

**ACCULTURATION AND RELIGIOUS LIFE CHALLENGE  
THE TIONGHOA ETHNIC IN SYARIA LAND TOWARD  
PEACE AND HARMONY IN ACEH  
(CASE STUDY IN ACEH TAMIANG DISTRICT)**

**Ismail Sulaiman**

*STAIN Zawiyah Cot Kala Langsa NAD*

**Abstract**

It is a phenomenal in social culture between Aceh people and Chinese ethnic which has happened in Aceh. Chinese ethnics have been as part of Aceh citizen for ages which have stayed in Aceh Tamiang and having socialization, adaptation, and integration with native peoples. Aceh *Qanun* (Undang-Undang PA) implement Islamic law gives freedom for it citizen to practice their faith and believe. This paper aims to describe about intercultural communication, religious challenges and the process of acculturation the ethnic Tamiang with ethnic Chinese in Aceh Tamiang district. There are several indications that the communication between the ethnic Chinese in Aceh Tamiang has worked effectively and the communication has done in the process of acculturation. Acculturation process goes well. Acculturation among ethnic Chinese with Tamiang occurs through a process of assimilation. Supporting factors also influence the establishment of acculturation. Among these factors are influenced by trading, education, and marriage. The majority of them are connected by trade. This factor has affected by awareness, tolerance and solidarity in the ability to communicate and socialize among them. It will simplify the process of acculturation and ethnic Chinese can survive in peace and harmony in Aceh as a Syaria land.

**Keywords:** Acculturation, Religious, intercultural, communication, Syaria.

**A. Background**

Culture is a reflection of society. Every society has a culture that is different from each other. Anthropologists and communication experts have formulated definitions of culture itself. According to Tubbs et al said that culture is a way of life that have developed and owned by a group of people and passed

down from generation to generation. Moreover, it is formed from the elements of culture that exist in the community such as in economics, religion, livelihood systems, and others ( Usman, 2009) As Allah says in QS.Al-Hujarat:13

يَتَّيِّبُهَا النَّاسُ إِنَّا خَلَقْنَاهُمْ مِنْ ذَكَرٍ وَأُنْثَىٰ وَجَعَلْنَاكُمْ شُعُوبًا وَقَبَائِلَ لِتَعَارَفُوا ۗ إِنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ أَتَقْوَاهُ ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلِيمٌ خَبِيرٌ ﴿١٣﴾

Meaning: "O people! Indeed, We have created you from a male and a female, and made you nations and tribes that ye may know each other. Truly, the most honored of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous. Indeed Allah is All Knowing, All-conscientious ".(Q.S.Al-Hujarat:13). (Kemenag, 2009)

From the above paragraph explains about the basis of the relationship and interaction between nations and ethnic humanitarian approach. Humans are directed to know each other, not against each other. From the introduction of the open door opportunity to co-exist, complement each other and help each other, to work together to advance their lives and improve the quality of their welfare (Wijaya Kusuma, 2007)

The cultural difference should be viewed as something to be known and respected. When it is applied in communication behavior, any form of communication, there is no reason for the communication to be blocked. (Saefullah, 2007)

Aceh Tamiang is one of area that has a wide range of ethnic, tribes and culture. The diversity makes this region tend to be areas that are open to newcomers. People who live in this area have a wide variety of races and cultures, such as Chinese and Tamiang tribe. Mixing the society and culture in an area not supposed to make them break away from their original identity. They must keep the identity of the socializing in the community. Ethnic Chinese is well-known who like to wander, can live and succeed overseas areas not separated from their philosophy of life and adjust to the surrounding natural environment.

Ethnic Chinese living in Aceh Tamiang generally still show the behavior and culture of their ancestors in dress, attitude and confidence. Chinese society generally hardwork, diligent and

efficient so that they are successful in their business, especially in the economic.

