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CULTURAL HERITAGE | RESEARCH ARTICLE

Cultural hybridization in the veneration of a Javanese local hero as a *kongco* at Lasem's Gie Yong Bio Chinese temple during Indonesia's reformation Era

Suastiwi Triatmodjo¹, M. Agus Burhan¹, Hanggar Budi Prasetya^{1*}, Endah Budiarti¹ and Henky Fernando²

Abstract: The investigation of cultural hybridization at a *kelenteng* (ancestral temple) in Lasem, Central Java, Indonesia, during the Reformation Era is a crucial and underexplored phenomenon. This study addresses the question of how the elevation of a small artifact, namely the statue of a local Javanese figure, to the status of *kongco* (patron ancestor) has triggered cultural hybridization in this small town. Data for this study was collected through meticulous observation and interviews conducted with key figures, community members, and cultural practitioners who possess extensive knowledge and experience in the realm of cultural hybridity in Kelenteng Lasem. The study's findings illuminate that cultural hybridity does not solely result from comprehensive processes of socio-cultural interaction, but also from the collective memory of the community, emphasizing the significance of cooperation in fostering harmonious socio-cultural life. These processes are further

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Hanggar Budi Prasetya The authors of this article are faculty members from the Indonesia Institute of the Arts (ISI) Yogyakarta and Universitas Gadjah Mada (UGM) Yogyakarta, collaborating with the Irwan Abdullah Scholar Foundation (IASF), an organization dedicated to researching social formation and transformation in local and global contexts. This article, which focuses on the cultural hybridization between the Javanese and Chinese communities in Indonesia, is jointly written from a comprehensive perspective. The authors include Suastiwi Triatmodjo (Department of Design, ISI Yogyakarta), M Agus Burhan (Department of Fine Art, ISI Yogyakarta), Hanggar Budi Prasetya and Endah Budiarti (Department of Puppetry, ISI Yogyakarta), and Henky Fernando (Department of Anthropology, UGM).

PUBLIC INTEREST STATEMENT

In the context of diverse societies, the phenomenon of cultural hybridization has emerged as a significant catalyst for fostering positive societal harmony. Cultural hybridization, however, transcends mere intergroup interactions and is profoundly shaped by the collective memory of these groups regarding the ideals of harmonious coexistence from the past. Thus, the historical knowledge and experiences embedded within these social groups play a pivotal role in effectively managing and nurturing the principles of harmonious living within pluralistic societies. Moreover, the implementation of inclusive public policies that facilitate open and equitable intercommunity interactions can further intensify the realization of societal harmony. Future research endeavors should concentrate on embracing the collective knowledge and experiences of preceding societies, while concurrently exploring public policy frameworks designed to effectively manage and foster cultural harmony within plural societies in the future.



facilitated by the active involvement of social authorities in cultivating more inclusive patterns of cultural interaction and communication. The study's outcomes provide valuable insights for social authorities to shape policies and effectively manage religious diversity in pluralistic societies.

Subjects: Culture; Art & Visual Culture; Cultural Studies

Keywords: cultural hybridization; local hero; religious worship

1. Introduction

The statue of Raden Panji Margono, a revered figure among the people of Lasem, Central Java, Indonesia, is situated at the town's Gie Yong Bio Chinese ancestral temple (*kelenteng*). Its presence represents the harmonious relationship between the Javanese and Chinese communities in the coastal town, which was achieved through the process of cultural hybridization, allowing for the blending of cultural and spiritual practices. Scholars such as Hadi (2020) acknowledge cultural hybridization as a promoter of collective goals and societal harmony, while Raditya (2020) contends that the exploration of cultural hybridity is of notable importance in reflecting the beliefs and values of various communities within a given society. The Gie Yong Bio temple, a repository of communal values, embodies the cultural hybridity that has facilitated peaceful coexistence in Lasem. Reflecting the principles and attitudes of Lasem society, the designation of Raden Panji Margono—a Javanese Muslim—as *kongco* (*gong zu*, 公祖, or patron ancestor) of the Chinese temple highlights the significance of such hybridization.

