



Culinary Acculturation Strategy at Dapur Babah Elite & Tao Bar Restaurant

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Abstract

Cultural acculturation has brought changes on culinary as it is seen in a restaurant called Dapur Babah Elite & Tao Bar. This restaurant is the acculturation manifestation of Chinese, Javanese and Dutch cultures. The research aims to figure out acculturation strategies found in the culinary arts at Dapur Babah Elite & Tao Bar. The approach used in the research is a descriptive qualitative approach by using John W. Berry theory (2005). Data collection techniques were obtained from observations, interviews, and documentation. Based on the analysis result, the naming of Dapur Babah restaurant was inspired by Peranakan (crossbreed) culture in the past. It is also known that there are two kinds of acculturation strategies found, those are integration and assimilation strategies. Culinary that used integration strategy covers Babah mixed rice, hong chicken (red braised chicken), Semarang spring rolls, and Peranakan fried rice. Whereas, culinary that used assimilation strategy was Babah pongteh chicken (braised chicken in fermented soy bean sauce) and lontong Cap Go Meh (rice cake with mixed condiments).

Keywords: *Strategy; Acculturation; Crossbreed; Culinary*

Introduction

Chinese ethnicity in Indonesia, especially in Java has survived since before the colonial government until now. During the New Orde Era, in 1965, ethnic Chinese experienced discriminatory actions from the government (Jati, 2013). Those regulations restrained the space of movement of ethnic Chinese in Indonesia that became stronger when the Presidential Instruction No. 14 of 1967 was issued regarding Chinese religion, beliefs, and customs (Jati, 2013). Ethnic Chinese were required to disguise their culture to survive among the Indonesian population, resulting in a mixture of two cultures that could be considered cultural acculturation.

Over a long period, the process of acculturation is a natural process in the journey of a nation (Sari, 2014). Cultural acculturation occurs when a group of individuals with a particular culture encounters different elements of a foreign culture. Berry (in Prakoeswa & Meinarno, 2021) stated that intercultural interaction is not a new thing, meetings and interactions with people from different cultures have resulted in shifts in the lifestyle and original culture of those interacting, as well as the formation of new cultures. This cultural shift gradually began to be accepted and processed into their own culture without eliminating the original cultural elements. The acculturation process can take place with various

strategies. The main purpose of acculturation strategies is to discover what happens to an individual when interacting with a group of individuals who have a culture different from their own (Berry, in Krsmanovic, 2020). Berry defines acculturation strategies into four types, namely assimilation, integration, separation, and marginalization.

Based on the above phenomena, it can be seen that ethnic Chinese has a contact with Javanese culture. One of the cultural elements that can be accepted and adapted to Javanese culture is culinary. Culinary plays an important role because it is one of the basic human needs. Yasmin (1993) said that cuisine is considered to maintain good relations between families in Chinese culture. In addition, the cuisine also serves to signify festival celebrations, religious rituals or offerings to ancestors, such as basket cakes on Chinese New Year (春节 *chūnjié*), *lontong Cap Gomeh* on *Cap Gomeh* festival (元宵节 *yuánxiāo jié*), *bakcang* on *Duan Wu* festival (端午节 *duānwǔ jié*), dishes in new year prayers, or other prayers.

Culinary is a cultural element of a nation that is easily recognized by the general public (Utami, 2018). As one of the cultural elements that can be accepted by the community, Chinese cuisine is integrated into *Nusantara* (archipelago) cuisine. At that time, ethnic Chinese began to recognize local ingredients, then tried to modify the cuisine. They incorporated Indonesian spices into the dishes. For example, they added cloves, cardamom and nutmeg to *soto*. This combination created new flavours that had never existed in China before.

Along with the times, Chinese cuisine is not only enjoyed by Chinese families but also sold in various food stalls and restaurants. A restaurant is a commercially organized place, which provides good service to all customers in the form of food and drinks (Atmoyo in Tangian, 2019). Chinese restaurants can be found all over the *Nusantara* with various characteristics and flavors, such as Dapur Babah Elite & Tao Bar.

Dapur Babah Elite & Tao Bar uses Babah *Peranakan* style as its main attraction. In addition to presenting an interior design that is reminiscent of the *Peranakan* past, Dapur Babah Elite also serves a *Peranakan* culinary menu. The *Peranakan* culture here encompasses a mix of three cultural elements - Chinese, Javanese and Dutch. The restaurant is placed in a 1940s colonial heritage building located on Veteran Street, Central Jakarta. Dapur Babah Elite has been operating for approximately 18 years since 2004.

