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DISKONTINUITAS BUDAYA: TERSEBARNYA PERANAKAN TIONGHOA DARI PECINAN "TIONGKOK KECIL" LASEM

CULTURAL DISCONTINUITY: THE DISPERSED OF CHINESE DESCENT FROM THE "LITTLE CHINA" CHINATOWNS OF LASEM

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Abstrak

Artikel ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis lunturnya budaya diaspora Tionghoa dari Pecinan Lasem dalam beberapa generasi. Studi mengenai identitas keturunan Tionghoa di Indonesia menjelaskan bahwa identitas dan orientasi ketionghoaan peranakan Tionghoa luntur karena asimilasi dengan masyarakat setempat selama orde baru. Padahal, sejak awal ada kecenderungan mereka tidak terlalu menunjukkan identitas ketionghoaannya. Studi sebelumnya tidak cukup memperhatikan situasi sosial dalam konteks lokal dan pewarisan budaya keturunan Tionghoa dari generasi ke generasi. Penelitian Studi kasus ini dilakukan melalui wawancara, observasi, dan studi dokumen. Data kemudian dianalisis menggunakan NVivo Program. Konsep baru diaspora dari Bauböck & Faist digunakan untuk menganalisis fenomena penyebaran diaspora Tionghoa dari Pecinan Lasem. Penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa masyarakat Tionghoa Indonesia cenderung menyebut diri mereka sebagai peranakan Tionghoa Indonesia dan berusaha melepaskan keterkaitan identitasnya dengan referent origin-nya; Tiongkok. Identitas ketionghoaan mereka mulai luntur karena pewarisan kebudayaan Tionghoa melalui ritual agama banyak ditinggalkan oleh peranakan. Anak-anak muda Tionghoa tersebar keluar dari pecinan Lasem dan kehilangan identitas ketionghoaan mereka. novelty dalam penelitian ini, asimilasi dan integrasi peranakan Tionghoa kedalam masyarakat lokal justru berkaitan dengan penerimaan masyarakat Lasem, alih-alih berkaitan dengan lunturnya kebudayaan Tionghoa.

Kata Kunci: Diaspora, Diskontinuitas, Penyebaran, Peranakan, Tionghoa

Abstract

This article aims to analyse how fading the Chinese diaspora culture from Lasem Chinatown over several generations. Previous study show that the identity and orientation to Chinese descent disappeared due to assimilation with the local community during the New Order. In fact, from the beginning, there was a tendency for them not to show their Chinese identity. This did not pay enough attention to the local context, social situation, and the cultural heritage of Chinese descent between generations. This case study is conducted by interviews, observation, and document study. The data is analysed using the NVivo Program. Bauböck & Faist's new concept of diaspora is used to review the phenomenon of the spread of Chinese descent from Lasem Chinatown. This research shows that the Indonesian Chinese people in Lasem tend to refer to themselves as 'Indonesian Chinese peranakan' and are increasingly detached from their identity relationship with their referent origin, China. Their Chinese identity is starting to fade since Chinese cultural heritage through religious rituals has been largely abandoned. Young Chinese children scattered out of Lasem Chinatown and lost their Chinese identity. The novelty in this research is that the assimilation and integration of Peranakan Chinese into local society are precisely related to the acceptance of the Lasem community, instead of Chinese culture's fading.

Keywords: Chinese, Descent, Diaspora, Discontinuity, Dispersed

INTRODUCTION

The great change in the political regime from the New Order to the Reformation brought new breaths to Indonesia's Chinese ethnic groups. The Chinese ethnic group's position began to be noticed due to the protests and support from various parties, including the international community, for the anti-Chinese violence that occurred at that time (Wibowo dan Lan, 2010). In the post-Suharto era, open-minded Indonesian liberal political leaders tried to improve ethnic Chinese conditions and rejuvenate relations with the PRC (Brahma, 2018). Many policies have been published that indicate recognition, guarantee representation, and accommodate the practice of participation, tolerance, and celebrating the diversity of ethnicity and community as fellow citizens (Gayatri et al., 2019).

