



## Cultural Value Analysis at Avalokitesvara Temple in Padangsidimpuan City

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### ABSTRAK

Studi ini membahas nilai-nilai budaya yang terkandung dalam Kuil Avalokitesvara di Kota Padangsidimpuan, dan bertujuan untuk menjelaskan nilai-nilai budaya di Kuil Avalokitesvara di Kota Padangsidimpuan. Pembahasan ini berfokus pada analisis makna simbolis dari berbagai elemen di kuil, seperti patung, ornamen, dan akulturasi dengan budaya lokal. Tujuan studi ini adalah untuk mengungkap peran kuil sebagai tempat pelestarian budaya dan spiritual, serta jembatan yang menghubungkan berbagai elemen masyarakat di Padangsidimpuan. Metode yang digunakan adalah analisis kualitatif, berdasarkan observasi langsung, wawancara, dan dokumentasi. Data primer dikumpulkan dari pengelola kuil dan jemaah, sedangkan data sekunder berasal dari literatur, jurnal, dan dokumen terkait. Pendekatan ini memungkinkan studi untuk menafsirkan makna di balik simbol-simbol yang diamati dan mengungkap nilai-nilai yang mendasarinya. Hasil studi menunjukkan bahwa Kuil Avalokitesvara dijiwai dengan nilai-nilai luhur, seperti welas asih universal, perlindungan spiritual, kemakmuran, pencerahan, dan toleransi. Namun, penelitian ini menghadapi beberapa kendala, khususnya dalam menelusuri sejarah kedatangan orang Tionghoa ke Padangsidimpuan. Kurangnya sumber tertulis dan catatan sejarah menyulitkan rekonstruksi latar belakang sejarah secara detail. Meskipun demikian, temuan penelitian ini memberikan pemahaman mendalam tentang bagaimana kuil ini berfungsi sebagai pusat budaya yang hidup dan simbol toleransi serta harmoni dalam masyarakat multietnis.

### ABSTRACT

*This study discusses the cultural values contained in the Avalokitesvara Temple in Padangsidimpuan City, and aims to explain the cultural values in the Avalokitesvara Temple in Padangsidimpuan City. This discussion focuses on analyzing the symbolic meanings of various elements in the temple, such as statues, ornaments, and acculturation with local culture. The purpose of this study is to reveal the role of the temple as a place for cultural and spiritual preservation, as well as a bridge connecting various elements of society in Padangsidimpuan. The method used is qualitative analysis, based on direct observation, interviews, and documentation. Primary data was collected from temple administrators and congregations, while secondary data came from literature, journals, and related documents. This approach allowed the study to interpret the meanings behind the symbols observed and reveal their underlying values. The results of the study show that the Avalokitesvara Temple is imbued with noble values, such as universal compassion, spiritual protection, prosperity, enlightenment, and tolerance. However, this study faced several obstacles, particularly in tracing the history of the arrival of the Chinese to Padangsidimpuan. The lack of written sources and historical records made it difficult to reconstruct the historical*

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*background in detail. Nevertheless, the findings of this study provide a deep understanding of how this temple serves as a living cultural center and a symbol of tolerance and harmony in a multi-ethnic society.*

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is an archipelagic country located on the equator in Southeast Asia, consisting of 17,504 islands of various sizes. Indonesia is home to around 300 ethnic groups, each with a cultural heritage influenced by Indian, Arab, Chinese, and European cultures over the centuries [1]. Indonesia also has a diversity of ethnicities, races, religions, beliefs, and languages unique to each tribe. There are many differences in thought, beliefs, and ways of life in each region. Based on the latest data from Worldometer on April 25, 2022, Indonesia's population was recorded at 2,278,752,361, which is 33.51% of the world's total population [1]

