TEK SENG BIO TEMPLE AS A SYMBOL OF HISTORY AND LOCALITY OF THE CHINESE INDONESIAN COMMUNITY IN CIKARANG

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This article examines Tek Seng Bio (德圣庙) Temple within the context of the temple as the symbol of local history among Chinese Indonesians in Cikarang. Established in 1900 by Tjio Lo Weh (蒋維内) from Fujian, the temple marked the inception of a Chinese settlement in North Cikarang. Unique in its devotion to Lín Tài Shī Gōng/Liem Tay Soe Kong (林太师公) as their main deity, Tek Seng Bio Temple originally functioned as a private familial place of worship. However, its transition to a public worship house faced challenges in 1967, with Presidential Instruction Number 14 imposing restrictions on Chinese religious practices, citing negative psychological and moral impacts on Indonesian society. In response to the governmental order, Tek Seng Bio Temple transformed itself into Dipankara Monastery in 1984. This adaptation facilitated the convergence of Theravada and Tridarma Buddhist worship, accommodating adherents of Confucianism and Taoism. Dipankara Monastery serves as a focal point for Chinese Buddhists, emphasising ancestor worship and traditional celebrations. Concurrently, Sariputra Monastery, established in 1991 adjacent to Tek Seng Bio Temple and even briefly occupying the front yard of Tek Seng Bio Temple before Sariputra had their own building, focuses on spiritual worship and education for pure Theravada and Chinese Buddhists in North Cikarang. This pioneering research constitutes the first comprehensive exploration of Tek Seng Bio Temple’s locality. Utilising primary source interviews, archival documentation, photographs, and fieldwork research, the study aims to contribute to the local historiography of North Cikarang, enhancing historical insights into the Chinese, Buddhist, Confucian, and Taoist communities in Indonesia. By meticulously examining the temple’s evolution and adaptation to external constraints, this research seeks to enrich our understanding of the complex interplay between religious practices, governmental regulations, and the cultural identity of Chinese Indonesians in Cikarang.
**KEYWORDS:** Chinese Temple, Tek Seng Bio, Indonesian Buddhism, Chinese Indonesian, Indonesian Confucianism and Taoism.

**INTRODUCTION**

Indonesia is a country with a majority Muslim population, and even today has the largest Muslim population in the world. However, the Buddhist, Confucian, and Taoist communities still have a significant role and identity in the country. Buddhism has long been present in Indonesia, as evidenced by the Srivijaya Empire, a Buddhist thalassocratic kingdom centred on the island of Sumatra. Srivijaya became an important epicentre of Buddhism and was a popular stopover for those travelling to India to study the religion (Bentley, 1993: 73). A report from Yijing, a Buddhist leader and frequent traveller of the Tang Dynasty, supports this. Yijing stated that many kings and chieftains in southern China were Buddhists and that this was reflected in Bhoga (Palembang, Sumatra), where Buddhist priests numbered over 1000 and practised their teachings well. He even noted that their teachings were identical to those in Madhya-desa (India). Yijing, therefore, recommended that Buddhist leaders in China who wished to study in India should stay one or two years in Srivijaya to master the teachings before travelling (Takakusu, 1896: xxiv).

The precise entry of Confucianism and Taoism into Indonesia lacks official documentation to date. However, it can be inferred that the introduction of these two Chinese folk religions coincided with the arrival of the Chinese community in Indonesia. Archaeological evidence, such as the discovery of Dong Son culture’s bronze drums in South Sumatra, indicates that maritime interactions between China and the Indonesian archipelago existed in ancient times. Further support comes from historical records and narratives dating back to the Han Dynasty. Notably, chronicles attributed to the reign of Emperor Wang Mang (6–1 BCE) mention knowledge of an archipelago called “Huang Tse,” which scholars have identified as a reference to Southeast Asia (Setiono, 2002: 18). These findings provide compelling evidence for early contact and potential trade relations between the two regions. These migrants brought not only goods, but also their evolving religious and philosophical beliefs. Among these, Taoism and Confucianism gained traction, with the former evidenced by the construction of numerous temples for worship, veneration, and meditation. Primarily hailing from the Fújiàn (福建) and Guangdong/Canton (广东) provinces of China, these early settlers integrated religious values into their lives, influencing cultural practices and contributing to the rich tapestry of Indonesian society (Ika Santhi Rahayu, 2005: 2).

Not all Chinese in Indonesia are Confucian or Taoist, especially considering Presidential Instruction of the Republic of Indonesia Number 14 of 1967 concerning Chinese Religions, Beliefs and Customs. The instruction states that all things originating from China, including religion, are forbidden, and are considered to be able to cause unnatural psychological, mental, and moral influences on Indonesian citizens and are therefore an obstacle to the assimilation process. The Presidential Instruction was further strengthened by the Minister of Home Affairs Circular Letter Number 477/74054/BA.01.2/4683/95. Thus, they need to be regulated and placed in reasonable proportions, by forcing them to embrace religions other than Confucianism and Taoism or other Chinese folk religions (President of the Republic of Indonesia, 1967).

Although President Abdurrahman Wahid revoked Presidential Instruction No. 14/1967 on Chinese Religions, Beliefs, and Customs through Presidential Decree No. 6/2000, the impact of the lack of distribution of Confucian and Taoist communities is still evident in society. This is because the forced assimilation of Chinese Indonesians led to the decline of Chinese identity, especially traditional Chinese religion, and beliefs. As a
result, the Confucian and Taoist religion in Indonesia are considered minority with the status of a recognised religion with the fewest adherents. This is reflected in the data presented by the Katabdata database, which shows that the number of Confucian adherents in Indonesia as of 2022 was recorded at only 71,999 people, with the largest concentration of adherents in Bangka Belitung (Dihni, 2022).

