraksa* gates on the west side and enter *Langgar Dalem*.

Next is a semi-private area, where the Sultan works and receives guests. The area can be entered through the *Gledegan* door. Lastly, there is the private area of the Sultan and his family. The area can be entered through the *Buk Bacem* gate (Rosmalia, 2018). According to the authors' observations, the Kasepuhan Palace is very unique and has different characteristics from other palaces in the archipelago. Kasepuhan Palace is decorated with many Chinese ornaments in addition to other ornaments. The Chinese ornaments can be seen from the very front of the building, namely *Siti Inggil*. Many Chinese ceramic patches were found that adorn *Siti Inggil's* walls.

The installation of ceramic plates from China at the Kasepuhan Palace, especially in the *Siti Inggil* building in various literatures is closely related to Islamic culture (Tylor, 2005). Berthold Laufer (1874-1934), an anthropologist working in the Philippines was the first to pay special attention to Chinese ceramic flakes for the study of cultural and commercial exchange (Laufer, 1912) Fleisher and Laviolette say that since the late 13th century, archaeologists in several locations have noted the presence of Chinese-style pottery in the main part of the mosque. Scholars argue for the parallel use of Chinese-style ceramics in religious and domestic contexts that may be closely related to Islam (J. A. Laviolette Fleisher, 2007).



Figure 1

Source: Mukhoyaroh Documentation, 2020

The Chinese ornaments are very strong in colouring the Kasepuhan Palace and other historical objects. Especially after the marriage between Sunan Gunung Jati and a Chinese princess named Ong Tien. The princess brought valuables from the Chinese palace such as glasses, plates, pots and other ceramic items and left for Cirebon on an imperial Chinese sailboat, accompanied by Commander Lie Guan Cang and Captain Lie Guan Hian (Sulendraningrat, 1985). The ceramics brought by Ong Tien are still stored in the Kong Building to this day. The ceramics in the Kong Building are from the Ming Dynasty, this opinion is also reinforced by the testimony of a Chinese scientist named Wan Ming. In addition, ceramics were also imported by the king's envoys and traders considering that Cirebon in the past had been an international port.

The marriage between Sunan Gunung Jati and the daughter of Ong Tien is reinforced by the writings of Pires which says that a Chinese ruler gave his daughter to a Javanese vassal to marry (Pires, 1944). The author agrees with some opinions which say that from Putri Cina, the expansion of the Cirebon palace used a lot of wall decorations from Chinese porcelain. Some urn-shaped decorations from the Ming Dynasty that were brought to Cirebon are still preserved today. Furthermore, Raden Ahmad Rafan Safari Hasyim also said that at that time goods or products from China, especially ceramics, were known to be very good, both in terms of motifs and quality. Everyone - from the Sultan to the people - likes the motifs or ornaments found on the ceramics or silks brought by Princess Ong Tien. Then in its development the ornaments also coloured and influenced the culture that developed in Cirebon. This opinion is also reinforced by the statement of PR Arief Natadiningrat-Sultan Sepuh XIV-that Chinese culture has begun to significantly influence Cirebon culture since the arrival of Ong Tien's daughter (Sofiyawati, 2017).

Gillin said, "*Amalgamation is a most favorable condition of the operation of the process of assimilation*". Gillin further said that assimilation and acculturation can occur if it fulfills several things, including: tolerance; equal opportunities in the economic field; respect for other people and cultures; mixed marriage; and external threats. (Gillin & Gillin, 1948). In line with Gillin, Abadi also in his research on assimilation in Sumenep found that *cross marriage* is one of the important institutions capable of producing quality and natural integration, which in turn results in acculturation and assimilation in various dimensions of life. Furthermore, Abadi said that quality assimilation will only occur if each individual or group upholds human dignity (Abadi, 2012).

Acculturation and assimilation require the interaction of both parties in a balanced way. Acculturation and assimilation necessitate reciprocal interactions. Interaction also requires tolerance and respect for diversity. Thus, actually in acculturation there are divine values and human values. Religion teaches that every human being respects other human beings and every believer respects the diversity of other people, and these values need to be upheld by a pluralistic Indonesian society. Through history, it is hoped that valuable lessons can be learned to be applied in the present and in the future. One of the rules of *fiqh* reads, "*al-Muhafadzoh 'alal qadimis-sholih wal akhdzu bil jadidil ashlah*".

