

# The Identity of the Hybridity of the Chinese Muslim Mosque in Sempusari, Jember (Charles Sanders Pierce Semiotic Analysis)

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**Abstract:** Religion and culture are two things that are always interesting to observe. It is difficult to imagine religion without culture or vice versa, culture without religion. In human history, religion and culture work hand in hand to preserve society with various legal arrangements. In Islam contains a number of teachings that are not limited to aspects of civilization. One example is the Muhammad Cheng Hoo mosque in Sempusari Jember, whose architecture is combined with Chinese, Javanese and Arabic culture. The Chinese identity was reborn after a post-reformation that was lost for decades. This study aims to describe the architectural meaning in the Cheng Hoo mosque in Sempusari Jember. To get the desired results, this research uses qualitative research with a descriptive approach, based on observation, interview, and documentation techniques. Meanwhile, to find out the existing cultural values, the writer uses the theory of cultural semiotics by Sander Pierce. The findings obtained from this study are a study of the meaning of cultural semiotics in the Cheng Hoo mosque architecture in Sempusari Jember including (a) the colors used. (b) An octagonal shape located in the middle of the Cheng Hoo Mosque. (c) Tower consisting of 5 flats. (d) the meaning of the lantern. (e) The shape on the walls of the mosque on the part of the imam and pulpit. (f) Flower motif. (g) the writing on the door of the mosque in Roman kanji style.

**Keywords:** *Architecture of the Jember Muhammad Cheng Hoo Mosque, Javanese-Islamic-Chinese cultural hybridity identity, Charles Sanders Pierce's Semiotics.*

## INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is one of the countries with the largest ethnic diversity in the world. There are at least 1,340 ethnic groups within the territory of this country. Each ethnic group has its own characteristics or characters, both in social and cultural aspects. However, the arrival of the Chinese in the archipelago caused identity changes to both him and the local population. Taylor shows that the arrival had an effect on the Islamization of the archipelago; the arrival of Islam brought by the Chinese.<sup>1</sup>

In the discussion of the theory of the arrival of Islam in the archipelago, it is not something new. Al Qurtuby asserts that the two theories of the arrival of Islam, namely the Arab and Indian theories, are much stronger than the Chinese theories. As explained by Taylor, "Linking Chinese and Islamic authenticity in the Malay-Indonesian world is a sensitive topic", the article is that the theory is trying to be "erased" by power.

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<sup>1</sup> Samsul Huda, *Orang Indonesia Tionghoa dan Persoalan Identitas*. Kontekstualita: Jurnal Penelitian Sosial Keagamaan, Vol. 25, No.1 (2010). P. 165-166  
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During the New Order regime there was discrimination against ethnic Chinese, this was shown in the legislation which was divided into five topics, namely discrimination in identity cards (KTP), prohibitions on the use of Chinese names, restrictions on Chinese language in the public sphere, restrictions on access to education, and restrictions on the use of Chinese names. economic opportunity.

In addition, the form of prohibiting the manifestation of Chinese culture is found in the religious aspect. Konghochu and temples that show ethnic Chinese identity are prohibited from operating. Because ethnic Chinese are suspected of being involved in the G 30 S PKI incident and their relationship with the People's Republic of China (PRC), all attributes that are affiliated with that country are prohibited from appearing in public areas..

However, in 1998 there was a political change in Indonesia, which was marked by the removal of the ban on the development of Chinese cultural identity by the post-New Order government. Abdurrahman Wahid progressively carried out various legal reforms aimed at protecting the cultural rights of the Chinese ethnic.<sup>2</sup> Chinese cultural identity reappears in public as the architecture of the mosque building. The first Chinese architectural mosque in Indonesia is the Cheng Hoo mosque in Surabaya.