In the last two decades, the pillars of Chinese culture that were previously abolished are now beginning to appear again. The changes that have taken place reflect the fulfillment of citizens' basic rights through the emergence of Chinese organizations, the publication of Chinese language print media, and the opening of Mandarin language courses in various places (Suryadinata 2010; Wibowo dan Lan, 2010). Scientists call this phenomenon as 'reinification' or restoration of Chinese culture (Setijadi, 2016). However, these resinification efforts did not necessarily restore Chinese identity among *Peranakan* Chinese. The forced assimilation that was carried out during the New Order leadership period indeed resulted in the erosion of the Chinese identity. Chinese customs, for example celebrating Chinese New Year, are now being replaced by new traditions, phenomena, and identities (Greif, 1994). However, Chinese people did not show their Chinese identity extremely when they first became a diaspora in the archipelago. Unlike Europeans, Chinese overseas migrants rarely take the Chinese flag to foreign shores, nor do they imagine the possibility of a Chinese state outside of China. The Chinese also did not come to Indonesia as laborers, demonstrate the peculiarities of intense religious rituals, or establish military strength in Indonesia, as other diaspora features (Reid, 2016).

Furthermore, Chinese ethnic groups, in general, also do not voluntarily want to be called a diaspora. The Chinese ethnic groups in Indonesia, for example, are more comfortable being referred to as Chinese *Peranakan* than the "Chinese diaspora". In the local context, for example, in Lasem Chinatown as one of the largest and oldest Chinese settlements in Indonesia, it is interesting to analyze how the fading of the identity and the spread of Chinese descent from Chinatowns or Chinese territories in Lasem especially after the resinification in the post-reformation.

RESEARCH METODHS

This research uses a qualitative approach with a case study of the Chinese community in Lasem, Rembang, Central Java. Lasem is chosen as the research location because it was the biggest stopover for immigrants from China in Java, apart from Semarang, Tuban, and Surabaya. Lasem is later referred to as Petit Chinois (Little China) or 'The Little Beijing Old Town' because of the many Chinese descent and Chinatown settlements. This is evident from several Chinese migrationwaves after the 1600s, who mostly headed to Lasem because of the brotherhood network (Unjiya, 2014).

Observation, in-depth interviews, literature studies, and document studies are used to obtain research data. The researcher observes four Chinese descent settlements or Chinatown in Lasem, namely in the Karangturi Village, Babagan Village, Soditan Village, and Gedongmulyo Village. Researchers also interviewes Chinese people from various generations since the arrival of their first ancestors to Lasem. Besides, literature

studies in the form of *Carita Sejarah Lasem* and several historical records in old houses or temples were also examined as a compliment.

In this study, the NVivo qualitative data analysis program was used to manage data. NVivo is chosen in this study because it can analyze data in the form of field notes, interview transcripts, image files, audio, and videos when collecting research data. In this study, three concepts in data processing were also used, as explained by Babbie (2014), namely qualitative data coding, writing memos, and graphically mapping concepts. Although not a "how-to" guide, these ideas provide a useful starting point for finding patterns (sequences) in qualitative data.

DISCUSSIONS

Lasem is a small town located on the coast of Java Island in Rembang Regency, Central Java. Lasem City is located 13 km to the east of the city center of Rembang with an area of 45 km² (Badan Pusat Statistik Kabupaten Rembang, 2019). The northern boundary is the Java Sea; the east is Sluke District, the west is Rembang District, and the south is Pancur District.

Lasem is classified as an old city, even older than Rembang Regency. Throughout its history, Lasem has experienced several periods of occupation of power from the kingdom, colonialism, and the post-independence era. Lasem's history cannot be separated from the history of the occupation of three kingdoms, namely Majapahit, Islam Demak, and Pajang. In addition, Lasem also underwent a period of occupation by the Dutch East Indies government, which made Lasem removed from the duchy's status and merged with the Rembang regency in 1828. Finally, Lasem also experienced Japanese occupation, which made various important sites such as the port and industrial center in Lasem destroyed by the Japanese army when landed on the coast of Kragan Beach (Unjiya 2014).