The Cirebon Sultanate was founded in 1482 AD and marked a new era in West Java. The reason, Cirebon was previously under the rule of the kingdom of Pajajaran. However, it should be emphasized that the establishment of the Cirebon Sultanate was not the beginning of the Islamizing movement, but the formation of a political institution that manifested as the Cirebon Sultanate was a continuation of the Islamizing process that had taken place and was carried out by preachers before the arrival of Sunan Gunung Jati (Tendi & Abdurakhman, 2019). Before Cirebon became a sultanate, this area was a small hamlet on the lips or on the coast of Cirebon Bay, people called it Lemah Wungkuk or Dukuh Tegal Alang-Alang because this hamlet was led by Ki Gedeng Alang-Alang (Lubis, 2000).

Ki Somadullah built Lemah Wungkuk on the orders of his teacher “Syekh Nurjati” and invited people who used to live in Amparan Jati, which was one of the most important international trade routes and ports at that time. In the project to establish the area, it was recorded that 52 people from different ethnic groups were registered to help and join. They worked together and join hands to clear the forest. Lemah Wungkuk is growing rapidly and attracting many people to settle down. The population increased sharply from 52 to 346 in a short time, with details of 196 people from Sunda, 106 people from Java, 16 people from Sumatra, 4 people from Malaysia, 2 people from India, 2 people from Persia, 3 people from Syria/Syria, 11 people from Arab and 6 people from China. The diversity of ethnic groups and the origins of the population shows how fast this area is developing, both demographically and economically. (Rosyidin, 2014).

Ki Somadullah succeeded in developing the Lemah Wungkuk area to surpass the Amparan Jati area, where Muara Jati became the centre of an international port. Also in its development, Amparan Jati later became part of the Lemah Wungkuk area and its international port was transferred to Lemah Wungkuk. Lemah Wungkuk area is getting bigger day by day so this area changed its name to Caruban or Cerbon or Cirebon which means mixed (Rosyidin & Syafaah, 2016), because the people who inhabited the place came from various nationalities, religions and languages as well as different professions. Cirebon then became one of the centres of transmission and trade of knowledge with the increasingly busy and strategic Cirebon port in international and regional shipping and trade networks. The number of artifacts found shows the complexity of culture and civilization that once stopped and developed in Cirebon.

In 1479 Prince Cakrabuana handed over power to his nephew Syarif Hidayatullah. Since 1482 Syarif Hidayatullah no longer wanted to pay tribute to the King of Pajajaran like his uncle. Since then, Cirebon has become a fully sovereign kingdom. Sheikh Syarif Hidayatullah finally received the mandate to continue the government from his uncle. His title is *Inggang Sinuhun Sunan Jati Purba Wisesa Panetep Panataagama Awliyah Khalifatur Rasulallah Shallallahu ‘Aliahi Wasalam*“. Sunan Gunung Jati was appointed by Raden Ali Rokhmatullah who is also the chairman of the Wali Songo Council.

Symbolic and Philosophical Meaning

Culture is not static and rigid, but continues to change according to existing social changes. A culture in society will continue to experience changes, including traditions, and cultural changes usually occur because of contact communication or dialogue through language. The process of cultural transfer will not occur without language. Dialogue requires equality and questioning between the parties involved. The assumption that certain cultures are superior to other cultures will only result in fascism, nativism and chauvinism. It is hoped that the dialogue will emerge new ideas that can enrich culture, and besides enriching culture, the dialogue also aims to find common ground between existing cultures (Mahfud, 2016).

Culture is always created without being separated from meaning. Usually this cultural meaning is made using symbols as well as symbols in the Kasepuhan Sultanate. From the meaning of the symbol usually includes various aspects. However, it should be noted that each region has a different cultural symbol, which distinguishes its own characteristics. Talking about symbols will automatically talk about semiotics. Piliang says that semiotics is the study of signs, their functions, and their meanings (Piliang, 2004).

Signs in human life always convey information, so they are communication. In Queiroz and Stjernfelt quoted from Peirce’s theory, namely the sign of an image can be divided into icons, indexes, and symbols. An icon is a sign similar to the object it represents. It can also be said that the icon is a sign that has the same characteristics as the expected characteristics.

An index is a symbol that has a causal relationship with the content it represents, or is also called a symbol as evidence. This symbol is a sign based on a convention, regulation or mutually agreed agreement. Symbols can only be understood if someone has understood the meaning that has been agreed upon in advance. Symbol as an adjective means bigger, more meaningful, more valuable, belief and achievement. Symbolic functions are used to bridge real objects or objects with abstract objects whose meaning exceeds the meaning of visible objects (J. & Queiroz, 2019). Talking about Elias's theory of symbols, Bucholc said that symbols are human creations, which embody expressions and natural phenomena in meaningful forms, and their meanings can be understood and recognized by certain people (Bucholc, 2020).

