

THE MINORITY AND THE STATE

Chinese Muslims in the Modern History of Indonesia

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Abstract

Despite their long existence in Nusantara, the Chinese ethnic groups remain less represented or even misrepresented in the history of Indonesia, resulting in negative stereotypes and attitudes towards the community. Sejarah Nasional Indonesia (SNI) and history textbooks for schools and universities, for instance, do not provide adequate narratives about Chinese contributions to Indonesian politics and economy during the pre- and post-independence era. This study aims to critically analyse the representation of Chinese ethnicities in the modern history of Indonesia, more specifically, the SNI and history textbooks for Islamic schools and universities. The findings of the study suggest that there was an unwritten history of Chinese and Chinese Muslims, especially during the Sukarno and Suharto regimes, which then Abdurrahman Wahid began to include. The study recommends new narratives of Chinese Muslims in modern Indonesian history by proposing some notable scholars who extensively worked on the History of Islam in Java, to which Chinese Muslims had contributed. [Kendati sudah berada di Indonesia berabad-abad, etnis Tionghoa tidak banyak tercatat dalam narasi sejarah Indonesia. Misrepresentasi etnis Tionghoa di Nusantara bahkan menyebabkan adanya stereotip dan sikap negatif terhadap etnis tersebut. Sejarah Nasional Indonesia (SNI) dan buku teks sejarah di sekolah dan universitas, misalnya, tidak banyak menyebutkan kontribusi etnis Tionghoa secara politik maupun ekonomi selama masa pra dan pasca kemerdekaan. Studi ini merupakan analisis kritis terhadap representasi etnis Tionghoa dalam sejarah modern Indonesia, khususnya dalam SNI dan buku teks sejarah di sekolah dan kampus Islam. Temuan kajian menunjukkan adanya sejarah tak tercatat tentang peran Muslim Tionghoa

selama rezim Sukarno dan Subarto, yang kemudian mulai diubah oleh rezim Gus Dur. Studi ini merekomendasikan penulisan ulang sejarah Muslim Tionghoa di Indonesia dengan mengintegrasikan temuan beberapa sarjana yang meneliti mengenai Islam di Jawa dan peran etnis Tionghoa di dalamnya.]

Keywords: Modern Indonesian history, Chinese Indonesians, Chinese Muslims, rewriting history, minority.

A. Introduction

Chinese ethnic groups have been known to be in Indonesia since the fourteenth century or earlier and have made up 1.20% of the total Indonesian population.¹ The maritime connection between China and Southeast Asian politics resulted in Chinese migration to the Archipelago at the time. The incoming of Chinese to Nusantara lasted for around five centuries, and the emigrants were mostly men. In the nineteenth century, the massive emigration of Chinese from their mainland ceased as there was a prohibition from the China government.² The longstanding emigration of Chinese in Southeast Asian countries, including Indonesia, resulted in interracial marriages between the Chinese and the locals. There were terms such as *totok*, referring to Chinese-born person, and *peranakan*, referring to Chinese people by blood but born in Indonesia.³ Different from their *totok* fathers, the *peranakan* spoke *Melayu Tionghoa* (Malay Chinese language) and developed into a Chinese Mestizo society.⁴

Over centuries, the locals perceived the Chinese community as “aliens” or outsiders.⁵ This “we and they” dichotomy could be traced

¹ According to the National Census 2010, Indonesian citizens acknowledged themselves as Chinese origins were 2.832.510 or 1,20% of total citizens, see Herman Tan, “Berapa Jumlah Etnis Tionghoa di Indonesia Berdasarkan sensus Penduduk 2020?”, *tionghoa.info* (20 June 2021), <https://www.tionghoa.info/berapa-jumlah-etnis-tionghoa-di-indonesia-berdasarkan-sensus-penduduk-2020/>.

² Thung Ju Lan, “Chinese Indonesians and China-Indonesia Relations: A Juxtaposition of Identity and Politics”, *Masyarakat Indonesia*, vol. 43, no. 2 (2017), pp. 199-200.

³ Leo Suryadinata, *Pribumi Indonesians, the Chinese minority and China: A study of Perceptions and Policies* (Kuala Lumpur: Heinemann Educational Books (Asia), 2005).

⁴ G. William Skinner, “Creolized Chinese Societies in Southeast Asia”, in *Sojourners and Settlers: Histories of Southeast Asia and the Chinese*, ed. Anthony Reid (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 1996), pp. 51-64.

⁵ Freek Colombijn, *Root of Violence in Indonesia*, eds. Freek Colombijn and J. Thomas Lindblad (Leiden: KITLV Press, 2002), p. 17.

back to the Dutch classification of the population of Indonesia into three groups: Europeans, indigenous (*pribumi*), and Far Easterners that made up mostly of the Chinese people. As noted by Tjandrasmita, their distinct skill in trading compared to the local population and their Christianity, for some reason, had made the Chinese in Indonesia socially different in the colonial era.⁶ Furthermore, the Dutch treated the Chinese groups with political and social privileges, while the locals were placed in the lower category. Chinese were employed by the colonial government as the tax takers responsible for collecting tax revenue from the locals. From this position, conflicts and sentiments between the locals and the Chinese had been common during the colonial era and continued afterwards.

Colonial segregation of the Chinese, to some extent, was continued during Soekarno and Suharto regimes. During the Suharto era, Chinese communities were politically eliminated and socially restricted. He made a regulation of SARA (*Suku, Agama, Ras Agama dan Antar golongan*/ethnicity, religion, race, and class). During this time, economic gaps between the Chinese and the majority of *pribumi* were so apparent that they caused frequent social tensions. Eventually, when the economic crisis hit the country in 1997, social turmoil in many parts of the country occurred, particularly prior to Suharto's resignation in 1998. As noted by Freek Colombijn, in May 1998, for instance, mass rapes and murdering Chinese people occurred.⁷

In the New Order era, the state's discrimination policy was evident towards Chinese minority groups. As Suryadinata said, its assimilation policy forced the Chinese population to eliminate their identities, including changing their Chinese names and closing Chinese press, schools and organisations. This discrimination policy was made official by the President's Instruction number 14/1967 which prohibited Chinese traditions and customs from being practised publicly, such as the celebration of Chinese New Year (*imleke*). Chinese songs also were disappearing from radio broadcasts.⁸

The Chinese ethnics were mentioned in the SNI as part of

⁶ Uka Tjandrasmita, *Arkeologi Islam Nusantara* (Jakarta: KPG Kepustakaan Populer Gramedia, 2009), p. 93.