Previously, Lasem had a reasonably large port because it was located on the north coast of Java. The number of fast-growing ports on the North Coast of Java has become a gateway for food exports from Java to the entire archipelago. The food was then bartered for Indian cloth in Aceh and Malacca and spices from Banda and Maluku. Lasem is also an essential part of this trading activity (Tarling 1999). Intensive business activities have made many domestic and foreign traders outside the archipelago visited Lasem, including Chinese.

In the (Bauböck dan Faist's, 2010) new concept of diasporic formation, the various dispersed can be categorized as diaspora. This different from old notion of diaspora that tends to be rigid due to be based on forced migration like Jewish, Palestinian, ora Shawnee in Amerika (Lakomaki, 2014). Chinese in Lasem came from various migration waves. Most of them and those who are in the north coast of Java were thought to come mostly from Zhangzhou Regency, Fujian Province, since theirworship of several venerable figures in temples follow worship procedures such as in temples in Fujian Province (Suliyati 2009). Meanwhile, Rembang, including Lasem, in 1815 was ranked 4th with the largest Chinese population (Lestari dan Wiratama, 2019).

Chinese citizens in Rembang account for 4% of the total Chinese population censored by the British government in Java -at that time under Raffles rule. The development of the Chinese ethnic community in Lasem made the Chinatown complex develop. Many Chinese migrated to Java, one of whom was Lasem, who were not motivated by fertile land but wanted to follow their successful predecessors in Lasem and build housing complexes in that location. At that time, there was a Dutch regulation, which prohibited Chinese people from owning agricultural land. They were forced to enter the trading business. Thus, Chinese ethics in the opium trade made the ethnic Chinese in Lasem very wealthy in the 19th century. They have unique houses and boats that support their trading activities to grow fast (Lestari dan Wiratama, 2019).

Lasem has a Chinatown area spread over three villages; Karangturi, Babagan, and Soditan. Typical Chinese architecture and cultural activities of the Chinese community are still robust here. According to Poesponegoro & Notosusanto, the formation of the Chinese community in Lasem went through a long historical process, starting with the trade relations between the Chinese kingdom and the kingdoms in Indonesia in the early 5th century AD (Suliyati, 2009). This trade relationship involved a coastal city such as the City of Lasem. Lasem City results from the acculturation of indigenous Javanese, Chinese, and Islamic cultures in harmony and charm.

Based on inter-religious tolerance, the life of various tribes in Lasem City is peaceful and orderly. The pesantren area that stands side by side with the Chinatown

area is evidence of the creation of cultural acculturation and tolerance. There are no more ethnic, racial, and religious boundaries in Lasem City. People of Javanese descent are used to "sitting" with people of Chinese descent in social discussions and various arts and cultural activities such as the lion dance, and so on.

Discontinuity and Dispersed from The Chinatown

Lasem is known as Little China due to its Chinese greatness. The small streets of Lasem used to be filled with Chinese people. Even though it is in one sub-district, Lasem has three temples. The three temples are the Poo An Bio Temple in Karangturi Village, the Gie Yong Bio Temple in Babagan Village, and the Tjoe An Kiong Temple in SoditanVillage, the oldest temple in Java Island. The three temples' existence is relatively close together because they are not more than 2 km apart. This situation summed up the greatness of the Confucianism that Lasem Chinese followed.

Even though the Chinese in Lasem grew up, the Chinese peranakan did not really show their culture identity. They immediately identified themselves with the local community when they arrived in Lasem. In general, Southeast Asian Chinese are late in accepting the term applicable to them. They have to struggle to show their local indications and fear as a well-known community without a sense of belonging (Tan, 1997). They identified locally as Southeast Asian and rejected the label "Chinese overseas" (huagiao) (Chee-Beng, 2013). Not only that, they also adopt a local identity respected by the indigenous community so that they could socialize with the local community (Mahmudi, 2020). This attitude may be different from some of them, especially Totok Chinese, who did not get equal citizenship rights during the New Order era. They are oriented towards China and call themselves huagiao (Chinese immigrants) so they expect to return to China (Liji 2012). This is in accordance with the old idea of the diaspora which implies an effort to return to the homeland (which is imagined) (Cohen 2008; Safran 1991), for example, homeland-oriented projects to shape the future of a country by influencing it from abroad or by encouraging back to the homeland (Bauböck dan Faist, 2010). Meanwhile, in the last few decades, Indonesian Chinese peranakan tend to say that they went abroad when they visited China.

