



Tay Kak Sie Temple: A Building Structure with a Style Influenced by Chinese Culture

Christian Yeremia¹, Kayla Cathlin Victoria², Lee Wynne Djunardi³
^{1,2,3} Universitas Kristen Maranatha, Bandung
Email correspondence: christianyeremia12@gmail.com

Received: 23 February 2022; Revised: 12 March 2023; Accepted: 17 April 2023
DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.37905/aksara.9.2.825-832.2023>

Abstract

Abstract: Acculturation is a combination of two or more cultures that gives birth to a new culture by a society without losing the characteristics of that culture, one of which is the Tay Kak Sie Temple which is in Semarang. The purpose of this study is to find out the meeting of the two cultures found in the structure of the Tay Kak Sie Temple Semarang. Through a qualitative descriptive method with a case study approach. As a result, it is known that initially this temple was used to worship the Goddess of Compassion, Kwan Sie IM, PO Sat which later developed into a large temple and worshiped various Taoist Gods. The structure of the temple has many Chinese cultural values, both interior, and exterior, and is closely related to the beliefs held by the Chinese community.

Keywords: Chinese; Semarang; Tay Kak Sie; Temple

INTRODUCTION

A temple is a place of worship for Confucius, Taoist, and Buddhist teachings. Because in Indonesia, adherents of traditional Chinese beliefs are often equated to adherents of the Confucian religion, the temple itself is often considered the same as the place of worship of the Confucian people. In some areas, temples are also referred to as *tokong*. This term is taken from the sound of bells sounding during a ceremony. The temple is said to be the beginning of the development of Chinese culture in Indonesia. Today the temple serves as a refuge for various forms of culture, such as living teachings, rituals, and arts.

Indonesia itself has many temples spread almost throughout the city. As one of the cities in Central Java Province, it is also one of the big cities on the island of Java, making the city of Semarang a city that has a population that has a variety of people both in terms of race, religion, ethnicity, and others. The city of Semarang itself is believed to have the largest population of Chinese citizens on the island of Java. Therefore, with the large population of Chinese people in Semarang City, there are various kinds of temples located in Semarang City, especially in the Chinatown area. The Chinatown area itself has a nickname, namely the "city of a thousand temples" because at every fork or near the river flow there are various temples. The temple is used as a gathering place or reunion for fellow Chinese who have the same lineage or surname, and also has the main function of performing various religious rituals. These religious rituals are focused on being carried out in their main temple, namely Tay Kak Sie Temple, which is the largest historical temple in Semarang City. The city of Semarang in Central Java is famous for the Old City area with ancient buildings with European architecture. However, don't forget that not far from there is also a Chinatown area that is thick with Chinese cultural nuances. One of them is the Tay Kak Sie Temple building.

His name may not be as popular as Sam Poo Kong who is famous in Semarang, plus Tay Kak Sie Temple is located in a small alley, namely Jalan Gang Lombok. However, the house of worship, which was built in 1746, also includes a historical temple and has its uniqueness. Before the Chinese New Year, cleaning activities are usually



carried out, especially on the altar table and Buddha statues and Gods, as a symbol of self-purification of the Tri Dharma people before entering the new year.

In addition to being a place of worship, Tay Kak Sie Temple is also commonly visited for tourist activities. So that anyone can visit this temple to enjoy the beauty of this magnificent temple building. Tourists are also allowed to walk around in the temple area but be sure to maintain an attitude and not to disturb. Tay Kak Sie Temple at its inception was named Kwam Im Ting Temple and was founded by a merchant, Kho Ping and Bon Wie and his friends. The construction of the temple originally aimed to worship Kwan Sie Im Po Sat, Her Royal Highness the Goddess of Compassion. Over time,

The name of Tay Kak Sie itself means the Temple of Great Consciousness; it is inscribed on a large signboard at the entrance of the temple. Complete with a record of the years of the reign of Emperor Dao Guang 1821-1850 of the Qing Dynasty. Tay Kak Sie is the largest temple in Semarang in the sense of the number of gods. In addition to the host deity Dewi Kwan Iem Po Sat, other Gods worshipped in this temple are Sam Koan Tay Te, Sam Po Hud, Thian Siang Seng Boo, Sam Po Tay Jin, Cap Pwee Lo Han, Po Seng Tay Te, Seng Hong Lo Ya, Kong Tik Cun Ong, Te Cong Po Sat, Jay Sin Ya, Thai Sang Lao Chin, Hian Thian Siang Tee, Hok Thik Ching Sin, and Kwan See Tee Kun. Every moment before the Chinese New Year, this temple regularly holds the Siang Sin Giu Hok ceremony which aims to usher the Gods and Goddesses to *kayangan*. The congregation gathered and carried a *tampah* filled with prayer papers which were then burned and the *tampah* swung. The ashes from the paper burnt will fly into the sky and deliver the Gods to the *kayangan*.