The city of Padangsidempuan is located in North Sumatra Province, which has an area of 159.31 km<sup>2</sup>. The city had a population of approximately 209,769 in 2015, with a population density of 1,317 people/km<sup>2</sup> [2]. Padangsidempuan City is located at the intersection of highways connecting Medan City, Pekanbaru in the southeast, and Bukittinggi City in the south [3]. The North Padangsidempuan District has the highest population density, with 4,297 people/km<sup>2</sup>, and the South Padangsidempuan District has a density of 3,443 people/km<sup>2</sup> [2]. The majority of the population of Padangsidempuan City is Muslim, while others are Protestant Christian, Catholic, or Buddhist [2]. There are no Hindus, Confucians, or followers of other religions. Based on 2015 data from the Padangsidempuan Municipal Government, places of worship in the city consist of 207 mosques, 64 Protestant churches, 2 Catholic churches, and 1 Buddhist temple [2]. Padangsidempuan has long been a transit city, which has developed into a trading city and administrative center [3].

One ethnic group with a long history and rich culture in various parts of the world is the Chinese. Distinctive symbols on the Chinese calendar, such as the Year of the Rabbit, Snake, and Rooster, show how the Chinese people strongly preserve their cultural heritage. It is believed that each animal has a unique character that can be used to predict possibilities and difficulties, including future business problems [4]. In Indonesia, the Chinese ethnic group has become an important part of cultural and social diversity, exerting a major influence in the fields of business, cuisine, traditions, and festivals. However, their life journey has also been marked by challenges and complex socio-political dynamics. In some countries, including Indonesia, the Chinese community often faces stereotypes, discrimination, and political changes that affect their position in society [5].

According to Regulation of the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia Number H III/ BA.01.1.03/1/1992 Chapter II, which states that "a temple is a place of worship for Buddhists that functions as a place to carry out religious activities, meditation, and a place of residence for monks. The life story of Gautama Buddha begins with his birth as Prince Siddhartha until he attained enlightenment under the Bodhi Tree after six years of asceticism." In addition, temples also play a role

in educating the community through sacred teachings [6]. The presence of the Chinese community in Indonesia encouraged the government to respect and appreciate them by granting them the right to establish places of worship in accordance with their beliefs. These places of worship are now known as temples or viharas.



Figure 1. Avalokitesvara Temple,2025  
Source: Rosintan,2025

Avalokitesvara Temple is the only temple in Padangsidimpuan. Avalokitesvara Temple is located at Jln Jend Sudirman no 423, Sadabuan, North Padangsidimpuan, Padangsidimpuan. This temple was built on May 17, 1982, and inaugurated on October 23, 1986, by the Director General of Hindu and Buddhist Community Guidance, Drs. I Gusti Agung Gde Putra. Initially, Buddhists in Padangsidimpuan worshipped in their homes. At the initiative of several Buddhist leaders, the decision was made to build a temple as a place of worship for Buddhists so that worship activities would no longer take place in people's homes. The temple stands out because the colors and ornaments on the building are very different from the surrounding buildings. Avalokitesvara Temple is dominated by red when viewed from the outside. The temple attracts the attention of people who happen to pass through the Sadabuan area because of its ornaments, which are different from other buildings.

Despite several previous studies on Buddhist temples, there is still a gap in research on cultural values, particularly spiritual values, related to the beliefs of Buddhists at the Avalokitesvara Temple in Padangsidimpuan City. Surbakti et al. [7] used Peirce's semiotics to study symbols at the Gunung Timur Temple in Medan. However, their research was limited to the context of Medan and did not cover the spiritual heritage of the community in Padangsidimpuan. Fortino et al. [8] discussed the philosophy of the Satya Budhi gate in Bandung (Shanmen and reliefs), but did not discuss the cultural values of the temple in Padangsidimpuan as a whole, including local spirituality. Ghufon Alwi Husaen et al. [9] used an archaeological-anthropological approach to investigate the history of the Avalokitesvara Temple in Banten. They emphasized the relationship between three religions (Buddhism, Taoism, and Confucianism) and Sunan Gunung Jati. However, they did not explore the spiritual values in Padangsidimpuan. Wulandari et al [10] analyzed the history and architecture of the Samyag Dresti Temple in Bali as teaching material, without touching on Chinese-Buddhist spiritual values or inheritance in Padangsidimpuan. Finally, Utari et al. [11] discuss the symbols (Qilin, lotus) at Maha Vihara Maitreya in Medan, which reflect Buddhist teachings.