Simultaneously, Buddhism in Indonesia stands as a minority faith with a limited number of followers. The national civil records lumps Buddhism together as a general category, without distinctions between Mahayana Buddhism, Vajrayana Buddhism, Theravada Buddhism, Nichiren Buddhism, and Maitreya Buddhism. Furthermore, Tridarma Buddhism, an umbrella term encompassing Confucianism and Taoism, which possess distinct religious frameworks from Buddhism, is also classified under Buddhism. However, the recent recognition of Confucianism in Indonesia has prompted some individuals originally identified as Buddhists under Tridarma to formally update their religious affiliation in the Indonesian civil records. As of 2021, the Buddhist population in Indonesia amounted to 2.3 million, with 395,365 individuals, constituting 19.44% of the Buddhist populace, residing in the Jakarta Special Capital Region Province (Mahdi, 2022).

Despite its historical presence in Indonesia, Taoism remains an officially unrecognised religion. Currently, it is subsumed under the category of Tridarma Buddhism and registered as such in national civil records. This lack of formal recognition makes it difficult to quantify the exact number of Taoist practitioners in Indonesia. Nonetheless, there are indications that the number of Taoists is on the decline, a trend discernible since 2015. This trend is notably highlighted in the testimony of Go Eng Lok, the manager of Po Ang Hio Temple in Demak Regency. According to Go Eng Lok, the 32-year suppression by Suharto’s New Order government against Confucianists and Taoists resulted in the conversion of Taoists who formerly adhere to Chinese Chinese religion and actively engaged in worship and veneration at Po Ang Hio Temple. It is noteworthy that Po Ang Hio Temple did not restrict those who converted from continuing their worship and practice of Chinese traditions. The diminished number of worshippers has left Po Ang Hio Temple consistently vacant, impacting the temple’s ability to employ Chinese heritage institutions for activities such as the lion dance. Furthermore, Go Eng Lok elucidated that there are presently no Chinese traditional activities related to tetabuhan and lion dance training. Various items and harps related to the Chinese ritual belonging to the temple have been quietly stored in the temple’s safe room (Faisol & Fuadona, 2015).

According to Peking University Indonesian studies scholar Kong Yuanzhi (2005: 1–12), the majority of Indonesia’s ethnicity comes from Yunnan, China. His theory divides Indonesians generally into Proto-Malays and Deutero-Malays. The Proto-Malays (also known as Original Malais or Ancient Malais) are Mongoloids who migrated from China to the Indonesian Archipelago between 2500 and 1500 BCE. The Deutero-Malays (also known as Young Malais), who are partly Austronesian from Tonkin, migrated to the Indonesian Archipelago around 300 BC (Waskey, 2013: 216).

In his 1965 work, The Chinese in Southeast Asia, Victor Purcell delineates the distribution and socio-economic roles of the Chinese community in Java. Notably, the Chinese predominantly resided in urban centres rather than rural areas, with a concentration in cities and towns. This urban settlement pattern was particularly characteristic of the middle-class merchants who wielded substantial influence over wholesale and retail trade. In 1930, commerce and transport constituted 61 percent of the Chinese population in Java, with significant involvement in sugar processing, food industries, and timber-related occupations. In Batavia, the capital city, the Chinese
comprised 15 percent of the total population. The early immigrants from south Fukien, especially to Java, were among the pioneers in Indonesia, with some families having established roots for nearly two centuries. Noteworthy examples include the Tsai (Tsoa) house, whose founder arrived in Java five generations ago, in 1753. Subsequent waves of Chinese migration included the Hakkas, the people from Chao Chou (including the city of Swatow), the Teochew, and those from southern Kwangtung, following the lead of the Hokkiens. The Hakkas began settling in West Borneo between 1740 and 1745, primarily engaged in gold mining or agriculture, cultivating rubber, pepper, and tobacco. However, by the end of the nineteenth century, as European-managed plantations and mines proliferated, many Teochew and Hakkas shifted their focus to colonising Bangka, Belitung, and East Sumatra. Notably, the Chinese community in Indonesia, particularly in Java, exhibited a more pronounced admixture of native blood compared to their counterparts in other Southeast Asian countries. (Purcell, 1965: 5–6).

The spread of Chinese people in Indonesia also includes Bekasi Regency, including North Cikarang. One proof of the existence of the Chinese community in North Cikarang is the Tek Seng Bio (德圣庙) Temple, which was established in 1900. The temple, once a private house of worship owned by Tjio Lo Weh (蒋維内), gradually developed, and became popular among the North Cikarang Chinese community due to its location next to the Cikarang railway line and close to the Cikarang market. On the other hand, Theravada Buddhists, including those who are not Chinese and are not adherents of Tridarma, Confucianism, and Taoism, did not have a dedicated place of worship prior to the establishment of Sariputra Monastery. In 1984, Theravada and Tridarma Buddhists worshipped at the Tek Seng Bio temple, which was adopted as a public house of worship under the name Dipankara Monastery to accommodate Presidential Instruction of the Republic of Indonesia Number 14 of 1967 concerning Chinese Religion, Beliefs and Customs. These two houses of worship are interesting because although they stand separately, there is causality in the historical framework that makes them have crossover and cooperation between the two parties. Furthermore, this research holds significance due to the distinctive nature of Tek Seng Bio Temple. The temple, devoted to Liem Tay Soe Kong as its primary deity, is noteworthy for being owned by the Tjio Lo Weh family. Interestingly, the temple’s orientation leans more towards Confucianism than Taoism in terms of its style and practices. Notably, the descendants of the Tjio Lo Weh family, specifically their children and grandchildren, embraced the surname or family name Utama. This choice later served as the foundation for establishing the Cakra Utama Foundation.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The investigation into the Local History of the Tek Seng Bio Temple is a comprehensive study, as there is currently no published research or scholarly work that specifically delves into this temple’s intricacies. Existing unpublished research is limited to a bachelor thesis within the Chinese Language and Chinese Culture Study Programme at Universitas Dharma Persada, authored by Rafii Muhammad. Titled Penghormatan Kepada Tokoh Keramat Lokal di Klenteng Tek Seng Bio Cikarang (Honouring Local Sacred Figures at Tek Seng Bio Temple in Cikarang), Rafii Muhammad’s bachelor thesis elucidates that the reverence for local sacred figures at Tek Seng Bio Temple manifests as an adaptation to local culture, serving as an attempt to assimilate into the community that first settled in the area. Beyond this bachelor thesis, information about Tek Seng Bio is largely confined to various news portals, lacking an in-depth exploration of its historical context. Instead, these sources predominantly focus on news coverage related to Chinese cultural celebrations in North Cikarang and the social service initiatives undertaken by
the Cakra Utama Foundation for the residents of North Cikarang and its vicinity.