This mosque has a Chinese nuance that is identical to the colors red, yellow and green. The name "Muhammad Cheng Hoo" is taken from a great Admiral (Military Soldier) from China who has sailed to Asia-Africa by commanding approximately 208 ships which is unmatched by any sailor to date. Admiral Cheng Hoo's goal in doing this voyage was not only to stay in touch but also to spread and introduce Islam to the local population that Islam is a rational and universal religion. In each of his voyages, Cheng Ho has also carried out strategic management of the Prophet Muhammad.<sup>3</sup> So that one can be Chinese as well as be Muslim. Or maybe the categorization is mixed up: Chinese Muslims. The success of the establishment of the Muhammad Cheng Hoo mosque in Surabaya, was followed by other cities, including in the village of Sempusari, Jember.

In general, the architecture of the Muhammad Cheng Hoo mosque in Sempusari, Jember, is not much different from the Cheng Hoo mosque in other cities, which displays a hybrid cultural identity or can be called a mixture of Chinese, Javanese and Arabic cultures. Arabic culture can be seen clearly in the building of this mosque, namely as a place of worship for

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<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*, 166

<sup>3</sup> Sumalyo, *Arsitektur Masjid dan Sejarah Muslim*. (Yogyakarta:Gadjah Mada University Press, 2006). P. 37.

Muslims in which there are various calligraphy writings using Arabic. Javanese culture can be seen from the roof of the mosque that juts out called usuk (in Javanese). While Chinese culture can be seen as a design pattern that is used thoroughly in most of the Muhammad Cheng Hoo Mosque buildings, which can be seen from the color of the mosque building itself which emphasizes the red color combined with green.

The difference between Muhammad Cheng Hoo Jember Mosque and other Cheng Hoo Mosques lies in 3 types, namely the tower, land area and building. The Cheng Hoo Mosque in Surabaya does not have a tower, the land and building area is wider than the Muhammad Cheng Hoo Mosque in Surabaya and Banyuwangi, and at the Muhammad Cheng Hoo Mosque Jember also keeps koi carp, they believe that the Koi Mas fish is a symbol good luck for chinese.

Through architecture designed by Chinese leaders, it aims to convey the message that Chinese identity can coexist with Islam which is the religion of the majority of Indonesian people. In this case, Chinese Muslim figures in Indonesia, want to show that the Cheng Hoo mosque in Indonesia is owned by all Islamic groups and is a place of interaction between various religious and ethnic organizations. Mosques with hybrid architecture show the re-emergence of Chinese Muslim cultural identity after the reformation and space for cultural contestation of ethnic diversity in Indonesia.

Etymologically, the mosque comes from the absorption of Arabic, which means prayer (place of prostration), while according to terminology it means kneeling, putting the forehead, both hands to the ground, so it can be concluded that the building made specifically for prayer is called a mosque. However, according to the big dictionary, mosque is a place to teach, discuss, and conclude all the main points of Islamic life. From this understanding, the mosque is defined not only as a place of prostration, purification of the place of prayer, but also as a place to carry out all Muslim activities related to obedience to God and as a cultural center..

## **RESEARCH METHODS**

In this study using qualitative research with a descriptive approach. The author uses a descriptive qualitative method because this study emphasizes the explanation of the meaning and elaboration of the architecture of the Muhammad Cheng Hoo mosque in Sempusari, Jember. So descriptive research aims to describe what is in the object of research by describing in detail, recording, analyzing, and interpreting current or previous conditions that have occurred.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Sugiyono, Memahami Penelitian Kualitatif ( Bandung: ALFABETA, 2014). P, 1  
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This descriptive qualitative research method is the basic method used to facilitate the research process on the architecture of the Muhammad Cheng Hoo mosque in Sempusari, Jember which is studied based on Charles Sanders Peirce's theory of semiotic analysis. Peirce in communication semiotics sees the sign (representament) as an inseparable part of the reference object and the subject's understanding of the sign (interpretant).<sup>5</sup>

To obtain data, the authors use data collection techniques sourced from primary and secondary data. Primary data was obtained by conducting interviews and observations with related parties, namely Muhammad Cheng Hoo Jember Mosque Manager and the Chair of PITI Jember. while secondary data is obtained from books, documentation, and journals that support the interests of the author.