The investigation of the hybrid nature of the Gie Yong Bio temple in Lasem and its impact on achieving peaceful coexistence in a diverse society is a significant topic for examination. This research can shed light on the values and attitudes of the community regarding cultural diversity management. While previous studies have focused on cultural hybridity in Lasem, they have primarily concentrated on residential architecture, Chinese temples' semiotics and aesthetics, batik motifs, and other culture-related matters (Ayuningrum, 2019; Nurhajarini et al., 2015; Pitaya, 2014; Sudarwani et al., 2018, 2019). Additionally, studies exploring Lasem's Chinese temple tend to focus on their establishment history and urban planning roles (Listiyani, 2013; Ratnasari et al., 2021; Susilo et al., 2018). These studies demonstrate that the hybridization behind the existence of Lasem's Chinese temples has been explored from various perspectives, including the emergence process, functionality, layout, and construction process of the temple building itself.

While several studies have examined the existence of Lasem's three Chinese temples and their relationship to cultural acculturation, research on the Gie Yong Bio temple has been relatively limited, especially in the area of hybridity as a symbol of community harmony. The objective of this study is to investigate the process by which Raden Panji Margono, a local hero of Lasem, gained veneration as a *kongco* at the Gie Yong Bio temple. This research supplements previous investigations that have focused on the architectural significance of the town's Chinese temples within the urban landscape. Additionally, this study provides a comprehensive analysis of the cultural hybridity practiced at the Gie Yong Bio temple among the Chinese community and other societal groups.

The argument presented in this discussion is that the Gie Yong Bio temple serves not only as a spiritual site, but also as a cultural venue for community activities, thereby exemplifying the principle of hybridity. The hybrid culture embedded in the temple has fostered cultural exchange between different community groups, particularly the Chinese and Javanese, resulting in the acceptance of diverse cultures and mutual understanding among groups. The local hero, representing local symbols and integral to spiritual, social, and cultural activities, has been instrumental in promoting knowledge and respect for different cultures. Therefore, the process of cultural hybridization has facilitated peaceful coexistence among diverse groups in the same locality.

2. Literature review

2.1. Cultural hybridization

Cultural hybridization involves the process of adapting and integrating different cultures to reach a mutual understanding, without undermining either culture (Hernández Paz et al., 2022). This process leads to the formation of a hybrid identity (Mubah & Anabarja, 2020). The process of hybridization between two groups can occur through accommodative social interactions and communication, while setting aside fanaticism towards ideologies, norms, and symbolic identities of each group (Mubah & Anabarja, 2020). The term “hybridization” refers to the negotiations that take place between cultures, rather than their intersections (Raditya, 2020). According to Sintowoko (2021), cultural hybridization has the potential to not only bring about modifications in cultural values, norms, traditions, and rituals, but also the development of novel cultural products. These changes and newly created cultural products may adopt fresh forms and meanings, thereby fulfilling cognitive, pragmatic, and moral goals within society (Coskuner-Balli & Ertimur, 2016). Gaeta (2021) and Koryakova and Panteleeva (2021) posit that hybridization can arise from a range of factors such as shifts in paradigms, conceptual advancements in geopolitical boundaries, population migration, and climate changes. This perspective suggests that cultural hybridization is essentially a dialectical process between cultures that have fundamental differences.

The existence of diverse traditions in a pluralistic society gives rise to a contestation of social space. This contestation can result in two distinct patterns: one that reinforces each group’s identity, and another that leads to the fusion of identities across groups. According to Hadi (2020), the former pattern may generate social conflict, while the latter can facilitate cultural hybridization that promotes social harmony. The failure of hybridization, exemplified by the Lampung riots of 2012 between Lampung natives and Balinese migrants, was attributed by Humaedi (2014) to the conflict between political economic interests and cultural differences, including community practices, mindset, and worldview. However, it is worth noting that the deliberate management of cultural hybridization in a more inclusive manner can cultivate a positive sense of harmony within a society. This is exemplified by the case of Lasem, where the Chinese and Javanese communities have experienced such cultural coexistence. Notably, the hybridization of Muslim places of worship, exemplified by the unique Lasem Jami’ Mosque that incorporates elements of Chinese culture, serves as a tangible representation of this cultural harmony. This instance of hybridization underscores the notion that cultural symbols and identities can play a pivotal role in fostering harmonious relations between different societal groups, thus steering society towards a more constructive and positive trajectory.

