

**SOCIO-ECONOMIC LIFE OF THE TIONGHOA COMMUNITY
IN BELITUNG REGENCY**

**SOCIO-ECONOMIC LIFE OF THE CHINESE COMMUNITY IN
BELITUNG REGENCY**

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Abstract

The discourse related to the socio-economic life of the Chinese community in Belitung Regency is certainly interesting to study. Moreover, there are quite a lot of ethnic Chinese in Belitung Regency. Therefore, the researcher argues that this research is important to be explored to see more about the socio-economic life of the Chinese community there. The type of this research is field research using a descriptive analysis approach. Researchers collect data by means of interviews, observation, and documentation. The results of this study can be understood that the existence of ethnic Chinese greatly influences the socio-economic life in Belitung Regency. In social life they can mingle and interact well with indigenous peoples. In terms of economic life, their existence is able to influence the economic sector of the local community.

Keywords: *Socio, Economic, Chinese, Belitung Regency*

1. INTRODUCTION

Discussing socio-economic life is of course interesting to do, especially the socio-economic life of the Chinese community in Belitung Regency. Chinese themselves are one of the ethnic groups that live in the district. Please note that Belitung Regency is one of the regencies located in the Bangka Belitung Islands Province. Chinese living in the Bangka Belitung Archipelago Province are an ethnic group with a large concentration, apart from those in the Riau Islands, Java, West Kalimantan and Sumatra. Even so, the ethnic Chinese in Bangka are different from the ethnic Chinese in Belitung.

The information is that detailed data on the number of Chinese residents both on the island of Bangka and in Belitung Regency do not exist. However, if we refer to Volkstelling during the Dutch East Indies period, the Chinese-Indonesian population reached 1,233,000 (2.03%) of the Indonesian population in 1930 (Vasanty, 2004). There has been no official data regarding the number of Chinese populations in Indonesia released by the government since Indonesia's independence. But the American anthropologist, G.W. Skinner, in his research, once estimated that the Chinese population in Indonesia reached 2,505,000 (2.5%) in 1961 (Skinner, 1963).

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In the 2000 population census, when census respondents were asked for the first time about their ethnic origin, only 1% or 1,739,000 people identified themselves as Chinese. The definition of "ethnicity" used by the BPS is based on the recognition of people in the census. On this basis, this number can be considered a lower bound as many Chinese citizens are reluctant to identify as "Chinese" in the census. A rough estimate that is believed to be the current number of Chinese-Indonesians is between 4% - 5% of the total population of Indonesia.

According to the Ohio University Library, the number of ethnic Chinese in Indonesia has reached 7,310,000 people. This number is the largest outside of China. Whereas in 2006 the number of ethnic Chinese in Indonesia reached 7,670,000. (Poston Jr & Wong, 2016) estimates that the Indonesian Chinese population is more than 8,010,720 people.

As for the Chinese who were in Bangka, they came in the 18th century, at which time the mining was officially opened. They generally do not come to Bangka with their wives, so they marry natives in Bangka. Therefore, most of the ethnic Chinese in Bangka are *peranakan* who speak *Hakka* and mix it with Malay. Meanwhile, ethnic Chinese in Belitung are often considered to be *Totok* Chinese. This is because they arrived only in the 19th century with their families. The *Totok* Chinese who live in Belitung still use the original *Hakka* language.

It is undeniable that the existence of ethnic Chinese in Belitung Regency influences the local community's economic sector. Moreover, history has proven that ethnic Chinese have good social interactions, so that they quickly adapt to the surrounding community (Ongkokham, 1983). The arrival of ethnic Chinese to Indonesia, generally were farmers, carpenters, laborers, traders, and so on (Setiono, 2008).

