

The Significance of Culturally Hybrid Religious Artifacts in a Multicultural Society

Memaknai Artefak Budaya Hibriditas dalam Masyarakat Multikultur

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Abstract

The Cheng Ho Mosque in Surabaya is the study's main point since it is a cultural artifact with a structural layout and social objectives that combine Chinese and Islamic traditions. The Cheng Ho Mosque is a cultural object, as well as a social arena that represents hybrid culture. The cultural artifact serves as essential for understanding how social interaction takes place in an environment with symbols representing cultural hybridity. This study aims to show how Cheng Ho Mosque, as a cultural artifact, develops significance and becomes part of a cultural group's daily existence. The main theoretical framework used in this study is Cultural Identity Theory. Cultural semiotics is the research method that is being used. The study's findings suggest that the cultural semiotic frame analysis of the artifacts indicates three distinct characteristics of Surabaya's Cheng Ho Mosque: a religious place, a commercial space, and a social space. Worship activities including prayer, reading the Holy Qur'an, and recitation are all part of the interactions in the mosque's main function. The architecture of the buildings surrounding the mosque, meanwhile, was designed to reflect the business culture and network of the Chinese community in Surabaya and the area, including the use of corporate sponsors for events that are not just religious but also for general community activities including sports and gatherings of the Surabaya Chinese community. The Cheng Ho Mosque is an artifact that represents the distinctive features of Chinese Muslims as a subculture.

Keywords: artefacts, cultural semiotics, multicultural society

Abstrak

Masjid Cheng Ho di Surabaya menjadi titik fokus penelitian karena merupakan artefak budaya yang tata letak struktural dan tujuan sosialnya memadukan budaya Tiongkok dan Islam. Masjid Cheng Ho menjadi artefak budaya dimana masjid menjadi ruang sosial yang merupakan perwujudan budaya hybrid. Artefak ini sangat penting untuk memahami bagaimana interaksi sosial berlangsung dalam ruang yang menggunakan simbol-simbol yang mengintegrasikan berbagai budaya. Penelitian ini mengkaji bagaimana benda-benda budaya yang menunjukkan perpaduan budaya dirasakan dan dimanfaatkan dalam

komunitas masyarakat. Dalam penelitian ini, Teori Identitas Budaya menjadi kerangka teori utama. Semiotika budaya adalah metode penelitian yang diterapkan. Menurut temuan penelitian, Temuan penelitian mengindikasikan bahwa hasil analisis bingkai semiotik budaya terhadap artefak menunjukkan tiga karakteristik spesifik dari Masjid Cheng Ho Surabaya: tempat keagamaan, ruang komersial, dan ruang sosial. Masjid Cheng Ho dan bangunan di dekatnya mengekspresikan perpaduan budaya dalam banyak hal. Struktur fisik masjid memadukan motif-motif Islam, termasuk kaligrafi dan ciri-ciri arsitektur yang menunjukkan keagungan Allah. Kegiatan ibadah seperti salat, membaca Al-Qur'an, dan mengaji merupakan bagian dari interaksi yang berlangsung di bangunan utama masjid. Sementara itu, arsitektur bangunan di sekitar masjid dirancang untuk mencerminkan budaya bisnis dan jaringan komunitas Tionghoa di Surabaya dan sekitarnya, termasuk penggunaan sponsor perusahaan untuk acara-acara yang tidak hanya bersifat keagamaan tetapi juga untuk masyarakat umum seperti kegiatan seperti olah raga dan pertemuan komunitas Tionghoa Surabaya. Masjid Cheng Ho merupakan artefak yang mewakili ciri khas Muslim Tionghoa sebagai subkultur.