People who live in different cultural environments require adaptation. Adaptation is needed at for newcomer to a new culture. Socialization process of adaptation requires learning and gaining all that makes human life in another environment. Socialization includes the conditions and processes of social communication including decoding (perception and cognition) and encoding (verbal and nonverbal). In other words, the adaptation process includes enculturation and acculturation (Usman, 2009)

## **B. Introduction of Chinese and Tamiang Culture**

### **1. Chinese Culture**

China is considered as the immigrant community as they begin to come to the archipelago that is estimated at the beginning of the 9th century AD. Indonesian ethnic Chinese present to be considered as a carrier change, especially in agricultural technology and trade system, because the Chinese has high civilization and one of the oldest civilizations in the world. Ethnic Chinese living and growing as other indigenous ethnic archipelago. As a fact there is no Indonesian areas that are not inhabited by ethnic Chinese. (Usman, 2009)

Interaction of trade in Southeast China's coastal areas, causes many Chinese people to trade out sailing. Their main destination at the time was Southeast Asia. Because shipping is very dependent on the monsoons, then each year the traders will live in areas of Southeast Asia who visited them. And so on there are traders who decided to settle down and marry local women, there were also traders who returned to China to continue to trade (Wikipedia, 2013)

Chinese has lived and grown in Indonesia hundreds or even thousands of years. The presence of ethnic Chinese in Indonesia is closely related to the history, politics, socio-economics. Tribes and ethnic diversity of the Chinese state makes them constructed with an order, customs, and language of their native culture, creating a system of their ancestors overseas. Customs and traditions of ethnic Chinese practiced overseas where they live. Chinese ethnic cultures in are Indonesia different

from each other such as Hok Kian ethnic, Kong Hu, and Khek. In addition the different tribes, they also consist of such clan Tan, Li, Liem, Che (Usman, 2009)

The diversity and uniqueness of the tribe that flourished in China is also growing in ethnic overseas Chinese, especially in Southeast Asia. The diversity and uniqueness of the culture passed on from generation to generation in the colony, where they live, especially their local language as the language of each Hok Kian and Khek. Despite of the different origins, they remain united in ideology, politics and culture.

The Chinese community is also made up of many clans to form a union are familiar with each clan. The creation of the primitive clan for Chinese society to follow his mother's clan called Xing. Mother is a central figure in the family. Letter xing consists of "nu" is female and the sheng (birth) which means that women who give birth. All of this is the implication that in primitive times, Chinese society is matriarchal.

Judging from the record of Chinese documents, the word culture or Wen hua (文化), appeared two thousand years ago in Zhouyi (周易) book or "Book of Changes". Cultural understanding in English is "culture", which is derived from the Latin word "cultura" which comes from the root word "Colere" which means "farming, residing, training and attention".

Wenhua or culture in the Chinese language originating from the two-letter words and hua wen 文化 namely, that the Modern Chinese Dictionary explains the meaning of culture is: the whole wealth of material and immaterial wealth created by mankind in the history of the development of society.

Chinese Culture in Aceh Tamiang is a tradition and a habit of life that developed as well as in practice by ethnic Chinese who live in Aceh Tamiang. Traditions or customs and beliefs of their ancestors is a reflection of Chinese culture that is alive today, among other things: trust, celebration of Chinese New Year Lion Dance Entertainment arts, the Feast of Cap Go Meh, Ceng Be, Death Ceremony, Prayer in Hok Kian grave and language are still practiced by the ethnic Chinese in Aceh Tamiang.

## 2. Tamiang Culture

Tamiang tribe is one of the tribes located in Aceh. Although the ethnic Malay and portions of Aceh, but they have a common language and a dialect of melayu Langkat North Sumatra. In 2<sup>nd</sup> June, 2002 the district officially became autonomous district. Since the number of tribes Tamiang in some districts, then this is the reason for naming Aceh Tamiang, most of the people who inhabit the district in which the newborn is ethnic Tamiang. Tamiang located in northeastern Sumatra and Lingga islands to the east of Sumatra (Wikipedia, 2013).

Although there is no evidence of an accurate history of this tribe, but there are a few stories such as fairy tales, legends and folklore of the tribe Tamiang own. One legend tells that the Tamiang is the name of a group of islands in the Riau region. The cluster is the place of origin of the ancestors of the tribe Tamiang. There is another story of Tamiang tribe, that they are descendants of the kingdom of Aru is located on the eastern coast of Sumatra.

Different to as told in the book titled "Culture in Aceh Region" written by Adnan Abdullah. It is said that the name comes from the nickname Tamiang people Pasai the conquests, which is located at the junction of Simpang Kanan River and Simpang Kiri. Tamiang is a region that became the royal dynasty conquered of Pasai. Tamiang who became king at that time was called the King Muda Sedia (1330-1352 AD).