However, they only discussed Medan and did not provide comparisons or spiritual explanations about other spiritual communities in North Sumatra, such as Padangsidempuan. Based on a review of previous studies, particularly those analyzing the meaning of symbols and ornaments at Gunung Timur Temple using Charles Sanders Peirce's semiotic approach, it was identified that the focus of the study was on interpreting the meaning of the physical elements of the temple building. Previous research has succeeded in revealing the meanings of various ornaments such as lions, the goddess Kwan Im, Hong birds, and lotus flowers, but has not touched on the cultural values that are lived and experienced by the community that uses the temple. This study takes a different approach. Through Clifford Geertz's cultural theory, the study does not stop at interpreting the meanings of physical symbols, but will explore how cultural values, especially spiritual values and Buddhist beliefs at the Avalokitesvara Temple in Padangsidempuan City, are actually practiced, passed down, and preserved in the life of the community. The focus of this research is on the system of meaning that lives in the practice of diversity, not merely on the meaning of material objects. Thus, this research not only complements the findings of previous studies, but also provides a new perspective in understanding cultural values in temples as a system of meaning that lives and develops within a particular community.

The Avalokitesvara Temple is also one of the historical artifacts of Padangsidempuan. Learning history is not just about studying facts, but also understanding the life experiences of the community, the values they hold, and the role of local traditions in shaping identity [12]. As stated by Koentjaraningrat, cultural values are the result of mutual agreement within a community, which then become norms or customs, as well as social identities in community life. These values have been passed down from generation to generation, especially cultural values, and even more so since temples are places of worship. Based on the above background, despite the fact that a large number of studies have been conducted in Indonesia on temples focusing on architectural aspects and interfaith relations in multicultural regions, there has been no comprehensive study that specifically investigates and discovers the cultural values found in the Avalokitesvara Temple in the city of Padangsidempuan. The symbols found in the temple are an integral part that strengthens spirituality and appreciation of the teachings of the Buddha. Therefore, I decided to choose the title "Analysis of Cultural Values at the Avalokitesvara Temple in Padangsidempuan City" to be discussed in more depth in this study.

The problems in this study are: 1) What are the cultural values at Avalokitesvara Temple in Padangsidempuan City? The purpose of this study is to explain and describe cultural values, focusing on the spiritual values contained in the beliefs and convictions of Buddhists, which are practiced at Avalokitesvara Temple in Padangsidempuan City.

The scope of this study is limited to discussing the cultural values embodied in Avalokitesvara Temple, specifically focusing on the spiritual values in the beliefs and convictions of Buddhists and the cultural values that are inherited and preserved in the lives of the temple community. Through Clifford Geertz's cultural theory approach, this study attempts to analyze the temple as a system of meaning that lives in the practice of diversity, not merely in the meaning of material objects.

## **2. METHOD**

The type of research in the Cultural Value Analysis study at Avalokitesvara Temple in Padangsidempuan City is qualitative research using descriptive methods. This study uses an ethnographic approach. The ethnographic approach is an approach that focuses on understanding and analyzing culture by conducting direct research at the research location. This approach involves the researcher living among the community and obtaining all information from reliable sources through direct observation [13]. Qualitative research can also be referred to as naturalistic research (state of nature), which is research conducted in the subject's natural environment [14].