In qualitative research, it is necessary to apply data validity testing to avoid invalid data. To determine the validity of the data in this study, the authors use the triangulation technique, which aims to check the validity of the data using something other than the data as a comparison against the data. Through various perspectives or views, it is hoped that very accurate and correct results will be obtained.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

The establishment of the Muhammad Cheng Hoo mosque in Sempusari, Jember, was based on the initiative of members of the Indonesian Chinese Islamic Association (PITI) to commemorate the services of Admiral Cheng Hoo as the first Chinese Muslim who preached in the archipelago by trading. Then the Haji Muhammad Cheng Hoo Indonesia Foundation gave a mandate to the Indonesian Chinese Islamic Association (PITI) DPD Jember Regency to continue the common hope in developing harmonious Islamic symbols and knitting ties of brotherhood, caring for each other, strengthening each other's spirit and spirit, socio-economic and supporting each other in the community. between Chinese Muslims, converts, and with indigenous peoples in order to be able to bring harmony.

The process of building a house of worship involves a long series of processes. Starting from the determination of waqf land, then the form of permits from the community, and the local government. This is a jointly decided provision under the auspices of FKUB (Forum of Religious Harmony).

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<sup>5</sup> Alex Sobur, *semiotika komunikasi* (Bandung:PT Remaja Rosdakarya, 2003),p., 15  
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This mosque was built on an area of 21 x 11 m<sup>2</sup> and the main building area is 11 x 9 m<sup>2</sup>. The number 11 means the size of the Kaaba when it was just built, while the number 9 means Walisongo. The mosque building which resembles a temple is intended to show the assimilation between indigenous Muslims and Chinese Muslims, as well as to commemorate the ancestors of the ethnic Chinese, who are predominantly Buddhist and Confucian.

Entering the first gate of the mosque, our view has been heeded by the five-tiered minarets which are red with green atams, and the gold and blue mosque buildings. This color selection is based on the typical color of the Chinese people. According to Chinese cultural beliefs, red is the color of good luck and happiness. The color green is interpreted as life, prosperity, harmony, and health. Yellow or gold is defined as a color that symbolizes neutralization and luck, while blue is a color that has a meaning of strength.

Culturally, the cheng hoo mosque building or Chinese-style building is a Chinese cosmological concept called feng sui (geomancy) and taoism to regulate the construction and layout of public residences for imperial and religious structures, this applies both in mainland China and its diaspora throughout the world, including Indonesia.

The use of special colors, numbers and cardinal directions in traditional Chinese architecture reflects the belief in its special characteristics, which reflect the inherent nature of the architecture itself. The architecture found in the Muhammad Cheng Hoo mosque has the values of cosmic harmony and culturally interpreted urban structure at the most basic level, such as the city of Beijing being one of the best examples of urban planning in Chinese culture.

In the context of the development of Islam and one of the famous mosque architectural buildings among the Chinese Muslim community is the Niujie Mosque, in the People's Republic of China. This mosque is a historic mosque, which has undergone renovations and expansions several times, this mosque became the center of the Muslim community in Beijing which at that time reached approximately 200,000 people.

The architecture shows the acculturation between Chinese culture and Islamic civilization. This area is the starting point for the entry of Islam in mainland China, so this mosque is said to be a historic mosque and this mosque has become an inspiration for the architectural style of various Chinese community mosque buildings located around the world, one of which is in Indonesia.

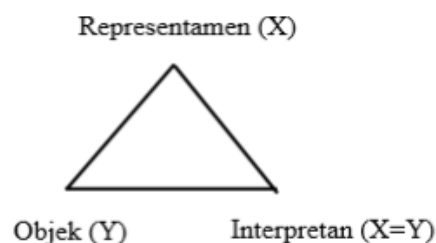
To examine signs that have cultural values, the author uses the theory of cultural semiotic analysis. Analysis of cultural semiotics when referring to Christomy's opinion is that culture is a sign system. In this semiotic study, culture displays forms of representation. Then this culture has an interpretant meaning in the form of terms, propositions, and arguments. So that it can be interpreted that cultural semiotics is the study of the meanings of the sign system contained in culture.