2.2. Local heroes

According to Farida (2019), heroes are distinguished individuals who exhibit courage and sacrifice in their efforts to defend the truth, whether for an individual, group, or institution. While heroic actions are often associated with the promotion of certain values, such as those related to fighting, this is not limited to national heroes alone. Harmiriyanti and Sidhartani (2018) note that local heroes also exhibit similar qualities and receive recognition for their contributions to the defense of their respective regions. The term “local hero” refers to individuals who have demonstrated exceptional achievements during their lifetime and played a significant role in promoting progress in their communities. This recognition is typically conferred by both the citizens and state as a result of their efforts to resist colonialism and defend their region, sometimes resulting in the ultimate sacrifice of their lives during war (Purandina & Wedananta, 2021; Villacampa & Heneka, 2020). To defend a region effectively, both national and local heroes must be willing to risk their lives and expend considerable time, energy, and even make personal sacrifices for their cause (Barnard, 2020; Brandes et al., 2008). It is important to note that local heroes do not fight for their own self-interest but rather for the greater good of their community and nation (Macdonald & Sassi, 2021; Porral & Levy-Mangin, 2015), thus exemplifying the ultimate sense of selflessness and devotion to a larger cause.

According to Azri and Agung (2017), local heroes must embody a range of essential values, such as a willingness to make sacrifices for their nation and community, prioritize communal interests over their own, and demonstrate an unwavering commitment to their cause. They must also possess a deep love for their country and exhibit selfless sincerity. To commemorate their heroism, communities often honor heroes by naming streets or places after them, constructing statues in their honor, and establishing museums and monuments (Setianto, 2019). These statues serve more than just ornamental purposes, as they provide a reminder of significant historical events and offer a positive vision for the future (Fahri & Harsritanto, 2020; Setiawan & Purnomo, 2016). They are also a symbol of shared values and principles that are highly esteemed by the community and serve as a tribute to the heroes who helped liberate them from colonization or other forms of adversity (Tuga & Sydin, 2020). Thus, they stand as testaments to the shared values and principles highly respected by the community (Tuga & Sydin, 2020; Yonita et al., 2018). This is exemplified in the Gie Yong Bio temple, a place of worship for the tridarma religious group, located in Lasem Subdistrict, Rembang Regency, Central Java Province, Indonesia. The local community constructed the temple to honor three Lasem heroes, including Raden Panji Margono, and it is believed to be the only *kelenteng* in Indonesia with a statue of a non-Chinese *kongco* or patron ancestor (Septyana, 2012).

2.3. Religious worship

Posada et al. (2020) define religious worship as a devotional act and set of worship practices undertaken to draw closer to God in accordance with religious principles. Adherents are expected to comply with physical and mental rituals stipulated by their religion (Ghodrati & Ebrahimi, 2020; Tobroni et al., 2020), and are not permitted to change or add to established worship practices (Brady, 2021; Bulkeley, 2014). The ultimate goal of religious worship is to attain the pleasure of God, thereby bringing glory to God in human life (Cavdar et al., 2013). Adherents perform worship at designated places of worship according to the teachings of their respective religions (Buchory & Rachmawati, 2021). Religious places of worship include mosques, churches, *vihara* (Buddhist monasteries), *pura* (Balinese Hindu temples), and *kelenteng* or Chinese ancestral temples (Sipahutar, 2021). *Kelenteng* buildings are typically associated with traditional Chinese beliefs, although in Indonesia they are often linked to the Confucian religion as well (Listiyani, 2013; Ratnasari et al., 2021).

Religious worship is characterized by a diverse array of rituals and practices that vary across different faiths and beliefs. Such variations often generate both positive and negative reactions within religious communities. An illustrative example is the Indonesian Sikh community, where the practice of carrying a kirpan, a sharp weapon of religious significance, presents a significant challenge due to the country's laws that prohibit possession of such weapons (Nasution, 2021). Similarly, within the context of Pentecostalism in Catholic and Protestant Christianity, differences arise in terms of doctrine, worship rituals, and evangelism, particularly in the Charismatic movement within the Church (Sihombing, 2019). These differences in worship practices are influenced not only by religious beliefs but also by changing times. Tangkudung et al. (2018) note that technological advancements, characterized by the digitalization of people's lives, have facilitated the worship process for the Evangelical Church in Minahasa. Church members are now able to access worship schedules, procedures, and related information through a smartphone platform.

The three concepts discussed in the literature review not only delineate the conceptual discussions regarding the phenomenon of cultural hybridization, but they also furnish a holistic comprehension of the factors contributing to cultural hybridization and the resultant values. These conceptual frameworks serve as a sturdy foundation for acquiring, elucidating, and analyzing data concurrently within the scope of this research.