The method of obtaining data and information used by researchers is sourced from written literature and field research data or observations from interviews with informants to obtain information

related to the research. The data collection technique used in this study was interviews with informants, namely the Head of the South Tapanuli Branch of the Indonesian Buddhayana Council and the congregation at the Avalokitesvara Padangsidempuan Temple, to obtain data relevant to the conditions at the scene. To obtain complete and unbiased information, direct observation, documentation, literature study, and other data deemed relevant to the discussion were also carried out.

### **3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

The Avalokitesvara Temple functions as a rich “network of meaning,” articulating cultural and spiritual values through each of its elements. The temple's architecture, rituals, and ornaments—such as the dragon, tiger, and lion statues symbolizing the Protection of Dharma, as well as various rupang visualizing enlightenment, compassion, and hope—are physical manifestations of the believers' faith. Core symbols, such as the Shòu character (long life) and the Dharma Wheel, as well as the symbolic meaning of the offering ritual, reflect the aspirations of the community. Contextually, this temple is a powerful symbol of tolerance and harmonization of identities through the acculturation of Chinese and Batak architecture. More than just a place of worship, Avalokitesvara Temple is an integral part of a multi-ethnic community that actively promotes social awareness and interfaith solidarity through social service activities. Thus, every detail in this temple is a dynamic expression of the spiritual values lived and shared by the community.

#### **3.1 The Meaning of Cultural Values at Avalokitesvara Temple**

##### **3.1.1. Naming That Refers to Universal Compassion**

Based on what my informant, Mr. Ir Febrius Suryajaya Wibisana, said during the interview, Avalokitesvara Temple took its name based on the considerations of the founding elders, which were rooted in Buddhist beliefs. Buddha is the Great Teacher for all beings, and Avalokitesvara is the Bodhisattva of Compassion who always helps humanity from hardship. These two fundamental concepts became the main basis for choosing the name of the temple. In addition, the temple adopted the idea of “Three Doors” or “Three Doors of Liberation” as a method of controlling the mind, speech, and body, which is also reflected in the architecture of the entrance/exit doors, while the Four Pillars in front of the temple symbolize the Four Noble Truths [15].

Architecturally, Avalokitesvara Temple displays a unique acculturation between Chinese and Batak cultures. Although the roof structure adopts a traditional Chinese style, such as the Xiē shāndǐng (resting roof) model [16], there are significant modifications. The most notable change is in the ornamentation at the top of the temple. While Chinese temples are generally decorated with Chinese dragon ornaments, this temple has been modified to reflect the Batak style. This local architectural adaptation is clear evidence of tolerance, openness, and harmonization of identities in Padangsidempuan, making this temple not only a place for a particular ethnic group, but also a place for dialogue between different cultures.



Figure 2. The roof of the Avalokitesvara Temple,2025  
Source: Rosintan,2025

### 3.1.2. Red as the Dominant Color in Buddhist Temples

The Avalokitesvara Temple stands out visually on the side of the road with its predominantly red building. According to Mr. Banget Hasiholan Simanjuntak, S.Pd (Buddhist teacher and temple member), the red color of this temple is taken from the Buddhist Flag (or “Dharma Flag”) and has an important meaning. When asked about the dominance of this color, the informant explained:

"This color is a reflection of the Buddhist flag, namely: Red symbolizes the blessings of practicing Dhamma, which will bring virtue, good fortune, and achievement. Gold/yellow symbolizes the Noble Eightfold Path. White symbolizes the pure Dhamma that leads to liberation. Blue symbolizes universal love. Orange symbolizes wisdom. And the combination of these five colors symbolizes the universal truth of Buddha's teachings and that all beings can also achieve enlightenment like Buddha."

In general, the Buddhist flag consists of six colors representing the rays of the Buddha, where red specifically symbolizes universal love. The dominance of red also visually shows the openness and hospitality of the monastery to everyone, regardless of background. This Buddhist flag itself was created by Colonel Henry Steele Olcott in 1880 [17].