Berger and Luckmann say that symbols are human efforts to institutionalize their views or knowledge about society. By treating society as a dynamic process, humans have built a universal symbolic world called a way of life or ideology. Therefore, the existing social reality is a social construction made by the community itself in the historical process of the past, present, and future. At the same time, Turner says that by examining the symbols, you will find out who owns the culture and who will inherit it in the future. The symbol is something that is well known and understood by the public because the symbol exists in everyday life (Turner, 1975, 1977).

Therefore, it is clear that there is archaeological evidence that the development of Chinese-style ceramics in the Cirebon area, especially in the Kasepuhan Palace, seems to be related to the entry of Islam, because in the Kasepuhan Palace, which incidentally is the Sultanate of Islam, Chinese-style ceramics were found. Ceramics can be seen in other historical buildings such as the Kanoman Palace, the tomb of *Astana Gunung Jati*, the *Gunung Jati Mosque* and *Guha Sunyaragi*. The author saw that the import of ceramics in high quantities is a social symbol. This unique commodity also functions as a social symbol and the embodiment of trading power.

One of the buildings in front of the Kasepuhan Palace is the *Siti Inggil* Wall. On the walls of *Siti Inggil* there is the door of Candi Bentar as well as patches of Chinese ceramics and Dutch ceramics. This decoration is placed at the front of the Kasepuhan Palace so that everyone can see it. The Candi Bentar gate, which is influenced by Hinduism, means that although the Cirebon Sultanate is an Islamic Sultanate, it still respects the ancestors while still accommodating elements of Hindu culture. In this way, Hindus who see the gates of Candi Bentar and Chinese when they see Chinese ornaments will feel their representation.

As mentioned above, various archaeological evidences also show that in Keraton Kasepuhan there are various colours of culture. The philosophical meaning, although Cirebon is an Islamic sultanate, is very open to social dynamics and includes cultural diversity and others. This sultanate hopes to build cultural diversity and uphold the beliefs of others. The Sultanate hopes to achieve religious and cultural harmony in the life of the nation. This shows that since the beginning of the existence of the Cirebon Sultanate, it has become the basis for the development of a tolerant, inclusive Islam or in a language that is currently booming, namely *Wasathiyyah* Islam or moderate Islam. Regarding the concept of "*Wasathiyyah*" Islam mentioned above. The author's opinion is emphasized by Mahfud in his paper that the Cheng Ho mosque in Surabaya, which has a Chinese architecture, is a symbol of openness and multiculturalism in Indonesia (Mahfud, 2018).

Muslim scholar Azyumadi Azra asserted that "*Wasathiyyah*" Islam or moderate Islam is basically an old tradition religiously or culturally. He further stated that *Wasathiyyah* Islam was introduced by previous scholars, starting from its presence in the archipelago. *Wasathiyyah* Islam met with various cultures and ethnic groups, which emphasized the "middle" attitude.-gave birth to an Indonesian Muslim who was *Wasathiyyah*, inclusive and

tolerant. For example, Javanese culture is *tepo seliro*, and *guyub* is a culture that emphasizes togetherness, does not “win-win”, is not selfish, and does not win alone. *Wasathiyah* Islam or moderate Islam that developed in Indonesia has several characteristics, namely *tawassuth*, *tawazun* and *muwathonah* (Azra, 1998).

Although the term moderate Islam or Islam *wasathiyyah* became popular and gained momentum under the leadership of Mr. Lukman Saefuddin (Minister of Religion of the Republic of Indonesia 2014–2019), in the context of this study, the author saw that its “spirit” has existed since the establishment of the Cirebon Sultanate. We can still witness the Islamic style that is inclusive, accommodating and tolerant of religious and cultural diversity inherited by the founders of the Cirebon Sultanate, and we can still witness it together at several historical sites in Cirebon. If the Cirebon Sultanate is exclusive, of course we will not find cultures from outside which incidentally are non-Islamic cultures and acculturated with Islamic culture, even attached to buildings that are glorified and sacred by local residents. Peaceful acculturation also occurs in Minang culture. When Islam came to Minang, Islam was able to dialogue with local customs and culture so that there was no turmoil and resistance from local traditional stakeholders (Aziz, 2020).