⁷ Freek Colombijn, "Maling, maling! The Lynching of Petty Criminals", in *Root of Violence*, p. 306; Leo Suryadinata, *Pribumi Indonesians, the Chinese Minority and China: A Study of Perceptions and Policies* (Singapore: Marshall Cavendish Academic, 2005), pp. 209-12.

⁸ Asyul Fikri and Anju Nofarof Hasudungan, "Siauw Giok Tjhan and Abdurrahman Wahid: History of Chinese Citizenship in Indonesia", *Journal of Education, Society and Multiculturalism*, vol. 3, no. 1 (2022), p. 190.

Indonesian history, although very minimal. In *Sejarah Nasional Indonesia V*, for instance, Chinese contribution to the economic sector (i.e., local people learned the trading and retail system from the Chinese traders⁹ and the Chinese were intermediary between the Europeans and the *pribumi*) was not mentioned from 1930 through 1942. The SNI did not mention Chinese figures' roles during the Indonesian political struggle. Partai Tionghoa Indonesia's (Indonesian Chinese Party, PTI) role in the nationalist movement was not mentioned in the SNI, while it mentioned the Indonesian Arab Association (PAI) instead.

Sejarah Nasional Indonesia (SNI) is a volume of Indonesian history funded by the Indonesian government covering the history of Indonesia from pre-independence to the current era. Since its independence, the Indonesian government has issued twice its national history volume, namely *Sejarah Nasional Indonesia* (SNI/*Indonesian National History*), in 1975 and 1984, respectively. The SNI was written by a national consortium of Indonesian historians as mandated by the government under the coordination of the Indonesian national education department (Departemen Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan). According to the SNI 1984, the periods of Indonesian history were classified into six periods: pre-history, the ancient period (1500s), the period of rise and development of Islamic kingdoms (1500-1800), the 19th century (1800-1900 AD), the awakening period and the end of Dutch colonialism (Hindia Belanda) (1900s), and period of Japanese occupation and Indonesian Republic (1942-1984). These periods were written in six volumes representing each period. The government considers SNI as the major reference in national history narratives. History textbooks for schools and universities refer to SNI as its main source. It means that the lack of representation of Chinese in the SNI would also make lack representation in the textbooks.

Many studies have been done on the position of the Chinese in modern Indonesia. Their distinct social function acted by the Chinese over decades has placed them at the centre of major discourses in the country. Amid dynamic circumstances in the Chinese position, the government has developed the narration of recognition and representation through historical texts used by formal education. This paper will critically address

⁹ Suryadinata, *Pribumi Indonesians*, p. 70; Pramoedya Ananta Toer, *Hoakiau di Indonesia* (Jakarta: Graha Budaya, 1998), p. 106. According to Toer, since the pribumi had no a strong entrepreneurship, the coming of Chinese traders (*Tiongkok traders*) with their distinguished trading skills contributed to the development of economic capability among the indigenous people for being learning from those Chinese traders.

historiographic accounts narrated in Indonesia's national history, more specifically: the *Sejarah Nasional Indonesia* (SNI), the textbooks entitled *Sejarah Peradaban Islam: Dirasab Islamiyah* (for Muslim university students), and *Sejarah Kebudayaan Islam untuk Kelas 3 Madrasah Tsanawiyah* (for Islamic junior school students).

The following sections will discuss the unwritten narratives of Chinese in Indonesian history, the attempt to include them in Indonesian history textbooks during Abdurrahman Wahid's regime, the Chinese in Indonesian Islam historiography, and the new proposed narratives of Chinese Muslims in Indonesian Islam.

B. The Unwritten Chinese Narratives in Indonesian History

The unwritten or less-written narratives of Chinese contributions in Indonesian history can be in economic and political aspects, as discussed below.

1. Chinese Contribution to Indonesian Economics

Economically, according to Leo Suryadinata, a *peranakan* scholar, in comparison to the *pribumi* and Europeans, the Chinese were more skilful than other groups living in Indonesia due to their position as intermediary traders between the colonial government and the *pribumi*. This position enabled them to play an essential economic role in pre-Indonesian independence.¹⁰ For example, in 1930, when the *pribumi* dominated the production of raw materials, the Chinese had remarkably engaged in trading activities and retailed sale systems. Locals had learned the trading and retail system from the Chinese traders.¹¹

However, such economic importance of the Chinese was not recorded in the SNI. In its sub-topic that described the end of the Dutch Indies in Indonesia (1930-1942), the SNI did not point out the economic significance of the Chinese traders during the period. Although the SNI mentioned the weakness of *pribumi* economic defence due to the global crisis, it did not mention those Chinese groups' economic strength, as Suryadinata addressed. Instead, the SNI discussed the direct impact of the economic crisis on the colonial government and local economy, as well as the emergence of nationalist movements as a consequence of the

¹⁰ William G. Skinner, "Creolized Chinese Societies in Southeast Asia" in *Sojourners and Settlers: Histories of Southeast Asia and the Chinese*, ed. Anthony Reid. (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1996), pp. 52-4.