In this Tamiang Land once stood a kingdom, which is called the Kingdom Continent Tamiang. According to A. Hasjmy first king who ruled in the Islamic kingdom Continent Tamiang is Meurah Elephant King (580-599 H: 1184-1203 AD) and the last king was Raja Muda Sedia (753-800 H: 1353-1398 AD). Meanwhile, according to East Aceh Ulema Council, the first king who ruled there was King Muda Sedia (1330-1352 AD) and the last King is the King of Po Garang (1490-1528 AD); after a reign that during the reign of King Sri Mengkuta (1528-1558 AD). Continent Tamiang royal federation incorporated into the Kingdom of Aceh Darussalam which began awakened in 1514 by Sultan Ali Shah Mughayat (the first Sultan, 1514-1530 AD).

Historical evidence which indicates the existence of the kingdom of Srivijaya inscription Tamiang is, a book that records the Wee Pei Shih Pei Kan Chiang country (Tamiang), and a book

called the Nagara Kertagama "Tumihang", as well as cultural heritage objects found on the site of Tamiang.

Tamiang community lives in the areas of agriculture, farming in the fields. In addition, they also maintain some farm animals such as chickens, ducks, goats and cows. Currently Tamiang people's lives are more advanced, as many are already working in the government sector and also in the private sector such as trade or open their own business.

### **C. Chinese Intercultural Communication in Aceh Tamiang**

The importance of communication and its impact on humans are dramatically underlined by Keating when he wrote, "Communication is very strong: able to bring a friend to our side or pull apart enemies, reassure or warn the children and create consensus or battle lines between us."

As an example of that communication is at the core of human relationships. Both are living in a town, in the village, on the farm or in the forest, all working on the same activities when they are trying to share thoughts and feelings to others. The impact caused when sending the message may be different, but the reason people tend to communicate are same.

### **D. Acculturation Among Chinese and Tamiang Tribe**

Acculturation as a process of cultural and psychological changes that occur as a result of the relationship between two or more cultural groups. Communication processes underlies an immigrant acculturation process. Acculturation occurs through the identification and internalization symbols significant indigenous community.

Chinese will set himself to know and to be known in touch with other people and it is done through communication. Other issues include problems of communication nonverbal communication, such as differences in the use and arrangement of space, interpersonal distance, facial expressions, eye movements, body movements, and perception of whether important nonverbal behavior.

Chinese people are known by the people who likes to wander, can live and succeed overseas areas and not in spite of their philosophy of life is "Adjusting to the surrounding natural

environment". Based on observations of the ethnic Chinese has been mingling with indigenous communities and the surrounding environment and following the rules that apply in the local area.

In the process of acculturation, at the invitation of Chinese ethnic indigenous communities when there are weddings, circumcisions and so forth. Also when there are indigenous people who died, they are present for the funeral and vice versa. Even Chinese residing in Aceh Tamiang have a car such as ambulances that can be used by anyone free of charge and driver are ready at any time when someone is sick or died, whether indigenous or ethnic Chinese community itself.

The process of acculturation can be done anywhere, either in the market, schools and within the family. As an example Rudy / Aho, he was a Muallaf of ethnic Chinese who married a Javanese ethnicity indigenous peoples. A very family priority to tolerance, especially in the trust. His father and mother he and his extended family are still Buddhist, only he and his brother who are Muslims. Even so, he never severed ties with his family, especially to his parents who are still alive today.

He often visit his parent who has been ill. According to him, the trust that is the right of all people, all people are free to choose, difference does not mean that if we trust with our parents then we disconnect the blood. Only, when the extended family gathered in a celebration or party, there are foods that are forbidden to eat by Muslims, it is not edible and they will understand it.

Chinese people generally do not feel to have the constraints in the assimilation of indigenous peoples. Association has been established with each other. In 1995 there was the establishment of Bakom PKB (National Unity Living the Communications Agency). It is now established PSMTI (Association of Indonesian Chinese Clan Tribe). People who engage in PSMTI not only the Chinese people but also people are natives also join into PSMTI. It was created to bridge the intermingling between ethnic Chinese and indigenous peoples. In this organization, not only the Chinese people who are in it, but also the indigenous population. This indicates that there is already build good communication between Indigenous and immigrant communities.