Kata Kunci: artefak, masyarakat multikultural, semiotika budaya

Introduction

The Cheng Ho Mosque in Surabaya, Indonesia, and the surrounding area serve as both the primary research site and the main cultural artifact to be investigated. This artifact is essential for understanding how social interaction occurs in a setting where symbols represent unique hybridizations of cultural values and beliefs. In some ways, the mosque is a culturally significant item, an expression of cultural hybridity, because its architectural design combines Chinese tradition with Islamic Indonesian culture (Aini, Saryoan, & Prakoso, 2022; Kori & Sumardiyanto, 2023). The Cheng Ho Mosque is a cultural artifact that represents hybrid culture in a social place (Endrayadi, 2019).



Figure 1: Cheng Ho Mosque Surabaya

Since interaction between various groups is unavoidable, a pluralistic society should be able to achieve harmony while accepting inherent diversity. Unfortunately, there are numerous identity negotiation process failures among diverse parties, which leads to conflict when a group's attempts to transmit their identity are misunderstood and misread due to the presence of specific preconceptions and prejudices (Muhammad, 2024). Nonetheless, the lengthy process of negotiating cultural identities can also lead to cultural hybridization, which is acceptable to the different groups involved or might be called "the third space" (Bhandari, 2020). Understanding how identity is communicated through cultural symbols and the usage of culturally hybrid artifacts is the aim of this study.

There are previous studies that examine cultural artifacts as a sign in a multicultural communication context. The research entitled *Artifacts and Cultures-of-Use in Intercultural Communications* was conducted by Steven L. Thorne (Thorne, 2003). This research develops a conceptual framework for understanding how intercultural communication is mediated by cultural artifacts including various internet-based communication devices, giving rise to problematic and interesting conditions in the context of learning languages. The results of the three case studies in this research show that intercultural communication mediated by the internet/computer combines four interconnected factors, namely discourse orientation, communicative modalities, communication activities, and the emergence of interpersonal dynamics. These factors contribute to variations in the quality and quantity of participation in the dynamics of interpersonal relationships. The results of this research show that the internet is not a neutral communication medium but its meaning is more about how individually and collectively a person uses and interacts using the internet (Thorne, 2003). The research is significant to discuss in this paper because it demonstrates how cultural artifacts can become the subject of intercultural communication studies when these cultural objects are viewed by groups from various cultures.

The next research pertaining to artifacts was conducted by Anna Kirova titled "The Role of Cultural Artifacts in Play as Tools to Mediate Learning in an Intercultural Preschool Program an Intercultural Preschool Program KELLY HENNIG ABC Head Start, Edmonton, Canada" examines the intercultural component of the artifact (Hennig & Kirova, 2012). The study issue about play's function in incorporating native tongues and cultural customs into multicultural early learning programs served as the starting point for the investigation. The study focuses on the function of cultural objects in educational programs where children who participate are mostly African refugees. The research's theoretical foundation was provided by Leontiev's activity theory and Vygotsky's sociocultural learning theory. According to a sociocultural viewpoint, materials are cultural objects in a social setting, and their use and purpose are adaptive and reliant on socially relevant activities. Children integrate themselves into their cultural environment through participation in events and interactions. The study issues were addressed through the use of ethnographic data-gathering techniques. Play episode descriptions serve as illustrations of how young children utilize cultural items (artifacts) and their relevant knowledge of certain cultural behaviours (such as singing while completing schoolwork) to mediate their learning. These instances, in the opinion

of the researchers, demonstrate how the early life context may be shaped by the child's home culture when artifacts are present. The study's findings show that children can integrate their learning from both their home and school environments in a way that is consistent with their learning when language facilitators and cultural mediators, who are members of the classroom teaching team, purposefully and carefully introduce cultural artifacts. The research is significant to explore in this paper because it provides insights into potential tools and analytical procedures for understanding various realities embedded in artifacts.