Some traditions are routinely held ahead of the Chinese New Year at Tay Kak Sie Temple are the Seng Sang Thian ceremony, which is the ritual of the Gods to face God, the Seng Xia Thian ceremony after Chinese New Year, namely the descent of the Gods from *kayangan*. Then, there is the distribution of *angpao* for the elderly and on the Chinese New Year calendar of the 5th month of the 1st, the temple will hold a ceremony commemorating the arrival of the statue of Dewa Po Seng Tay Tee with a parade carrying the statue of the god of medicine to Marina Beach. The purpose of this ceremony is to make Semarang City always safe and free from disease outbreaks.

On the 29th of the 6th month of the Chinese New Year calendar where the temple holds a ceremony commemorating the arrival of Lord Sam Po Tay Dien in Semarang. The statue of the Deity will be taken to the Gedung Batu Temple, interred on the throne, then at noon returned to Tay Kak Sie. Chinese New Year celebration at Tay Kak Sie Temple, Semarang City, Central Java. Chinese New Year celebrations are held simply by serving various offerings to the gods along with large candles, some of which have begun to be lit ahead of the people's prayer rituals. In the temple located in Gang Lombok, Purwadinan Village applies quite strict rules for the people.

Tay Kak Sie Temple also often holds performances of Wayang Potehi, an art that has existed since the Jin Dynasty in 265-240 AD, as an offering to the Gods. Wayang Potehi generally has serialized stories, such as the classic historical story of the Kingdom of China (Suparno 2017). Tay Kak Sie Temple has a building with a Chinese-style construction that is visible on the retaining pillars of the building made of triangular shape wood. In Chinese, the frame retaining system is called *dou-dong* and serves to hold the gauze of the roof. When entering the temple area, at the front there will be a statue of Admiral Cheng Ho and on the river bank, visitors can see a replica of Admiral Cheng



Ho's ship leaning (Cheng and Purbalingga 2014; Rizky 2019). This temple also has a sky well, which is a hole in the roof of the open temple directly facing the sky. The well of the sky serves as the main altar meaning worshipping God Almighty.

The temple building has various ornaments and symbols. For example, the *Gautama* Buddha statue under the Bodhi tree means shady or peaceful. The roof is decorated with a pair of dragons fighting for the sun. In Chinese mythology, the dragon or *liong* is an animal that symbolizes power, justice, and guardian of sacred objects, while the sun is a symbol of the pearl of the universe (Alieffudin 2018; Mustaqin 2014; Nuratri 2022). In front of the entrance, there are also male and female lions who symbolize repellent, justice, and honesty (Liesawan and Novita 2021). Then, there are paintings of a pair of Qie Lan Pu Sa and Wei Tuo Pu Sa warlords. Not far from the door Entering, visitors can also see a large Abu Hio place flanked by two candles that never die throughout the year.

The room in this temple is divided into three, namely the middle room for the main worship, which is the place to worship Guan Yin Pu Sa accompanied by Shan Cai. Then, there is the Tri Ratna Buddha (Sam Poo Hud) worship table. In the room on the right, there is a place to worship Hok Tek Ceng Sin (God of the Earth), Hian Tian Siang Tee (God of Exorcism), Koan Tee Kun (God of Justice), Jing Cui Co Su (God of Water), and Te Cong Ong Po Sat (God of the Door of the afterlife).

METHOD

Research on Tay kak sie temple uses qualitative research with a case study approach. Qualitative research methods are research used to examine the condition of natural objects, where the researcher is a key instrument (Creswell 2014; Taylor, Bogdan, and DeVault 2016). According to Yin, a case study is a method shown to investigate and study events or phenomena about something (Yin 2018).