Research on the primary deity of the temple, Liem Tay Soe Kong, has been previously conducted, though the name is often spelled as Lim Tai See or Lin Tai Shi (and several other name variations as a form of romanisation of Chinese characters) in existing studies. Huang Wen Chu’s work, titled 由人而神, 從史轉醫: 新加坡林太師信仰文化的在地敘說 (From man to God, from history to medicine: a local narration of the belief culture of Taishi Lin in Singapore), published in the 成大中文學報 (Journal of Chinese Literature of National Cheng Kung University), is one such study. The article delves into the life and literary contributions of Lim Tai See (1537–1604), also known as Lin Xie Chun, emphasising his integrity, people-centric approach, and commitment to educating villagers as evident in his work, Yun Shan Ji Shi Ji. It traces his evolution from a “historian Lim Tai See Gong” in a historical context to an “imperial teacher Lim Tai See Gong” revered in folk beliefs. The research sheds light on how, in the twentieth century, the veneration of Lim Tai See evolved within the Hokkiens Chinese community in Singapore, influencing local religious culture and fostering a shared Chinese identity and collective memory.

This study also draws from a collaborative journal article by Lee Cheuk Yin and Yip Xin Ying, examining Liem Tay Soe Kong, or Lim Tai See Gong. Titled 漂洋过海: 林偕春与新加坡的 林太师信仰 (Across the seas: Lin Xiechun and the Lim Tai See belief in Singapore), the article is published in Cogitatio: Journal of Sinological Studies 漢學研究學刊. Diverging from Huang Wen Chu’s research, both Lee Cheuk Yin and Yip Xin Ying focused on highlighting the local significance of Lim Tai See Gong in Singapore, exploring the presence of Hoon Sam Temple and Lim Tai See Street as tributes to him. Constructed in 1902, the Hoon Sam Temple dedicated to Lim Tai See witnessed an increase in followers from diverse clans and regions as society evolved. Notably rare, Lim Tai See Street stands out as one of the few streets named after a temple deity. Lee Cheuk Yin and Yip Xin Ying paper’s objective is to trace the history of development and migration of this widely embraced belief, emphasising its localisation in Singapore, while introducing Singapore’s unique and historically rich Chinese culture.

Hoo Sam Temple and the Lim Tai See Gong congregation in Singapore both adhere more towards Taoism, distinguishing them from the Lim Tai See Gong congregation at Tek Seng Bio Temple in Indonesia. The latter leans towards Tridarma Buddhism and Confucianism. The study’s novelty lies in emphasising the distinctive religious affiliation of Tek Seng Bio Temple and its congregation. Notably, their practices prioritise the religious guidelines of Tridarma Buddhism and Confucianism over Taoism, though Taoism is still combined with Tridarma Buddhism. This distinction gains significance as, in Indonesia, Taoism is integrated into Tridarma Buddhism, blurring the clear identity of Taoism as a separate religion. The uniqueness extends to Tek Seng Bio Temple’s veneration altar dedicated to local sacred figures who follow Islam. This results from the syncretism of Islam with the local beliefs and traditions of the Javanese (Kejawen) and Sundanese (Wiwitan) communities, irrespective of whether these practices are considered deviant from Islamic teachings and rules.

**METHODOLOGY**

This article employs historical research methods. As defined by Martha Howell and Walter Prevenier, historical research entails selecting reliable sources, reading them carefully, and synthesising them into a trustworthy and verifiable account (Howell &
Prevenier, 2001:2). The author’s research methodology for this historical study is based on Louis Reichenthal Gottschalk’s approach, which emphasises the examination and analysis of primary sources (Gottschalk, 2008: 39). To analyse and produce scholarly work from these sources, the author follows the four stages of the historical method: heuristics, source criticism, interpretation, and historiography (Ismaun, 2005: 50).

Regarding the methodological timeline, this research, encompassing the selection of the theme, literature review, establishment of contacts with key individuals such as foundation owners and worship house organisers, fieldwork, interviews, documentation of historical sites, and the subsequent article writing process, was completed within an approximate duration of 8 months. The research timeline commenced at the end of April 2023 and concluded by mid-November 2023.

The most basic step was literary heuristics, which involved collecting primary sources on Buddhism and Confucianism in Indonesia, as well as sources on Liem Tay Soe Kong, a deified figure by some Chinese people, especially Taoist and Confucianists. Since this research is a pilot study, the primary sources are interviews with relevant parties who are witnesses to history and memory keepers of the research theme. The author interviewed Bakri Utama, the great-grandson of the founder of Tek Seng Bio Temple, and Jun Susanto, the Secretary of Sariputra Foundation, to understand the historical connection between Tek Seng Bio Temple/Dipankara Monastery and Sariputra Monastery, despite their functional and institutional differences.