### 3.1.3. Chinese-Buddhist Symbolism

The main symbols at Avalokitesvara Temple, as revealed by informants, are the five statues on the altar and the dragon, as well as various rupang/animal statues that are considered Protectors of Dharma (guardians of the supernatural and the mundane). These symbols are found in strategic locations such as the main gate pillars, the entrance threshold, and the altar area.

Regarding their meaning, informant Mr. Banget Hasiholan Simanjuntak, S.Pd explained: “The dragon has the meaning of bestowing blessings upon all beings, known as Paritta Ettavata, cosmic power, and universal blessings and goodness. Meanwhile, the tiger has the same meaning as the lion, symbolizing spiritual protection.”

In Chinese tradition, the dragon is a symbol of the Kingdom and Virtue [17]. At Avalokitesvara Temple, the dragons winding around the eight pillars (two in front and six inside) represent the Eight Noble Paths. Dragons symbolize the protection of purity, protection from negative energy, and bringing life.

The tiger (on the front right) symbolizes strength, courage, and spiritual protection, and serves as a guardian deity. According to Greetz's theory [18], the tiger is part of a complex “system of meaning,” connecting primal mythology (ferocious power) with the teachings of Dharma, forming an inclusive

protective identity. The tiger is one of the Eight Dharma Protectors who conquer mara and protect the Sangha, representing personal transformation and the power of children [19].



Figure 3. Dragon Pillars Located on the Altar and Tiger Statues,2025  
Source: Rosintan,2025

The lions (on the front right and left) symbolize justice, honesty, prosperity, and wealth. In Buddhism, the lion is the guardian of the Dharma, and its voice is known as the Lion of Dharma. The male lion statue carries a ball (national unity) and the female lion carries a cub (happiness) [7]. The lion, also according to Greetz [18], functions as the center of a “system of meaning” that encourages honest daily ethnic actions for social justice.

Overall, the Dragon, Tiger, and Lion form a complementary triad of protectors: the Dragon is responsible for cosmic blessings, the Tiger for personal transformation (the power of children), and the Lion for social justice, all of which are related to the internalization of Dharma values.



Figure 4. Lion Statue,2025  
Source: Rosintan,2025

#### 3.1.4. Bodhisattva Statue

In addition to Dharma guardians, there are also statues in the temple. Statues in the Avalokitesvara Temple are not just physical objects; they are visualizations of the teachings, philosophy, and core values of Buddhism that are lived out by the faithful. Each statue has a narrative and profound meaning that shapes the understanding and cultural behavior of the congregation. The types of statues also differ in

each place, region, and country. Their goal is to achieve enlightenment so that they can obtain the strength and ability to effectively and deeply help all oppressed beings [20].

#### 1. The Buddha Gotana

The statue of Lord Buddha Gotama is located in the center, symbolizing the highest figure and spiritual example. He is the founder of Buddhism who attained Perfect Enlightenment at the age of 35 after undergoing extreme asceticism (as shown by the emaciated statue in the temple) and then taught the Four Noble Truths and the Noble Eightfold Path (Ariya Atthangika Magga).

**Key Meaning:** Enlightenment, Purity, and Spiritual Exemplar. The statue in the Avalokitesvara Temple shows the Dhyana Mudra (Meditation Mudra) hand gesture, which symbolizes peace of mind and deep concentration before enlightenment, as well as the purification of negative karma. The gold/yellow color of the statue symbolizes wisdom, purity, and transcendence of suffering [20].

#### 2. Amurvabhumi

Amurvabhumi or Arya Bumi is regarded as the manifestation of the Earth God in Chinese tradition. **Main Meaning:** The Power of the Earth, Wealth, and Prosperity.

The presence of this statue reflects the view that spirituality is inseparable from worldly aspects, where doing good (Dharma) also brings protection and blessings in life.



Figure 5. Buddha Gotana and Amurvabhumi,2025

Source: Rosintan,2025

#### 3. Satya Dharma

Satya Dharma or Guardian of Dharma is identified with Guang Gong in Chinese tradition. **Key Meanings:** Virtue, Justice, Loyalty, and Courage. This statue, often depicted carrying a scroll of sacred texts (wisdom) and accompanied by guards, promotes the values of honesty and firmness in upholding Dharma and protecting Buddhist teachings from threats.