Dapur Babah Elite & Tao Bar has 48 menus that are grouped by type, including *Hors D'oeuvres*, *Soepen*, *Masakan Djawa Dapur Babah Poenja*, *Matjam-Matjam Satay*, *Dapur Babah Chinesche Stijle*, *Ayam Kodok (Babah Treasure)*, *Pentjoetji Moeloet - Desserts*. Dapur Babah Elite & Tao Bar was chosen because the restaurant has a variety of *Peranakan* menus. The researchers wants to find out more about acculturation strategies found in the culinary at Dapur Babah Elite & Tao Bar. Therefore, the researchers is interested in conducting research on culinary acculturation at Dapur Babah Elite & Tao Bar Restaurant. Based on the explanation above, this research takes the title "Culinary Acculturation Strategy at Dapur Babah Elite & Tao Bar Restaurant".

Research Method

The type of research was descriptive research with a qualitative approach. The focus of this research was to solve problems and describe data with words based on facts to produce conclusions that clarify the picture of the object under study. Therefore, the researchers used descriptive research with a qualitative approach to understand and describe the phenomenon of the culinary acculturation strategy used in Dapur Babah Elite & Tao Bar. The main data of this research were descriptive words from interviews with several informants. The determination of informants was based on purposive sampling.

The informants in this research were the Sales and Marketing Manager, Receptionist, Bar Waiter, Chef and customers at Dapur Babah Elite & Tao Bar. In this research, the researchers used several data collection techniques, namely observation, interviews and documentation. The observation was carried out to observe and record the actual situation related to the general description of acculturation in culinary at Dapur Babah Elite & Tao Bar. Esterberg (in Sugiyono, 2018) explained that the interview technique is divided into three types, namely structured interviews, semi-structured interviews, and unstructured interviews. As the statement above, this research used semi-structured interviews.

Steps in data analysis included data reduction, data presentation, and verification & confirmation of conclusions. The researchers selected important points from the topic raised. Then described the research results obtained from observations and interviews with informants. In the final stage, the researchers conducted conclusions from the research results. The triangulation used in this research was source triangulation, where the researchers tested the credibility of the data by checking the data that had been obtained through several sources.

Result and Discussion

1. Dapur Babah Elite & Tao Bar

"Historically, the Javanese influence on Chinese cuisine came from Chinese immigrants who came to trade. Since native spices were limited, they had to adapt to the local spices and ingredients of the archipelago. To smoothen their business, the Chinese used to negotiate and entertain the Dutch by making food presentations as similar as possible to Dutch food presentations. This is where the culinary fusion comes from. This restaurant was inspired by that Peranakan history."

Dapur Babah Elite & Tao Bar is one of the restaurants owned by the Tugu Group that applies concepts and menu recipes influenced by the history of the fusion of Chinese, Javanese and Dutch cultures which can be called *Peranakan*. Based on the informant's explanation, the background of the naming of Dapur Babah Restaurant was inspired by the Peranakan culture in the past. The kitchen where it is processed is called Babah's Kitchen. The term "Babah" here serves to symbolize the concept raised by the restaurant.

Dapur Babah restaurant is placed in a 1940s colonial heritage building on Veteran Street, Central Jakarta. Dapur Babah Elite Restaurant has been operating for approximately 18 years, since December 5, 2004.

"*Dapur Babah* has 11 rooms and each room has a name. The statue in *Dapur Babah* is called *Zao Jun Gong*."

The restaurant has many rooms with different names, including the VOC room, *Tao Bar* room, *Tao Bar* room drinking area, *Tay Tay* room, *Hap Liang* Tailor room, *Megawati* room, *Kwan Im* room, Angela room, *Dapur Babah* room, and terrace room. Each room is equipped with furniture and interiors that support the concept, as found in the *Dapur Babah* room which has the feel of a traditional Chinese shop accompanied by a statue of the Kitchen God (灶君宫 *Zào Jūn Gōng*).



Figure 1. List of Menu

The menu at Dapur Babah Elite & Tao Bar restaurant is written in the old style. The menus are grouped into eight types, namely *Hors D'oeuvres*, *Soepen*, *Masakan Djawa Dapur Babah Poenja*, *Matjam-Matjam Sate*, *Dapur Babah Chinesche Stijle*, *Ayam Kodok (Babah Treasure)*, *Pentjoetji Moeloet – Desserts*.

2. Acculturation Strategy in Culinary at Dapur Babah Elite & Tao Bar Restaurant

This research used Berry's (2005) acculturation theory. Berry (2005) divided acculturation strategies into four types, namely assimilation, separation, integration, and marginalization. Based on the theory proposed by Berry, two acculturation strategies were found in the culinary at Dapur Babah Elite & Tao Bar Restaurant, namely the assimilation strategy and the integration strategy.

a) Assimilation Strategy

Assimilation strategy occurs when individuals do not wish to preserve their original culture and prefer to interact with other cultures in their daily lives. Then the original culture becomes extinct and is replaced by a new culture (Berry, 2005).