The study that will be addressed next examines how cultural hybridity manifests itself in objects and language within a multicultural group. The research is entitled *Global and Local Hybridity in African Youth Language Practices* conducted by Fridah Kanana Erastus and Ellen Hurst-Harosh (Kanana & Ellen, 2020). This study provides an explanation of African youth linguistic patterns in the context of globalization. This sparked a discussion on how globalization affects African youths' language identity. Additionally, this study offers several instances of how youth linguistic culture is used in daily interactions and makes various recommendations about young involvement in linguistic transformation in Africa. The study's findings demonstrate how cultures collide in spoken language and vocabulary among young people, and how African youth use bricolage to incorporate popular culture from across the world into their language practices to become hybrid. Discussed and shown are the ways in which the local and global converge, as well as how African youth recontextualize the world and forge local cultural traditions and young identities. The study's conclusion notes that although global brands have an impact on young people's language and practices, these effects are interpreted and applied locally; global symbols, cultural artifacts, and figures enrich youth culture in Africa; they enhance it rather than replace it. The study demonstrates how a specific group may be an agent for constructive change in a heterogeneous society by generating cultural hybridity and enhancing the more fluid concept of group identity.

The previously mentioned studies indicate that there are three key study areas pertaining to cultural objects and communication activities. The first is the place of origin of artifacts, which take the shape of different speech expressions and the language that is employed to convey identifying purposes. Second, it has to do with the public display of cultural objects and symbols belonging to certain communities. The third is the use of cultural objects to convey cultural hybridity. These three key areas are covered in the study of Cheng Ho Mosque as a culturally hybrid artifact in an attempt to it would give an overview of cultural artifacts and identity communication in a multicultural nation such as Indonesia.

Several previous studies have been done with the Cheng Ho Mosque as their primary subject of study. The initial study under review focuses on the importance of the Cheng Hoo Mosque in Makassar City's multicultural da'wah movement and the difficulties it encounters, as researched by Thaib et al. (Thaib et al., 2021). The study uses qualitative methods and focuses on society and da'wah. Data were gathered through field interviews, observations, and record studies. The research aims to investigate the presence of multicultural da'wah at the Cheng Hoo Mosque in Makassar City, together with the challenges presented by pluralism, identity, and

puritanism. The Cheng Hoo Mosque has been a cultural and religious hub for Makassar City's Chinese Muslim community, according to study findings. Multicultural preaching has challenges with plurality, especially when it comes to religion and the polarizing effects of religious puritanism. The Cheng Hoo Mosque, a symbol of the identity of the Chinese Muslim minority in Makassar City, has played a pivotal role in *da'wah* endeavours within this multicultural setting. In a multicultural society that is multiethnic and multireligious, the establishment of this *da'wah* approach is crucial because it raises a sense of religious purification that leads to societal division. The Cheng Hoo Mosque uses three strategies to carry out the multi-cultural *da'wah* campaign: non-*mazhab* mosques, mosques open to all groups, cross-cultural and cross-faith, and acceptance and knowledge of local culture. Each multi-cultural *da'wah* technique employed at the Cheng Hoo Mosque helps to unite disparate potentials and bridge cultural gaps in order to develop Islamic humanity (Thaib et al., 2021).

The next review is a research conducted by Choirul Mahfud that investigates how the Cheng Ho mosque has enhanced Indonesia-China relations globally while also shaping Indonesian Chinese-Non-Chinese links in various areas of culture, society, education, and religion (Mahfud, 2014). The Cheng Ho Mosque is one of the ethnic Chinese cultural identities in Indonesia. In addition to serving as a place of worship for Chinese Muslims, it is now a popular religious tourist destination and an emerging media source of new information about Islamic Chinese cultures in Indonesia. In addition, Cheng Ho Mosque is beginning to be increasingly seen as the "new Silk Road" because of the notion that it is crucial in fostering positive relations between the governments of China and Indonesia. This is demonstrated by the establishment of Cheng Ho mosques in various Indonesian regions. The research paper outlines how the Cheng Ho Mosque, also known as the "New Silk Road," has influenced and added to bilateral connections between China and Indonesia within the constraints of the provided framework, with a focus on Islamic cultural identities. The Cheng Ho Mosque in Indonesia is essential to the growth of the new Silk Road and China-Indonesia relations. When the leaders of Cheng Ho Mosque in various Indonesian locations assist, many types of collaboration are less complicated to accomplish. For example, there is an ulama exchange program between China and Indonesia that aims to exchange Islamic experiences and knowledge in social, religious, and cultural contexts. In the domain of education, a program for teaching Chinese was developed. The construction of the Cheng Ho Mosque in Surabaya and its consequences have inspired others to create their unique mosques that are fashioned after Cheng Ho throughout Indonesia, including Southeast Asia. The study highlights the need for the government and other groups to support Cheng Ho Mosque's development initiatives in specific Indonesian regions to advance Chinese diversity and Islamic cultural identity across the country (Mahfud, 2014).