Chinese ethnic who are engaged in trade, prefer strategic places in the city center. In principle, they think that the city is a gathering place for the vortex of economic drivers, has a special position, develops a distinctive lifestyle, and is a heterogeneous space. Therefore, even though the ethnic Chinese are a minority, it cannot be denied that they play an important role in the economy in Indonesia. Therefore, it is not uncommon for some people to speculate that ethnic Chinese are a strong economic group, while natives are an economically weak group (Lombard, 1996).

Apart from that, ethnic Chinese have good social interactions with the surrounding community, their presence also has an influence on the economic sector. Interestingly, apart from dominating the economic sector in Indonesia, it turns out that they also influence the economic sector at the local level. Regardless of whether this is true or not, as of now it can be seen that ethnic Chinese have very strategic trading places, such as being in city centers and on major roads. Therefore it is natural for some to think that the ethnic Chinese are a strong economic group and the natives are a weak economic group. Departing from this presentation, the researcher aims to examine further the socio-economic life of the Chinese community in Belitung Regency.

2. LITERATURE STUDY

2.1. Social Economy Concept

Socio-economics is a person's condition or position in the life of the society around him. According to (Malo, 2009), social economics is defined as a person's position which is socially regulated and occupies a certain position in society's life. The granting of a position is also accompanied by a set of rights and obligations that must be played by the bearer of status (Juariyah, 2010). Not only that, economic attachment is not only limited to networks or personal relationships. However, it is also present in supra-individual and interpersonal societal relations conditions. Therefore, the economic actions of an individual are always embedded in a social setting (Haryanto, 2011).

Burns and DeVille (2007) show evidence of attachment and its influence on a country's economic performance. According to him, capitalism has significantly different forms in various countries and regions. These variations are due to social attachment or the contextualization of economic processes. According to Polanyi, the most common economic rules throughout history are economic transactions and price mechanisms attached to the social, political and cultural rules of the local community (Burns and DeVille 2007, cited by Haryanto, 2011).

2.2. Socioeconomic Determinants

The factors that determine the social economy in the community include education level, income level, wealth ownership, and type of work.

2.2.1. Education

According to the Law of the Republic of Indonesia number 20 of 2003 article 3, education aims to "Educate the life of the nation and develop Indonesian people as a whole, namely human beings who believe and fear God Almighty and have noble character, have knowledge and skills, physical and spiritual health." a solid personality and social and national responsibility." Looking at the objectives in RI Law No. 20 of 2003, education is held in school and outside school education.

2.2.2. Income Level

Income is the sum of all the results of a job received by a working person which is manifested in the form of money and goods. Income is all receipts in the form of money or goods from one's own output which are valued in money. The income received by a person can be obtained from various sources (Kamanto, 2004). Each family, to meet its needs, requires income from sources that are different from those of others. The advancement of science in all fields has resulted in an incalculable number of jobs in society. Where each job requires different talents, skills or abilities to occupy it.

2.2.3. Ownership of Wealth

Ownership of wealth is wealth in the form of goods that have benefits to support economic life. According to Manginsihi, work is an activity carried out by parents to earn a living. The work carried out varies so that it can result in differences in income levels

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(Hanafi, 2009). Ownership of valuable items can also be used for this measure. The more a person owns something of value such as a house and land, it can be said that that person has high economic capacity and the more respected they are by the people around them.

2.2.4. Type of work

Work is a determinant of socio-economic status because by doing work the needs and needs can be met by the economy and satisfaction. Apart from that, work will determine socio-economic status because from work all needs can be met. Work does not only have economic value but human effort to get satisfaction and get rewards or wages, in the form of goods and services will fulfill their life needs. A person's work will affect his economic ability, for that work or business is a must for every individual because work contains two aspects, physical satisfaction and the fulfillment of life's needs. Therefore, by working people will earn income, from the income that person receives is given to him and his family to consume goods and services resulting from development. Thus it becomes clearer, whoever has productive, then he has actually participated in real and active in development (Soeroto: 1986).

