

New Vihara Design Generating Process: Study Case Vihara Dharma Cintamani, Kintamani, Bali

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Abstract. This is preliminary paper regarding the process of designing a new Chinese religious building of *Tridharma* concept in Kintamani village, Bangli Regency, Bali, 80652. A small Chinese community in that area came up with the idea long time ago, but the actual planning started around 2023. As a self-sustain community, they try their best to come up with the architectural planning, with Chinese traditional religious building concept in general. One of the main problems so far, they need to know if the planning they made is according to the design standard requirement and have ample Chinese characteristic, with bits of local Balinese multicultural visuals endeavors to prevent alienation from the surrounding region. The research aims to provide consultation in meeting the maximum above criteria regarding the construction. The main architect is a local Chinese Balinese and a self-taught man that needs specific guidance in this type of building. Researchers use general interior design methods of D. K. Ching: Analyze, Synthesize, and Evaluate to research and provide necessary consultation based on the criteria needed. The improvements made in three main areas of design: safety, comfort, and aesthetics. The result will be tested in the real construction and visitors later; the most important, this place will be one source of happiness and embodiment of their unique spiritual belief and mutual religious tolerance among the majority Hinduism believers in Bali.

Keywords: *Tri Dharma*, Religious Tolerance, Design Standard Requirement, Interior Design Consultation, Chinese Religions.

1 Introduction

There are many Chinese communities throughout Indonesia. Buddhist monk I-tsing went to Indonesia – Srivijaya kingdom back then – and lived for researching Buddhism’ sacred texts and write books [2]. He even suggested Chinese pilgrims to stayed over to learnt discipline and Sanskrit language before went again to India. At the similar era, trading goods business flourished over between China’s kingdom and Srivijaya, both local goods, and imported ones like from Persian and India. It will be not uncommon to assume that the trading needs small community of Chinese traders live in Indonesia for working and translating any written and oral communication. On the other hand, Lekkerkerker [3] argued that the first wave of Chinese immigrants came to Indonesia

from Fujian (Southern China) around 800–900 AD as traders. Sporadically, Chinese small communities travel around Indonesia to find better business, better living condition, and better places to live.

The Chinese in Bali believed they came at similar time with other Chinese in different area of Indonesia. There were many evidences and documentations regarding the interactions between Balinese and Chinese. On the archaeological side, Han Dynasty bronze mirror was unearthed at Buleleng, Tang Dynasty porcelains found in

Branjang, and ceramics from 7th until 10th Century discovered around Sanur. Those findings disclosed the exchange and trade between Bali and China as far as Han Dynasty [8]. On the documentations side, there were many local legends regarding earlier relationship between the two cultures in their oral traditions; for example, Barong Landung.

It will take months, or even sometimes years, to reach Indonesia from Southern part of China in earliest days Chinese ancestors traveled. They brought with them their tangible and intangible forms of Chinese culture, things and ideas represented their important identities. Chinese brought their technologies, systems, and beliefs. In term of religions, they sometimes brought along some effigies – personal or public use – to enhance their safety and bring luck on the journey. Chinese traditionally believes in Chinese religions: Taoism, Confucianism, and Buddhism, along with ancestors and Shamanism worships [4]. All teachings do not merge into one ultimate religion, but practiced harmoniously according to the occasions and needs. Based on these beliefs, Chinese who planned on permanently lived in Indonesia need to build religious buildings to accommodate their religious needs.

The religious buildings that built by Chinese and served their needs, most of the time cannot categorized specifically in one religion, though some scholars tried to distinguished them by the main deity at the main altar. For example, the temple that have Guanyin as main deity, categorized as Buddhist temples – as in Jindeyuan temple in Jakarta, it also has several Taoist deities such as Ching Cui Co Su, Tek Hay Cin Jin, and Cu Sin Nio Nio [4]. There are also temples that have local Chinese gods, the ones that unknown in China itself, for example Da Bo Gong temple in Jakarta with the main deities are Sampo Soei Soe and Ibu Sitiwati.

Though they are assumed as local Earth Gods, it did not really belong to just one specific religion. Chinese Indonesian laymen do not mind the difference system of belief between their religions, they just name it into Indonesian term Tri Dharma – Three Teachings, though there are two other important characteristics – Ancestor and Shamanism worship. In English term, to generalize all their beliefs with no specific boundaries in one religious building, we use general term Chinese religion and Chinese temples. It also has other significance, to differentiate with Indonesian Buddhist temple in form of candi, such as Candi Borobudur.