According to Muzzaki's research on the Cheng Ho Mosque, ethnic Chinese Muslims today feel more at ease expressing their socio-political, economic, and religious identities because of the Cheng Ho Mosque, which was built in response to and via agreements with the state's political power (Muzzaki, 2010). Due in significant part to the persecution of ethnic Chinese people during the New Order,

these identities were not strongly established in the past. The one domain in which the ethnic Chinese diverged was the realm of commerce. Because of the establishment of Cheng Hoo Mosque, ethnic Chinese Muslims—particularly those from the middle class—can now express their religious and ethnic identity (Muzzaki, 2010). The mosque has also enabled ethnic Chinese Muslims to establish strong relations with Islamic popular groups such as Muhammadiyah and NU, ensuring their socio-political stability. This security is crucial because it hedges against anti-Chinese sentiment in the community and discrimination and abuse by the state bureaucracy. All of this is a result of the Cheng Hoo Mosque, which has strengthened the place of ethnic Chinese Muslims in Indonesian society (Muzzaki, 2010).

The novelty of the study discussed in this article in it focuses on the cultural semiotics of the structure of Cheng Ho Mosque as a cultural artifact. The study differs from previous research on the Cheng Ho Mosque since the study emphasizes the Mosque's structural construction, as well as how the artifact's design and function embody Chinese Muslim identity. The mosque will be analyzed specifically in the context of this research utilizing the concept of artifact semantics, which defines how (certain sorts of) things generate a specific (kind of) meaning under specific circumstances. (Siefkes, 2021).

One of the key concepts in the analysis of a cultural artifact is identity. Therefore, a particular framework that could potentially be used to comprehend how people create and negotiate their (religious) identities is the Cultural Identity Theory. Theory from Mary Jane Collier and colleagues is a thinking developed to build knowledge about the communicative processes that individuals carry out in constructing and negotiating their cultural group identities and relationships across contexts (Littlejohn et al., 2017). Collier is interested in how diversity is comprehended in a cultural group where the members of the cultural group have diverse cultural identities. Diversity within and between groups is the starting point of Cultural Identity Theory. Not only does individual identity consist of distinct and diverse cultural identities (race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality), but also individual identification within a cultural group differs in salient and important ways across diverse contexts (Littlejohn et al., 2017).

The way in which Cultural Identity Theory is useful for this study is because it is concerned with who constructs the social identity of a cultural group and how this identity is communicated. Collier and Thomas explain two processes, namely avowal (recognition) and ascription (determining the cause) (Collier & Thomas, 1988). This process is to differentiate how a person describes his own identity (avowal) and how he refers to the identity of others (ascription). Personal avowals often respond to ascriptions, and these are expressions of stereotypes of cultural groups. Each individual is then engaged in a continuous process of identity negotiation, specifically the relationship between how a person understands his or her cultural group and how others perceive that group.

The process of identity negotiation is closely related to the notion of intercultural sensitivity possessed by the members of the cultural group. The theory that explains intercultural sensitivity is the Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity. This model is a thought that examines understanding capacity

development to accommodate and accept cultural differences. This thought from Milton Bennets is an attempt to understand intercultural communication competence. Intercultural sensitivity is the development of the capacity to accommodate and accept cultural differences in communication behavior, values, and beliefs (Littlejohn et al., 2017). Conceptually, cultural identity in this research can be seen through the meaning of cultural artifacts where cultural artifacts are a form of materialization that represents certain meanings regarding values, beliefs, and the truth of cultural identity (Hennig & Kirova, 2012). The cultural artifacts that serve as the main subject of this study are Chinese Muslim artifacts that show how different cultural groups may hybridity coexist.