After collecting sources, the author conducted source verification/critique, interpretation, and historiography. The sources, including interviews, were verified with evidence such as documents (e.g., the founding document of Dipankara Temple), and by cross-checking statements from one source with another (in this case, between Bakri Utama and Jun Susanto). Once the validity of the sources was established, the author interpreted the results of the critique to understand how to prepare the writing narrative. The writers of this article undertook critical examination and verification to understand why Tek Seng Bio, dedicated to Liem Tay Soe Kong as its primary deity, exhibits a leaning towards Confucianism rather than Taoism. The outcome of this scrutiny and validation, shaping the writers’ interpretative process, points to the acknowledgment of Confucianism as an officially recognised religion in Indonesia, capable of existing independently or integrating into Tridarma Buddhism. This recognition complicates the exclusive identification of Tek Seng Bio as a Taoist temple, particularly for the lay audience, as illustrated by the presence of the Tri Nabi/Three Prophets concept on the veneration altar. The regular worship and veneration practices at Tek Seng Bio Temple adhere to the guidelines of Magabutri (Majelis Agama Buddha Tridharma Indonesia/Indonesian Tridarma Buddhist Council), incorporating elements from Buddhism, Taoism, and Confucianism in the paritta, chants, and other rituals. This syncretic approach underscores the intricate interplay of these religious influences in the temple’s worship and veneration routines. The results of the interpretation were then finalised in the form of historiography.
FINDINGS

1. Profile of Tek Seng Bio Temple

![Figure 1. Photo of Tjio Lo Weh (Baba Loweh) as the founder of the Tek Seng Bio Temple. Source: Fieldwork, 2023.]

Tek Seng Bio Temple is a Chinese temple estimated to have been established in 1900, according to the Chinese calendar. It is located at Jalan KH. Fudholi Number 5, Karangasih Village, North Cikarang District, Bekasi Regency, West Java, Indonesia, postcode 17530. The temple was founded by Tjio Lo Weh (蒋維内, also known as Baba Loweh and Jiäng Wei Nei) to preserve his Chinese culture and customs, honour his ancestors from Fujian, and to venerate Liem Tay Soe Kong. However, the establishment of the temple was not straightforward, but had a long history, beginning with Tjio Lo Weh’s migration to Java.

![Figure 2. Tek Seng Bio Temple from the front entrance, Source: Fieldwork, 2023.]

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In 1880, Tjio Lo Weh migrated from China to the Dutch East Indies because of the wars, opium epidemics, and instability in Qing China. He settled in Muara Gembong, where he worked as a farmer, before moving to Sukatani. In Sukatani, Tjio Lo Weh built a small house to pray and venerate his ancestors in an area now known as North Cikarang. The temple was deliberately located near the market (Pasar Lama Cikarang) and the river to make it accessible to Chinese entrepreneurs and worshippers and venerators who arrived by boat (Interview with Bakri Utama, 2023).

2. Liem Tay Soe Kong as Temple’s Deity

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*Figure 3. Tek Seng Bio Temple from the right entrance (roadside to Cikarang railway). Source: Fieldwork, 2023.*

*Figure 4. Sculpture of Liem Tay Soe Kong, the main deity of Tek Seng Bio Temple. Source: Fieldwork, 2023.*
In contrast to other temples in Indonesia, Tek Seng Bio was founded with Liem Tay Soe Kong as its principal deity. Liem Tay Soe Kong, also known as Lin Kaichun/Lin Xie Chen (林偕春) or Lin Fu Yuan (林孚元), hailed from Yunxiao County, Fujian province (Wen Chu, 2020: 129). Born in the 16th year of Jiajing’s reign during the Ming Dynasty (1537), he passed away in the 32nd year of Wanli (1604) and buried at Qi Xing Hills (七星山), one kilometre northwest of Mashan Village, Pumei Town, Yunxiao County, south of Fujian Province. Revered for his loyalty and benevolence to the Ming Empire, Lin Kaichun, having succeeded in the Jinshi imperial examination in the 44th year of Jiajing (1565), later served as a reviewer at the Han Lin Academy (翰林院) in the second year of Longqing (1568). Notably, his involvement in compiling the “Records of Emperor Muzong of the Ming Dynasty (明穆宗实录)” earned him the titles of historian and princely advisor (Cheuk Yin & Xin Ying, 2018: 199–200, 222). According to an interview with Bakri Utama, Tek Seng Bio’s founder’s great-grandson, Liem Tay Soe Kong was also recognised for aiding communities affected by drought (Interview with Bakri Utama, 2023).

Liem Tay Soe Kong was well known for his extensive writings covering a wide range of topics. His most notable work is Yunshan Jushi Ji (云山居士集), a collection of his writings that reflected his thoughts on politics, governance, and current affairs. This collection showcased his dedication to helping society and his high moral standards (Cheuk Yin & Xin Ying, 2018: 200).

Over time, Liem Tay Soe Kong contributions and local impact led to his deification as a local god, particularly in Yunxiao County, Fujian. The belief of the local people influenced this transformation from a historical figure to a revered local deity. The folk belief system around Liem Tay Soe Kong lacked formal doctrines or organised religious institutions, but his legacy as a benevolent figure who cared for the well-being of the people earned him a special place in the community’s hearts.