¹¹ Suryadinata, *Pribumi Indonesians*; Toer, *Hoakian di Indonesia*.

global economic crisis at the time.¹² After the Indonesian independence, the Chinese continued to play a vital role in the Indonesian economy as retail traders. However, instead of creating national stability, the economic prominence of the Chinese brought locals' jealousy, resulting in political and social resentment among the *pribumi* for their lack of economic advantages.¹³ In responding to the increasing tensions between the *peranakan* and the *pribumi*, President Sukarno launched Presidential Regulation No. 10 on 16 November 1959 to prevent Chinese traders inhabiting rural areas from engaging in retail trade. As reported by Pramoedya Ananta Toer in his *Hoakiau di Indonesia*, in observance of this government policy, at least 547,300 Chinese retail traders became bankrupt because of this "racist" policy.¹⁴ Unfortunately, the impact of the Presidential Regulation on Chinese ethnics, as noted by Toer, was not presented in the SNI.¹⁵

2. *Chinese Contribution to Indonesian Politics*

The contribution of the Chinese community to Indonesian politics can be classified into two periods: before and after the independence of Indonesia. For instance, Chinese political engagement increased during the Japanese invasion between 1942 and 1945. During this time, the Chinese community, both *totok* and *peranakan*, united in opposing Japanese fascism. Soon after the independence, as debates on integration arose, the process of becoming Indonesian citizens continued, mostly among the *peranakan*.¹⁶

Suryadinata also pointed out the significant contribution of the Chinese to nationalist movements, which can be traced back to the early twentieth century, when a proto-nationalist movement appeared in the form of political organisations. The foundation of the *Tiong Hoa Hwee Koan* (Overseas Chinese nationalism) in Java in 1900s, for example, indirectly inspired Indonesian nationalists to establish the nationalist movement, Budi Utomo, in 1908, and ever since, many nationalist

¹² Marwati Djoned Poesponegoro and Nugroho Notosusanto, *Sejarah Nasional Indonesia*, 5th edition (Jakarta: Departemen Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan, Balai Pustaka, 1984), pp. 8-85.

¹³ Robert W. Hefner, "Markets and Justice for Muslim Indonesians", in *Market Cultures: Society and Values in the New Asian Capitalism*, ed. Robert W. Hefner (USA: Westview Press, 1998), p. 230.

¹⁴ Toer, *Hoakiau di Indonesia*, p. 68.

¹⁵ Poesponegoro and Notosusanto, *Sejarah Nasional Indonesia*, pp. 311-26.

¹⁶ Suryadinata, *Pribumi Indonesians*, pp. 52-3.

organisations started to emerge. Eventually, the rise of nationalist organisations culminated through the *Sumpah Pemuda* (Youth Oath) in 1928, where debates on nationalism and China's participation in nationalist organisations occurred.¹⁷

Amid political and cultural prejudices due to their allegedly Chinese transnational movement, the *peranakan* showed their strong political inclination to integrate into the nationalist movements. Though their ethnic suspiciousness towards the Chinese was still strong, nationalist leaders like Sukarno and Sutomo welcomed the *peranakan*'s participation in their parties: Indonesian Nationalist Party (PNI) and Partai Indonesia Raya (Parindra).¹⁸

The political restriction and cultural prejudice made the *peranakan* uncomfortable becoming members of nationalist organisations, and they established Partai Tionghoa Indonesia (PTI) in 1932. As the Partai Arab Indonesia (Indonesian Arab Party/PAI), PTI joined the Gabungan Politik Indonesia (GAPI/ the Association of Indonesian Politics) to gain their right to have an independent parliament. Both parties worked for Indonesian independence and struggled to have legal status as indigenous Indonesian (*pribumi*) under the banner of national integration.¹⁹ In addition, some *peranakan* leaders, such as Liem Koen Hian,²⁰ Ang Jan Goen Yap Thiam Hien and Lauw Chuan Tho,²¹ were recognized as nationalist *peranakan*.²²

Surprisingly, these historical roles of Chinese *peranakan* were not

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 9-10.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 16.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 19; Poesponegoro and Notosusanto, *Sejarah Nasional Indonesia*.

²⁰ Suryadinata, *Pribumi Indonesians*, pp. 90-1. Liem Koen Hian was first a Chinese nationalist. He was one of the founders of the PTI and the editor of some Chinese oriented newspapers, but in the mid-1920s he declared himself as Indonesian nationalist. His nationalism appeared in some nationalist newspapers such as *Soeara Publiek* (Surabaya, 1925-1929), *Sin Tit Po* (Surabaya, 1929-1932; 1939) and *Kong Hoa Po* (Jakarta 1937-1938).

²¹ Although recognized as a leftwing activist, Ang Jan Goen was a major figure in the *peranakan* community and a leading member of *peranakan* organizations, while Yap Thiam Hien was well known as a law and human rights activist. His popularity rose up internationally when he played as the defense counsel for Sukarno's First Deputy Prime Minister, Subandrio. In addition, Lauw Chuan Tho or Yunus Jahja, a Rotterdam-trained economist, was a propagator of the idea of conversion to Islam as a better way to support the assimilation of Chinese community due to the majority of Indonesian Muslims. He himself converted to Islam in 1979; see Suryadinata, *Pribumi Indonesians*.

²² Suryadinata, *Pribumi Indonesians*, p. 19.

comprehensively described in the SNI, which the new order government produced. SNI did not mention the role of PTI when it was incorporated into the GAPI, as addressed by Suryadinata.²³ While Indonesian Arab Party (PAI) was mentioned as part of the nationalist movement at the time, PTI as a Chinese political organisation was not recognised as a significant organisation within nationalist political struggles.²⁴ For instance, although the SNI narrated the importance of the contribution of Chinese newspapers to the early development of the Indonesian press in the early twentieth century, it did not specifically acknowledge the significant contribution of those nationalist *peranakan* journalists who led Chinese presses in the growth of nationalist newspapers (*koran pergerakan*). Even worse, SNI did not mention the names of Chinese vernacular papers led by the *peranakans*, which contributed to the nationalist movement.²⁵

The SNI did not either mention the role of the Chinese figures in the history of the foundation of the Indonesian constitution when the Japanese government urged Indonesian nationalists to create a committee which prepared all means for the independence of Indonesia. The committee was known as BPUPKI (*Badan Penyelidik Usaha-usaha Persiapan Kemerdekaan Indonesia/Dokuritsu Junbi Cosakai*) in which nationalist leaders from different regions and organisations, including those of Chinese and Arab descents, were invited to become its members. The BPUPKI's archives noted five Chinese representatives as members: Liem Koen Hiam, Oey Tiang Tjoe, Oey Tjong Hauw, Mr. Tan Eng Hoa and Drs. Yap Tjwan Bing. Along with other foreign Indonesian-born (Arab and the Netherlands) representatives, these Chinese figures participated in BPUPKI's meetings.²⁶ However, the SNI merely discussed the composition of BPUPKI's structural organisation consisting of 70 members from different representations, including the Chinese.²⁷

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 16; Poesponegoro and Notosusanto, *Sejarah Nasional Indonesia*, V: 230-5.