Chinese ornaments can be found in several parts of the Kasepuhan Palace, but the author will focus on the ornaments attached to the walls of the *Siti Inggil* building. The ornaments are dominated by animal images. Chinese culture is rich in meanings and symbols, especially those related to animals. In the book *Tripitaka* as written by Mulyono and Diana explained that the Buddha really appreciated the life of living beings, including animals. Therefore, Chinese society makes animals as a symbolic component and often associates the nature of animals with the values of human life. Animals are considered to have a close relationship with the values of life to be achieved, namely health, longevity, strength, prosperity, and protection from all dangers (Mulyono & Thamrin, 2008). Likewise, the pictures that adorn the ceramics on the walls of the *Siti Inggil* building, Keraton Kasepuhan are rich in symbols related to Chinese culture. The images that adorn the existing ceramics are mostly dominated by images of dragons, phoenixes, and fish.

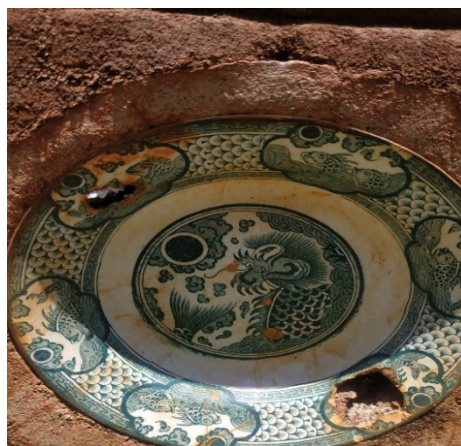


Figure 2

Source: Mukhoyyarah Documentation, 2020

Dragons in the Chinese zodiac are extraordinary creatures that symbolize prosperity and strength. The dragon is also a symbol of the Chinese emperor, where they always wear a robe full of dragon ornaments. While in Chinese tradition, the dragon is synonymous with something big and great. According to Bambang Irianto, Naga is specifically for leaders. The number one leader is usually the Dragon facing the front. So, even the Patih, tumenggung or regent would not dare to wear a robe or dress with a dragon ornament facing the front.

Usually other than the King or Sultan, the dragon ornament is facing to the side. This can be seen on the Golden Chariot *Singa Barong* which is decorated with many dragon statues, all of which face forward. This means that the *Singa Barong* chariot is a special vehicle for the Sultan.

Dragons have a very valuable meaning for the Chinese people. The Dragon symbol symbolizes the values of virtue that are upheld. In essence, the Dragon is a symbol of greatness, majesty and greatness; A symbol of prosperity for water, whether through rain or lakes; A symbol of the power that maintains and oversees humans and the universe (Gex, 2000). Meanwhile, according to Tanomi, the dragon was considered the god of the sea and the god who could bring rain by the ancient Chinese. They really respect the Dragon because they rely heavily on agricultural products. Furthermore, they regard the Dragon as a symbol of good luck, prosperity, power, courage, trust and heroism. The Lion performance at the *Cap Go Meh* event is a form of tradition to pray for protection to the Dragon (Tanomi & Christiana, 2014).

The Chinese ornaments on the walls of the *Siti Inggil* building are dominated by images of dragon, *phoenix*, fish and plant. These animals are proud of and have deep meaning for Chinese society to this day. The dragon is found on the wall of *Siti Inggil* as the main and front building, which philosophically means that the Cirebon Sultanate is a sovereign sultanate, not a subordinate kingdom of Pajajaran like when it was still under the leadership of Cakrabuana. Cirebon has become a sovereign state since Syarif Hidayatullah led Cirebon (Atja, 1986). The dragon located on the *Siti Inggil* Wall also means a prayer to the *Transcendent Power* to protect and protect the residents of the palace, especially the Sultan's family and the Cirebon people in general from all kinds of dangers, disasters, enemies and other dangers. The implied meaning is that a king or leader must be able to protect and protect his citizens from all kinds of dangers, both the danger of enemies, hunger, disease, ignorance and harm. A leader must be able to give a sense of security, peace and prosperity to his people.