Methods

This study employs an interpretative paradigm in its investigation of cultural communication. This descriptive research aims to clarify the significance of cultural objects in a multicultural society. The research employs the cultural (social) semiotics method, which is well-equipped with analytical tools to comprehend the dynamics of spatial communication in hybrid products of culture. Thus, the primary reason for employing the specific cultural semiotics approach is that it offers instruments for analysing the signs of physical structures that include places of worship, as well as the social interactions and interpretations that occur within them, which serve as research subjects. As a consequence of the specific research approach, in addition to analysing the specific signs of cultural artifacts using a semantization of cultural semiotics method, this research also uses in-depth interviews to understand the connection between the artifact and the members of a specific cultural group in creating the social and cultural meaning of the artifacts as a part of individual experiences, intertextuality, and social aspect of the research (Gualberto & Kress, 2018).

A description of the domain of "mental culture" as being made up of signs and representations has been created in the notion of a semiological system (Siefkes, 2012). Not much has been stated about the domain of "material culture." It is intended to be made up of objects that serve certain purposes. It has been noted from a semiotic viewpoint that the artifacts (for example, through an appropriate design) can convey this function; in this scenario, the artifacts become sign vehicles whose function is their sign content. Aside from their practical uses, artifacts—such as photographs, structures, and books—are frequently included in semiotic theories as sign matter (Siefkes, 2012). The discourse of the Mosque as a cultural artifact in this research examines the notion of how the representation of meaning is raised by the Cheng Ho Mosque as a form of cultural acculturation. The research also sees how the symbols and signs found in the Cheng Ho Mosque trigger specific acts of communication interaction. how the expression of identity communication appears in the social space of the Cheng-Ho Mosque and examines the logic of truth that emerges in the social space (Leeuwen, 2004)

Primary data for this study came from the analysis of cultural artifacts as texts using semantization techniques as part of cultural semiotics, as well as in-depth interviews with research informants to better understand the interpretation of cultural hybridity artifacts in places of worship as a social semiotics tool. Thus, this study applies the analytical approach of artifact semantization, which is a part of cultural semiotics.

The first step of analysis is semantization which is the act of giving items (in this case, artifacts) meaning and turning them into signals is known as "semantization." A semantization analysis of the Cheng Ho Mosque is conducted using seven concepts. Frame connection is the first component; it is the idea that a frame is an arranged component of the world knowledge that characterizes a particular situation type, including roles and usual activities, as well as various sorts of artifacts. Style is the second component; the information it contains provides a broad cognitive function that allows us to tie characteristics to desires, values, aesthetic standards, and cultural/group understanding. The third component is iconicity, which refers to artifacts that may be used to evoke other ideas (for example, the image of Cheng Ho suggests a subtle Chinese background in the area surrounding the mosque). Thus, these somewhat iconic signs—which frequently lead to further associations—are used to generate meaning. The fourth component is individual experiences, which is a different type of semantics made up of individual recollections associated with artifacts together with the connections and emotions these memories arouse. The fifth component is cultural allusions, which see culture as being made up of a complex network of interrelated representations and artifacts (intertextuality). The sixth component involves artifacts that are perceived as having ties to particular social groupings; these connections give the objects significance and determine their appeal or lack thereof to other people.

Analysing the relationship between the artifacts and the people who use and interact with them is the focus of the second analytical stage. This stage in particular supports the individual experiences, and cultural allusion components (the fifth and sixth elements in the first stage. This stage of analysis looks at how a particular culture often produces unique types of artifacts with meanings encompassing various connections and prejudices associated with the particular social group. Through the application of rules that are applied in particular contexts, artifacts take on extra value. This is the subject of the analysis of in-depth interviews, which aims to understand how particular artifacts are intertextually related to their users.