### **E. The Factors of Acculturation has happened in Aceh Tamiang**

Chinese came to Indonesia from hundreds or even thousands of years ago before the independence of Indonesia. Their primary factor associated with the Indonesian state is trade. Another factor that causes them to live and thrive in Indonesia and left his home country is because of the difficulty to live the country of China at that time, especially in the economic field caused by political problems.

Since then the Chinese began to live and evolved into various regions of the archipelago, one of them in Aceh Tamiang. The main factor that caused the acculturation between ethnic Chinese and Tamiang in (business).. Other factor that connects ethnic Chinese immigrants with indigenous communities is through marriage and education.

#### **a. trade**

In the Dutch colonial period in Indonesia, ethnic Chinese residing in Indonesia has become a means for the Dutch to trade. Indonesian agricultural products such as spices and other sold by the Netherlands to other countries through Chinese society. Chinese in general originated in China, they immigrated to Indonesia as a result of the pattern of trade. Until eventually they married and settled in Indonesia. Trade is one of the potential to Chinese community as immigrants. Through trade, ethnic Chinese are were able to survive and succeed as an immigrant in the overseas area. Through this trade, they were able to relate well with indigenous peoples.

Business is a skill that is taught from generation to generation in their families. The family is a business network that has been a tradition for the ethnic Chinese. Chinese companies are growing because they have a network between families. With the family in business networks establish their companies become stronger and survive anywhere and anytime. Through trade, ethnic Chinese and indigenous peoples interact every day and eventually become regulars. Trade leads to Chinese and indigenous people (Tamiang) interact with each other and establish kinship.



## **b. Marriage**

Marriage is one of the factors causing acculturation. Chinese who interact with the Indonesian trade at the time by looking at the direction of the wind sailing. If the wind direction at the time did not allow them to return to the country of China, then for a while they lived in Indonesia waiting for the wind direction to improve. At the time of waiting for this wind direction, they blended in with the people of Indonesia and married.

Ethnic Chinese who had been married to indigenous communities do not return to the country of China until finally they have children, grandchildren and so on. By marriage, the Chinese changed his beliefs or converted from Buddhism into Islam. Through marriage, acculturation has occurred between the Chinese community and the society in terms of religion in Aceh Tamiang.

Chinese who married with the indigenous people of different cultures and religions become one of the causes of acculturation. With different cultures, Chinese in the facing is no significant difficulties to interact.

## **c. Education**

Acculturation can also occur from the education factor. Chinese highly value their education pattern. Although there are no special schools for them in Aceh, they continue their education in the public schools. For education they unify with the indigenous peoples.

Chinese communities associate with Tamiang in public schools which locate in Aceh Tamiang. In daily life they play together and take part in education as other school children even though they are of different races and religion. Adaptation through education can create a harmonious relationship within the community.

National-based education can create an adaptation that is planned and programmed so that all ethnicities can receive the same education so that each acculturated and adapt with other ethnicities. Therefore, adaptation is performed as a necessity of ethnic Chinese is done so that they feel no different in education and treatment in schools.

This interaction is not only established at school, but continues beyond the school environment, such as in the afternoon or evening when they are exercising and visiting each other in times of leisure.

## **F. Challenges of Religious Life of Chinese Ethnic in Aceh Tamiang**

People in Aceh Tamiang who have lived for hundreds of years have different religious backgrounds, among them Buddhism and Islam. Ethnic Chinese in general are Buddhist and Muslim indigenous peoples. Its many Chinese who embraced Buddhism can be seen from the number of temple which is located in Aceh Tamiang.

Aceh has implemented Islamic Sharia gives opportunity to its people of the minority to worship, including ethnic Chinese. Chinese perform prayers every day at morning and evening in their home each and every month on the 1st and 15th month of China at temple. Ethnic Chinese prays in the monastery close to their place of residence, namely Vihara Sukong located in the Old City and Pe Kong Dharma Buddhist Vihara Foundation in Kampung Durian Aceh Tamiang.

In contrast to the indigenous Islamic people, they perform prayers five times a day and it can be done at home or in the mosque. In addition, Islam also requires each followers to fast or Puasa in Ramadan for one month. Fasting means holding or canceling everything such as eating, drinking, keeping the passions and others. Muslims also own a large feast of the Eid al-Fitr and Eid al-Adha and the days are still many other Islamic days.