2.3. Previous Research

To facilitate research related to the socio-economic life of the Chinese community in Belitung Regency, the researcher primarily conducted a literature review of several research results that were relevant to the study to be studied. The studies are:

Hannum and Wang (2010) whose research discusses economic trends and introduces several government policies targeted at ethnic minorities, namely the Chinese. (Sheng, 2018), raises ethnic Chinese related to health by linking it to residents' income. Her research found a large population-related imbalance in health care spending compared to income. This study uses a concentration coefficient approach. Not only that, (Panjaitan, 2019) has raised concerns about Chinese ethnicity. This is his thesis with the theme "*Kehidupan Sosial Ekonomi Etnis Tionghoa Kelurahan Sukaramai II di Kecamatan Medan Area dari Tahun 1970 – 2005*". The approach used is historical studies. The results of his study found that the Chinese ethnic from time to time always controlled trade. In addition, (Rizaldin, 2016) in his research related to Chinese ethnicity uses a historical approach. The Chinese ethnicity has always been able to survive in urban and rural areas even during the crisis in Lasem City. Meanwhile, (Faisal, 2019) also uses historical research related to Chinese ethnicity. In his research, it was explained that the Chinese in Welahan experienced changes. During the New Order era, ethnic Chinese there tended to be closed and rarely socialized with non-Chinese. However, in the economic field they still dominate. (Rasyid et al., 2021) explain that ethnic Chinese can always mingle with local people in Manado. Their presence among the people of Manado also adds to the cultural diversity in the city of Manado. Laily et al., (2016) have also raised ethnic Chinese in Makassar City using a historical approach. The Chinese ethnic from time to time had changes and ups and downs in the socio-economic field, but during the New Order they were eventually able to develop in the city of Makassar.

It should be understood that research related to Chinese ethnicity is still minimal. Therefore, according to the writer's opinion, it still needs to be raised to the surface. Meanwhile, the writings above still speak of ethnic Chinese using a historical approach. When compared with the research that will be examined in this article, of course it is different. To discuss the socio-economic life of the Chinese community in Belitung Regency and look deeply into the existence of the Chinese community in empowering and improving the local community's economy, according to the researchers, it is appropriate to use field studies (field research) using a descriptive analysis approach. Therefore, research using this approach needs to be carried out and will definitely get new findings about the economic life of the Chinese community, especially in Belitung Regency.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study is a field study using a descriptive analysis approach (Sugiyono, 2018). This approach was chosen because the researcher seeks to reveal the socio-economic life conditions of the Chinese community in Belitung Regency and their existence in empowering and strengthening the local community's economy in accordance with the reality on the ground in depth (Suharsimi Arikunto, 2019). This research raises the theme "Socio-Economic Life of the Chinese Community in Belitung". Therefore, there are at least several steps used to make this research successful (Sukardi, 2014), which include:

First, researchers identify problems in the Chinese community in Belitung Regency. Second, the researcher formulates the problem, namely: How is the socio-economic life of the Chinese community in Belitung Regency? Third, determine the benefits of research. Practically, this research can contribute ideas and direct experience for researchers about the socio-economic life of the Chinese community. The benefits for agencies are as an effort to help realize the Mission and Vision of the University of Bangka Belitung towards a research campus that produces superior works in the field of sustainable development based on moral, mental and intellectual excellence, to build the nation's civilization. Fourth, the researcher conducts studies and studies related to relevant previous studies. Fifth, build thinking concepts to help answer the research problem formulation. Sixth, designing research methods. This study uses a purposive sampling technique, as stated by Sugiyono that purposive sampling is a sampling technique for data sources with certain considerations. These certain considerations, for example the person who is considered to know best about what we expect, or maybe he is the ruler so that it will make it easier for researchers to explore the social object/situation under study (Sugiyono, 2018).