Figure 3

Source: Mukhoyyaroh Documentation, 2020

In addition to the image of the dragon, on the wall of *Siti Inggil* there is also a picture of the *phoenix* - one of the important symbols in the tradition of the Chinese community. This creature is described as a beautiful bird with a combination of several colours. This creature is considered capable of bringing good fortune and symbolizing the female emperor, peace and prosperity. The *Phoenix* bird also symbolizes the sun and the warmth that covers the southern region because this creature is a symbol of the south. According to Tatt, there are several values and meanings of the *Phoenix* bird, namely: a sign of the birth of "great people", the *Phoenix* bird will only stop at something valuable, brings prosperity, peace and comfort, is also able to resist evil. In Chinese community wedding ceremonies, the image of the *Phoenix* is always juxtaposed with the Dragon. *Phoenix* bird symbolizes the bride, while the Dragon symbolizes the groom (Tatt, 1993).

The picture of Phoenix pasted on *Siti Inggil's* wall means prayer and hope that peace, tranquillity and prosperity will always colour the lives of the people of Cirebon. The people of Cirebon are kept away from all conflicts, disputes and wars. When the state of the country is peaceful, development in all fields will run well, the economy will also grow rapidly, which in turn will bring the people of Cirebon to a prosperous and prosperous condition.



Figure 4

Source: Mukhoyaroh Documentation, 2020

The next picture is a picture of a fish. In Chinese tradition, fish means darkness. This animal is usually served on Chinese New Year, meaning that all things that are not good and life filled with darkness or bad luck in the past must be removed and replaced with something good and full of luck. Fish is also a symbol of “excess” (luxury). So the fish ornaments in ceramics affixed to the walls of *Siti Inggil* can also be interpreted as prayers and hopes that the Cirebon people will always be in a state of sufficiency in material and spiritual aspects (Huang, 2006).

The author sees that there are various cultures from outside that have coloured and embedded in the architecture of the Kasepuhan Palace, indicating that there has been cultural acculturation in the Cirebon Sultanate. The author’s view is in line with Keesing’s (1953) theory that acculturation is a social process that arises when groups of people with certain cultures meet certain foreign cultural elements, so that foreign cultures will gradually be accepted and processed into their own culture without causing their respective cultural identities is lost (Keesing, 1953).

Conclusion

The socio-cultural contact of the Chinese and Cirebon ethnics in its development led to the acculturation process of the two cultures and reached a climax at the end of the 15th century with the wedding procession of Sunan Gunung Jati with a Chinese princess, Ong Tien Nio. This is proof that the institution of marriage produces quality and natural acculturation. Various cultures that characterize the Kasepuhan Palace and various forms of physical culture. This sultanate wants to stand on cultural diversity and place high respect for the beliefs of others. Various archaeological evidences show that there are various cultures that characterize the Kasepuhan Palace and various forms of physical culture. The philosophical meaning, although Cirebon is an Islamic sultanate, is very open to the dynamics of society and is inclusive of different cultures and other people’s religions. For example, some of the animals that adorn the ornaments on *Siti Inggil's* walls are animals that are proud of and are considered to have deep meaning for Chinese society. The dragon in the Chinese zodiac is an extraordinary creature that symbolizes prosperity and power, besides being a symbol of the emperor. The dragon in the front building of the Kasepuhan palace contains a philosophical meaning that the Cirebon Sultanate is a sovereign sultanate, not a subordinate area of Pajajaran. While the image of the Phoenix bird means hope and prayer so that peace and prosperity always colour

the lives of the people of Cirebon. Likewise, the fish symbol is interpreted as a prayer and hope that the people of Cirebon are always in a state of well-being in material and spiritual aspects. For further researchers, the authors recommend several things that can be the focus of the next study. First, the Cirebon culture which is influenced by outside, in addition to Chinese influence. Second, non-material culture that is acculturated with Cirebon culture.

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إنسانيات

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Vol 6, Number 1, November 2021

**A Cognitive Linguistic Approach to Life Metaphor
in Tetralogy *Laskar Pelangi***

Merry Lapasau, Sulis Setiawati

**Chinese Culture in The Cirebon Sultanate:
Symbolic and Philosophical Meanings**

Mukhoyyaroh, Didin Saepudin, M. Ikhsan Tanggok

Islamic Book and Islam in Indonesia: a Historical Perspective

Jajat Burhanudin

**Multilingualism in Sunan Ampel Tomb Complex:
A Linguistic Landscape Study**

Kartika Nuswantara, Hurrotul Firdausiyah, Zuliati Rohmah, Diana Nur Sholihah

**Representation of the Self and Other in Joe Biden's
Democratic National Convention Speech**

Ingrit Vianica, Trisnowati Tanto

**The Study of Mosque Management in Indonesia and Spain:
Majority and Minority Muslim Factors**

Sukron Kamil, Zakiya Darajat

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