Results and Discussions

The results of this study are organized with the logic of semantization of cultural semiotics that includes components: frame, style, iconicity, individual experiences, cultural allusions, with the support of in-depth interviews this research also explores the intertextuality and cultural connection of the cultural artifacts.

Artifact Frame: The Mosque as a cultural play of Chinese Muslim

As cultural artifacts, the Cheng-Ho Mosque and its surrounding environment create what is called a cultural frame in the context of cultural semiotics. The cultural frame in this context is the arranged component of artifacts

that signify the knowledge of cultural hybridity in the Cheng Ho Mosque including the situation type, activities, as well as various sorts of interconnected artifacts. The following is the picture that depicts Cheng Ho Mosque as a cultural artifact followed by a frame analysis table of the Cheng Ho Mosque as a cultural text.



Figure 2: The Hybridity of Cheng Ho Mosque Artifact

Table 1: The frame Analysis of Cheng Ho Mosque Artifact (Text)

<p>Frame “a mosque with cultural hybridity nuance”</p> <p>Artifacts: A Chinese nuance Mosque, Promotion Boards, A multifunction field</p> <p>Characteristics attribute: a religious space, a commercial space, a social space</p> <p>Actions: praying, religious rituals, commercial promotions, sport, social gathering</p> <p>Feelings: a non-conventional religious place, a multi-purpose space, non-elitist</p>
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The frame analysis shows that as an artifact the Cheng Ho Mosque is a Chinese nuance artifact as well as evokes a non-conventional religious space. That frame is closely related to the notion that the Indonesian Chinese Islamic Association (PITI) in Surabaya mostly conducts its operations out of mosques. To provide a focal point for the organization's numerous religious and social events, they constructed a mosque. Even so, their heritage as Chinese descendants strongly influence the way they carry out activities around the mosque. The following passage, taken from an interview with one of the PITI Chairmen, illustrates this.

“PITI founded the mosque (Cheng Ho, Surabaya)... the mosque serves as a sphere of activities for PITI...The design of the mosque was inspired by buildings in China...The design is in sync with the culture of PITI members, most of whom are ethnic Chinese...”

The Chinese Muslims understand that the mosque's primary purpose is for people to pray together and foster harmony among them, despite the building's strong ties to Chinese culture. Therefore, the main frame of the artifact is “a mosque with cultural hybridity nuance.” In cultural discourse, the terms "diversity," "pluralism," "multiculturalism," and the adage "melting pot" are frequently used to describe the intricate, extremely delicate, and incredibly interwoven histories of

race, religion, and cultural identity. Over time, concepts around cultural identity—including what individuals genuinely 'are' at their core, where they are from, how they choose to be defined, and how majority cultures may identify them—have changed (Wihbey et al., 2022), as the following sample from the interview illustrates.

“The mosque is a place of worship (prostration) together. That's why there was a term used to be a Jami' Mosque, jami' together. So, the mosque is a place of prostration together. So, why do we emphasize praying together, it is in order to foster unity.”

The function of the mosque as a cultural unifier is part of the connection between people and artifacts. People-things interactions in communities are examined, along with the significance material cultures play in fostering connections between people and their homes. In other words, people, objects, and non-human species are interrelated, and the research demonstrates how things-things, human-things, and human-human symbiotic interactions generate and recreate the community views on the world. Additionally, there are unique ties among and items that shape their coexistence (Wayessa, 2017). The relationship between the function of the mosque, the hybrid design style, and traces of Chinese culture show how the mosque becomes an artifact that plays on the relationship between various expressions of different cultural identities.

The Style and Iconicity of Ritual and Social Artefacts

The discursive paradigm, which encourages the interpretation of ritual as an action that contains symbolic meanings that can be understood through textual analysis, is the implicit foundation of most ritual analysis methods (Kitts et al., 2017). The style element of cultural semiotics signifies a cognitive function of the artifacts as well as the values of the culture in question (Siefkes, 2012). The main function of a mosque is a place of worship however the design style of the mosque also indicates the notion of hybridity. The Cheng Ho Mosque carries out religious function while still using architectural styles related to Chinese culture. For example, around the mosque, there are miniature ships and paintings depicting Cheng Ho's heroism.



