

## Chinese-Indonesian Culture: Shedjit Toapekong Cultural Carnival in Tegal City

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**Abstract.** Indonesian culture is diverse, especially in terms of culture and religion. This diversity is a positive value the community owns as a form of tolerance for diversity. One of the proofs is the existence of people of Chinese-Indonesian descent, who have lived in Indonesia since ancient times until now, one of which is in the city of Tegal. The entry of Chinese culture gave birth to a new culture that merged into a new adaptive culture in Indonesia. One such adaptive culture is shedjit toapekong. Research with qualitative descriptive methods, assisted by literature studies and supported by documentation, makes the resulting research present better results and reliable validation. The aim is to show the tolerance and collaboration of residents in the form of cultural relay activities carried out in the city of Tegal. The role of participation of all communities in this event illustrates the beauty of tolerance so that culture will continue to be maintained and can be passed on to the next generation with adaptive and collaborative results with local culture.

**Keywords:** Descent Culture, Cultural Relay, Shedjit, Toapekong

### INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is a country rich in diverse cultures. Culture comes from the Sanskrit word "buddayah-buddi", which means ethics (Awang and Mahmud, 2018). This culture seeks one of the characteristics possessed by Indonesia. Indonesia is known to have around 300 ethnic groups, one of which is ethnic Chinese (Antara and Yogantari, 2018). Indonesia is also known as a country with the largest ethnic Chinese population in the world living outside China (Liesawan and Novita, 2021). This is due to the history of the arrival of Chinese people in ancient times with the aim of trading in Indonesia. In addition, there is evidence of the crossing of Chinese culture with the archipelago, especially Java, from traces of archaeological relics (Sujana and Nirmalasari, 2019).

The influence of the arrival of China gave rise to a new culture that acculturated with local culture. The role of this culture must indeed be preserved through assistance from the community and government (Azima et al., 2021). According to BPS data, the population of Tegal in 2022 will reach 290,988 people (2023:65). People from diverse backgrounds will undoubtedly bring much cultural diversity to the city of Tegal. Tegal City itself is a city that is very open with a culture so that a harmonious state is established in the community. Tolerance between religious communities is a characteristic of the city of Tegal and is manifested by the frequent holding of religious activities regardless of feathers.

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## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **1. Chinese-Indonesian Descent**

Indonesia is a country with diverse tribes. One of the tribes is the ethnic Chinese tribe spread throughout Indonesia (Effendi, 2019). However, Indonesians who are ethnic Chinese are not native Chinese who come from China but are of Chinese descent. The word "Peranakan" is Malay, which means "child" (Romanti, 2023). In general, it can be understood that people of Chinese descent are Chinese people who have settled in Indonesia and have descendants who have lived in Indonesia since birth, giving rise to a new generation of descendants. The offspring of this new generation is called the Chinese-Indonesian breed. The initial story of China's entry into Indonesia was through trade relations (Gumulya, 2017). Increasingly, the need for Chinese experts in gold mining is growing (Utami, 2019).

During the trading period, many ancient Javanese kingdoms collaborated to establish business relations with Chinese dynasties (Sujana et al., 2020). Over time, people of Chinese descent began to live in Indonesia for a long time to blend in with the local community. The problems of Chinese descent society arise when faced with the new order period and improve when entering the reform period (Susanto, 2021). In the city of Tegal, referring to BPS data, there are approximately 1305 people who adhere to Buddhism and Khong Hu Chu (2023: 170). Based on these data, the greater the number of adherents of a religion, the greater the effect of carrying out a religious activity on a group.

### **2. Cultural Relay**

One form of tourism attraction is culture. According to Koentjaraningrat (2014: 146), culture is the idea and work of humans that must be familiarized through learning and become the whole result of the cultivation of a work. Indonesian culture is comprised of culinary, fashion, and diverse arts (Nahak, 2019). Art in implementing its introduction can be done in various ways, one of which is relay. Kirab is a journey with regular and consecutive herrings (parades) (Wibawana, 2022). If understood together, a cultural relay can be interpreted as an accompaniment activity for a cultural element to carry out certain traditional celebrations. This cultural relay is carried out by all levels of society regardless of anything and is an effort to preserve culture (Sodiq and Suyahmo, 2022).