Chinese temples were begun similar to traditional Chinese residential plan. After sometimes, it begun to developed into series of complicated buildings, but still use residential template plan: sanheyuan, siheyuan, vertical rectangular, horizontal rectangular, and complex [4]. The similarity could be based on the basic principles that the temples is ‘House of Gods’, it built according to traditional Chinese house principle, so the Gods would feel ‘homey’. There is also no big difference of layout plan between

Taoist temple, Buddhist temples, or Confucian temple in Chinese Indonesian ones; usually the interior design and architectural differences placed in the deities and the religious decorations put upon the place.

This paper mixing the research and the community service experience lecturers and students must done in their field study. The aim of research is to provide necessary professional advice for the architect / designer and his team regarding basic design principles to build Chinese temple, preventing some problems usually arise in established similar temples in Indonesia, and deepen understanding about primary philosophies of Chinese religion in general, resulting in their specific building considerations. Since the building is still in primary phase and the architect consulted through 3 dimensions drawings plan, the paper will only cover the necessary consultation in most general and basic areas – discuss the topics to cover three main design problems: safety, comfort, and aesthetics. This paper will use qualitative type of research, mostly based on the proposed design observation and comparing with data from similar cases and theories.

2 Research Method

2.1 Interior Design

The design process according to Ching [9] consist of three major phases: Analyze, Synthesize, and Evaluation. The 3 phases will evolve simultaneously and reassess through every step of planning, build, until the place completely done. The Analyze phase mainly done by Perkumpulan Suka Duka Dharma Cintamani – including answering problems regarding why they need this place, what kind of purposes this place will serve its community, identifying the users' needs and preferences, etc.

The researchers starting at the Synthesize phase [9], to help architect / designer has good grip on developing concept - how far it will follow Chinese temple basic principles, and how much acculturation with Balinese culture could occur to maintain harmonious state between the two.

While the Synthesize phase still ongoing, the Evaluation phase, which usually begin much later, starting earlier in the form of suggestions made by researchers. The evaluation based on previous experiences researching established Chinese temples in other cities in Indonesia, especially Jakarta, with its general building and human behaviors' problems. These suggestions hope to add safety, provide more comfort, and enhance aesthetics necessary for the necessary purposes [9]. The suggestions also important to prevent minor to major risks that many times happened in Indonesia's Chinese temples – either caused by wrong design decision, by human errors, or ignorance behaviors.

The process researchers involve here are as consultant, mainly not as primary designer / architect, but as person involved in many old Chinese temples research. The new temple already has its own architect, a self-made man that learn to build and plan through experiences. This is the second time he and his team build Chinese temple. The first one is near Chinese cemetery in Kintamani area, Bio Hok Tek Ceng Sin Bhakti Semadhi – 1.8 km South from Vihara Dharma Cintamani. The former temple is small

and consist of one simple building. Vihara Dharma Cintamani, on the other hand, plan to be built as a complex with several main buildings and several side buildings for community purposes.

The architect and his team need more knowledge of Chinese temple's design basic principles, and some public building standard design. Researchers helping to enhance and reaching those standards. Mostly researchers do not attempt to interfere with architect and designer's creative ideas, since they know best the community's needs of the place and how to achieve them.

2.2 Cultural Acculturation

A wide known Theory of Acculturation proposed by John W. Berry stated that acculturation between two cultures has 4 types of outputs: assimilation, separation, integration, and marginalization [10]. The use of these types could be different in public general and private life acceptance. Based on Berry explanation, we will only use his theory on Balinese and Chinese acculturation output in public display, not private individual agendas that could be differ person to person.

Based on several studies on acculturation between Balinese and Chinese culture [5] [7] [8], the basic differences between them are not too far from the start, so the acculturation process was rather smooth along the way. The process still ongoing, and mostly stay in the Integration type [6], the best form acculturation for both culture – the native and the foreign. This type promotes inclusivity, open end discussions and adaptations, learnt from each other, and natural. Some parts of Balinese culture are adaptation from Chinese one, for examples the use of '*kepeng*' copper coins, Balinese performance dance Barong Landung, some borrowed words, etc. on the other way around, Chinese also learnt and adapt many things from Balinese as host culture. Figure 1 and Figure 2 can be best example how Chinese still retain their religion but also adding '*Pelinggih*' structure in their home as respect to the Hinduism in Bali.