Figure 6. Satya Dharma,2025  
Source : Rosintan,2025

#### 4. Avalokitesvara

Avalokitesvara (literally meaning “King Who Looks Down Upon the World”) or Kwan Im (Goddess of Compassion) is the essence of the temple's name and symbolizes boundless grace and empathy.

Key Meaning: Active and Responsive Compassion. The image of Avalokitesvara (including the Thousand-Armed and Thousand-Eyed versions) symbolizes transformative power and comprehensive responsiveness to help all beings from suffering. The sacrifice of postponing Nirvana demonstrates profound compassion, inspiring devotees to develop universal love and take concrete action to help others.



Figure 7. Avalokitesvara,2025  
Source: Rosintan,2025

#### 5. Buddha Maitreya

Buddha Maitreya is believed to be the 29th Buddha who will appear in the future, when human life spans reach 100,000 years and morality declines. His figure in temples is often depicted as Budai (“Laughing Buddha”), a fat, cheerful Chinese monk carrying a cloth bag [21].

Key Meanings: Hope, Spiritual Optimism, and Universal Love (maitrī/mettā). Maitreya's presence is believed to restore Dharma and guide humans toward enlightenment, as well as symbolize happiness and prosperity.



Figure 8. Maitreya Buddha, 2025  
Source: Rosintan,2025

### 3.1.5. Types of Symbols

Avalokitesvara Temple integrates key symbols of Buddhist teachings and Chinese traditions into its architecture and rituals, which serve as visual blessings and spiritual guidance. The character Shòu engraved on the wall, symbolizing longevity or continuous life, serves as a manifestation of deep prayers for well-being and is included in the five blessings of Chinese Wǔfú [22].

Meanwhile, the Dharma Wheel on the right and left doors, with its eight spokes, is the main geometric symbol that symbolizes the unceasing spread of Buddhist teachings and represents the Noble Eightfold Path (Ariya Atthangika Magga), the core of the Middle Way that teaches Sīla, Samādhi, and Paññā as practical guidelines for ending suffering (Getting to Know Symbols in Buddhism, 2016).



Figure 9. Shòu and the Wheel of Dharma,2025  
Source: Rosintan,2025

Kim Luo (incense burner) is interesting because its shape resembles a [23]. This tradition of burning paper, which is related to the story of a powerful monk, has become a ritual to honor ancestors and pray for good fortune. It is a form of cultural assimilation whose spiritual meaning remains open to interpretation by the wider community.



Figure 10. Paper Burning Site ,2025  
Source: Rosintan,2025

### 3.1.6. Spiritual Rituals and Ceremonies

The most prominent Chinese cultural values preserved at Avalokitesvara Temple are Chinese virtues known as Ti Che Gui. Ti means respect for elders, Che is shame as self-control in the context of morality, and Gui are norms or rules that guide people's lives. These values are internalized in religious practices, including sacred celebrations such as Vesak (Buddha's birthday) and the commemoration of Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara, which is celebrated three times a year (birth, perfection, and death) based on the Lunar calendar.



Figure 11. Celebration of the Birth of Avalokitesvara,2025  
Source: Mr.Febrius Suryajaya Wibisana,2025

In prayer rituals, various offerings rich in symbolic meaning are used: noodles symbolize long life, sweets symbolize that the kindness given will return, fruit reflects the results of effort or karma, and flowers symbolize the impermanence of life. In addition, incense (Hio) symbolizes the cleansing of inner stains, and the Lotus is a symbol of steadfastness in adversity. The entire ritual, including the use of dharma tools such as the Morning Gong and Evening Drum (marking time and the release of worries) and the Wooden Fish (a reminder of perseverance and anti-laziness), has a dual purpose: to show respect

and to encourage people to continue to reflect and improve their spiritual quality (Ulambana as a ritual of transferring the merits of ancestors).