So, the research method uses qualitative research with a case study approach aimed at being able to describe in detail the structure of the building in the tay kak sie temple. This research also collects data from journals, websites, and from literature studies that have been studied (Creswell and Plano Clark 2018; Leavy 2017).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

History of Tay Kak Sie Temple

In the beginning, Tay Kak Sie Temple was founded in 1746, by a merchant named Kho Ping and Bon Wie named Kwan Im Ting Temple. Tay Kak Sie Temple is one of the largest and most complete temples in Semarang, but this temple was established in the Lombok garden in 1771. This gives rise to the dualism of establishing the founding year of the Tay Kak Sie Temple which bases on two different perceptions. The first is to determine the establishment period of the Tay Kak Sie Temple based on the place on the site which is now Lombok Alley, while the second is based on the establishment of the goddess Kwan Sie Im Po Sat (Kustedja, Sudikno, and Salura 2013; Mustaqin 2014; Nuratri 2022).

Tay Kak Sie Temple is also the same as the existing temples in general which have ornaments and symbols. The *Gautama* Buddha statue, located under the Bodhi tree,



means shady or peaceful. The tiles on the temple are decorated with a pair of dragons fighting for the sun which is a symbol of the guardian of the temple from bad influence. While the sun has the symbol of the pearl of the universe. The male and female lions that are at the entrance symbolize repellent and are symbolized as justice and honesty. On the door leaf of the Temple, there are paintings of a pair of warlords Qie Lan Pu Sa and Wei Tuo Pu Sa. The spot near the entrance has a large ash holder, which is flanked by two candles that never go out all year round (Mustaqin 2014).

Initially, this temple room was divided into 3 large rooms, namely the middle room, the right room, and the left room. The central room for the main worship, which is the place used to worship Guan Yin Pu Sa and accompanied by Shan Cai. There is also a worship table for Tri Ratna Buddha (Sam Poo Hud). The space on the right to worship Hok Tek Ceng Sin (God of the Earth), Hian Tian Siang Tee (God of Exorcism), Koan Tee Kun (God of Justice), Jing Cui Co Su (God of Water), and Te Cong Ong Po Sat (God of the Door of the Hereafter). The room on the left is to worship Thian Siang Seng Bo, the protector of the fishermen and the people who sailed. There is also a place of worship for 9 figures of Cap Pwee Lo Han. The room on the left side also has a place to worship Poo Seng Tay Tee (God of Strategy), Seng Hong Lo Ya (God of Justice), Kong Tek Cun Ong (Patron God of the Hok People), and Thay Siang Lo Kun (Supreme God of Taoists). The statues of the gods were worshipped in the Tay Kak Sie Temple number 33.

Structure, Interior, and exterior of Tay Kak Sie Temple

The big Tay Kak Sie temple (figure 1) located in Gang Lombok, Semarang has elements and symbols that are influenced by Chinese culture (Mustaqin 2014). Tay Kak Sie Temple has images, statues, and decorations in the shape of humans, animals, plants, and natural phenomena that occur.



Figure 1. Tay Kak Sie Temple

Source: <https://indonesiakaya.com/pustaka-indonesia/mengunjungi-tay-kak-sie-klenteng-terbesar-di-semarang/>



In addition, the choice of colors in this temple is dominated by red and yellow gold colors whereas in Chinese culture both colors have meaning of greatness and majesty. In traditional Chinese house buildings, there are still many who use elements such as stone, bamboo, wood, to mud. Similar to what happened to the building elements of the Tay Kak Sie temple, the Tay Kak Sie temple is broadly made using wood, metal, and soil. Wood and soil elements in building structures are used as materials for making sculptures while metal materials are used in the manufacture of furniture and fixtures and temple decorations are made with these three materials. Tay Kak Sie Temple itself has a roof with the ornamentation of a pair of dragons fighting for the sun which is a symbol of guarding the temple from evil influences (figure 2). While the sun here has a meaning as a symbol of the pearl of the universe.



Figure 2. Ornamentation of a pair of dragons fighting for the sun which is a symbol of guarding the temple from evil influences

Source: <https://indonesiakaya.com/pustaka-indonesia/mengunjungi-tay-kak-sie-klenteng-terbesar-di-semarang/>

In front of the main door of the Temple, there is a male lion and a lioness which means to repel the *bala* and symbolize justice and honesty. On the door leaf of the temple, there is also a painting of a pair of warlords, namely, Qie Lan Pu Sa and Wei Tuo Pu Sa. There is also a large place to store ashes flanked by two pairs of candles that never die all year round and are located not far from where the paintings are located. The ceiling found in the Tay Kak Sie temple is formed from an open roof structure, so the shape of the temple ceiling follows the shape of the roof in the form of a gable roof (gavel-aligned gable). The ceiling itself has function as a protector for everything underneath. This ceiling itself has an arrangement of support beams that have horizontal and vertical directions which have the meaning of the relationship between man and God as well as between man and man.