The early emergence of this semiotic theory was introduced by Ferdinand de Saussure through a sign system: signified and signifier. This concept sees that meaning will arise when there is an association relationship between the signified and the signifier. Then came various experts in their respective fields, one of whom was Charles Sanders Peirce.

Peirce emphasized that signs are related to objects that resemble them, their existence has a causal relationship with signs or because of conventional associations with these signs. He uses the term icon for similarity, index for cause-and-effect relationships, and symbols for conventional associations.<sup>6</sup>

Peirce is famous for his sign theory "sign is something which stands to somebody for something in some respect or capacity". Something used to make a sign work, by Peirce called ground. Consequently, the sign (sign or representamen) is always present in a triadic relationship, namely ground, object, and interpretant.<sup>7</sup>

Peirce calls signs as representations and concepts, objects, ideas, and so on which are referred to as objects. The meaning we get from a sign by Peirce is given the term interpretant. These three dimensions are always present in significance. Therefore, Peirce views it as a triadic structure.<sup>8</sup>



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<sup>6</sup> Alex Sobur, *Semiotika Komunikasi*, p. 34

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid*, p. 35

<sup>8</sup> Marcel Danesi, *Pesan, Tanda, dan Makna: Buku Teks Dasar Mengenai Semiotika dan Teori Komunikasi*. (Yogyakarta: Jalasutra, 2010), p. 37.

## Triadik 1.1

Signs can be interpreted openly, but are limited by the context, both the text itself and the socio-cultural context, as well as the knowledge/experience of the reader. Peirce on behalf of denotation and connotation as interpretant concepts. For Peirce, what is important is the process of semiosis. Therefore, in the analysis of the observed object, it plays a role in determining the right and appropriate tool. In Sobur it is stated that Peirce divides signs based on their objects into 3 (three), namely icons, indexes and symbols.<sup>9</sup>

As for if it is applied to the architecture of the Muhammad Cheng Hoo mosque in Sempusari, Jember as follows.

picture 1.2



The colors of Muhammad Cheng Hoo Mosque Jember

in the picture above the icon drawn in the form of a mosque is dominated by green, gold, and red colors. In Chinese culture, colors are classified into two categories: favorable colors and unfavorable colors.

The index shown in the picture is that the ancient Chinese believed that the five elements made up everything in nature. Five thousand years ago during the reign of Huang known as the Yellow Emperor, people actually worshiped the color yellow. From the next period, through the Shang, Tang, Zhou and Qin dynasties, the Emperors of China used the theory of the five elements to choose colors. Because they understand that color comes naturally, they gradually form a connection between color and the principles of the five elements, guided by the natural movements of Heaven and Heavenly Dao..

The symbols shown are the colors used: red, yellow or gold and green, which are believed to bring good luck. The red color symbolizes joy and luck. The Chinese people both ancient and modern highly valued the color red. Red is prohibited at funerals because it is a

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<sup>9</sup> Alex Sobur, *Semiotika Komunikasi*, (Bandung:PT REMAJA ROSDAKARYA, 2003), p. 41-42.  
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traditional color symbolic of happiness. The color yellow or gold corresponds to the earth, is considered the most beautiful color. The Chinese proverb says, "yellow produces Yin and Yang" this means that yellow is power. Yellow is the color for the emperor. Yellow is also freedom from worldly worries and thus honorable in Buddhism. The color green is generally associated with health, prosperity and harmony.



**Picture 2.3**  
**Bentuk segi delapan ditengah masjid**

The icons drawn are the eight elements of Pat Kwa which include chen, tui, li, chien, sun, kan, ken, and kun. Eight sides at the top of the building, where the dome of the mosque is located.

Index: this relates to Emperor Fu Xi's observation of all changes in nature and life forms including every movement of the body, which concludes that all movements or changes in the universe and everything in it change according to the laws of life or natural laws.

