

# WHITE WINE (白酒 Bǎi jǐ ŭ) IN WORSHIP AT TRIDHARMA TEMPLES

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Received on: 29 August 2023

Accepted on: 06 January 2024

Published on: 24 April 2024

## ABSTRACT

*This study aims to investigate white wine in various solemnities performed in Tridharma temples. The data were collected by observation, interview, and documentation. To obtain data, the informants were interviewed. The informants were one biokong and two worshippers of Tridharma temples. The total number of informants was six. Two Tridharma temples were chosen as the locations for conducting this research. It was Toa Se Bio Temple. As it is the oldest Tridharma temple in West Java, the writer chose it as the location of the study. The theory used in analyzing the data were Xiao's theory (1995), a textbook entitled *The Worshipper Leaders* (2015), and a book entitled *A Brief History of Sian Djin Ku Poh Temple* (2019). The results revealed that white wine has been used in worship. It is used in worship toward ancestors and sinbengs. There were two kinds of the usage of white wine. The use of white wine in prayer activities is still valid, especially for prayer activities and festivals. The prayer activities that still use white wine are prayers to worship sinbeng, Cap Go Meh night activities, and Sejit. The use of white wine in prayer activities is a tradition that has existed for generations. It is also used in tangsin ceremony, Cap Go Meh Eve, and sejit ceremony.*

**Keywords:** Chinese culture, white wine, worship, Tridharma temple.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Tiongkok is a country that possesses a diverse culture. Since ancient times, Tiongkok has had various types of alcoholic beverages. One of the alcoholic beverages in Tiongkok is white wine. Chinese assumes that white wine is a beverage holding spiritual values. The ancient Tiongkok always drank white wine when performing death ceremonies, banquet ceremonies, and ceremonies to God or their ancestors (Rismawati 2011). According to the ancient traditions, white wine can cure ailments, prolong life and embrace rites. White wine plays a very prominent role in Tiongkok. It is used in diet, cooking, health, and recreational culture. There is a Chinese saying “无酒不成宴，无酒不成欢 Wú jiǔ bùchéng yàn, wú jiǔ bùchéng huān” that implies that

if there is no wine, then there is no feast. Chinese attaches great importance to etiquette when drinking at banquets, e.g., they should take the initiative to make a toast if they want to show respect to their parents, dignitaries, or guests. According to the Chinese people, life will be very pleasant when somebody is drinking wine. By drinking wine, people will speak honestly and laugh in a delighted atmosphere (Ren 2015).

In Mandarin, the word *arak* (wine) is called *jiǔ* (酒). The word *jiǔ* (酒) is used for any beverages that contain alcohol. *Arak* has a long history in Tiongkok. The first preparations appeared around 5,000 years ago. It becomes an inseparable part of everyday life, social interaction, parties, gathering with friends, visiting relatives, and both in sad and happy events. According

to a legend, the goddess Yí Dī (仪狄) made wine for the first time. Goddess Yí Dī (仪狄) made wine by wrapping rice in mulberry leaves. During the Xia Dynasty (2200 – 2100 BC), wine was first served to Emperor Dà Yǔ (大). According to some Chinese, in the era of the Xia Dynasty, the earliest person who made wine was Dù Kāng (杜康). When Dù Kāng (杜康) wanted to leave to tend his sheep, Dù Kāng (杜康) left the millet pulp in a bamboo stick for half a month. The millet pulp turned into fragrant wine. Then, the name Dù Kāng (杜康) was known as the first winemaker at that era (Fu 2004).

Xiao (1995), in a book entitled "International Handbook on Alcohol and Culture," argues that from ancient times until today, Chinese has emphasized that wine plays a very utmost role in socio-cultural life. It has influenced the Chinese lifestyle, behavior, values, attitudes, and belief patterns. Some early Chinese considered wine to be a holy beverage. They would drink it only during certain solemnities. They also use wine to worship heaven, earth, ancestors, spirits, and gods. Bone and tortoise shell inscriptions were found as early as the 16th century BC, during the Shang Dynasty (1711-1066 BC). This inscription describes the offering of wine to great leaders and soldiers who have passed away. Xiao also proposes that wine and the Chinese already have a very close relationship, apart from being used as a means of offering to the heavens, earth, ancestors, spirits, and gods. Wine is also regarded as the most important part of various activities, such as when accomplishing political activities, celebrating the harvest, and honoring parents.

In ancient China, Chinese people used wine to worship the heavens, earth, mountains, and oceans. When they worship the mountains, they pour white wine on the ground. They also pour white wine onto the seabed when they worship the ocean (Fu 2004). The custom of drinking arak is almost the same as the custom of drinking tea. Arak plays a very important role in Chinese culture. Many drinking customs arose during China's long history. In the past, Chinese ancestors made wine as an offering to the heavens, earth, mountains, rivers, countries, temples, ancestors, and spirits. Arak should always be poured on the ground after reading a prayer.