Figure 5. Liem Tay Soe Kong Altar as the Main Altar of Tek Seng Bio Temple. 
The process of deification likely began to take root in the 18th century, as indicated by references to Lin Kaichun in local county annals. By the early 20th century, he had become known as Taishi Gong (太史公), a respected figure whose influence extended beyond local borders. Despite some scepticism from official sources, the veneration of Lin Kaichun persisted among the people, evolving into a generalised form of religion centred on ancestor worship and community god worship (Cheuk Yin & Xin Ying, 2018: 204).

Although there are some differences of opinion regarding when Liem Tay Soe Kong became a deity, there is the strongest evidence, although it is dated to the 19th century. According to Yunxiao Fengwu Zhi (云霄风物志), Yunshan Academy was built in 1883, the ninth year of the Guangxu reign of the Qing dynasty, to commemorate the virtues of Lin Kaichun (Liem Tay Soe Kong). It is also known as the Tai Shi Gong Temple. Over time, this temple has gradually become an ancestral temple and has spread its incense overseas, allowing this folk belief to spread. Therefore, although it is difficult to say exactly when Lin Kaichun/Liem Tay Soe Kong became a local deity, this belief can be traced back to 1883, when Tai Shi Gong became one of the representatives of Yunxiao County.

3. Chinese Ancestor Veneration and the Uniqueness of Tek Seng Bio Temple

![Special altar behind the altar dedicated to Liem Tay Soe Kong is dedicated to a local figure of North Cikarang.](source: Fieldwork, 2023.)

The enduring strength of the Chinese community’s culture and its continued survival can be attributed, in part, to the profound respect for ancestors and a commitment to preserving the values imparted by them. Chinese culture is notably known for its emphasis on honouring ancestors, a practice deeply rooted in traditional Chinese religion. Ancestor veneration constitutes a significant aspect of this tradition, involving the celebration of deified ancestors and guiding deities associated with individuals sharing the same clan or surname. These deities are typically organised into genealogical societies within ancestral temples. Despite being invisible, ancestors, their spirits, and deities are considered integral components of the world. It’s important to note that, in Chinese belief,
they are not regarded as supernatural or transcendent beyond the realm of nature. Rather, the ancestors deified in Chinese teachings are revered human beings who have achieved righteousness and serve as exemplary life models for the community. This fundamental connection underscores the cornerstone of Chinese religious teachings, which is rooted in the practice of ancestor worship (Nadeau, 2010: 369).

Tek Seng Bio Temple stands out for its reverence towards local figures in the Cikarang region, who do not align with Chinese, Buddhist, Confucian, or Taoist affiliations. Among the 14 altars of veneration, alongside venerating deities like Liem Tay Soe Kong, Siddhartha Gautama, and Kwan Im, the temple pays homage to several Sundanese and Javanese public figures. These figures include Raden Surya Kencana Winata Mangkubumi, Raden Mas Soerjokoesoemo (大老师/Tay Lau Soe), Raden Mas Imam Soedjono (二老师/Dji Lau Soe), and Embah Sabin. Notably, each altar contains ashes from the respective figure’s grave, serving as a conduit for connection between visitors paying their respects and these revered individuals (Interview with Bakri Utama, 2023).

Each revered figure in Tek Seng Bio Temple holds a unique narrative. Raden Surya Kencana Winata Mangkubumi, honoured as “Embah Raden Suryakencana” under his gravestone, was the son of Prince Aria Wiratanudatar. Sent to propagate Islam in Cikarang, Raden Surya Kencana is esteemed as sacred by the local community (Oktaliani, 2023). Raden Mas Soerjokoesoemo, also known as Tay Lau Soe (大老师), is recognised at Tek Seng Bio Temple with an altar headstone bearing his name. Despite debates over his identity and background, he is acknowledged as the spiritual mentor of Prince Diponegoro. Revered by the Javanese, Madurese, and Chinese communities, Tay Lau Soe gained respect for successfully combating the cholera epidemic in East Java. Some believe he was a fugitive who fled Qing China after the Taiping Rebellion, adopting various names like Raden Mas Soerjokoesoemo, Kiai Zakaria II, and Mbah Kromodi Redjo (Kustedja, Sudikno, and Salura, 2014: 2).1 “Tay Lau Soe” linguistically translates to “the great teacher” and is also linked to Raden Mas Imam Soedjono. Dji Lau Soe (二老师), meaning “the second teacher” after Raden Soerjokoesoemo, was a bodyguard of Prince Diponegoro credited with founding Wonosari Village by cutting the base on the slopes of Mount Kawi, Malang (Syafi’i, 2023). The final local figure, Embah Sabin, is an ancestor of Jonggol and played a crucial role in spreading Islam in the region along with Embah Jago, Embah Surkat, and Embah Jagakarsa. Revered by the Sundanese people, they are highly respected within the local community (Desprosianasari and Hartati, 2019: 36).

1 There is an alternative viewpoint asserting that Tay Lau Soe is the great-grandson of Pakubuwana I of the Mataram Sultanate. This assertion is supported by a certificate issued by Pengageng Kantor Tepas Darah Daken Kraton Yogyakarta Hadiningrat, numbered 55/TD/1964, and signed by Kanjeng Tumenggung Danoehadiningrat on 23 June 1964 (refer to Kusumo, 2021).
4. Veneration Activities at Tek Seng Bio

Figure 7. Recitation of the paritta as part of Tek Seng Bio Temple’s regular worship by following the directions and guidelines of the Indonesian Tridarma Buddhist Assembly. Source: Cakra Utama Foundation archive.