3. Methodology

The primary focus of this study centers on the statue of Raden Panji Margono, who is revered as a *kongco* or patron ancestor at the Gie Yong Bio Chinese temple in Lasem. This city, located on the

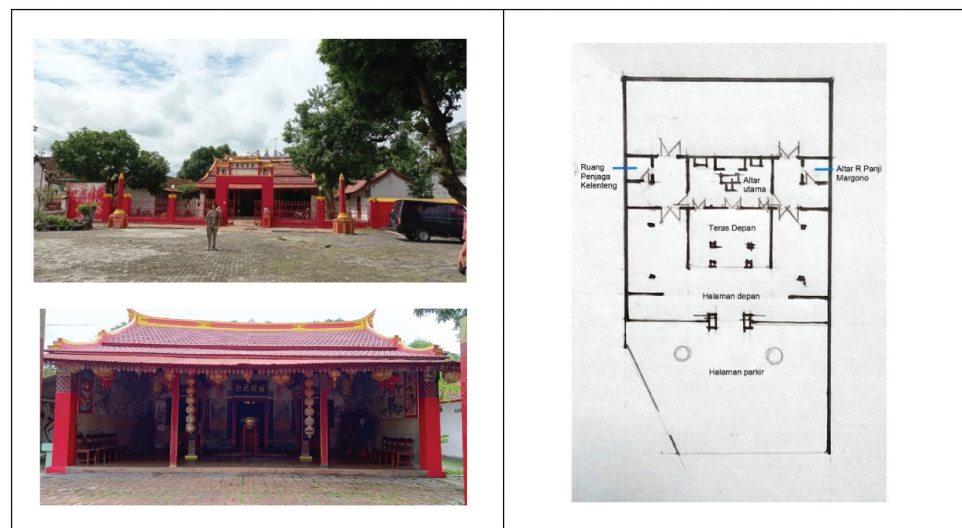
northern coast of Java, is renowned for its rich Chinese history and culture, and boasts numerous Chinese temple and cultural relics. The settlement of Chinese communities in Lasem dates back to the 14th century, and the area once served as a prominent trading port for traders from mainland China. As a result, Lasem has been a melting pot of Chinese and local cultures for centuries. The city has witnessed significant historical events, including the exodus of Chinese people from Batavia as a result of *Geger Pecinan* (The Chinese Massacre) of Batavia in 1740, and *Perang Kuning* (the Yellow War) in 1750, in which the combined forces of Chinese and indigenous Javanese communities fought against the Dutch (Dharmowijono, 2013; Unijaya, 2014). Given this background, Lasem provides an ideal context for examining the complex interactions between Chinese and indigenous Javanese cultural groups (See Figure 1).

This study adopts a qualitative descriptive instrumental case approach, as previously employed by Creswell (2013). The research is centered on examining the community's reception towards the appointment of Raden Panji Margono as a *kongco* at the Gie Yong Bio ancestral temple in Lasem. The research objects include the artifacts of Raden Panji Margono's *kongco* statue, religious practices like prayer and offerings, and cultural activities associated with the artifact, such as a city-wide procession carrying the *kongco* statue of the figure. To gain a deeper understanding of this case, in addition to observing the objects and activities, the underlying reasons for their existence were investigated.

This study relied on both primary and secondary data sources. The primary data for this study were obtained through structured and unstructured observations and interviews with key community figures, community members, and cultural practitioners who possess knowledge and experience regarding the process of cultural hybridization within the subject temple. Based on field observations, photographs were captured depicting artifacts and religious and socio-cultural activities related to the primary subject of observation, namely the *kongco* statue of Raden Panji Margono. Additionally, interviews were conducted with individuals who interact with the temple, including temple worshippers, committee members of Lasem's Tridharma temples, and the caretaker of Gie Yong Bio ancestral temple. These interviews aimed to gather data regarding interactions, perspectives, purposes of worship, and interpretations of the symbols associated with the statue of Raden Panji Margono at the temple. In parallel, secondary data for this study were acquired through the review of relevant websites, books, manuscripts, and journal articles.