The new idea of the diaspora implies a continuous relationship across borders such as in the practice of transnational or "migration development nexus" which emphasizes the lateral ties and structural transformation of politics, economy and culture globally where migrants are the agents of transnational development (Faist 2008). Nonetheless, the condition seems different from what happened in Lasem Chinatown recently. At present, there is a tendency for Chinatowns and Chinese culture in Lasem to be abandoned by Chinese *peranakan*. Most of the remaining Chinese in Lasem Chinatown are of the older generation. It is rare to see a Chinese child or young person on the streets of Lasem City, despite their lifestyle that tends to be at home. As stated by Liem Long Thun or Jadun,

"In the past, Lasem was full of Chinese, bro. Now they have moved. What is called by 'Little China' is in Lasem. The alleys of all Chinese are many" (Interview with Liem Long Thun or Om Jadun on 2/9/2020).

Chinese children in Lasem tend to start leaving Chinatown when they go to school in the outside city. In Lasem, at least two schools are quite old and well-known to Chinese circles, namely SD Wijayakusuma -formerly Con Min- which is located on the main road Daendels and SMP Pancabakti -formerly TionghoaHwe Kwan (THK). Although at present the school is not devoted to Chinese children, many Chinese people attend school there. They started leaving Lasem when they are in senior high school. Many of them go to school in Rembang, such as SMA Negeri 1 Rembang or even outside Rembang. After graduating from high school, they continued to pursue higher education outside Lasem because Lasem did not have a favorite university.

Apart from school reasons, many of the Lasem Chinese also work outside Lasem. Actually, there is a custom for a Chinese child to inherit their parents or ancestors' job. One child in a Chinese family will usually continue the parenting profession, and all the resources gathered before. For example, a young man in Karangturi village named Toni inherited the typical "Yopia" cake production that has survived for hundreds of years since his first ancestors came to Lasem. Even so, only Toni in his family who inherited it. Two of her older siblings have left Lasem in looking for other jobs. Stories like this happen a lot in the Lasem Chinese family.

Lasem is indeed not enough to provide jobs for young Chinese children. Most of them are limited to the trade sector, such as opening bicycles, gold, or food shops. However, there are now more job or professional options for young Chinese in Lasem, such as doctors, teachers, accountants, or academics. Apart from that, there is also some belief that if you want to grow, you have to leave Lasem. Therefore, not a few go to

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Surabaya, Semarang, or Jakarta to look for work. Usually, they joined their Chinese relatives or friends out of town.

However, people who left Lasem did not live in a special Chinese community or settlement, such as in Chinatown. They spread according to their work. Some of them did form communities such as the Lasem Citizens Association (Pawala), which brought together people of Chinese descent from Lasem around the Jakarta city area. This community is still in frequent contact with other Chinese descent in Lasem and organizes activities in Lasem.

Meanwhile, some of the house's conditions that were abandoned by its occupants were left empty and neglected. Some places are even planning to be sold, as was done by Tan Gwan Nio or Mrs. Frida, who is 71 years old. He alone manages the 4-hectare house, which he plans to sell for four billion rupiahs.

"People say don't sell it. But my son (in) Rembang was told to sell it. You know, if I pull out the grass from the front to the back, I will pay 900 thousand. 100 thousand a day. I sweep, but there are still cobwebs. How do people take care of the house like this!" (Interview with Tan GwanNio or Mrs. Frida on 24/8/2020)

Many other houses in Lasem have collapsed, been sold, and their owners have moved to other cities. The sale of the home is also related to the distribution of inheritance. The house is an essential legacy in the Chinese family that lasted quite a long time. Lots of Chinese places today are the same houses where their ancestors first came to Lasem. However, when the occupants are outside Lasem, some choose to sell and distribute the money to the remaining heirs.