Figure 3: Gathering for reciting the Koran with the backdrop of Admiral Cheng Ho's painting

Putting up images of Cheng Ho's bravery outside mosques might not be acceptable to some Islamic groups. On the other hand, in depth interview with the member of Chinese Muslim community suggest that since Cheng Ho was the one who converted the Chinese, his contributions should be honoured in the surrounding spaces of the mosque. But as the following interview shows, there is also opposition to incorporating Cheng Ho symbols in the Mosque environment which is in terms of placing the statues of Cheng Ho around the mosque.

"There was a friend who bought the statue of Cheng Ho, who became the target of ongoing protests because he had different opinions. We recommend just placing it on the gate because the statue is not something to be worshiped (so there's no need to worry)."

The negotiation over where to place the Cheng Ho statue demonstrates how one lens cannot properly comprehend particular discourses of religious worship. Rather, it should be viewed as consuming and distributing notions that persuade at several levels of perception, which then connect and ignite to raise consciousness (Kitts et al., 2017). Mosques serve both religious and social purposes, in the context of Cheng Ho Mosque in Surabaya across religions social activities are quite prominent.



Figure 4: Covid-19 Vaccination (Source: Research Observation)

The Cheng Ho Mosque carries out many social activities within the mosque for social activities such as COVID-19 vaccine activities, disaster fundraising, and a Chinese family clan meeting in Surabaya. So social activities carried out around the mosque do not have to be related to Islamic religious activities. The varied social activities have become a specific feature of the Cheng Ho Mosque's Chinese Muslim community. Non-religious social activities generate what the Cultural Identity theory refers to as reflective dialogic. According to Mary Jane Collier, reflective dialogic communication is conducted by listening to the opinions of other groups to reduce bias and prejudice against specific ethnic groups (Littlejohn, 2021). As a result of engaging in communal activities, Chinese Muslims will be better understood, allowing them to articulate their cultural identity.

The Collaboration Allusion of Chinese Muslim

The specific cultural group is frequently represented by specific rituals and customs, that serve as justification for the cultural classification of individuals as belonging to a specific group. The establishment of a government strategy on shared values, which pinpoints the cause of national unity, reflects the state's concern with the necessity to actively interfere with the culture of the minorities (Ang & Stratton, 2018). Chinese descendants in Indonesia have experienced several attempts to merge Chinese culture into Indonesian culture. However, various efforts were also made to challenge these efforts. Chinese descendants in Indonesia, especially Chinese Muslims in Indonesia, have also developed a survival strategy by reaching out to various prominent religious and social organizations in Indonesia, including the government. As illustrated in the following interview:

“In relation to interests, I founded PITI East Java with the principle that PITI can be used anywhere, but it should not be brought to other interests (politics). Well, another important thing is getting support from all parties, NU, Muhammadiyah, Christians, Buddhists, and all parties support it.”

Meanwhile, another existing strategy is raising funding for mosque activities, relatively the same collaboration approach is also applied. The involvement and dominant position of Chinese Muslims in business strengthens their position to negotiate their identity. In the context of Identity Theory, the privileged position of a group will make it easier for them to make their culture accepted as part of the dominant culture (Littlejohn, 2021). The following illustration shows how sponsor boards surround the field of the mosque.



Figure 5: Sponsorship Billboards

Even though it is relatively open regarding funding or donations, there are still limitations where for mosque construction all funds are collected from PITI members themselves, as can be seen in an interview excerpt with the Chairman of the Cheng Ho Mosque Foundation.

“When it comes to funding, funds come from member fees, donors, and then from the PITI organization... If we build a mosque from our own money (PITI members). There is nothing wrong with the buildings around the mosque from non-Muslim sponsors. Because we don't have money to build buildings around the mosque, we ask for donations. There aren't many Chinese Muslims who need help from donors or sponsors. Meanwhile, the mosque building came from our own money.”