2.3 Chinese and Balinese Temple in Bali: Several Study Case

The first example acculturation of Chinese – Balinese in term of place is Pura Dalem Balingkang. This Hindu temple believed built around King Paduka Sri Maharaja Haji Jayapangus era that was governed in 1178 – 1181 CE [5]. This specific temple has Chinese elements inside since according to its legend, King Jayapangus married to Kang Cin Wei, a Chinese girl, and the vicinity has a *pelinggih* (a form of altar for a certain god) dedicated to a Chinese – *Pelinggih* Ida Ratu Ayu Subandar – believed a representation of the Queen Kang Cing Wei, or her father who adopted Balinese name I Subandar. The building has Chinese element, like Fig. 1.

The usual *Palinggih* structure is vertical, made from stone or bricks – the elements that abundant in Bali. The *palinggih* in Balingkang specially for Ida Ratu Ayu Subandar shaped like Chinese traditional building with low roof, with red and yellow colour ornaments, and altar for Earth God altar below it [8].



Fig. 1. Pelinggih Ida Ratu Ayu Subandar in Pura Dalem Balinkang. (Source: Kastawan, 2019)[5]

The second example acculturation of Chinese – Balinese in term of place is in Tempat Ibadah Tridharma Kongco Bio or Vihara Dharma Cattrra in Tabanan. It was first built in 1939 and had major renovation in 2004. The main deity is Tanhu Cinjin (Chenfu Zhenren 陳府真人). He was Chinese Indonesian believed lived in Bali around 1740 as an architect and survived magically through vicious treatment from people who jealous about his skill. He was worshipped mainly in Bali and East Java as a saint who helped people through sea storm [11].

Vihara Dharma Cattrra mainly built according to Chinese temple basic principles, with main building with main deity in altar. The difference from Chinese temple outside Bali, it has Pelinggih Penunggun Karang, a Balinese / Hindu altar with traditional Bali architecture to acknowledge the local Earth God [13] (Fig. 2). The main gate built according to Balinese style. The main materials in the vicinity are variously using local ones, such as bricks and stones, with some Balinese traditional decorations as well [12].



Fig. 2. Some design acculturations inside Vihara Dharma Cattrra. (Source: Hendrawan, 2019) [12]

The two examples above, one from Balinese Hindu temple which has Chinese acculturation, and the other is Chinese temple which has Balinese acculturation, both are real application of harmonious and equal Integration type of acculturation. With this equal stand, their interaction will be swift without big barrier between them, they respect each other and other types of acculturations they choose in private life can occur with less tension.

3 Results and Discussion

3.1 Bali and Kintamani Community

There are several villages around Bali that have many Chinese descendants residing for over 3 generations, one of them is Catur Village. Most of the Chinese descendants retain their Buddhist religion in their identity card (*Kartu Tanda Penduduk* / KTP), but they also follow Balinese Hindu religious practices [7]. The evidence of their harmonious co-existence can be traced in their Pura Panyagjagan Temple. The place divided loosely into two sections, with the Hinduism side marked by Meru Tumpang Solas (eleven roof tiers) for worshipping Ida Batara Catur Muka, and Chinese religions side marked by Kongco Stana Ratu Syahbandar (Subandar) as manifestation of Chinese local god. There are also several Balinese and Chinese rituals blended for Chinese in the funeral procession, such as Ngaben, and Co Kong Tik (pinyin translation: *Zuo gongde* / 做功德) after 40 days, and afterwards the ancestor tablet (*sinci*神牌) moved and worshipped at *Siu Tji*. The other rituals Chinese still doing is Cing Ming (*Qingming* 清明) festival. Every year, on Cing Ming (April 5), they pray at the cemetery for their deceased ancestors.

Beside the co-existence in public area (Pura) and in rituals, the harmonious symbols also existed in Chinese descendants' houses. Each Chinese family house consists of two types of shrines, instead of one Hinduism shrine for Balinese houses, which are Hindu shrine and Chinese *Siu Tji* (pinyin translation: *jiaci* 家祠) like in Fig. 3 and Fig. 4.