²⁴ Different from PAI, PTI was not listed in the SNI index; See Poesponegoro and Notosusanto, *Sejarah Nasional Indonesia*, V: 351-8.

²⁵ Poesponegoro and Notosusanto, *Sejarah Nasional Indonesia*, V: 290-312, 343-4.

²⁶ Mona Lohanda, "Studi Minoritas dalam Spektrum Kajian Sejarah Indonesia", in *Panggung Sejarah: Persembahan kepada Prof. Dr. Denys Lombard*, eds. Henri Chambert-Loir and Hasan Muarif Ambary (Jakarta: Ecole française d'Xtreme-Orient, Pusat Penelitian Arkeologi Nasional, Yayasan Obor Indonesia, 1999), p. 141.

²⁷ Poesponegoro and Notosusanto, *Sejarah Nasional Indonesia*, VI: 67.

C. The Mute Presence of Chinese Muslims in Indonesian Islamic Historiography

Not only were the Chinese underrepresented in the National History of Indonesia, but the role of Muslim Chinese in Indonesian Islamic history was also scarce. The lack of proportionate representation of Chinese Muslims in the history of Islam in the Archipelago was evident in two major seminars on Islam in Medan (1963) and Aceh (1980). In the 1963 seminar, rather than considering the possibilities of Chinese Muslims' important role in the spread of Islam in the Archipelago and considering China as another region where Islam came from, the seminar only recognised that Indonesian Islam was coming directly from the Arabian Peninsula brought by Arabian missionaries. The Aceh seminar of 1980 did not either consider Chinese Muslims as a contributor towards the spread of Islam in the Archipelago.²⁸

The unrecognised role of Chinese Muslims in the history of Indonesian Islam can also be found in the SNI. Although the history of Indonesian Islam was discussed in a separate volume, the SNI did not acknowledge the significant role of Chinese Muslims' participation in the spread of Islam in the Archipelago.²⁹ Although the SNI mentioned the history of the Islamic kingdom in Java (Demak) and its king, Raden Fatah or Panembahan Jimbun (Djin Bun: Chinese), it did not correlate him with the existence of the Chinese Muslim community in sixteenth-century Java as did other historical works on Islam and China in Indonesia.³⁰

Further, SNI, which mentioned the history of Islam in the Archipelago, did not elaborate on the role of Chinese Muslim traders (compared to Arab and Persian traders) in the Islamization of certain regions in the country. The Chinese Muslims' participation in the spread of Islam was highlighted in a very marginal exposition. Although the SNI quoted a Chinese source, namely Chou Ku-Fei, concerning the existence of Chinese Muslims in the Sriwijaya court, for instance, it did not elaborate further on the role of Chinese Muslims in the Sriwijaya

²⁸ A. Hasjmy, *Sejarah Masuk dan Berkembangnya Islam di Indonesia: Kumpulan Prasaran pada Seminar di Aceh* (Bandung: al-Maarif Offset, 1981), p. 7.

²⁹ For example, its index does not consist of words or terms "China", "Chinese Muslims".

³⁰ Resources of the SNI are dominantly Western sources, while local and Chinese sources are from European or English translations.

(San fo-Chi) kingdom.³¹

Not only did the SNI ignore the role of the Chinese community in the history of Indonesia, but so did most history textbooks for school and university students. In *Sejarah Nasional Indonesia for Middle School Students*, for example, the Chinese were usually described to be in opposition against the *pribumi (merdeka)*. Such competition symbolised the economic rivalry between Chinese and local traders, which was followed by the establishment of the Muslim Traders Association (*Sarekat Dagang Islam/SDI*) in 1912 as a response to the economic contest between Chinese and Muslim traders.³²

Similar misrepresentations of Chinese Muslims can also be found in history books for Islamic schools and universities. These history textbooks did mention the presence of China traders in the maritime in the past without mentioning their involvement in religious activities and the genealogy of President Abdurrahman Wahid as of Chinese descent.³³ Similarly, there was Chinese representation in Islamic history textbooks, which mentioned the theory of China in Islamization in Indonesia. These textbooks were produced by the Ministry of Religious Affairs of Indonesia for Islamic schools.³⁴ *Sejarah Kebudayaan Islam* (The History of Islamic Civilization) for university students, written by an Indonesian Muslim historian Badri Yatim, for instance, did not elaborate enough on the role of Chinese Muslims in the spread of Islam in Indonesia. Although his book noted that Chinese resources reported that in 1282 Muslims had been found in Sumatra and that Islamization in the Archipelago occurred through trading routes, it did not point out the

³¹ M. Nakahara, "Muslim Merchants", in *Islam in Asia*, eds. Raphael Israeli and Anthony H. Johns, Vol. 2 (Boulder Colorado: Westview Press, 1984), pp. 4-5. Accordingly, most of Srivijaya's envoys were sent to China after the end of T'ang had Arabic names and they seem to have been Muslims. For example, Srivijaya's envoys given in the *Sung Shu* (489) and *Sung Hui Yao* include: Li A-mu (Li Muhammad), Li Ho-mu (Li Muhammad), P'u T'o-han (Abu Adam), Li Fu-hui (Abu Hayya), P'u-ya-t'o-lo (Abu 'Abd Allah), etc... Chau Ju-kua also said in his book: "A large proportion of the people of this country (San-fo-ch'i) are surnamed P'u." P'u stands for *Bu* (Arabic: father).

³² Nugroho Notosusanto et al., *Sejarah Nasional Indonesia 3 for Middle School Students* (Jakarta: Departemen Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan, 1992), p. 57.