Researchers will collect data by means of interviews, observation, and documentation. Researchers interviewed 20 informants from the Chinese community, 3 people from the village government, and 5 people from the local community. Where the informant becomes a source of information who knows about the research being researched, with the consideration that they are the ones who know the research information best. The selection of informants was carried out using a purposive sampling technique or deliberate selection with several considerations. The informants in question

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are informants who are directly involved or informants who are considered to have the ability and understand problems related to the Socio-Economic Life of the Chinese Community in Belitung Regency. Seventh, the data that has been obtained is then analyzed. Researchers will perform data reduction, triangulation, and draw conclusions. Eighth, the researcher describes the results of the research and makes a report on the results of the research.

4. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Indonesia has a large Chinese population, one of which is in Belitung Regency. Belitung Regency is part of the Bangka Belitung Islands Province, which is also an archipelago consisting of 98 large and small islands. The territorial boundaries of the northern part of Belitung Regency are the Natuna Sea, the eastern part of the Karimata Strait and East Belitung Regency, the southern part of the Java Sea, and the western part of the Gaspar Strait and South Bangka Regency (<https://portal.belitung.go.id/kondisi-geografis>, 2023). Belitung Regency has 5 sub-districts with each area and population as follows:

Table 1. Districts, area, and population in Belitung Regency, 2022

Number	District	Area (km ²)	Total Population
1.	Membalong	909.550	27.117
2.	Tanjung Pandan	378.448	104.152
3.	Badau	458.200	15.328
4.	Sijuk	413.992	31.673
5.	Selat Nasik	133.500	5.734
Total			184.004

Source: Data on the population of Belitung Regency per Sub-District, 2022

In the 17th century, Belitung Island became a trade route and a stopover for traders. Of the many traders, the most influential were traders from China and Arabia. This can be proven from the pottery from the Ming Dynasty from the 14th to the 17th centuries, which was found in many layers of tin mines in the Kepenai, Buding and Kelapa Kampit areas. These Chinese traders entered Belitung Island around 1293. This is based on the records of a Chinese historian named Fei Hsin in 1436. Meanwhile, the Chinese knew Belitung because in 1293, a Chinese fleet under the leadership of Shi Pi, Ike Mise and Khau Hsing who was traveling to Java Island was stranded in Belitung waters.

There are various ethnic Chinese groups living in Belitung Regency, such as Hokkien, *Hakka*, and Teochew, each with their own customs and traditions. In addition, there are also differences in religion and belief among Chinese people, such as Buddhism, Taoism, Confucianism, Christianity, Islam and so on. The Chinese community in Belitung Regency also participates in the social and economic life of the local community. They adapted to Indonesian culture, among other things, by changing their

clothes to Indonesian tribal clothing, such as clothes brackets with kebaya, trousers with sarongs. They still speak the original *Hakka* language.

The large-scale arrival of Chinese in Bangka Belitung occurred in the 1700s – 1800s. *Hakka* people were originally imported from various regions in Guangdong Province such as Meixian, Huizhou Prefecture, Chaozhou Prefecture to become tin miners. The majority of ethnic Chinese in Bangka Belitung are dominated by *Hakka* people with a minority of Minnan (Hokkien) people. Based on the 1920 census, the total population of Bangka Chinese reached 44% of the total 154,141 people (www.tionghoa.info, 2023).

Some individuals in Chinese society may be involved in social and cultural organizations and be active in community activities. Chinese cultural activities are also maintained and celebrated in Belitung Regency. Celebrations such as Imlek (Chinese New Year), Cap Go Meh (end of Chinese New Year celebrations), Tanglung Festival, and other Chinese cultural celebrations are still held by the local Chinese community. These traditions often involve distinctive decorations, traditional art performances, and Chinese cuisine. Apart from that, the Chinese community also maintains their cultural heritage through art, such as traditional performing arts, such as wayang Potehi (Chinese puppets) and Barongsai (Chinese lion dance). Chinese food is also an important part of the diversity of the Chinese community in Belitung Regency. Apart from that, there are several popular Chinese food including noodles, spring rolls, buns, and fried rice.