When carrying out offerings to the river, wine will be poured until it runs out into the water (Fu 2004).

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

In a book entitled *Petugas-Petugas Sembahyang<sup>1</sup>* (*Prayer Officers*) (2015), worship can be classified into two things; namely:

### 1) Worship with offerings. This can be categorized as follows:

- a) Offerings using tea or wine. This type of worship refers to tea or wine worship. In this worship, they only use tea and wine. They also add cookies.
- b) Offerings using cakes and fruits and food. This type of worship is commonly referred to as collective worship.

### 2) Worship without offerings. Prayers only use incense.

In the book entitled *Overview of the History of the Sian Djin Ku Poh Temple* (2019), there are four procedures for prayer activities, as follows:

- a) Pray to God Almighty. Tridharma worshippers substantially must pray to Tian/Thien. This worship should be done in all prayers. The following worship was offered to Sin Beng. This worship sequence applies to all temples. According to the teachings of Tian Dao/Tridharma (Daoism, Buddhism, and Confucianism), the Supreme God resides in Li Tian (the highest realm at its level, namely Nirvana) with the Buddhas who have reached the perfect status.
- b) Pray to the Prophet and the Saints (Sinbeng). During worship to the Sinbeng, the ceremonies performed are raising incense, then praying, sticking the incense into Hiolo, then kneeling three times and bowing nine times.

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1 This book is a reference for temple officials in guiding prayer activities at the temple. This book was compiled by several temples' officials in Jakarta.

c) Pray to the ancestral spirits. During worship to ancestral spirits, the ceremonies performed are raising incense four times, concentrating, and praying. After finishing praying, they bow four times and stick incense into *Hiolo*. However, if they are praying to the host, they only kneel once.

However, based on the *Prayer Officers* book (2015), there is one procedure for praying, as follows:

a) Pouring tea and wine. In all prayer ritual activities, there must be a ritual of pouring tea and wine. The pouring of tea and wine is done after sticking incense into *Hio Lo*. With great respect and solemnity, they pour the tea or approach the altar where the *teh-koan* (small kettle filled with tea water) and *ciu-pan* (small kettle filled with wine), *teh-koan* or *ciu-pan* are placed. Tea or wine is poured into each cup provided.

In this study, the problem formulation is the use of white wine in worship at the Toa Se Bio temple and at the Sian Djin Ku Poh temple. They are two of the oldest temples in West Java.

The study aims to examine kinds of worship using white wine in Chinese temples. In addition, it also aims to discover the use of white wine on worship based on the worshippers.

### 3. METHODOLOGY

This study used qualitative method. This research method is an approach to explore and comprehend the individual and group meaning raised from social and humanity problems (Creswell 2014). Qualitative research was conducted using a phenomenological approach. Phenomenological research investigates and listens more closely and thoroughly regarding individual explanations and understanding of their experiences (Sugianto 2015).

In investigating the use of white wine in worship, the researchers used qualitative methods. The purpose of using this phenomenological approach is to explain

persons' experiences in their life, including experiences when interacting with other people and the surrounding environment.

Phenomenological research focuses more on finding out, studying, and conveying the meaning of phenomena and events. Qualitative method research is included in pure qualitative research because the research is based on trying to understand and describe the characteristics of phenomena that occur to oneself (Sugianto 2015). Phenomenological studies are implemented in this research since the researchers are interested in studying more deeply the phenomena experienced by the informants i.e., *biokong* and the worshippers of the temples.

In qualitative research with a phenomenological approach, the method in obtaining data was interview. This is the main procedure in constructing descriptions and the experiences of people. Another method used to collect data was documentation. This method was to obtain an overview of one's life experiences. To present valid and up-to-date evidence, researchers used the documentation method. Phenomenological researchers are connecting media to obtain data through stories and experiences of informants (Farid 2018).

In order to obtain valid, reliable, accurate, complete, detailed, and guaranteed data sources, the author went directly to the research location with research tools. According to Sugiyono (2017), qualitative research refers to part of the human instrument. It has a function as the main focus, looking for informants that are used as data sources, collecting data by documentation and observation, checking data quality, analyzing data, explaining results, analyzing data, and drawing conclusions from the research findings.

Observation is a very important part of qualitative research. Through observation, researchers can document and reflect systematically the activities and interactions of research subjects. Everything seen and heard, which is in accordance with the themes and problems in research, is carefully recorded (Nugrahani 2017). The first steps in observation is identifying the places to be studied and mapping in order to gain a

general picture of the research objectives. The next stage is the researchers identifying the informant, time, duration and topic. In this study, the researchers made direct field observations about the use of white wine in worship.