³³ Tim Penulis Kementerian Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan, *Sejarah Indonesia, Buku Siswa Kelas X* (Jakarta: Kementerian Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan, 2017), pp. 11, 74, 90-9, 103; Abdurrahman et al., *Sejarah Indonesia, Kelas XII* (Jakarta: Kementerian Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan, 2018), p. 84.

³⁴ M. Kholiluddin, *Sejarah Kebudayaan Islam, Madrasah Tsanawiyah Kelas IX* (Jakarta: Kementerian Agama RI, 2020), p. 14.

participation of Chinese Muslim traders in the development of Islam in the region. The book instead pinpointed the roles of Gujaraties, Indians, and Persians in the spread of Islam in Nusantara.³⁵ In parallel with Yatim's book, *Sejarah Kebudayaan Islam* for Islamic junior schools (*Madrasah Tsanawiyah*) completely ignored the role of Chinese Muslims in the history of Islam in the Archipelago.³⁶

Some studies have actually examined the role of Muslim Chinese in Indonesia, one of which was Hew Wai Weng's study on the formation of ethnicity and religiosity and the meaning of being Muslim in contemporary Indonesia.³⁷ Through a multidisciplinary approach, Weng examined how Chinese identity as Chinese Muslims emerged and was constructed. Muslim Chinese identity was dynamic and the result of negotiation between Chineseness and Islamicness, where the democratisation era allowed every ethnic group, including the Chinese community, to prevail. Social, political and economic elements were also apparent in making such an identity in this process. On the other hand, as Weng reported, inclusive Indonesian Islam also accommodated such reciprocal processes of Chineseness and Islamicness. This study showed the compatibility of Islam and Chinese as indicated by the Chinese influences blending in with Islamic nuance in the mosque buildings, such as in Cheng Ho's mosques in Surabaya and Semarang.³⁸

Another work on Chinese and Islam in Indonesia was conducted by Sumanto Al Qurtuby. Through a historical approach, Al Qurtuby explored the role of Chinese traders in disseminating Islam in Java in the 15th and 16th centuries. This study supported the theory of China Islam by which the role of Chinese Muslims was very critical in the Islamization process in Indonesia, particularly in Java. Instead of promoting the theory of Arabs and India, Al Qurtuby disclosed the Chinese Muslim networks contributing to the conversion of local people to Islam. Indeed, those Chinese Muslim figures collaborated with several prominent preachers of the nine saints (*wali songo*) in teaching Islam in Java. Employed varied sources like European and Arab travellers' diaries, Chinese sources, local chronicles, and living local stories, Al Qurtuby showed what he named

³⁵ Badri Yatim, *Sejarah Peradaban Islam: Dirasah Islamiyah II*, 2nd edition (Jakarta: PT. Raja Grafindo Persada, 2000), pp. 201-7.

³⁶ Murodi et al., *Sejarah Kebudayaan Islam untuk Kelas 3 Madrasah Tsanawiyah* (Semarang: PT. Karya Toha Putra, 2003).

³⁷ Hew Wai Weng, *Chinese Ways of Being Muslim: Negotiating Ethnicity and Religiosity in Indonesia* (Denmark: Nias Press, 2018).

³⁸ *Ibid.*

the *Sino-Javanese subculture* in the 15th and 16th centuries and its impact on the Islamization of Java while also showing Chinese architectural influences on many local mosques.³⁹

D. Chinese Narratives in the Post-Soeharto Era: The Legacy of Abdurrahman Wahid

After the fall of the Suharto regime, the reform era began amid political changes driven by the people movement. However, a significant change in discrimination regulation against the Chinese ethnic group has not changed yet. Nevertheless, a traumatic impact caused by the anti-Chinese riot in May 1998 targeting the Chinese community was undoubtedly evident. Thousand Chinese left their homes to go overseas to avoid social unrest. Around 80.000 Chinese (1,5% of the Chinese population in Indonesia), mostly the wealthy middle and high class, were leaving Indonesia.

Right after his appointment as the third President of Indonesia, Burhanuddin Jusuf Habibie (B.J. Habibie), a technocrat figure and former vice President of Suharto, tried to evaluate state regulation on discrimination, especially that of minority groups. Accommodating the reform movement led by Amin Rais, a leading Muslim intellectual striving for democratisation and freedom, President Habibie opened political life by allowing more than 100 political parties (including Chinese political parties) to participate in the 1999 general election.⁴⁰

The fourth President of Indonesia, Abdurrahman Wahid (Gus Dur), elected in October 1999, made a bolder policy on abolishing discrimination towards minority groups. In 2000, the discrimination policy by the state upon Chinese groups was abolished. Gus Dur was a prominent Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) figure, the largest Muslim organisation promoting humanism, pluralism and democracy. Through his Presidential Decree number 6/2000, Gus Dur changed such a long-lasting racial regulation on the Chinese minority population run by the New Order government of Suharto. Subsequently, the alienated Confucianism was acknowledged by the state as a religion, giving freedom to Indonesian Chinese to practice their belief. Based on the decree, Gus Dur also

³⁹ Sumanto Al Qurtuby, *Arus Cina-Islam-Jawa* (Jogjakarta: Inspeal Press, 2013).