### **3.1.7. Interfaith Harmony**

Avalokitesvara Temple actively expands its function beyond a place of worship to become a center for the development of social awareness and interfaith solidarity, reflecting the principles of Buddhist teachings, in which social practice is seen as a means to increase virtue (parami) based on wisdom (Paññā) [24]. Clear evidence of this commitment is the implementation of regular social service activities, such as distributing takjil (food to break the fast) to local residents during Ramadan (demonstrating tolerance), providing assistance to Christian orphanages at Christmas, and distributing basic food supplies to victims of natural disasters and the temple community after the Ulambana ceremony.

All of these activities show that the temple practices the universal values of Metta (love), Karuna (compassion), and Mudita, and upholds Hiri (shame for doing evil) and Ottappa (fear of bad consequences) as “two protectors of the world” that maintain morality. Thus, Avalokitesvara Temple is not only a place of worship for Buddhists, but also a powerful symbol of social harmony in Padangsidempuan, where its universal values transcend religious boundaries and can be applied by anyone.

## **3.2 Cultural Values at Avalokitesvara Temple**

Avalokitesvara Temple is a dense “network of meaning” (Geertz, 2001), radiating five core values. Spiritual Values are the main foundation, where symbols such as the Rupang Buddha Gotama (Dhyana Mudra), the Wheel of Dharma, and the Shòu character (long spiritual life) foster vertical relationships and internalize enlightenment, supported by saddha, sīla, samādhi, and paññā.

Cosmological Values are manifested through the cycle of karma and Chinese-Batak harmony, where protective symbols such as the dragon (cosmic power), tiger (natural courage), and lion (justice) interpret the universe as an interconnected system maintained by Dharma, with the belief that Maitreya Buddha will restore moral degradation, not the apocalypse. Social values emphasize cross-border solidarity, manifested in architectural acculturation (Chinese-Batak roofs) and active social activities such as the distribution of takjil during Ramadan and post-Ulambana assistance to multi-ethnic communities; temples function as communal centers that uphold the principle of Ehipassiko and prevent moral collapse through hiri and ottappa.

Cultural Identity values show acculturation as an ever-changing system of meaning, preserving Chinese heritage through Batak-style ornamentation on the roof peaks, where the Informant states, “Chinese-Batak hybrid architecture symbolizes openness,” affirming the temple as a “shared home” that respects the Batak hosts.

Finally, Universal Human Values transcend the local context, embodied through the Thousand-Armed Avalokitesvara statue (responsiveness and compassion) and the Dharma Flag (universal love), encouraging global empathy, where followers emulate Avalokitesvara's teachings to “help those in distress,” creating an inclusive community.

## **4. CONCLUSION**

The results of the study show that Avalokitesvara Temple, which was inaugurated in 1986 as a center of culture and spirituality, is not only a place of worship but also a locus of ethical and social values that have been passed down across generations in the multi-ethnic region of Padangsidempuan. This temple is rich in powerful religious symbolism, where the statues of Buddha Gotama, Avalokitesvara (including the Thousand Hands), Satya Dharma, Amurvabhumi, and Buddha Maitreya symbolize core values such as enlightenment, compassion, wisdom, and hope for the future, reinforced

by the symbolic meaning of ritual offerings (noodles, fruit, sweets). Contextually, the temple is named after the Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara, while the dominant red color reflects universal love and openness. Its architectural aspects display a harmonious acculturation between Chinese and Batak cultures, serving as tangible evidence of tolerance. In addition, the temple upholds the moral values of Ti Che Gui in religious practice and actively participates in interfaith social activities, such as distributing takjil during Ramadan and providing disaster relief, affirming the role of Avalokitesvara Temple as a tangible representation of the integration of cultural values, tolerance, and humanity that coexist harmoniously in society.

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