Interview is one technique to collect data. Interviews are conducted to obtain information by asking the research subjects directly (Sugiyono 2017). Interviews are conducted to obtain information that cannot be obtained through observation or questionnaires since researchers cannot observe everything. Not all data can be obtained through observation. Therefore, the researchers had to deliver questions to informants (Raco 2010).

Informants are data sources related to third parties. Informants provide data about events or events experienced or known to individuals. Before conducting interviews, researchers select individuals. Researchers are really selective in choosing informants who really have expertise on the research topic. The steps taken were to select basic informants or people who had extensive knowledge about various sectors regarding the use of wine for prayer, introducing researchers to other informants who had expertise on the sectors or cultural elements studied (Sugiyono, et al. 2017). The authors used the method proposed by Raco and Sugiyono et al. for the smooth running of the interviews. Before conducting the interviews, the author prepared several lists of questions and recording devices in the form of cell phones and cameras. During the interview, the researchers asked the informants several questions, then the informant answered, then the researchers recorded them. There were a number of interview results that could not be recorded, therefore recording devices in the form of cellphones and cameras really helped researchers to play them back so they could be listened to and recorded.

In conducting this research, the researchers interviewed one biokong and two worshippers from two Chinese temples. Thus, six informants were involved in this study. These informants are as follows:

TABLE 1. Informants that are involved in this research.

Name	Status	Temples	Code
Ceng-Ceng	Biokong	Sian Djin Ku Poh	B.1
S.M	Umat	Sian Djin Ku Poh	U.1.1
Reynaldo	Umat	Sian Djin Ku Poh	U.1.2
Ricky	Biokong	Toa Se Bio	B.2
Kenny	Umat	Toa Se Bio	U.2.1
Edward	Umat	Toa Se Bio	U.2.2

Documentation is a data collection technique to obtain information. Documentation can be in the form of text and photographs related to research problems (Rukin 2019). Documentation is a method used to provide various kinds of written and printed documents. To complete the data in the study, the researchers collected activity report documentation. Documentation aims to make it easier for researchers to prepare reports. Documentation can also strengthen research reports. This method is used to collect data that is already available in document records. The function of the documentation is to support and complement the data obtained through observation and interviews.

## 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results are divided into two parts: the use of white wine in festivals and ceremonies.

### 4.1 White Wine in Worships

Data obtained from Informant B.2:

*"That's right, until now the host Kongco, which means male, 100% on average uses white wine. For goddesses or women, for example, the goddess Kwan Im does not use white wine, because she really avoids alcoholic drinks. According to him, drinking is karma, so if Kongco uses it, it is actually from our ancestors, it shows friendship, in Indonesia it is famous for tea, right? Every tea banquet is the same as paying respect and so is the same. We Chinese were entertained by generations of our ancestors. In the past, giving wine was the biggest honor, so it is the same with the prayer ceremonies that*

we carry out here, they are also used for the same aims to signify a friendship and our respect to the sky. So, the offerings are 3 cups or *sanqing* each. The storage position for these 3 cups should not be arbitrary, usually it has to be between 3 cups of sweetened tea, 3 cups of white wine, Chinese dates (*angco*), and pumpkin sweetened with sugar. These are all usually used for prayer. Except for *Hok Tek Ceng Sin*, it has to be 5, because he is one of the gods of fortune. The point is that it has to be odd, because odd indicates certainty, if even it is usually still gray. Because certainty is what is usually used for big ceremonies.



Figure 2: Kongco Sejit Ceremony  
Source: Personal Documentation



Figure 1: Kongco Sejit Ceremony  
Source: Personal Documentation

Since the host of the Toa Se Bio temple is the god Tjen Gwan Tjeng Kun, the use of white wine in this temple is still valid. There are many gods who loved to drink wine during their lifetime. When praying for the *sinbeng*, usually the caretaker of the temple always puts three cups of white wine during *kongco sejit* activities, *Cap Go Meh* night, or regular prayers. Almost every event has white wine. According to the god Kwan Kong, wine is a symbol of honesty and loyalty. *Arak* symbolizes respect for the ancestors.