⁴⁰ Leo Suryadinata, "Kebijakan Negara Indonesia Terhadap Etnik Tionghoa: Dari Asimilasi ke Multikulturalisme?", *Antropologi Indonesia*, vol. 71 (2003), pp. 3, 9-10; Haryanto Aryodiguno, "Changes in Chinese-Indonesian Identity: Indonesianization or Re-sinization?", *AEGIS*, 5th edition, Vol. 3, No. 1 (2018), p. 12.

announced the freedom for the Chinese community to celebrate the *Imlek* as their annual festival. Since then, for the first time in Jakarta and Surabaya, the Chinese population celebrated the Imlek of 2551 in February 2000. In addition, Chinese schools were allowed to reopen, and Chinese students celebrating the *Imlek* were not mandated to gain absence permission from their schools since the state considered it as a national holiday.⁴¹ Instead of using the term China or *Cina* for Chinese people, President Wahid decided to use *Tionghoa* term for calling the Chinese community. The Chinese felt the term China or *Cina* was a kind of insulting label due to the severe relationship between Indonesia and mainland China in the past.⁴² In his presidency, Gus Dur also accommodated Chinese figures, like Kwik Kian Gie as his minister. He also supported political opportunities for Chinese descent in the legislative members (DPR) like Tjandra Wijaya Wong, Alvin Lie Ling Piao, Enggratiasto Lukito, and L.T. Susanto. At the same time, in the People's Consultative Assembly (MPR), there was Hartati Murdaya (Chow Lie Ing).⁴³ Following Gus Dur, President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono issued a President regulation no.135/2014, on the opening of a Directorate General of *Konghucu* in the Ministry of Religious Affairs (MORA).⁴⁴

President Wahid or Gus Dur's inclusive policy on minority China has generated new studies on Indonesian Chinese, among which is that by Symphony Akelba Christian. According to Christian, Indonesian culture, history, and power holders have been the major elements in making Chinese identity. Likewise, Suyadinata's study also emphasised the formation of Chinese identity and the nature of the government of Indonesia in defining the term "race" in the independence era. What we know as the Chinese identity, in fact, was more fluid than what the government had defined it.⁴⁵ Setefanus Suprajitno, in 2013, conducted a quite similar but more comprehensive study focusing on the formation of the identity of the Chinese community in Surabaya after the Suharto era.

Suprajitno noted that the recognition of Chinese ethnicity could

⁴¹ Faur Rasid, "Gus Dur dan Agama Khonghucu di Indonesia", Master Thesis (Jakarta: Fakultas Ushuluddin UIN Syarif Hidayatullah, 2017), p. 6.

⁴² Haryanto Aryodiguno, "Changes in Chinese-Indonesian", p. 14.

⁴³ Wasino, et al., "From Assimilation to Pluralism and Multiculturalism Policy: State Policy Towards Ethnic Chinese in Indonesia", *Paramita: Historical Studies Journal*, vol. 29, no. 2 (2019), p. 221.

⁴⁴ Faur Rasid, "Gus Dur dan Agama", p. 74.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 16; Symphony Akelba Christian, "Identitas Budaya Orang Tionghoa Indonesia", *Jurnal Cakrawala Mandarin*, vol. 1, no. 1 (2017), pp. 11-22.

be seen in the restoration of the three pillars of the Chinese community: Chinese language education, Chinese media and Chinese organisations. His anthropological fieldwork concluded that the Chinese in Indonesia were not a single entity that was static and easily changed. Instead, they were a heterogeneous society, reflected in their various articulations of interest and cultural identities. Of their diversity, the impacts of the restorations of the three pillars were varied. Indonesian Chinese responses to the re-emergence of Chineseness also differ, although they still encountered the same social and political problems: racial discrimination, marginalisation, stigmatisation and prejudice.⁴⁶ To some extent, what was found by Suprajitno was politically evident, as it happened in the case of Ahok (Basuki Tjahaya Purnama), who was running for Jakarta's gubernatorial candidacy in the governorship election 2017. Ahok, a minority Chinese and a Christian, was eventually losing when he became a suspect of blaspheming Islam. At the moment, the majority group employed religious sentiment, echoing the sense of Islamism and nativity of Indonesia (*pribumi*) versus the outsider of Chinese (*aseng*). Such political identity was symbolically marked by the religious movement on 2 December in Jakarta prior to the election, namely the 212 movement.⁴⁷

Gus Dur's policy has also been studied from an international relations (IR) point of view, such as Bakti Putra Dwivianto's work on the impact of Gus Dur's policy on Chinese ethnic groups on China-Indonesia bilateral relations.⁴⁸ Indeed, Gus Dur's effect on Indonesian Chinese can also be seen in the daily life of Indonesians, where Mandarin publications, like Chinese fortunes (*feng shui*), folklores, romans, et cetera, are easier to be found and Chinese language courses alike. Last but not least, during the Gus Dur era, many Indonesian Chinese organisations were established, such as the religious organisation of Confucianism (*Majelis Tinggi Agama Khonghucu Indonesia/MATAKIN*).

⁴⁶ Setefanus Suprajitno, "Chineseness is in the Eye of the Beholder: The Transformation of Chinese Indonesian After Reformasi", Ph.D. Thesis (Cornell University, 2013), p. 261.

⁴⁷ Wasino et al., "From Assimilation to Pluralism", p. 222.

⁴⁸ Bakti Putra Dwivianto, "Pengaruh Kebijakan Mengenai Etnis Tionghoa di Indonesia Era Pemerintahan Abdurrahman Wahid terhadap Hubungan Bilateral Indonesia dan Tiongkok", *Jurnal Analisis Hubungan Internasional*, vol. 5, no. 2 (2016).

1. *Updated version of SNI during Gus Dur Era*

It was during Gus Dur's regime that there were changes within the SNI; hence it was called the updated version of SNI (*Sejarah Nasional Indonesia Edisi Pemutakhiran*). The spirit of shifting paradigm initiated by Gus Dur on Indonesian Chineseness apparently sounded in the New SNI. Similar to the old SNI, the latest one consists of 6 volumes. However, an important change took place in the fourth volume. Different from the old SNI,⁴⁹ the new SNI broadened its discussion beyond what was familiar among historians, which was the term "the early modern period" where European influences upon the Indonesian Archipelago between the 16th and 17th centuries.

In the SNI new edition, the role of China traders was discussed, and the theory of China Islam or the contribution of China Muslims in the history of the spread of Islam in Indonesia was also discussed, in addition to two dominant theories of Islam from India and Arab. The theory of China Islam within the newest SNI was marked by the role of Admiral Cheng Ho during his trade mission in Indonesia. Local power holders of Melaka welcomed his presence to develop a Chinese trade emporium in the Archipelago. Cheng Ho was a trusted envoy of Yung Le (1402-1424) of the Ming dynasty in mainland China.⁵⁰ Unfortunately, such an important role of Cheng Ho was not elaborated further, especially regarding the Islamization process run by Chinese Muslim preachers.