In Belitung Regency, the Chinese community also has a significant contribution to social life. In general, the social conditions of the Chinese community in Belitung Regency have adapted well to the local culture and have long lived in harmony with the indigenous Malay community. The social configuration between the Chinese and the natives is quite different from other regions that have high tolerance, and the Chinese and natives are considered equal. The Chinese community has contributed to regional development and is active in the social world. The community of ethnic Chinese and Malays can be seen from their participation in mutual cooperation in cleaning the environment, participating in the environmental security system (siskamling), invitations to wedding receptions, and social service events.

There is friendship or brotherly ties between Chinese and Malays because they live near each other and their economic level is also equal. Because the houses are close together, they will definitely know each other and communicate. Chinese and Malays are close friends, just like people of same ethnicity who look for friends because they feel compatible, perhaps because of similarities in hobbies or the environment in which they live. In this case, it can be concluded that as a whole, the Chinese community in Belitung Regency has positive social conditions and have lived in harmony with the indigenous people.

Chinese people do not only trade, but there are also some of them who become farmers, gardeners, laborers, ranchers, and fishermen. There are also some Chinese who become civil servants, but the number is very rare. This shows that there is no ethnic discrimination in the recruitment of civil servants. In the economic field, Chinese and Malays work together. The Chinese who have capital do business with the Malays to

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provide labor or raw materials. Many Malays who have low incomes work for the Chinese as shop workers or construction workers. Apart from trading, Chinese and Malays also work together to open unconventional mines (TI). Usually, the Chinese provide the facilities and infrastructure while the Malays are the workers. Thus, this indicates that the presence of the Chinese community in Belitung Regency certainly influences the economy of the local community.

Chinese people who trade think are not always synonymous with wealth, but some of them become rich people and occupy upper-middle positions in the strata of society. For example, Lim Tau Kian was known as a Chinese Muslim figure, Lim Boe Sing was a businessman in the Dutch East Indies period, Tjoeng A Tiam was a Chinese mayor in Muntok City, Tan Hong Kwee was known as a Chinese captain in Muntok City in 1832 – 1839, Rudianto Tjen and Basuki Tjahaja Purnama (Ahok) is a politician, and Tony Wen is a freedom fighter.

5. CONCLUSION

Based on the empirical results and discussion above, this research aims to examine further how Chinese society builds its socio-economic life. Therefore, researchers feel it is important to explore it. This type of research is field research using a descriptive analysis approach. From the results of the data analysis that has been done, the following conclusions are obtained:

Communities in Belitung Regency are not only inhabited by ethnic Malays, but there are also ethnic Chinese. This indicates the diversity of the community, both religion, ethnicity, culture, and so on. Even so, the diversity of the people there has never had a conflict. The people there are used to living together and interacting, even to the point of inter-ethnic marriage, cultural acculturation and assimilation. Ethnic Chinese as immigrants can quickly assimilate and adapt to the culture and social life of the indigenous population of Belitung Regency. So that makes them easy to accept among the majority ethnic Malays. Not only that, from their easy social life, of course, it also has an impact on their economic life.

The ethnic Chinese in Belitung are often considered to be *Totok* Chinese. This is because they arrived only in the 19th century with their families. The *Totok* Chinese who live in Belitung still use the original *Hakka* language. It is undeniable that the existence of ethnic Chinese in Belitung Regency influences the local community's economic sector. There are various Chinese ethnic groups living in Belitung Regency, such as Hokkien, *Hakka*, and Teochew, each with their own customs and traditions.

Apart from that, there are also differences in religion and belief among Chinese people, such as Buddhism, Taoism, Confucianism, Christianity, Islam and so on. The Chinese community in Belitung Regency also participates in the social and economic life of the local community. The existence of ethnic Chinese greatly influences the socio-economic life in Belitung Regency. In social life they can mingle and interact well with indigenous peoples. In terms of economic life, their existence is able to influence the economic sector of the local community.

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