The data analysis in this study adhered to Creswell's (2013) approach, which encompassed three distinct stages. *Firstly*, data reduction was undertaken to systematize the collected data by

Figure 1. The Gie Yong Bio temple and its floorplan.



categorizing the various forms, factors, and attitudes that emerged following the process of cultural hybridization. *Secondly*, data verification was employed to draw conclusions based on the categorized and condensed data. *Thirdly*, the findings were presented through data display, utilizing interview quotes and photographs as valuable evidence. Subsequently, an inductive analysis was conducted, serving as the basis for interpreting the results. The interpretation process commenced by restating the data in alignment with the ongoing socio-cultural conditions, circumstances, and contexts within the community. The analytical stages and techniques employed in this study facilitated the development of a comprehensive conclusion concerning the cultural hybridity that transpired at the ancestral temple of Gie Yong Bio.

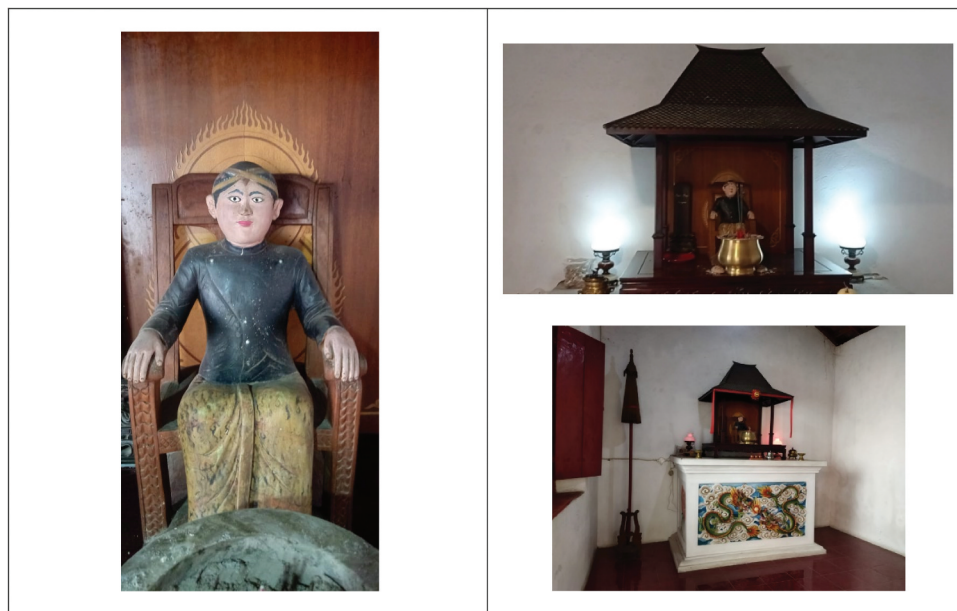
4. Findings

4.1. Statue dan Altar of Kongco Raden Panji Margono

Figure 2 depicts the representation of Raden Panji Margono, revered as a *kongco* at the Gie Yong Bio temple, in the form of a 30 cm tall *kim sin* (statue). It is dressed in traditional Javanese noble attire, with a dark blue *beskap* (formal shirt) and a Surakarta-style *blangkon* hat. Its face is round and youthful, with a bright white color. The statue is situated in a sitting position on a wooden chair, with the body resting on the back of the chair and both hands on the armrest. The background of the statue is a wooden gebyog partition, which is adorned with a golden *praba* (disc of light) carving. The altar table is made of concrete and is decorated with a pair of green dragons facing each other, surrounded by clouds. The statue is placed on a flat brown surface with a *joglo*-shaped top cover supported by four *saka guru* poles.

At the Gie Yong Bio temple, the altar dedicated to Raden Panji Margono is located in a small side room measuring 3×3 meters. The room's narrow space accommodates a centrally positioned altar table, with a closed and large standing umbrella placed to the left. In Javanese culture, the umbrella symbolizes a person's high social status, indicating that Raden Panji Margono is still of noble descent. The overall design of Raden Panji Margono's altar space is characterized by the simpler Javanese style rather than the more elaborate Chinese style. Within this space, Chinese cultural elements are represented solely by the presence of green dragon and blue and white clouds as ornaments. On the other hand, in the spacious and exquisitely decorated main room of the temple, the *kongco* statues of the two primary patron ancestors, both

Figure 2. The statue of Raden Panji Margono dan its altar.



called Gie Yong Kongco, are displayed. These figures represent Oei Ing Kiat and Tan Kwee Wie, two Chinese individuals who, along with Raden Panji Margono, joined forces in battling the Dutch during the Yellow War in 1750.