**Data obtained from Informant U.1.1:**

*"I still use white wine. Because it so happened that the altar where I pray mostly keeps gods who used to drink wine during their lifetime, so to honor the kongco I always use white wine. Kongco is another name for Dewa, Kongco is another name for Engkong, which is shortened to Kongco or engkong, usually they are men. Another name for Kongco can also be used as our ancestor, for example, I have a papa, papa has a papa, it's called grandfather, and grandfather has papa, it's called kongco because they've passed several generations of life, so they've reincarnated as descendants."*

**Data obtained from Informant U.1.2:**

*"I still use white wine because white wine for prayer has been a tradition passed down from generation to generation, so I still use this tradition, so that the tradition doesn't just disappear."*

**Data obtained from Informant U.2.1:**

*"Yes, because it's a Chinese tradition, right? Using white wine to honor ancestors who no longer exist, I don't really know why I use wine in detail, because I'm just following the existing tradition. Usually at the time of prayer, white wine is always used at the end of the closing. Usually also use white wine which is not for consumption for drunkenness."*

**Data obtained from Informant U.2.2:**

*"Yes, I use arak to pray to my ancestors and sinbeng"*

on my home altar. According to ethnic Chinese beliefs, arak has a philosophy that symbolizes friendship or kinship, honesty and loyalty. It is believed that wine will not intoxicate like human speech, so every time I pray at home, I always use white wine on the prayer altar."

According to informants U.1.1 to U.2.2, white wine is still used in worship. Even though the culture is almost extinct, there are still many people who use white wine when praying at their home altar. White wine is a liquor that must always be present at the prayer altar.

The reason white wine is still used in worship is that white wine is a tradition that has existed since ancient times. This tradition has been passed down from one generation to another. In order that this tradition does not become extinct, the use of white wine should be maintained and preserved.

#### 4.2 White Wine in Festival Atau Ceremonies

Data obtained from Informant B.1 are:

"The use of white wine in this temple is already rare, white wine is mostly used for special occasions, for praying to sinbeng it's rare, because Mak Ku Poh himself doesn't like wine, he prefers bitter tea. The use of white wine is more often used for sejit, Chinese New Year events, banquets for temple administrators and donors, if ordinary prayers no longer use white wine.



Figure 3: Mak Ku Poh Altar Worship  
Source: Personal Documentation

The host of the Sian Djin Ku Poh temple is Mak Ku Poh. Mak Ku Poh is a goddess. The use of white wine in this temple is not too much. The use of white wine is still ongoing but only for certain activities, such as worshipping sinbeng, worshipping ancestors, the kongco sejit ceremony for each god, except for the host's sejit event, and during the Cap Go Meh event. Mak Ku Puh is a woman who is considered a goddess by Chinese people. Mak Ku Poh is famous for her kindness in life. Mak Ku Poh almost never drank any kind of wine.

Data obtained from Informant B.1: "After Mak Ku Poh passed away, no one served white wine on altar. It respects for the people to Mak Ku Poh who did not like wine at all."



Figure 4: Worship  
Source: Personal Documentation

Based on information from biokong B.1 and B.2 almost all rituals and festivals use white wine, both at the Toa Se Bio and Sian Djin Ku Poh temples and there is also the kongco sejit event, Cap Go Meh. At the Toa Se Bio temple, white wine is used at the Kongco sejit event for the host. In contrast, in the temple and Sian Djin Ku Poh, white wine is not used when the host is kongco sejit because the owner of this temple is a female sinbeng, or goddess.

Kongco Sejit is a celebration celebrated by Chinese people. Sejit is the birthday of the god. Kongco Sejit is the birthday of the god of the earth which is celebrated once a year. The god of the earth is the god of fortune and prosperity. In this celebration there are several

activities carried out, namely prayer, lion dance, liong, and trampling coals. This celebration was held in the temple.

*Cap Go Meh* derives from the words 'cap go' meaning 15 and 'meh' meaning night. Therefore, *Cap Go Meh* means the fifteenth night on the first month of Chinese lunar calendar. The *Cap Go Meh* tradition has existed since ancient times. The purpose of the *Cap Go Meh* event is to honor the supreme god during the Han Dynasty. The term *Cap Go Meh* only exists in Indonesia, while in other regions of the country or internationally it is called the Lantern Festival or Festival of the Lanterns.

## 5. CONCLUSION

1. Based on the research that has been conducted, there were six data regarding the use of white wine in prayer activities. The data were influenced

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by Chinese's culture which includes the use of white wine. Based on the data obtained, there are two uses of white wine in activities at the temple and four uses of white wine in prayer activities at home.

2. There were two kinds of the usage of white wine. There were data of using white wine performed at Chinese temples and other data of using white wine in worship at home. The data described the usage of white wine. There were six interviews in this research.
3. The use of white wine in prayer activities is still valid, especially for prayer activities and festivals. As for prayer activities that still use white wine, they are prayers to worship sinbeng, Cap Go Meh night activities, and Sejit. The use of white wine in prayer activities is a tradition that has existed for generations.

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