With the house's sale, there is only one binding person to return to Lasem, namely their ancestors. Chinese people will at least return to Lasem because there is an annual tradition to visit ancestral graves. This tradition is usually carried out during Chinese New Year celebrations, or more commonly during the Cheng Beng ritual; pray at the ancestral grave held every April. However, not all Chinese descendants want to preserve the tradition of visiting their ancestors' graves. Lots of graves or 'Bong Tionghoa' are not well maintained and even covered with dirt. Some of the Chinese graves in Lasem have never been visited again, but they are still paid the tax not to convert. Usually, they hire local people to look after them. Therefore, the departure of Chinese descent from Lasem Chinatown greatly influenced the breaking of Chinese cultural rituals (See table 1).

Meanwhile, those who are old no longer visit the graves due to health factors and difficult access -most Chinese tombs are centered on Mount of Bugel or high hills. Besides, there was a bad precedent when they brought food for worship; the people around the tomb took it. Interestingly, some people are no longer in Lasem because they should take care of their ancestors' graves, so they have to bring or move the graves to a location near their residence.

Apart from leaving Lasem, the disconnection of Chinese people from Lasem culture and Chinatown was also due to religious conversion (see table 1). Many Chinese rituals are related to Confucian religious ceremonies, such as the annual ritual of pilgrimage to the tomb (Cheng Beng), the daily practice of praying at the altar or ash table, rituals on gods in Chinese homes, and others. In recent decades, there have been massive religious conversions among Chinese people. Before the Reformation, Confucianism was not recognized by the state. As a consequence of the New Order government's forced assimilation, Chinese people inevitably had to choose one of the religions recognized by the state; Buddhist, Hindu, Protestant Christian, Catholic Christian, or Muslim. Many of the Chinese then decided to choose between Protestant or Catholic Christianity.

"Well, they are getting more and more ignorant. For example, my children don't want to go to the grave. Moreover, influenced by Christianity. Now they are all Christians, and why did we choose Christianity? Because our saviors -Chinese in Java- are mainly Christians and Catholics. If we don't follow them right away, we could be victims of riots at the end of Soekarno's term because the G30 S incident could become a victim of G30 S excess". (Interview with Tio Sian Gwan or Soesantio on 28/08/2020).

Although there are three temples in Lasem, data from the Central Bureau of Statistics of Rembang Regency (2015-2019) do not mention the number of Chinese religion followers. They are classified under one attribute "Hindu, Buddhist, and others".

Meanwhile, the conversion of religion from confucianism resulted in a shift in activities from the temple to other worship places. Some art communities, such as the Barongsai, also began to run out of members so that the Chinese art communities in Lasem also no longer had activities. Moreover, there is a tendency for Chinese people to identify themselves as members of the religious community, instead of the members of ethnic groups; redefining themselves as part of the global Muslim or Christian

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community, instead of the Chinese diasporic community (Weng, 2014). Besides, there are several provisions in other religions that prohibit Chinese culture's implementation, especially those inherent in Confucian religious rituals; for example, for Chinese Christians, they no longer pray to ancestral spirits.

"Certain religions have restrictions, such as in Christianity. Those who have converted to Christianity, for example, no longer pray to ancestral spirits since Christians believe that a person who has died has a business with the Almighty. They have been submitted to the Almighty. So they no longer have to deal with worshiping ashes, it will usually be passed on to those who are still Buddhist or descendants of the Confucian religion". (Interview with Liau Tung Hwe or Arif Adikara, Chinese descent who became a Pastor, on 26/8/2020).

Although some of these rituals are prohibited in certain religious teachings, their followers also negotiate some of these prohibitions. Some Christians who are forbidden from sending food to their departed ancestors still carry out the ritual but only as a formality, for example, making food as is. After they no longer take care of the worship of their ancestral spirits, they usually entrust their traditional ashes to the temple. There was a superior officer for the prayer section who worshiped the neglected gray. Thus, Chinese culture associated with religious rituals was slowly being abandoned by Chinese descent in Lasem.