### **3. Shedjit Toapekong**

The series of Chinese cultural relays are usually held when there is a birthday celebration of one of the ancestors of the temple, known as shedjit (Sugihartati, 2019). The celebration of the shedjit followed by tapering is identical in the Asian region, which

includes Indonesia, Singapore, Malaysia, and China. Toapekong has a designation as "Great Uncle", which is described as a god who brings good luck (Ravando, 2022). The celebration of shedjit toapekong is usually done in a temple as the host. The host god that each temple has will be different from one another. This difference makes each temple have shedjit celebrations at different times. This difference factor is influenced by tradition. Tradition is the cycle of human life from the womb to the lifeless.

In addition, tradition can survive because it benefits the community that supports it. This culture is usually followed by the majority of people who belong to the Chinese race. In reality, based on cultural acculturation, shedjit celebrations can be enjoyed by every level of society, regardless of race or religion. This is realized based on tolerance in the social environment that has succeeded in melting into one unit. This worship teaches about filial piety towards elders and shows loyalty to maintain the good name of the community (Cangianto and Hartati, 2021).

#### **4. Tek Hay Kyong Tegal Temple “Klenteng Tek Hay Kyong”**

Klenteng is the name of a place of worship for Chinese people and represents several kinds of religions, such as Taoism, Confucianism, and Buddhism. Apart from being a place of worship, temples are also often used as places of social activities (Kalelu, 2022). According to Permatadewi and Gunawan (2022), in terms of history, the temple is an essential architectural art point that is full of culture from ethnic Chinese. Tek Hay Kyong Temple has been established for more than 2.5 centuries, precisely 262 years (Achmad, 2023). Since its inception in 1760 by Kapiten Souw Pek Gwan, this temple has witnessed the development of Chinese descendants in Tegal. This temple is also known for having an heirloom gamelan called Kiai Naga Mulya (Prabowo, 2021). The existence of this heritage gamelan shows the role of Javanese customs in the cultural life of the Chinese community at that time and has developed until now.

## **RESEARCH METHODS**

Location: Tek Hay Kiong Tegal Temple

Time: July 15-16, 2023.

In this study, researchers used qualitative descriptive study methods. This research method describes in detail the research results obtained by the researcher. Qualitative descriptive research, according to Moleong (1998: 6), explains that research with collected data in the form of words, images and not numbers, but all collected data is the key to quality

research. According to Arikunto (2019: 3), descriptive research is defined as research to investigate a condition or condition and the results are presented in the form of research.



Figure 1. Event's Rundown

Source: Instagram @tekhaykiong.mudamudi (2023)

According to Sugiyono (2013: 224), data collection techniques are the most strategic stage in a study because the goal is to attract data. Therefore, the data collection technique chosen uses documentation techniques and literature review. Documentation techniques are used to collect all information related to research in the form of images, sounds, manuscripts, and many other types. A literature review is used to ensure or validate research with a relevant correlation between theory and practice in the field.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Shedjit celebration at the temple's religious event is an annual agenda that is celebrated based on birthday celebrations. This birthday is intended to commemorate the ancestors of the great gods "Kong Cho" and "Ma Cho" worshipped by the temple.

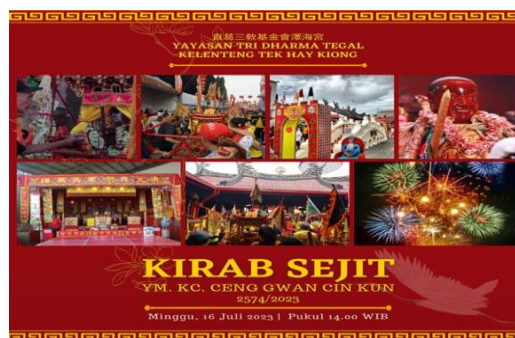


Figure 2. Event Brochure

Source: Instagram @tekhaykiong.mudamudi (2023)

As seen in Figure 2, it is known that this celebration is reserved for the god 'YM. KC. Ceng Gwan Cing Kun'. This god is one of the gods considered ancestral to the Tek Hay Kiong Tegal temple. Thus, the statement will be carried out in addition to being a birthday activity, also used as a momentum to introduce and preserve Chinese culture.