The principle of cooperative funding and networking seems to be an important characteristic that differentiates Chinese Muslims from other Islamic groups. In the meeting hall around the mosque, we can find an inscription board that displays the names of donors and the amount of the donation. Rewarding donors by writing their names on inscriptions is one of the characteristics of Chinese culture in Indonesia. In the context of cultural allusions or intertextuality in cultural semiotics, the promotion billboards surrounding the Mosque are related to the cultural characteristics of Chinese Ethnicity that historically characterized as mainly working in the business sectors. As stated by Mary Jane Collier, one of the principles in Cultural Identity Theory is that the cultural identity of a group is closely related to the historical context and political context of the group where both contexts will shape how the cultural group interacts with other cultural groups in society (Littlejohn, 2021). Thus, intertextually as a cultural space, the Cheng Ho Mosque and the surrounding areas signify the subculture identity of Chinese Muslims.

The Subculture Identity of Chinese Muslim

The identity negotiations carried out by Chinese Muslims show how they have become a subculture that has various specific markers. This specific identity can be seen in various artifacts, attributes, and specific activities carried out in the mosque environment. How the identity of Chinese descent is very important can be seen in the following interview excerpt.

“PITI founded the Cheng Ho mosque, indeed we also specifically hope that Chinese Muslims will join the PITI organization. To be honest, what is highlighted is the Chinese descent, all Chinese. If not, it's the same as existing organizations such as Muhammadiyah and NU. PITI indeed accommodates the lifestyles of Chinese people. These Chinese people have a different type of culture from others. Indeed, all humans are different, so Chinese Muslims also have different characters.”

According to Mary Jane Collier in Cultural Identity Theory, there is a principle of agency where members of a particular culture can express their specific identity tactically so that they can make their group acceptable to the dominant group (Littlejohn, 2021). Various attempts to show the distinctive characteristics of a group are one of the characteristics of a subculture. According to Hebdige, subcultural theory had previously placed a particular group in what it saw as a theatre of identity struggle (Bennett, 2020). In Subculture, it is implied that class, race, gender, and ethnicity may influence both responsive and stylistic reactions. These reactions can also be sparked by other stimuli, such as media, artifacts, and even cultural practices. Subculture is perceived as questioning history and ideology while playing with messages and signifiers (Bennett, 2020).

Conclusions

This study aims to show how Cheng Ho Mosque, as a cultural artifact, develops significance and becomes part of a cultural group's daily existence. The cultural semiotic frame analysis of the artifacts indicates that there are three characteristic attributes of Cheng Ho Mosque in Surabaya which are important in

gaining the cultural significance of Chinese Muslim group which are a religious space, a commercial space, and a social space. As a social space in particular brings about the notion of connection between Chinese Muslims with different religious organizations, business groups, and social groups in addition to being a place of prayer. The frame analysis of the artifacts also indicates that the religious space, the mosque's structure, and the religious activities convey the identity of Chinese Muslims, who belong to a particular subculture. Chinese Muslims as a subculture convey their Islamic identity through a variety of social events conducted in and around the mosque, as well as by displaying their identity through Chinese patterns on mosque structures. Furthermore, in terms of social space, the Chinese Muslims in the artifact's region demonstrate their legitimacy by displaying their network and indicating a collaboration with different religious organizations, the government, and companies to engage in specific collaborative efforts. The result also represents the strong sense of agency in the context of the artifacts' environment, where members of a Chinese Muslim cultural group may display their distinctive identity strategically making their group acceptable to the dominant group. Thus, socially, this research contributes to providing an overview of how a marginal cultural group, in this case, Chinese Muslims, communicates its identity through artifacts and also how they use these artifacts as part of a strategy to be accepted socially in society. To have a comprehensive understanding of the social, network, and functional features of Chinese Muslims in Indonesia as a subculture, further research can more broadly conduct cultural semiotic analysis on various Chinese Muslim artifacts in Indonesia.

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