The role of Chinese organisations was also still missing in the new SNI's discussion on the Era Kebangkitan Nasional (National Awakening Era) around the twentieth century. Rather than mentioning the role of Partai Tionghoa Indonesia within GAPI, as noted by Suryadinata above, the new SNI focused its discussion on the emergence and the role of women and youth movements in this era.⁵¹ The important missing event in the history of Chinese in Indonesia, namely the mass-riot anti-China in May 1998 was found in the new SNI's 6th volume, which contained the modern history of Indonesia from the Japanese occupation era to the fall of the Suharto regime. The anti-Chinese violence in 1998 marked a symbol of the decline of the military power of Suharto and the rise

⁴⁹ Marwati Djoened Poesponegoro and Nugroho Notokusanto (eds.), *Sejarah Nasional Indonesia IV* (Jakarta: Balai Pustaka, 1984).

⁵⁰ R.P. Soejono and R.Z. Leirissa (eds.), *Sejarah Nasional Indonesia (Edisi Pemutakhiran)*, vol. IV (Jakarta: Balai Pustaka, 2008), p. 10.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 394-436; Poesponegoro and Notokusanto, *Sejarah Nasional Indonesia. Al-Jāmi'ah*, Vol. 61, No. 1, 2023 M/1444 H

of reformation and democratisation.⁵² Though this volume addressed the situation triggering the decline of the new order of Suharto from monetary, political turbulences to social riots, it did not discuss any further the anti-Chinese rampage on 13 May 1998 that made them exodus to several neighbouring countries like Singapore, Bangkok, Hongkong, and Australia.⁵³ Meanwhile, studies on May 1998 tragedy had been conducted by many scholars and could have been included in the new SNI's narration.

E. New Narratives of Chinese Muslims in Indonesian Islam

The lack of representation and recognition of Chinese and Chinese Muslims in modern Indonesian history books calls for a rewriting of the Chinese narratives, both for the SNI and the history textbooks for schools. The abovementioned discussion has described that Chinese Muslims positively contributed to Indonesian economic, political, and religious life. Nevertheless, these roles were not comprehensively recognised in the state-made history references. Common readers and students only knew the version of Indonesian history where the Chinese dominated the economy, hence disadvantaging local people, and where the Chinese had nothing to do with the development of Islam in Indonesia. Without significant intervention from the educational institutions and the official historical reference, this could lead to negative sentiments and attitudes towards the Chinese in Indonesia. Therefore, new narratives of Chinese and Chinese Muslims are relevant to and needed in the current socio-political situation of Indonesia, where political identity was often used by political individuals from the majority group to discourage minority politicians such as those from Chinese descendants.

The following works of scholars on Chinese Islam in Indonesia can be useful sources for the rewritten narratives of Chinese and Chinese Muslims. The notable scholars, among many, are as follows.

1. Slamet Muljana

Although one of Muljana's works, *Runtuhnya Keradjaan Hindu-Djawa dan Timbulnya Negara-Negata Islam di Nusantara* has been a historical debate among the experts in the field, his account on the role of Chinese in the history of Islam in the Archipelago should be considered as a helpful

⁵² Chong Wu Ling, "Rethinking the Position of Ethnic Chinese Indonesians", *Sejarah*, vol. 25, no. 2 (2016), p. 102.

⁵³ Soejono and Leirissa (eds.), *Sejarah Nasional Indonesia*, VI: 665-70.

contribution in the representation of Chinese in indigenous perspective. In this work, Muljana discussed the incoming Chinese Muslim immigrants on the north coast of Java and their relationship with the local polity, Majapahit. Using two Javanese chronicles, Babad Tanah Jawa (BTJ) and Serat Kandal (SK), Muljana examined the history of Majapahit and the rise of early Muslim figures. To support his analysis of both sources, Muljana also assessed two Chinese archives of Semarang collected by Poortman, Chinese notes of Talang (*Babad Cerbon*), and European notes of Tome Pires.⁵⁴

The story of Islam in the BTJ, he said, began with a mythological tone: the king of Majapahit (Raden Alit or Brawijaya VII) dreamt of marrying a princess from Champa. Meanwhile, a female demon (*raksasi*) was eager to marry him. In order to marry Brawijaya VII, the demon had to change herself into a human being. From this marriage, Brawijaya VII had a son named Jaka Dilah or Arya Damar, who later ruled Palembang. From Arya Damar, the story of Raden Fatah, a Muslim ruler of Demak, can be traced.

Another story of Raden Fatah, as Muljana added, came from Brawijaya's second marriage with a Chinese princess, a daughter of his close friend, Kyai Bantong. This marriage was approved by his first wife, Dwarawati of Champa. Although she could not give Brawijaya a baby, Dwarawati's jealousy increased when she knew Brawijaya's younger wife was pregnant. Shortly after, she asked Brawijaya to send her back to Champa. Brawijaya asked Gajah Mada to bring his Chinese wife to Palembang, hoping his son, Arya Damar, would marry her after she gave birth to his son, Raden Fatah. Following his father's command, after she had given birth, Arya Damar married his father's former wife and had a baby, namely Kusen.⁵⁵

In addition, referring to the BTJ, Muljana says, the king of Champa (Brawijaya's father-in-law) had converted to Islam because of the presence of a Muslim missionary, Makdum Ibrahim. Later on, Makdum Ibrahim was married by the king to his daughter or Dwarawati's sister. In other words, since he married Dwarawati's sister, Makdum Ibrahim became King Brawijaya's brother-in-law. From his marriage to the princess of Champa, Makdum Ibrahim had two sons: Raden Rachmat and Raden

⁵⁴ Slamet Muljana, *Runtuhnya Keradjaan Hindu Djawa dan Timbulnya Negara2 Islam di Nusantara*, (Jakarta: Bharata, 1968), pp. 46-87.

⁵⁵ Muljana, "Runtuhnya Keradjaan Hindu", pp. 47-8.