The religious practices at Tek Seng Bio closely align with those observed at Chinese temples throughout Indonesia. For a detailed glimpse into these activities, one can refer to the Instagram page @teksengbio_cikarang, accessible via the web address https://www.instagram.com/teksengbio_cikarang/. Routine ceremonies at Tek Seng Bio Temple involve the collective recitation of paritta, occurring on the 2nd (Ce Ji) or the evening of the 3rd (Ce Sa) in the Chinese calendar, and the 16th (Cap Lak) or the night of the 17th (Cap Cit) in the Chinese calendar. Furthermore, consistent with other Chinese temples, Tek Seng Bio Temple hosts recurring events such as Cap Go Meh (十五冥) on the 15th day of the first month of the Chinese calendar, Cioko Worship Festival (鬼節) on the 15th day of the 7th month of the Chinese calendar, and the Xun Jing (巡境) celebration—known in Indonesia as Sejit Kongco, specifically termed Sejit Kongco Liem Tay Soe Kong at Tek Seng Bio. This celebration marks Liem Tay Soe Kong’s birthday and typically includes a cultural carnival featuring various arts, including a lion dance performed along the streets of Cikarang. The Xun Jing festival takes place on the fourth day of the fourth month in the Chinese calendar.
Figure 8. An excerpt from the Pedoman Kebaktian Tridharma (Tridarma Devotional Handbook) showing that Tridarma Buddhist worship involves worshipping the Three Prophets, which includes Buddhism, Confucianism, and Taoism).

Source: Pedoman Kebaktian Tridharma, pp. 42.
Figure 9. Peace and Happiness (Damai dan Bahagia) chant in a Tridarma Buddhist worship service combining Buddhism, Confucianism, and Taoism, with veneration of Sakyamuni representing Buddhism, Khong Cu representing Confucianism, and Tao representing Taoism, Source: Pedoman Kebaktian Tridarma, pp.21.

It is important to note that the worship and veneration practices at Tek Seng Bio adhere to the directives and principles of Magabutri (Majelis Agama Buddha Tridharma Indonesia/Indonesian Tridarma Buddhist Council). Magabutri integrates Buddhism, Confucianism, and Taoism within the framework of Tridarma Buddhism and the concept of the Tri Nabi Three Prophets. Consequently, the rituals associated with worship, mourning, and funerals encompass elements from Buddhism, Confucianism, and Taoism. These practices strictly adhere to the guidelines outlined in the Tridarma Service Manual for worship and the Tridarma Mourning Manual, compiled by the Pandita Council of the Indonesian Tridarma Buddhist Assembly, for mourning and funeral processes. Similarly, Tek Seng Bio aligns its worship and veneration procedures with the guidelines set by the Indonesian Tridarma Buddhist Council.
5. The Dynamics of Tek Seng Bio Temple: Buddhist Monastery as a House of Worship and Chinese Temple as a House of Tradition

Originally a private prayer house restricted to a select few, Tek Seng Bio Temple underwent a transformation in response to the growing number of individuals seeking to venerate Liem Tay Soe Kong and other Chinese deities. It transitioned from a private space to a publicly accessible house of worship. However, it did not acquire official recognition as a temple until the period following Indonesian independence and the establishment of the Suharto regime (Interview with Bakri Utama, 2023).

Figure 10. A document authorising the establishment of Tek Seng Bio Temple as Dipankara Monastery. Source: Fieldwork, 2023.

In 1984, Tek Seng Bio Temple was formally registered. However, in adherence to the Presidential Instruction of the Republic of Indonesia Number 14 of 1967 concerning Chinese Religions, Beliefs, and Customs, it could not be officially recognised as a Chinese temple or a house of veneration and worship for Confucianism and Taoism. In accordance with governmental directives, Tek Seng Bio Temple was established as a Tridarma Buddhist Monastery and named Dipankara Monastery.
A foundation (yayasan) is required as a legal entity to manage a legitimate public place of worship. As a result, the Cakra Utama Foundation was established in 1988 (recognised as a Buddhist religious institution) to oversee the Dipankara Monastery/Tek Seng Bio Temple. The foundation was founded to manage the activities of the Buddhist-Confucian and Chinese communities in North Cikarang and to strengthen the legal basis of Tek Seng Bio Temple, particularly in terms of the relationship between places of worship and the North Cikarang community.

Figure 11. A document that validates the Cakra Utama Foundation as the foundation that oversees the Dipankara Monastery/Tek Seng Bio Temple. 

Figure 12. The “Tri Nabi” Altar at Tek Seng Bio Temple is an altar for Buddhist worship mixed with Chinese Folk Religion veneration (Confucianism and Taoism). 
The Avalokiteśvara/Kwan Im Worship Altar was added as a form of fulfilment of the Tridarma Buddhist house of worship at Tek Seng Bio Temple under the name Dipankara Monastery. Source: Fieldwork, 2023.

The establishment of Dipankara Monastery was a solution to the problem of the legality and formal recognition of Tek Seng Bio Temple. In addition to registering Dipankara Monastery, the temple also added altars and shrines to worship Buddha and Kwan Im Goddess (*Avalokiteśvara*). This allowed Tek Seng Bio Temple to officially operate as a *Tridarma* Buddhist temple (Buddhism, Confucianism, and Taoism).

6. The Unique Relationship between Tek Seng Bio Temple and Sariputra Monastery

Interestingly, several years after Tek Seng Bio Temple’s official establishment under the name Dipankara Monastery, Sariputra Monastery was also established in 1993 as a purely Theravada Buddhist monastery (without Confucian or Taoist rites). Before
Sariputra Monastery was established at Jalan Anggrek Number 5, the Sariputra Foundation’s congregation worshipped in the courtyard of Tek Seng Bio Temple from 1987 to 1991, before moving to a prepared room in the badminton court across Tek Seng Bio Temple at Jalan Anggrek Number 9 (Interview with Jun Susanto, 2023).