The lantern elements contained in this temple are placed symmetrically. The lanterns are placed in the room or placed on the altar of worship. The lanterns have a function as decorative elements. In addition, the lanterns are believed to be amulets to eliminate or fend off the evil influences that come. Therefore, these lanterns have a very important role in the social life of the Chinese community.

Tay Kak Sie Temple has a building structure with a style influenced by Chinese culture which is visible on the retaining pillars of the building made of triangular wood.



In Chinese, the frame restraint system is called *dou-dong* which serves to hold the gauze on the roof of the building (Mustaqin 2014).

The elements contained in the big temple of Gang Lombok, Semarang have their meaning and meaning. With the passage of time and the development of the times, there are also changes in the meaning of the elements in the temple. The elements contained in the big temple of Gang Lombok Semarang are placed according to the rules, beliefs, and customs applied in China. In addition, the temple element is motivated by the statement that religion has played a role in determining symbols on an emotional, objective, and individual level, so the form of elements in this temple is made and formed based on a stream of beliefs other than the culture of the Chinese themselves.

Tay Kak Sie Temple has many statues of gods contained in worship rooms. Each of these elements consists of three schools of a belief that influence the interior elements of the temple, both philosophy, and form contained in it. One of the principles is the principle of dualism, Yin and Yang which comes from the belief of the Taoist school which has the principle of the balance of symmetry and asymmetry. This principle is seen in the laying of furniture as well as the division of rooms and the application of various decorations found in the main room to other spaces located next to the left and right wings of the temple. The Tay Kak Sie Temple has a Yin-Yang concept, namely life that is balanced, and orderly and complements each other.

Tay Kak Sie Temple has many South Chinese cultural values in almost all aspects of its building both interior and exterior. South China itself is known as a fertile region and is also rich in diversity of both flora and fauna. So, there are so many buildings in South China with the theme of flora and fauna. Not much different, Tay Kak Sie Temple has a variety of variegated decorations. An example is a dragonfish found on the console where these elements cannot be found in other temple buildings located in the Semarang Chinatown area. Tay Kak Sie Temple itself has a dynamic building shape where this building shape is adapted from the shape of buildings in South China. The floor contained in the Tay Kak Sie Temple has a geometric shape where when viewed on the lay the floor is rectangular, and the floor coating is square and hexagonal. The temple also has a floor elevation in the interior of the temple which aims to avoid the influence of dampness and has a meaning as a holy place/worship. In addition, the hexagonal shape on the floor upholstery has a meaning as a relationship with the eighteen *arahats* who are the Guardian Gods.



Figure 3 Statue of Godness

Source: <http://www.kinaryatour.com/2016/03/klenteng-tay-kak-sie-62-821-316-7070-8.html>



Various talks continued, until finally in 1771, at the direction of feng shui experts, led by Khouw Ping, several Chinese merchants chose a large area of land on the Semarang River which at that time was still a Lombok garden. The Chinese community worked together to contribute various purposes for the establishment of their new place of worship, not only monetary donations but also various building materials. Masons, carpenters, carvers, and more were brought in from various places. The statues of gods and goddesses were imported directly from the land of China. In 1772, a year since it began construction, the shrine has stood majestically and firmly, Tay Kak Sie its name, meaning Temple of Consciousness.



Figure 4 The Place of worship of the Gods and Goddesses

Source: <https://www.emakmbolang.com/2015/09/tay-kak-sie-klenteng-tua-dan-terbesar.html>

Above the Altar, there is a statue of the God Goddess and also a statue of Buddha in golden yellow (Figure 4). Lined Candle's large candles are beautifully decorated with unique decorations. Various fruits are served on a plate. A brass copper to ignite the Hio. Side by side with a pretty glass cup with oil inside. Flags and various ornaments inscribed with Chinese characters stood between the altars. While above it hangs a beautiful lantern side by side with a charming chandelier. The main altar is flanked by two small altars on the right and left. Statue of a god with an oriental face complete with typical Chinese clothing.