Fig. 3. Chinese Citizens' Ancestral Place of Worship (*Siu Tji*). (Source: Winaja, 2019)[7]



Fig. 4. Balinese Hindu's Ancestral Place of Worship at a Chinese home. (Source: Winaja, 2019) [5]

3.2 Vihara Dharma Cintamani

The idea of Vihara Dharma Cintamani begun from a long time ago, since the Chinese were there for a very long time and so far, they do not have their own religious building. They started from built another temple, Bio Ho Tek Ceng Sin Bhakti Semadhi (finished in January 2024), 1.8 km from Vihara Dharma Cintamani. The first temple was necessary since it near the Chinese cemetery area in Kintamani and they need to pray to Earth God / Ho Tek Ceng Sin (Fúdé Zhèngshén 福德正神) whenever the burial or festival regarding death occur. Vihara Dharma Cintamani will have Goddess of Compassion/ Guānyīn (觀音) as the primary deity. The community in Kintamani already form an internal institution Perkumpulan Suka Duka Dharma Cintamani and appointed it as the executor of this idea.

The Chinese temple will be built at Kintamani, Bangli Regency, Bali. It is located on the slope of Mount Batur. In Fig. 6 the East side of the Raya Kintamani Street, across the temple, there are so many buildings – many of them are cafes, restaurants, or other business purposes buildings. The lands are owned by privates and situated in higher ground (nearer to Gunung Batur) than the other side of the street. The East side favored for businesses because it has premium scenery to the downward slope of the mountain – more open and wide view area. On the other side, the temple side of the street - are almost empty from buildings. The lands owned by government as forest and natural reservoir. The community asked local government to use this plot of land for social religious purpose, and their request granted.



Fig. 5. Vihara location in relationship to Batur Mountain. (Source: Google map, 2023)



Fig. 6. Vihara location in relationship the surrounding area. (Source: Modified from Google map, 2023)

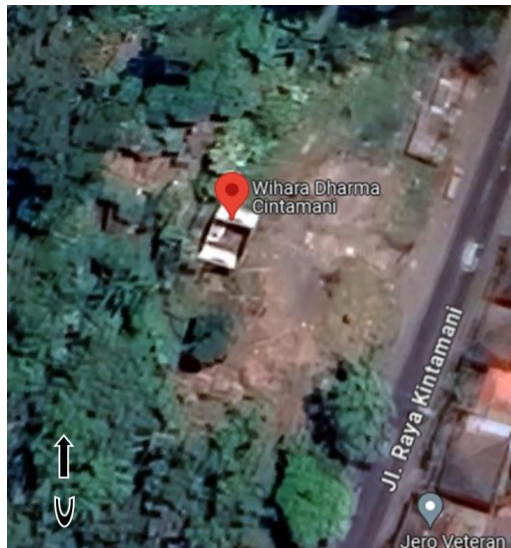


Fig. 7. Vihara micro area in construction. (Source: Modified from Google map, 2023)

Based on the macro analysis of the site, the front façade of the Vihara Dharma Cintamani is higher and naturally sloping down at the back side. Its front facing East. The vicinity has many masses – look at Fig. 8. Number 1 is the primary building, the altars for deities. Number 2 is the place to gather believers for religious mass (*Ruang Kebaktian / Dharmasala*). Number 3 is a giant statue of Goddess Guan Yin, planned to have

5-meter height. Number 4 will have library purpose – contain religious and non-religious contents especially to increase understanding of Chinese culture. Number 5 is community multipurpose building – can be use for wedding, learning, hobbies, or other community events. Number 6 has a communal kitchen, and number 7 has toilet function.