Table 1. Matrix of Discontinuity Factor		
Nodes	A : Discontinuity	
1 : Assimilation	0%	
2 : Conflict	12.14%	
3 : Conversion	48.69%	
4 : Dispersed from Lasem	39.17%	
5 : Integration	0%	
6 : Lasem Acceptance	0%	

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Source: Query Result of Analysis in NVivo Program 12

Apart from religious conversion, the fading of Chinese culture is also related to the changing *peranakan* identity. They prefer to be called Indonesians with an urban lifestyle that is less related to rituals. They began to give up their Chinese identity and emphasize their Indonesian identity more. The era of globalization has led to changes in the lifestyle of a more modern society. As a result, people tend to choose a new culture that is considered more practical instead of local culture. One of the factors that causes local culture to be forgotten in the present is; the lack of future generations who have an interest in learning and inheriting their own culture (Nahak, 2019). This identity shift is not precisely related to assimilation and integration. The old notion of the diaspora tends to see that members of the diaspora are not totally integrated socially-politically, economically, and culturally-into a host country so that they create and maintain boundaries facing the majority group. It is also often associated with the maintenance of boundaries by the dominant majority through discrimination against diaspora groups. Assimilation means the end of the diaspora, either ethnically or religiously (Bauböck dan Faist, 2010). Meanwhile, new ideas emphasize the cultural hybridity behind 'dissemination' (Bhabha, 2004).

The fading of Chinese identity and culture is more caused by the inheritance from the old generation to the younger generations of Chinese who are not going well. Young Chinese children do not get stories about their ancestry, migration history, or family tree. On the one hand, they still admit Chinese culture, on the other hand, they are more comfortable being called Indonesians.

"I personally prefer to be called Indonesian. Because I was born in Indonesia, I don't really know Chinese culture much more, then there is no direct relationship there, yes. I feel because I was born in Indonesia, spilled Indonesian blood, yes, I am Indonesian even though I am ethnically Chinese. Still, as a nationality, it is clear that I am Indonesian citizenship. So it is no different from the Javanese, the Batak tribe, in Indonesia, that is". (Interview with Liau Tung Hwe or Arif Adikara on 26/8/2020).

In addition, the fading of Chinese culture in Lasem was actually influenced by minor conflicts in the past. However, the conflict did not have much effect in Lasem because the relationship between the Chinese community and the local population tended to be harmonious. In addition, this phenomenon is not related to the assimilation and integration of Chinese *peranakan* in Lasem with the local community (see table 1). The process of assimilating Chinese ethnicity with the local community in the present context is precisely related to the acceptance of the Lasem community (see table 2). They are more accepted by the local population because of their assimilation and efforts to integrate with the local community. In fact, not a few of them have inter-ethnic intermarriage.Therefore, the assimilation and integration of Chinese *peranakan* in Lasem with the local community are more of a lively narrative of cooperation, not related to the fading of Chinese identity or the conflict that occurred both in Lasem.

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Table 2. Matrix of Assimilation and Integration		
Nodes	A : Assimilation	B : Integration
1 : Conflict	0%	0%
2 : Discontinuity	0%	0%
3 : Lasem Acceptance	82.72%	17.28%
	$CD \rightarrow 1 \rightarrow 1$	7. D 10

Source: Query Result of Data Analysis in NVivo Program 12

CONCLUSIONS

The existence of ethnic Chinese in Lasem has become part of the city's history. They visit and migrate to Lasem mainly due to business and trade activities in various waves of migration. Some of them later settled in Lasem and Rembang, which makes this area the 4th largest Chinese population in Indonesia. Since the beginning of his arrival, Chinese people had not really showed their identity. They try to show their local identity and fear being seen as a scattered community without a sense of belonging. This Chinese identity also faded during the New Order era due to assimilation and integration into Indonesia. Chinese celebrations and rituals are prohibited at this time so that Chinese people increasingly do not recognize their own culture.

Currently, after the recognition of Confucian religion and the celebrations and rituals of Chinese people are allowed to be celebrated in public, there is still a tendency for the Chinese in Lasem to leave their Chinese culture. Chinese children and youth in Lasem tend to go from Chinatown due to poor education service and lack of employment provided in Lasem City. Besides, many of them also had to convert from Confucianism, whose rituals are tightly appertained to Chinese culture. This transfer greatly influenced the discontinuity of Chinese culture. Meanwhile, this discontinuity is not affected by the assimilation and integration of the Chinese community into the local people.

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