Figure 3. Welcome Banner

Source: Documentation (2023)

The background of Tegal is known as a peaceful city. The reason is that the city of Tegal, which consists of various cultures, religions, tribes, and others, always has harmony among its people. This has become a characteristic of the city of Tegal as a city of religious tolerance. Figure 3 even firmly shows the words 'Welcome to the Village of Religious Moderation'; through the banner, the city of Tegal proves its ability to establish harmony between religious communities. Data regarding guests and facilities are found as follows:

Table 1. Event Data's

No	Event	Planning	Facts
1	Toapekong	30 Palanquins	45 Palanquins
2	Culinary Market	30-40 Tenants	>50 Tenants (full)

Sumber : Yunita's Interview (2023)

This special celebration invites up to 45 participants Palanquin to participate in performing the toapekong relay. The participants included Tegal, Slawi, Semarang, Banjarn, Pekalongan, and Cirebon. In addition, there are also culinary tours of various exciting foods and drinks to visit. Related data have been presented in Table 1 above.



Figure 4. Sequence Number of The Palanquin

Source: Documentation (2023)

Figure 4 explains that each participant from various regions gets a sequence number that can be used as a place to put and show off the Palanquin that will later follow the relay process. This process makes it easier for the committee to collect data and coordinate the number of Palanquins participating in the toapekong cultural relay activities.



Figure 5. Route of Carnival

Source: Instagram @tekhaykiong.mudamudi (2023)

This relay process takes more than 5 Km to travel because of the large number of Palanquin participating in the relay process and the enthusiasm of the community. The enthusiasm of the community can be seen in the number of crowds of travel companions jostling from the beginning to the return route, according to Figure 5. Activities before the procession, on the previous day, of course, were held first. In the culture section, Tegal temple, which still refers to Javanese culture, had the opportunity to exhibit a work offering in the form of a heritage gamelan performance, 'Kyai Naga Mulya', in Figure 6.



Figure 6. Gamelan Exhibition

Source: Instagram @tekhaykiong.mudamudi (2023)

This gamelan has enormous cultural value for the surrounding community. Moreover, as a Javanese people, the gamelan itself is a musical instrument that has social and spiritual meaning in every song it plays. This activity was made as a form of togetherness in the preservation of local culture raised. This is one way to introduce and promote local culture, seeing the momentum of a significant event attended by many tourists.



Figure 7. Religious Procession Altar

Source: Documentation (2023)

Without losing the essence of the activity, the religious event in Figure 7 is also unforgettable. This religious procession is intended to give thanks to respected ancestors. This activity is also an opportunity for people who are able and want to be prayed for to make a Thanksgiving offering in the form of buying an offering package that has been provided. It is believed that this procession is a stage of thanksgiving and offering all offerings to the ancestor. After that, the necessary process is blessing all the statues of the deity that will follow the relay. This blessing is done through a procession of prayers and asking permission for his willingness to ride on the Palanquin that has been prepared. This process for Khong Hu Chu's belief has enormous spiritual significance, where the organizers and the general public who believe will

flock to get the opportunity to touch the statue to find the opportunity to be the person who accompanies the deity of his belief.



Figure 8. Toapekong Palanquin Carnival

Source: Documentation (2023)

This toapekong Palanquin relay effort has the term 'pikul' which means carrying a Palanquin. In the Tegal language, it is also called the term 'mikul tepekong'. Residents and other Javanese regions often speak this local language because the term is very familiar, so it is easy to remember. Mikul itself was initially only carried out by people of Chinese descent as an ancestral culture that was preserved. Gradually, this culture experienced a positive shift where the positioning of this mikul culture did not become exclusive and could be enjoyed by all circles. There are so many people of non-Chinese descent who try to blend in and follow the procession because they are curious about this culture.

This curiosity finally attracted the interest of people who wanted to experience carrying a Palanquin. This Palanquin weighs up to more than 80 kg because it uses thick teak wood and its unique ornaments. In addition, this Palanquin lifting process has two versions, namely, Palanquin lifting by the 4-person method and Palanquin lifting by the 8-person method. The Palanquin itself is also tiny for children, medium size for women / general, and large size for the public. It is created based on a specific god figure, and its purpose of use is aimed at certain limits. By making Palanquin of various sizes, all community segments could play an active role and participate in the series of Palanquin relays. Without worrying about any social problems, this palanquin relay activity aims specifically to bring blessings that are believed to be for a temple, individuals who participate in carrying palanquins, to their families and descendants.



## **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION**

Through these activities, culture can continue to be passed down and will not disappear. Seeing many enthusiastic community participants created harmony between religious and inter-ethnic communities without distinguishing each other merged into one. This harmony and high tolerance in society has been proven in Tegal. In the future, the city of Tegal can continue to establish harmony and high tolerance so that the comfort of society will be increasingly viewed positively. The existence of temples and Chinese culture can also continue to merge with local culture so that its existence will not disappear until the next generation of successors.

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