Symbol: Chinese Pat Kwa philosophy, symbol of good luck and glory. These eight elements are called the Trigrams, namely Chen (Sky), Tui (Metal), Li (Fire), Chien (Lightning), Sun (Wind), Kan (Water), Ken (Mountains), Kun (Earth). the basis of the ancient Chinese system of cosmogony and belief philosophy.





**Picture 3.4**  
5-tier mosque minaret

The icon drawn is a tower consisting of five layers, meaning five elements, namely elements, namely: water, fire, earth, metal, and wood..

Index: the Chinese believe that all objects in the universe belong to one of the five elements: water, wood, fire, earth and metal elements. These five elements are called Fengshui which symbolizes the five ways in which Qi is manifested. The year of birth of a person will determine which element is most important to him, for example, if we were born in 1989 (Serpent zodiac), it means that we are of the earth element. They believe that everyone has five elements of life, besides that they believe that these five elements are related to each other, for example the element of burning wood will appear fire, after the fire is extinguished then earth will appear, from the ground will get various metals (gold, iron etc.) ) and if the metals melt it will symbolize water. Finally, the water element will support various plants and produce wood, thus creating a cycle of energy that is always rotating.

The picture above has symbols that are shown are the forces that emerge from all corners of the universe.



#### **Picture 4.5 Mosque Lantern**

In the picture above, the icon drawn is a red light with a round shape like the earth or a beam. Lanterns are artifacts made of cloth or oil paper, round like balls with a diameter ranging from 25 to 50 centimeters.

The index in the picture above is a warning for the services of a rebel during the Ming dynasty named Lie Cu Seng for his struggle against the common people.

Symbol: prosperity, unity and sustenance. Therefore, lanterns are always there, especially at big moments in Chinese culture, such as Chinese New Year, Cap Go Meh, and others. Lanterns hung during Chinese New Year celebrations as a sign of good luck.



#### **Picture 5.6 Priests and pulpits resemble churches**

The icon drawn is the shape on the mosque wall in the imam and pulpit resembling the shape in the church.

Index: Humans are social creatures, who cannot live alone, they need other people and essentially in Indonesia there are various religions including: Islam, Christianity, Buddhism, Confucianism, Hinduism. As social beings, we must not assume that our religion is the most correct, we must tolerate each other in religious differences.

Symbol: interfaith harmony. So what is meant by inter-religious harmony here, we as humans must respect each other with people of different religions, we must not assume that our religion is the most correct.



**Picture 6.7**  
**Flower Pattern**

The icon drawn is a flower motif that is always on the wood of Cheng Hoo's building, with its distinctive colors of green, blue and red.

The icon drawn is a flower motif that is always on the wood of Cheng Hoo's building, with its distinctive colors of green, blue and red.

Symbol: prosperity, peace, beauty and compassion. Chinese people believe that flowers are a symbol of nature and their presence is able to make the heart peaceful.



**Picture 7.8**  
**Writing the name of the mosque in Roman letters**

Icon: the name of the mosque in kanji-style Roman letters. This writing itself is written on a black background, while the text that appears is golden.

Index: this is a marker of the background of the owner of the mosque who used to be a famous criminal and was in the black world who later emigrated to become a Muslim and had a golden age, namely Admiral Cheng Hoo.

Symbol: a valiant figure and propagator of Islam, namely Admiral Cheng Hoo.

## CONCLUSION

Muhammad Cheng Hoo Jember Mosque is a mosque that was built like a pagoda building where Confucians worship, each architecture has its own meaning, where this mosque is a wealth of Islamic cultural treasures in Indonesia. The combination of acculturation from Islamic-Chinese-Arabic-Javanese culture makes this mosque present as a symbol of the beauty of ethnic and religious tolerance in Indonesia.

Not only from the architectural form, but the specialty of this mosque lies in the philosophical values that symbolize tolerance for diversity, the spirit of spirituality and integrated peace along with its function in society in the fields of da'wah, education and socio-economics.

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