Figure 15. A document explaining that the violence experienced by the Chinese community in North Cikarang had become one of the bases for the formation of the Dharma Bhakti Foundation, which was initially used to manage Chinese burial grounds, as well as protect Chinese burial grounds, Source: Sariputra Foundation archive.

Figure 16. A document explaining the history of the founding of the Dharma Bhakti Foundation as the catalyst for the founding of Sariputra Monastery. Source: Sariputra Foundation archive.
Before the establishment of Dipankara Monastery and Sariputra Monastery, the Yayasan Dharma Bhakti was founded in 1976. Initially focused on managing burial plots since 1952 and 1959 under the authority of Lauw Djin Hwee, it underwent name changes, evolving from Lauw Djin Hwee to Perkumpulan Kematian Dharma Bhakti (Dharma Bhakti Mortuary Society) in 1985, and later to Yayasan Dharma Bhakti Sariputra. Originally created to oversee the burial grounds for the North Cikarang Chinese community, its scope expanded with the construction of the Pasar Baru Cikarang Terminal, necessitating the relocation of burials, which included the replanting of grave frames and bodies. Over time, the foundation’s functions broadened to encompass Theravada Buddhist education, spiritual development, and the continued management of burials for the Cikarang Chinese community (Interview with Jun Susanto, 2023).

**Figure 17.** A documentation of Sariputra Monastery’s activities in welcoming and serving monks from Thailand, Laos, and Cambodia who were travelling on foot to Borobudur Temple to undergo the *Thudong* ritual.

*Source:* Sariputra Foundation archive.

An intriguing feature of Sariputra Monastery, particularly as a hub for the North Cikarang Buddhist community, is its vibrant interaction with monks from overseas. Notwithstanding its recent establishment in the 1990s, Sariputra Monastery has emerged as a prominent site and religious institution for the Theravada Buddhist community of North Cikarang and Buddhist communities abroad. This prominence arises from its strategic location along the *Thudong* to the Borobudur Temple route, a rigorous ritual pilgrimage undertaken by monks that involves a trek of thousands of kilometres, typically commencing in Nakhon Sri Thammarat, Thailand, and culminating at Borobudur Temple. The monks embarking on this arduous journey from outside Indonesia to Borobudur Temple are graciously welcomed and served by Sariputra Monastery. This welcoming spirit is further enhanced by the enthusiasm of North Cikarang residents, who embrace these monks as guests capable of imparting spiritual blessings to the local Buddhist community.
It can be said that Sariputra Monastery is the focus of Buddhist activities in North Cikarang in terms of spirituality and education. Meanwhile, celebratory, and traditional activities, especially those related to Chinese, Confucian, and Taoist traditions, are held at Tek Seng Bio Temple/Dipankara Monastery. These celebrations include *Cap Go Meh*, *Cioko Festivals*, and *Sejit Kongco* (Interview with Bakri Utama, 2023).

Despite their distinct origins and foundational differences, as well as their varying functionalities as places of worship, Tek Seng Bio Temple and Sariputra Monastery have fostered a harmonious relationship throughout their development. This amicable bond is evidenced by Tek Seng Bio Temple’s regular invitation of Sariputra Monastery monks to conduct *parittas* and other Theravada Buddhist rituals (Interview with Bakri Utama, 2023). Moreover, Tek Seng Bio Temple and Sariputra Monastery frequently collaborate on joint activities, including social services and food distribution initiatives for the underprivileged. These collaborative endeavours often involve the coordination of
activities between the two places of worship, with Tek Seng Bio Temple, through the Cakra Utama Foundation, sometimes acting as a donor for Sariputra Monastery and Dharma Bhakti Sariputra Foundation initiatives (Interview with Jun Susanto, 2023).

**ANALYSIS**

The Chinese temple plays a vital role in society, serving not only as a preservation of tradition but also as a sacred space for conducting ancestor veneration ceremonies, an expression of filial piety. In Confucianism, filial piety is referred to as *xiào* (孝), representing a strict hierarchical structure within the family. Subordinate members hold the duty of obedience to those in superior positions, while the latter reciprocate with care, support, and guidance. Filial piety, along with fraternal responsibility and loyalty to the country (*zhōng* 五常, five constants/relationships) in Confucianism. These constants, in descending order of importance, include benevolence or *rén* (仁), righteousness or *yi* (义), propriety or *li* (理), wisdom or *zhì* (智), and fidelity or *xin* (信) regulating ancient Chinese society ethically (Wang & Madson, 2013: 28).

Filial piety, according to Confucianism, holds the utmost significance among ethical teachings and is extensively discussed in the classical literature known as the *Book of Filial Piety* (*Shao Chien*). Dating back to the 2nd or 3rd century BC, this text illustrates how ancient kings and sages observed filial-piety rites directed towards heaven and their parents. This concept has wielded influence over China for more than 2500 years, serving as the stabilising and unifying force within the Chinese family system (Chao, 1987: 21). The Analects of Confucius (Book 2:5) further reinforces the importance of ancestor veneration in filial piety, quoting Confucius, “Never disobey (the rituals)! When your parents are alive, serve them according to the ritual. When they die, bury them according to the ritual, and make sacrifices to them according to the ritual” (Confucius, 2000: 81).