CONCLUSION

Temples are a form of acculturation that occurs in Indonesia. The temple is said to be the beginning of the development of Chinese culture in Indonesia. The existence of temples makes us recognize and awaken Chinese culture in Indonesia. In addition, many Chinese moral, cultural, and historical values are contained in the temple. Tay Kak Sie Temple is an example of a form of cultural acculturation in Indonesia. Tay Kak Sie Temple is a temple whose shape and elements are dominated by South China. Where there are many buildings in South China with the theme of flora and fauna. In this arrangement, this temple refers to the symmetrical and asymmetrical balance seen in the laying of structural elements. Tay Kak Sie is broadly made using wood, metal, and earth. Wood and soil elements in building structures are used as materials for making sculptures



while metal materials are used in the manufacture of furniture and fixtures and for temple decorations are made with these three materials and there is a mixture of other materials such as bamboo, fabric, and other elements. Tay Kak Sie Temple has currently been designated by the Semarang City government as one of the cultural heritage. Tay Kak Sie Semarang Temple is also visited a lot for tourism and is used as a place to hold various kinds of religious ceremonies. On certain days, this shrine holds a variety of religious ceremonies that attract many visitors to come here. The visitors who came were not always ethnically Chinese. The surrounding community also enlivened and participated in witnessing various art performances held. It is also one of the attractions for foreign tourists to visit Semarang. Tay Kak Sie Temple has a variety of variegated decorations. An example is a dragonfish found on the console where these elements cannot be found in other temple buildings located in the Semarang Chinatown Area.

REFERENCES

- Alieffudin, Muhammad Nizar. 2018. "Makna Arsitektur Klenteng Teng Swie Bio Di Kecamatan Krian, Sidoarjo." *AntroUnair* (2):151–66.
- Cheng, Muhammad, and H. O. Purbalingga. 2014. "Masjid Jami Piti Laksamana Simbol Keindahan Toleransi." *Jurnal Kebudayaan Islam* Vol. 12(No. 1):27–39.
- Creswell, John W. 2014. *Penelitian Kualitatif Dan Desain Riset*. 3rd ed. edited by S. Z. Qudsy. Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar.
- Creswell, John W., and Vicky L. Plano Clark. 2018. *Designing and Conducting Mixed Methods Design*. Third Edit. edited by C. Neve. Los Angeles: SAGE Publication In.
- Kustedja, Sugiri, Antariksa Sudikno, and Purnama Salura. 2013. "Makna Ikon Naga, Long 龙, 龍 Elemen Utama Arsitektur Tradisional Tionghoa." *Jurnal Sosioteknologi* 12(30):526–39.
- Leavy, Patricia. 2017. *Reseach Design: Quantitative, Qualitative, Mixed Methods, Arts-Based, and Community-Based Participatory Research Approaches*. 1st ed. edited by P. Leavy. New York: The Guilford Press.
- Liesawan, Tresiyani Mettasari, and Jesseline Carissa Novita. 2021. "Analisis Tata Ruang Dan Makna Simbolis Ragam Hias Binatang Pada Klenteng Tulus Harapan Kita (Thian Huo Kiong) Gorontalo." *Jurnal Desain Interior* 6(1):25.
- Mustaqin, Khairul. 2014. "Ornamen Liong Pada Atap Kelenteng Di Jawa Tengah Dan Diy: Studi Kasus Kelenteng Tay Kak Sie, Kelenteng Tien Kok Sie, Dan Kelenteng Tjen Liong Kiong. KIONG." Institut Seni Indonesia (ISI) Surakarta.
- Nuratri, Ruth Kiana. 2022. "Overview of Tien Kok Sie Temple in Solo City, Indonesia." *MANDARINABLE: Journal of Chinese Studies Language, Literature, Culture, and Journalism* 01(01):17–21.
- Rizky, Amanda. 2019. "Re-Aktualisasi Kisah Perjalanan Laksamana Cheng Ho Di Cirebon Melalui Batik (Kajian Batik Di Cirebon Serta Hubungannya Dengan Bahasa Rupa Tradisi)." *Corak* 8(1):27–42.
- Suparno, Antonius. 2017. "Memaknai Kembali Tradisi Wayang Potehi." *Jurnal Litera* 16(2):189–202.
- Taylor, Steven J., Robert Bogdan, and Marjorie L. DeVault. 2016. *Qualitative Reseach Methods*. 4th Editio. Canada: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.
- Yin, Robert K. 2018. *Case Study Research and Applications: Design and Methods*. Sixth. Singapore: Sage Publication Inc.