1) Assimilation Strategy on Pongteh Babah Chicken

"Pongteh chicken is *Peranakan* Chinese. It's soupy, so we use pagoda, oyster sauce, king flavor, and black mushroom. We stir-fry the chicken with *Blueband*, and we use chopped shallots. But it's a soupy form, only the soup is not so brown, clear, but is not so clear. That's the characteristic of the pagoda."

Pongteh chicken is a Chinese culinary specialty combined with Peranakan spices. While *pongteh* originally used non-halal meat, Dapur Babah Restaurant uses chicken in its presentation.

Babah's *pongteh* chicken had a distinctive flavour in the sauce due to the use of pagodas mixed in during the cooking process. Chef Dapur Babah explained that *pongteh* chicken was made with fermented soy sauce. The *pongteh* chicken was then served with potato slices and black mushrooms for a complete meal.

From here it can be seen that the strategy applied in *pongteh* chicken culinary is an assimilation strategy. Because the restaurant owner chose to replace the use of meat in its presentation and uses pagodas to create a different taste.

2) Assimilation Strategy on *Lontong Cap Go Meh*

"For *Cap Go Meh*, we have a special menu, *Lontong Cap Go Meh*."

Lontong Cap Go Meh is a signature dish at Dapur Babah that is served two weeks after Chinese New Year, precisely during the *Cap Go Meh* celebration. *Lontong Cap Go Meh* contains rice cake, chicken seasoned with yellow *opor*, papaya vegetables with *pete*, dried fried shrimp and shrimp and coconut *serundeng*. There is soybean powder mixed in with the sauce. Dapur Babah substitutes *tangyuan*, a type of *onde* cake commonly served during *Cap Go Meh* in China, for *lontong*. According to informants, the use of *lontong* was adapted from the Javanese who made *ketupat* when celebrating *Eid al-Fitr*. Then, the culinary historian added that there are complementary elements in the *Cap Go Meh lontong* dish such as the use of soybean powder, then papaya vegetables in it. *Lontong* is made in an oval shape, so when cut it will be round. This round shape will form a full moon, which illustrates the meaning of the *Cap Go Meh* tradition.

Based on the observation, it can be concluded that the strategy applied in this culinary is an assimilation strategy. Seen in how the restaurant owner replaces Chinese cultural elements with Javanese cultural elements.

b) Integration Strategy

Integration strategy occurs when individuals have an interest in preserving their original culture while still building interactions with other groups (Berry, 2005).

1) Integration Strategy on Semarang Spring Rolls

Semarang spring roll is one of the culinary delights served at Dapur Babah Restaurant. Spring roll is known as 春卷 *chūnjuǎn* in Mandarin. In Chinese culture, it is commonly spelled as *lun pia*. However, local people call it *lumpia* (Anggraeni, 2018).

"The original one used pork. This one is made from bamboo shoots. Then add onion, oyster sauce, chicken egg, that's it. With egg, because it's a mixture of egg and chicken filling, there are shrimps too."

Lumpia was originally made from pork. However, it has been changed into an ingredient that can be consumed by Muslims because the majority of Indonesian people are Muslims. Chef Dapur Babah explained that the filling of Semarang spring rolls is changed to chicken or shrimp plus a mixture of bamboo shoots, then wrapped in spring roll skin.

It can be seen that Semarang spring rolls are a blend of Chinese and Javanese cultures. It is concluded that the strategy applied in Semarang spring roll acculturation was integration strategy.

Because the restaurant owner chose to change the use of meat in the presentation, but still maintain the original form of spring rolls.

2) Integration Strategy on Babah Mixed Rice

"Babah's mixed rice is one of the icons of Dapur Babah. It's based on *Babah Jawa* and is based on the concept of home. The concept is that people used to eat with mixed rice."

Babah Mixed Rice is one of the favorites at Dapur Babah Elite Restaurant & Tao Bar. Babah's mixed rice reflects the home concept of Babah's Javanese culture.

"Babah Mixed Rice is a detailed menu. The rice uses suji leaves, so it's green. I also use pandan to make it fragrant."

This dish is called mixed rice because it consists of green rice combined with a complete range of side dishes in one plate, including dried fried shrimp, *serundeng*, *sambal goreng* potato tofu *tempe*, *sayur lodeh*, shrimp cakes, chicken *cocoh*, peanut *peyek*, *sambal terasi* and yellow pickles. The green rice in this menu is served in banana leaves so that when the package is opened the rice will be mixed with various side dishes. Dapur Babah mixes pandan leaves for fragrance and adds suji leaves for green color.