The statue of Raden Panji Margono and its accompanying altar, situated within the temple, represent an emblematic demonstration of acknowledgement and reverence by the Chinese community in Lasem. This gesture is a tribute to the valuable contributions and collaboration of the said figure and Chinese community leaders during the historic Yellow War in 1750.

In 2004, the elders of the Lasem Chinese community, most of whom are the *kelenteng's* administrators, held a gathering to talk about Lasem's fighters during the V.O.C. [Dutch] era. Before the gathering was held, these Lasem Chinese elders did *samadi* [meditation]. During the *samadi*, they received a guidance that they should place the statue of Raden Panji Margono, son of Adipati [Duke of] Lasem, who had fought together with the Chinese community to expel the Dutch from Lasem; [it was to be placed] on the altar that already had a *joglo* in the Gie Yong Bio temple.

The revered *kongco* of Raden Panji Margono, similar to the other two patron ancestors, is represented through a small statue sculpted by local artist Rustamaji in 2004 at the behest of the Chinese community elders in Lasem. Prior to this, the elders underwent a process of spiritual guidance through meditation and proceeded to convene a gathering to engage in deliberations with the broader Lasem populace. Rustamaji revealed these details during an interview held in October 2022. The data gleaned from this account indicates that the appointment of Raden Panji Margono as a *kongco* at the Gie Yong Bio ancestral temple and the creation of his statue took place during the Indonesian Reformation Era, following the nullification of President Suharto's oppressive Presidential Instruction No. 14 of 1967, which aimed to suppress the Chinese community's customs and beliefs. The Lasem community subsequently supported the elders' proposal during the gathering to designate Raden Panji Margono as a *kongco* and to commission his statue.

4.2. *Worship of Kongco Raden Panji Margono*

Figure 3 depicts the religious practices that devotees engage in at the Gie Yong Bio temple. To commence a prayer session, worshippers hold incense sticks with both hands, articulate their prayers, and place the sticks into a designated receptacle. Subsequently, the worshippers prostrate themselves in front of the altar of the specific *kongco* they are venerating. The first image depicts

Figure 3. Prayers and offerings at Gie Yong Bio temple.



the ritual of prayer being conducted outside the altar of Raden Panji Margono, while the following image captures a congregation praying before the primary altar of the temple. At the bottom of the photograph, images of altar tables replete with offerings for the patron ancestors are visible. From the image, it is evident that due to the limited space, some worshippers may have to pray outside. Conversely, the main altar area appears more spacious. In the main altar, it can be observed that the table and offerings for the kongco statue of Raden Panji Margono are smaller and simpler compared to the table and offerings found in the main altar.

Raden Panji Margono is among the patron ancestors venerated at the Gie Yong Bio temple by adherents. In Chinese religious practices, deities and ancestors are consistently revered and esteemed as a form of respect and homage. This expression of reverence and respect is exhibited through the act of prayer, wherein devotees send supplications for protection and safety. Yanto, a devotee, affirmed in 2021 that praying in front of the statue of Raden Panji Margono is done to pay tribute to him as one of the Chinese community's ancestors. This prayer is also conducted as an expression of gratitude for the opportunity to reside in the land of Lasem. Furthermore, in 2022, the temple's caretaker, Cik Lin, disclosed that the statues of the patron ancestors in the temple are worshipped daily. The temple visitors can either offer prayers to all the patron ancestors or focus their prayers on one of them. Part of the temple caretaker's responsibilities is to pray in front of all the patron ancestors' statues and to maintain the temple's surroundings.

Along with praying in front of the patron ancestors' altars, Chinese religious practices also involve showing respect and honoring them through the act of presenting offerings, such as fruits or other foods, on the altar table. Figure 3 illustrates this tradition, where each altar table bears two bowls of fruits, two ash containers, and a pair of sitting lamps on the left and right of the statue, as well as a large brass vessel for holding incense sticks directly in front of the statue.

In Chinese religious practices, adherents are expected to perform the important rituals of prayer and offering to the *kongco*, which can be done either at a temple or at home. The act of prayer involves seeking guidance from deities, gods, angels or ancestors, and expressing gratitude to them. At Gie Yong Bio temple, the statue of Raden Panji Margono, who is revered as a *kongco*, is honored every day by the congregation and particularly by the temple's caretaker through offerings and worship.