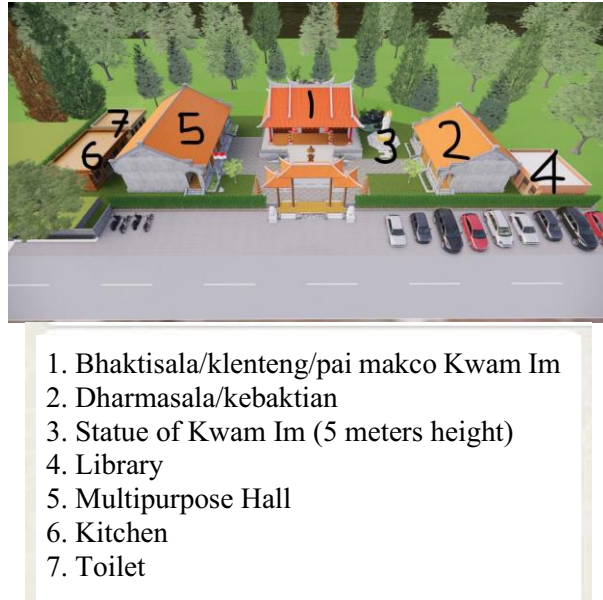


Fig. 8. The buildings' program plan. (Source: Authors, 2023)

3.3 Discussion on Safety Problems

The first problem of safety arose for the first altar at the temple. It is altar for Tian Gong (Almighty God), usually placed in front of the building or the first altar you faced inside the main building. In Vihara Dharma Cintamani, Tian Gong altar placed in front of the main building, on podium (*bebaturan*) – raised flooring commonly used in any religious building in Bali as representation of legs (*Nista Angga*) [1]. The design proposed for the altar is metal incense burner with its own small roof. In front of the altar there is a pair flight of stairs flanking a mock ramp – the traditional Chinese design for important building such as palace. The mock ramp will use dragon carving design and is not function for walking. The placement and design for altar generate two sub-problems. One is the placement of the altar; since it is near to the mock ramp and stairs, without proper fence rounding the mock ramp, people – especially children – can fall down the ramp (Figure 9). Researchers suggest building a proper fence, so people are safer. The second sub-problem is the altar itself. Since the altar has its own roof, it needs to be wide enough for people to pray there without getting wet if it rains. It also needs to be deep enough so the stick incenses tip is not too high to catch up the wind, also not too high so children 12 years and above can safely pray by themselves and not afraid

of incense burning risk. The bowl with wide enough roof also prevents the risk of incenses getting wet because of rain (Fig. 10).



Fig. 9. The original Planning of the Tian Gong altar. (Source: Authors, 2023)



Fig. 10. The original planning (left) and alteration after consultation (right). (Source: Authors, 2023)

Every Chinese temple using candles as part of its important ritual props. The problem most of the time lies in their handling – place their put the candles after lit. Many of them placed on metal table line up flatly in several rows. This creates risk of getting burn by previous candles placed in the front row, while the next one must place in a row behind it. The better design is to make stair- like rows getting higher at the back, with minimum height difference is 10 cm. This is one solution for daily prayer candles – usually small and last for 2-3 hours lit, as we can see in Fig. 11.

Other safety problem resides on the big candles usually donated by devoted member.

It usually measured by *kati* (*jin* in Mandarin). They believe the heavier they could donate, the better. These candles can be lit for the whole month, year, or more; and many times, it caused heavy casualties. Researchers dealt with two Chinese temples fire, all because of all-time lit candles. Researcher advised architect to make a meticulous plan before they run out of place to put these big candles, since the management cannot reject candles donation. At Fig. 11, the background of small candles are the big candles.



Fig. 11. The bad design of candles' organization put safety at major risk. (Source: Nasirullah Sitam)

3.4 Discussion on Comfort Problems

The first comfort problem arose and acknowledged is the direction of the vicinity and its consequences. The temple facing the East to the front street, so the back is the West. The back of the temple has separate building for meditation and social-informal gathering. The building arranged to have only floor and roof without any wall. The architect plans to put Buddha statue against the back forest, so its back facing West. The back of the Buddha statue is threatened by sun exposure, whatever material they choose to make it. The people that come to pray and meditate there will facing the Buddha statue and face-to-face with afternoon sun. This risk is not safe for human eyes, and the heat of afternoon sun is not comfortable for human body to meditate and relax in hours' time – Fig. 12. Researcher then recommend some adjustment. The roof on the west side should be longer downward to prevent more afternoon sun glare, though the tall trees of the forest will prevent some of it. West side wall can be built if necessary. It does not have to be full wall – it can be half height or roster wall with corresponding design.