Unlike the Buddhist Chinese, they carry every beginning and end of the fasting month China they believe the white fasting, the purification of the heart. Fasting implemented Buddhists is holding only eat food that is animate or bleed just like fish, chicken, and others however rice, vegetables and water still be eaten or drunk. Buddhism also has a feast day just as the Lunar New Year, Cap Go Meh, Vesak, Ceng Be, and others. Chinese New Year is celebrated by ethnic Chinese with joy, like Eid for Muslims. Morning prayer and then they execute each visit

to the family, siblings, relatives and others with Chinese characteristic by giving Ang Pao.

Two weeks after the Lunar New Year, they were back to celebrate Cap Go Meh is the closing day of Lunar. There is also a celebration of Ceng Be, where all ethnic Chinese pilgrimage (pray, pray hold) at family funerals with rituals such as burning incense while praying and a box containing all the equipment in the world such as clothes, sandals, money, toothbrushes and so on another would be burned, but the items are all made of paper. According to their beliefs, the ritual is performed to deliver supplies in the lives of others for the souls who have died.

### **G. Barriers and Challenges of Chinese and Tamiang Tribe**

Barriers in intercultural communication are all things that become an obstacle course of the messages exchanged between the communicator to communicant. Barriers can be sourced from the elements of communication, for example communicator, communicant, messages, or media.

Based on observations, all respondents agreed that the main obstacle comes from the communicator and communicant. This is because of differences in social status and culture. In general, Chinese society is a society that is less friendly with other ethnic communities around it. They tend to prefer to socialize with each other alone. There is an assumption of the Chinese community that indigenous people were lazy, lazy looking for money, do not like them. So if they come to the place of indigenous people just to socialize, not welcomed by them. They assume the only indigenous people use only and the edges are asking for money. Only a few Chinese people who want to socialize with indigenous peoples.

As the result of such assumptions, it makes the indigenous people is reluctant to engage with the Chinese community if only just to socialize. Chinese community and Indigenous interact only if there is a need, just like selling interactions.

In terms of language Tamiang language with Hokkien used by the Chinese is very different. Although the majority of the population is ethnic Chinese, but indigenous peoples (tribes Tamiang) do not understand at all the language they use.

Chinese Hok Kian typically use language when communicating with others of his tribe alone, as well as community Tamiang. Tamiang use traditional language when doing communicating with others of his tribe himself. When communicating with other tribes, they use Indonesian.

In addition, other barriers are ethnic Chinese philosophy of life that is more about making money in comparison with any. Even when the feast was sometimes there were still trading after attending a prayer in the morning. The Chinese are more concerned with earning money (trade) so they rarely to come together with others in the surrounding communities. Even if there are activities that should people gathered but they rarely participate. They prefer to keep trade rather than participate in village activities. Even so they still participate in these activities, such as sending food or beverage for people who currently work together.

However, in contrast to one of the Chinese community who had converted to Islam. Rudi Tandean / Ahoo who have converted to Islam since 1992 was caused by the marriage. He better understands the importance of socializing with the surrounding community. For him, life is not solely about money, need refreshing once in a while and we also can not live without the help of others.

Chinese, they feel discriminated against as migrants, grew and lived in the area. There is a sense of less freedom of expression, creativity and participate in the community. For instance, only a small proportion of Chinese who joined the government agencies or practically nothing in Aceh Tamiang, like the police, military, civil servants and others.

As a fact there are obstacles and challenges that feel as immigrant Chinese community / society nomads, there is a principle in their lives that they can survive and make a successful living in the overseas area of their life philosophy "fit in with the surrounding natural environment".

## **G. Conclusion**

As a conclusion, everyday Chinese in Aceh Tamiang generally same as indigenous peoples. It's just that they spent more time to trade in shops or stores them. Their socialization

towards indigenous peoples are still lacking, but there are no obstacles to adapt and blend in with the indigenous peoples as ethnic Chinese remained true to his principles, which adjust to the surrounding natural environment. The interactions between the two ethnic groups are established in the store at the time buying and selling.

The process of acculturation and adaptation that occurs between ethnic Chinese and indigenous people in the tavern below involve elements of intercultural communication. Although different cultures and beliefs and thought patterns, acculturation does not make divisions and hostility between ethnic Chinese and society.

Precisely acculturation can be made as a cultural should be viewed as something to be known, respected and equipped. With the acculturation, a sense of solidarity and tolerance in the liver is embedded in their respective societies.

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