4.3. Inclusion of Raden Panji Margono's Statue in communal procession

Figure 4 depicts a grand ceremonial procession where the Mak Co statue from Cu An Kiong temple, along with several other statues from Po An Bio and Gie Yong Bio temples, are carried in palanquins by officials and community members. The procession covers the distance from Cu An Kiong temple to Po An Bio temple, passing through Gie Yong Bio, and returns to Cu An Kiong. The event features vibrant flags, ceremonial mock weapons, and displays from various art groups and participants. The final photograph depicted in Figure 4 highlights the striking and magnificent special palanquin attributed to *kongco* Raden Panji Margono, drawing a notable contrast with the adjacent palanquins. At present, these palanquins are housed within the premises of Cu An Kiong temple. The image further captures the presence of onlookers from the general populace who are spectating the procession along the streets. This observation leads to the inference that the festivities associated with Chinese festivals and the commemoration of revered entities within the Chinese community are often characterized by their grandiose nature. These processions garner wide-scale participation and admiration from both the general public and visitors alike. The responsibility for organizing such processions primarily rests upon the Chinese community, supplemented by the support and involvement of the Javanese community and the wider public.

Processions that involve the statue of Raden Panji Margono from the Gie Yong Bio temple are traditionally held alongside Lasem's two other temple. The ceremony, called *xu jian*, is an annual event that typically takes place during the Chinese New Year or to commemorate the anniversary of a temple. The meaning of *xu jian* is to eliminate negative energy in the surrounding

Figure 4. Various communal processions in Lasem involve the carrying of statues of deities or patron ancestors.



neighborhood by parading around it. In celebration of the birthday of Mak Co, the primary deity of the Cu An Kiong temple, the procession features the transportation of statues from all participating temples on palanquins around Lasem. As depicted in Figure 4, the cultural event is not only a gathering for the Chinese community but also a celebration for the broader community of Lasem.

Raden Panji Margono, one of the triumvirates of the Yellow War (1750), holds a significant place as a patron ancestor of the Chinese community in Lasem. This revered status is reflected in the inclusion of his statue in the town's religious processions, thereby incorporating him into the spiritual practices of the community. Such a procession serves as an ancient method of mitigating negative energy and is a fundamental aspect of religious traditions observed by various ethnic groups globally. The primary purpose of this ritual is to safeguard the environment and invoke blessings from the divine forces of nature or God. The procession is a momentous occasion often marked by lively artistic performances. By including the statue of Raden Panji Margono in their religious processions, the Chinese community not only recognizes his pivotal role in their history but also acknowledges his elevated status as a *kongco*, as well as his power to ward off negative energy.

5. Discussion

This research indicates that the phenomenon of cultural hybridization can arise not only from paradigm shifts, conceptual advances in geopolitical boundaries, population migration, and climatic factors as identified by Gaeta (2021) and Koryakova and Panteleeva (2021), but also from collective memories of positive collaborations in the past and the implementation of government policies that promote open and fair social relations in society. This study demonstrates this phenomenon in three distinct ways. Firstly, symbolic hybridization occurred through the construction of a statue of Lasem's local hero, Raden Panji Margono, at the Gie Yong Bio Chinese ancestral temple, incorporating Javanese symbols like *beskap* clothing and *joglo* architecture. Secondly, spiritual hybridization was evident through the regular prayers and offerings made to Raden Panji Margono at the temple indicating respect and recognition of his ancestral role in the Chinese community. Thirdly, cultural hybridization emerged through the inclusion of the statue of Raden Panji Margono in the communal processions of Lasem's Chinese community, which involve the wider community and are organized to dispel evil spirits and negative energy in the environment and safeguard the Chinese community. The practices of prayer rituals and participation in communal processions were established after the statue's creation in 2004.

The cultural hybridization witnessed in Lasem exemplifies the successful interaction between the Chinese immigrant community and the native Javanese population, resulting in a harmonious coexistence. This process of cultural hybridization has persisted from the fourteenth century to the present, underscoring the significance of mutual acceptance and understanding in all forms of communication and interaction, culminating in the cultural amalgamation of the Javanese and Chinese communities in Lasem (Pratiwo, 2010). This context signifies that the cultural hybridization between the Javanese and Chinese communities in Lasem has been an enduring phenomenon deeply rooted in accommodating modes of communication and interaction. A notable instance of this can be seen in the Yellow War of the eighteenth century, wherein the Chinese and Javanese peoples collaborated closely to resist the Dutch East India Company or VOC (Dharmowijono, 2013; Unijaya, 2014). The collective remembrance of this event as a symbol of past collaboration continues to hold positive value for both communities in the present era (Fahri & Harsritanto, 2020; Setiawan & Purnomo, 2016; Yonita et al., 2018).