Fig. 12. Meditation space at the back of the Vihara. (Source: Authors, 2023)

The second problem discussing about praying altars. General characteristic of good praying altar is simple design with only necessary attributes to help maintain focus of the religious process. On the other hand, the cost and energy to clean and purify the articles are higher if the altar have too many objects to take care. Many Chinese temples that researcher had visited in the past have too many objects – sacred or just accessories – crammed on altar. Most of them dusty and untidy, not because the caretaker was lazy, but because one of the main religious processes in Chinese temples using incense in many forms. It gathered dust, smoke residue, and blackened paint like Fig. 13.



Fig. 13. Careful planning on objects at altars will prevent dust, smoke residue, and blackened paint. (Source: Authors, 2005)

The third problem indicated the back of the main building that facing West will have similar problem with the meditation building. The roof on the West side should be longer than the East side because it will encounter scorching afternoon sun that can make wall crack like Fig. 14.



Fig. 14. The original plan on the West side back roof of the main building. (Source: Authors, 2023)

Next problem discussing ease of movement. The standard stair depth is 30 cm; the temple uses 35 cm – good choice. The standard stair rise is 12-17 cm, to accommodate the difficulties for elderly and physical disabled person, which complied by the architect. The architect plans to have ramp wide enough for wheelchair – Figure 9. Apparently, one of the religious leaders the architect acquainted has disability and bound to wheelchair, while one of the researchers is still using cane for walking. Although there are National Building Standard in Indonesia that architect must comply, but objectifying it is another story. From personal experience, researchers started to realize how bad the situation of building planning in Indonesia after one of them had stroke and using wheelchair and later a cane to help walk properly. Since the architect also personally know person that will come to the vicinity and have disability, he makes sure he altered the plan accordingly. There are very limited religious buildings in Indonesia comply with the disability design standard unless it is main, big, national use buildings, or the designer have some personal experience dealing with disabled people.

3.5 Discussion on Aesthetic Problems

The first aesthetic problem is not actually aesthetic, but rather a philosophical one – the design preferences system developed by Chinese under the term *fengshui*. Chinese since ancient time took liking of numbers. They even maximize its function beyond mathematic, into the philosophy of numbers as meaningful symbol. When the temple architect asked about the proper measurement for the altar, researcher immediately introduce simple apps made by Vietnamese – Master Tam Nguyen – called Luban ruler or *Thuoc Lo Ban* in Vietnamese. Here Master Nguyen transfer the reading measurement that usually put at regular measurement tape (upper picture in Figure 15 in Chinese writing) into phone apps that have English, Vietnamese, and Chinese reading. The measurements are more detail, with three different system – for construction (*yang* – positive measurement), for worship and grave (*yin* negative measurement), and for furnishing. The regular measurement tape only has the first and the second ones. It will help the architect to make *feng shui* decision himself.



Fig. 15. Fengshui Ruler with the digital version apps of Thuoc Lo Ban. (Source: likvietnam.com and Tam Nguyen, 2024)

The other aesthetic and comfort problem is the information system for the front vicinity. The most important signage is the name of the temple. Researcher asked the planning, and architect give Picture 16 as their plan. He also told that they plan to add Chinese characters. Researcher remind him about the readability standard, especially since this signage will be read by passerby in vehicles (cars, buses, and motorbikes).



Fig. 16. Signage at the façade of Vihara (Source: Authors, 2023)

4 Conclusions and Suggestions

Since Vihara Dharma Cintamani temple is still working in progress, more further design process needed to be done. As consultant, we deal only with the problems that may arise along the way, but several suggestions we would like to express since it is important considerations. There are several characteristics as part of acculturations output between Balinese and Chinese in buildings design, especially religious ones. First, Chinese porcelains as part of wall finishing or decorations could be added. These decorations are already common in Bali to symbolize wealth and privilege. Second, the using of Drum pavilion called Bale Gugu that similar with Chinese Bell and Drum Towers for telling important occasions or an alarm. Third, the using of Patra Cina relief decoration at important part in the vicinity – the decoration believed came from China as per named [8].

Acknowledgments. The researchers would like to appreciate the ICRA committees to let us contribute to this academic accomplishment. We would like to thank Perkumpulan Suka Duka Dharma Cintamani, especially I Made Suardana, as the architect of Vihara Dharma Cintamani, for the opportunity to contribute to this wonderful building idea. We hope the planning and construction will be smoothly developed into a great example of religious place ‘from community, for community, and by community’.

Disclosure of Interests. The authors have no relevant competing interests to disclose concerning the content of this article.

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