"Well that was, Dapur Babah took the concept like mixed rice, and the cakes were from Mrs. Babah's cooking."

Based on interviews with informants, it was known that the cakes/*perkedel* in this mixed rice are Mrs. Babah's cooking. According to experts, the term *perkedel* comes from the Dutch word "*frikadel*", indicating Dutch influence. However, the *perkedel* in Babah's mixed rice has been processed with the cooking techniques of the Chinese on Java or Mrs. Babah. Culinary historians add that there is a Chinese element to Babah's mixed rice, which is contained in the word "Babah". From this, it can be seen that Babah mixed rice is the result of Javanese, Dutch and Chinese culinary acculturation. The strategy applied in this culinary was integration strategy.

3) Integration Strategy on Hong Chicken

"Yes, the original ingredient is pork. So, why did we make it into chicken, because it's not available for pork in our restaurant group, considering that Indonesia is a Muslim-majority country, so we replaced it with chicken."

The Sales Marketing Manager of Dapur Babah said that the name hong chicken is because the restaurant does not use pork in cooking all of its food. Pork hong itself is a culinary origin in China.

"The recipe is the same as pork hong but we use chicken. We can use *kampong* chicken, and broiler chicken too. It's also marinated in oyster sauce. So we use pepper, give oyster sauce, let it sit for 30 minutes, then we take cardamom, ansitar, cloves, then we just sauté it with garlic, and shallots, but we chop it up and sauté it. Then we put the chicken in, then we give it like chicken broth and let it sit for a few minutes, then we give it plate mushrooms, with flavored king sauce, sweet soy sauce, and oyster sauce, until it's cooked."

Dapur Babah Chef explained that the recipe for cooking hong chicken is the same as for hong pork, the only difference is the meat. The hong chicken is cooked with five types of spices and added with sweet soy sauce.

It can be seen that *hong* chicken is a blend of Chinese and Indonesian cultures. Since the majority of Indonesians are Muslim, the restaurant owner changed the use of pork to chicken.

It is concluded that the strategy applied in Babah mixed rice acculturation was an integration strategy. It can be seen in the use of the same recipe as hong pork but the restaurant owner chooses to replace the use of meat in the presentation.

4) Integration Strategy on *Peranakan* Fried Rice

Fried rice is a culinary adaptation of the Chinese style of cooking. A Yangzhou Regent named 伊秉绶 *Yī Bǐng Shòu* realized that salt was a luxury that only Yangzhou City had. At that time, the Qing Dynasty began to try frying rice to produce a Yangzhou specialty called Yangzhou fried rice (Dewi, 2022). Yangzhou fried rice is served separately with side dishes. Along with the times, this Yangzhou version of fried rice began to spread to the archipelago.

"That's our signature, so the fried rice uses noodles and rice, then the chicken is shredded, the egg, so the marinade is already made first with the chicken, then chili, spices, so it's like the marinade is already made, then we just need to add the marinade."

"For the noodles, we make it ourselves, so we don't buy it, we make it ourselves from the raw ingredients to the finished product. Well, I happen to make the noodles."

Dapur Babah's Bar Waiter said that what distinguishes Dapur Babah's *Peranakan* fried rice is the addition of noodles in the presentation combined with *Peranakan* spices. The second informant also added that the noodles used in Dapur Babah's fried rice were made by Dapur Babah's Chef.

It can be seen that *Peranakan* fried rice is a blend of Chinese and Indonesian cultures. It was concluded that the strategy applied in the acculturation of *Peranakan* fried rice is an integration strategy. The restaurant owner combines noodles and spices in the fried rice.

Conclusion

Based on the results of observation analysis, and in-depth interviews with informants, it was concluded that the acculturation strategy found in culinary at Dapur Babah Elite & Tao Bar Restaurant was divided into two strategies, namely integration strategy and assimilation strategy. Culinary delights at Dapur Babah Elite & Tao Bar that used integration strategy include Babah's mixed rice, *hong* chicken, Semarang spring rolls, and *Peranakan* fried rice. Meanwhile, culinary delights at Dapur Babah Elite & Tao Bar that used assimilation strategy were Babah *pongteh* chicken and *lontong Cap Go Meh*. The writing in the culinary menu at Dapur Babah Elite & Tao Bar Restaurant was using the old style of writing. This research only discussed culinary in one *Peranakan* restaurant, further research is expected to develop research in several *Peranakan* restaurants so that the data obtained is more diverse.

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