The cultural hybridization observed in Lasem is influenced by the collective memory shared between the Javanese and Chinese ethnicities, rooted in a historical tradition of cooperation dating back to the fourteenth century and persisting in the present era. This cultural hybridization often manifests through collaborative expressions of appreciation, exemplified by the joint participation of the Javanese and Chinese communities in the annual Cap Go Meh procession, a significant event commemorating Chinese New Year. The objective of this collective endeavor is to invoke blessings, foster benevolence, and cultivate harmonious coexistence. Using the perspective of Hernández Paz et al. (2022), the cooperative spirit observed between the Javanese and Chinese communities in Lasem represents a form of cultural hybridization within a community, striving towards the attainment of collective harmony while preserving and respecting the distinctive cultural identities of each group. This process of hybridization is facilitated through inclusive social interactions and communicative practices, transcending rigid adherence to specific ideologies, norms, and symbols of identity within both communities (Mubah & Anabarja, 2020).

In this instance, the cultural hybridization that took place resulted not only in the creation of a new artifact and its corresponding cultural practices but also in mutual understanding and harmonious coexistence, as posited by Sintowoko (2021) and Coskuner-Balli and Ertimur (2016), in this context between the Chinese and Javanese communities. The creation of the Raden Panji Margono statue took place in 2004, four years subsequent to the revocation of the restrictive policy of Presidential Instruction No. 14 of 1967, which had regulated Chinese religions, beliefs, and customs. Thus, this cultural hybridization was made possible by the nullification of the Presidential Instruction in 2000, through Presidential Decree no 6 of 2000, by President Abdurrahman Wahid. Following the issuance of this Presidential Decree, the Confucian (Tridharma) religious practices of the Chinese people could be carried out openly in public places such as temples. These Tridharma religious practices enabled a more liberal and dynamic interaction between the Chinese and the local community, thereby engendering the hybrid culture (Hernández Paz et al., 2022; Raditya, 2020).

In Lasem, this study has demonstrated that long-term associations, coupled with positive collective memory and government policies promoting open and equitable social relations, have led to cultural hybridization and social harmony. Conversely, social interactions between different ethnic groups can also become unproductive contests of cultural identity, resulting in social strife and conflict. As Humaedi (2014) notes, the failure of hybridization, as seen in the Lampung riots of 2012, can be attributed to conflicts between political and economic interests and differences in mindset and worldviews. Such conflicts not only fail to benefit the community, but also result in material and immaterial losses, including the loss of human life.

In the coming years, society is likely to become increasingly diverse due to the increasing mobility and migration of individuals both within and between countries. As a result, there is a risk of competition and conflict in the social arena. To prevent this, and instead promote social harmony, it is important to encourage cultural hybridization. This view is supported by Hadi (2020), who argues

that cultural hybridization has the potential to foster social harmony in society. Building on this study and related research, promoting cultural hybridization can be achieved through activities that bring different community groups together, the creation of shared experiences, and the development of policies that facilitate intercultural dialogue. The emergence of new hybrid cultures can contribute to the creation of a diverse society in which communities coexists peacefully.

6. Conclusion

This study, which examines the selection of a local hero as a patron ancestor for the Chinese community in Lasem, Central Java, Indonesia, has revealed that cultural hybridity is not solely the product of equal interaction between two cultural groups. The flourishing of cultural hybridity is facilitated by positive collective memory and policies that promote freedom of interaction between cultural groups. In the case of this study, it can be argued that collective memory, openness, and freedom to engage in cultural activities form the necessary foundation for the development of cultural hybridity. Furthermore, this study highlights how the strong character of a local hero has played a key role in fostering cultural hybridization between two groups in society.

This study can offer a valuable scientific contribution by shedding light on the process of cultural hybridization between multiple societal groups. The creation of a small cultural artifact can serve as the starting point for a larger and more intricate hybridization process that includes various activities and an expanding group of individuals. This organic process can be nurtured by policies that encourage open and equitable interactions among community groups.

Because it only involves one case in Lasem, this study is still limited in terms of sample size. More case studies are needed to gain a better understanding of the process of cultural hybridization among Indonesia's many groups of people, by examining, comparing, and discussing the symbols and activities of migrant ethnic groups and the local population in the context of tolerance.

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