Yang Qing Kun (楊慶堃), in his work titled *Religion in Chinese Society: A Study of Contemporary Social Functions of Religion and Some of Their Historical Factors* (1961: 21), asserts that the application of the structural-function approach to the examination of Chinese society reveals two distinct forms of religion. The first is institutional religion, characterised by an autonomous system of theology, rituals, and organisational structure. Operating as an independent social institution, it possesses its own fundamental concepts and structural framework. The second form is diffused religion, in which the theological, ritual, and organisational aspects are closely intertwined with the concepts and structure of secular institutions and other elements of the social order. In the diffused form, religious beliefs and rituals seamlessly integrate into the organised social pattern, exerting a pervasive influence on various aspects of Chinese social life. It is crucial to recognise that the apparent absence of a formally organised religious structure in China does not diminish the functional significance or the existence of a structural system within Chinese culture. While Buddhism, despite its foreign origins, has assimilated so deeply into Chinese culture that its Indian roots are often overlooked by the general population, Christianity and Islam remain beyond this classification. Their exclusion is attributed to their limited acculturation, as their theological and ethical principles do not significantly impact the daily lives of ordinary people, and their followers constitute only a small percentage of the population.

Filial piety and diffused religion are integral aspects of Chinese society, brought
forth by the migrating Chinese populace. These elements form the bedrock of cultural values, including a religious framework, perpetuated by the Chinese community. Consequently, Chinese temples beyond China closely mirror their counterparts within the homeland, exemplified by Tek Seng Bio Temple. The temple vividly showcases the enduring commitment to filial piety, particularly in reverence to Liem Tay Soe Kong. This underscores the ability of the Chinese community in Indonesia, particularly the Peranakan Chinese (Chinese groups in Indonesia and surrounding countries who have mixed with or with the culture of local communities, for example Malay, Javanese, Sundanese, and even marrying some of them), to uphold their cultural teachings despite integration with local communities. Remarkably, Tek Seng Bio Temple takes a distinctive stance by featuring an altar dedicated to revered figures acknowledged by the local Cikarang residents. These figures are of the Muslim faith, a nuance that might be misconstrued as worship, especially from the standpoint of Abrahamic religions like Islam, Christianity, and Judaism.

However, in the context of Tek Seng Bio Temple, this practice is well-supported. The existence of the altar aligns with the prevalent religious syncretism observed in Cikarang, where individuals may identify as Muslim but adhere to pre-Islamic Javanese customs, termed Kejawèn. Kejawèn, or Kebatinan, amalgamates Animistic, Buddhist, Islamic, and Hindu elements, rooted in Javanese history. A parallel example exists in Sundanese society, including the Baduy/Urang Kanekes and Banten tribes, where adherents of pre-Islamic customs are known as Wiwitan. Sunda Wiwitan similarly integrates Animistic, Buddhist, Islamic, and Hindu aspects, constituting an Indonesian folk religion. Despite their diminishing numbers due to the waning interest in ancient local teachings, the altar in Tek Seng Bio Temple persists. Bakri Utama’s insights reveal that this practice faces no opposition from the Islamic community in Cikarang or beyond. This is noteworthy, especially given the close proximity of the temple to the Jamu’ Nurul Huda Mosque, situated a mere 260 metres away. The altar’s preservation is not an endorsement of teachings conflicting with Islam but rather a concerted effort to safeguard traditions and uphold Cikarang’s local history. Its maintenance underscores the Chinese community’s respect for the sacred figures on the altar, who, during their lifetimes, welcomed and embraced the Chinese community in Cikarang, demonstrating a harmonious coexistence with the broader community (Interview with Bakri Utama, 2023).

CONCLUSION
Tek Seng Bio Temple stands out for its unique approach, blending respect for local Muslim figures in Cikarang with the preservation of Chinese values, customs, and culture. This respect for Muslim figures is not only a commitment of the temple but also reflects the broader efforts of the Chinese community in Cikarang to integrate into Indonesian society. The regular worship and veneration activities at the temple, following a fixed schedule in accordance with the guidelines of the Indonesian Tridharma Buddhist Assembly, emphasise the deep-rooted respect for ancestors like Liem Tay Soe Kong.

Historically, Tek Seng Bio Temple has transformed from a family-owned house of worship into a Chinese Temple and Buddhist Monastery, providing tangible evidence of its significance as a symbol of the local Chinese Indonesian community in Cikarang because of the many Chinese Indonesians who come and worship at the Tek Seng Bio temple. The temple has adeptly navigated government regulations targeting the existence of Chinese religions and customs by repositioning itself as the Dipankara Monastery.

An intriguing aspect of this research is the role of Lin Tai See/Lin Taishi as the main deity in Tek Seng Bio Temple within the Indonesian Chinese community. Notably,
Lim Tai See is more likely venerated by Confucianists than Taoists—whose recognition is more common in other countries—in Indonesia, given Confucianism’s official recognition and visibility in society. The worship and veneration practices at Tek Seng Bio lean towards Confucianism and Tridarma Buddhism, underscoring the intricate dynamics involved.

Additionally, the research sheds light on the challenges faced by Tek Seng Bio Temple in adapting to government regulations targeting the existence of Chinese temples. This contributes to the historiography of the Chinese communities in Indonesia and highlights the ongoing struggle of Taoists, who remain under the umbrella of the Indonesian Tridarma Buddhist Assembly. Despite Confucianism’s official recognition, the acknowledgment of Taoism as an official religion in Indonesia is yet to be realised.

Moreover, Tek Seng Bio Temple has fostered a harmonious relationship with other places of worship and foundations, such as Sariputra Monastery. This collaboration has enabled the effective execution of various activities, including spiritual practices, traditional observances, and community service initiatives. Both Tek Seng Bio Temple and Sariputra Monastery have faced challenges, showcasing their resilience and adaptability in nurturing the Chinese Indonesian community of Cikarang. Tek Seng Bio Temple, in particular, stands as a symbol of the enduring presence of the Chinese community in Cikarang.

REFERENCES