Santri.⁵⁶ Raden Rachmat visited his aunt (Dwarawati) in Majapahit, north of Java. There he fell in love with a Majapahit girl, the daughter of Tumenggung Wilatikta, Ni Gede Manila. He married her and moved to Ampel Denta. As a religious teacher of Ampel, Raden Rachmat was well-known through his nickname, Sunan Ngampel.⁵⁷ Slightly different from the BTJ, Muljana notes, in Serat Kanda (SK), the Majapahit king is not recognised as Brawijaya but Angkawidjaya, who married a female demon, Ni Endang Sasmitapura.⁵⁸

Apart from these different names of King Majapahit's wives mentioned either in the BTJ or the SK, the existence of the Chinese community can be traced to Kiyai Bantong, King Angkawidjaya's father-in-law. According to the SK, the king gave Kiyai Bantong a piece of land for the Chinese community living in his reign.⁵⁹ On the other hand, Sayid Rachmat (or Raden Rachmat of the BTJ) was a son of the priest Mustakim of Champa. Perhaps, he was Makdum Ibrahim, as mentioned in the BTJ. After his arrival from Mecca, Sayid Rachmat visited his aunt Dwarawati in Majapahit. Accompanied by his brother, Djenalkabir, Sayid Rachmat stayed in Kudus and married a Javanese girl, Nyai Lara Ngunjun, but he continued his travel to Majapahit, leaving his wife pregnant. In Majapahit Sayid Rachmat was welcomed by King Angkawidjaya. Similar to the BTJ, according to the SK, in Majapahit, he married Tumenggung Wilatika's daughter, Ni Gede Manila.⁶⁰

Ngampel was well known as a centre of Islam where many Muslim scholars lived. Some of them were Sayid Iskak from Arab; Raden Rachmat (or Sayid Rachmat)'s uncle, Sayid Ibrahim or Maulana Mahribi; Said Ali (Sunan Gesang); and Sayid Akbar. The SK says Raden Patah, son of Brawijaya (or Angkawidjaya of the BTJ), was born in Palembang. Raden Patah went to Ngampel and met Raden Rachmat (Sunan Ngampel). On a suggestion by Sunan Ngampel, Raden Patah moved to Demak in 1326 Saka, married Retna Mulia (the daughter of Sunan Giri), and built a mosque.⁶¹

In addition to his narrative on Chinese Muslim origins, Muljana enriches it with Chinese archives collected by Ir. M. O. Parlindungan

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 48.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 49.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 57.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 58.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 58.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 60.

in his book, *Tuanku Rao*.⁶² According to Parlindungan, the connection between Islamism and Chineseness is so apparent that most well-known Muslim figures propagating Islam in Java are interconnected with saints of nine (*wali songo*) whose origins are Chinese. In this regard, the validity of Parlindungan's source also prompted historiographical debates among scholars.⁶³ However, according to Parlindungan, he obtained the manuscripts from Poortman, a Dutch residence, due to the request of the colonial government in 1928 to collect Chinese manuscripts in Sam Po Kong temple of Semarang (Central Java) to figure out whether Raden Patah was a Chinese descendent.⁶⁴

In the temple, Poortman found a number of Chinese manuscripts drawing on the existence of Panembahan Djin Bun alias Raden Patah. According to Muljana, Poortman's file regarding the existence of Raden Patah is the same as the BTJ and the SK's explanation, recognising him as Senapati Djimbun and Penambahan Djimbun, respectively. According to Poortman's archives, Djin Bun is a Chinese word meaning a powerful person, although it is not mentioned in Chinese manuscripts of the Ming dynasty.⁶⁵ In addition, Sam Po Kong's chronicle is dated in the Chinese calendar; perhaps it was written in 1411 AD.⁶⁶

Drawing a parallel with Poortman's, Muljana seems very convinced that Arya Damar (Swan Liong), Raden Patah (Djin Bun) and Raden Kusen (Kin San) were of Chinese origins: they were Majapahit's offspring from a Chinese princess. From their Chinese mother, they inherited perseverance and a hard-working spirit, while from Majapahit, they obtained leadership

⁶² Muljana said that Parlindungan was his former teacher. Parlindungan book, *Tuanku Rao*, was published in Jakarta in 1964. According to Muljana, Poortman was very cautious in identifying his finding. His strong carefulness was shown from his use of the term "supposition" through his academic analysis dealing with the comparison of various names mentioned in the BTJ and Pararaton translated by Dr. J. Brandes. See Mangaradja Onggang Parlindungan, *Pongkinangolngolan Sinambela Gelar Tuanku Rao: Terror Agama Islam Mazhab Hambali di Tanah Batak 1816-1833* (Penerbit Tandjung Pengharapan, 1964).

⁶³ Ann L. Kumar, "Islam, the Chinese, and Indonesian Historiography—A Review Article", *The Journal of Asian Studies*, vol. 46, no. 3 (1987), pp. 607-8.

⁶⁴ Muljana, "Runtuhnya Keradjaan Hindu", p. 64.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 64. According to Muljana, Poortman's mission was secret. The finding was only for limited people in the colonial government, used for political stability in Java, especially among Muslims, at the main time. Muljana says that the finding would make Chinese community in Java proud of their ancestor (Raden Patah) who had played an important role in the history of Java and Islam.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 68.

and courageous character. For example, at twenty-three years of age, Djin Bun defeated Majapahit after 184 years of power and sent his armies to Melaka. Meanwhile, Swan Liong was well-known as a Chinese captain and a Majapahit trader in Palembang. Quoting Poortman, Muljana noted that during Djin Bum's leadership in Demak, initially, most Chinese people came from Mainland China: Yunnan and Swatow.⁶⁷

Based on these manuscripts, Muljana concluded that Sunan Ngampel was no more than Bong Swi Hoo (grandson of Champ ruler of Bong Tak Keng) coming from Yunnan to Java in 1445 and marrying Ni Gede Manila, a daughter of Gan Eng Tju alias Arya Teja, a Chinese captain of Tuban. Later on, Bong Swi Hoo had a son, Sunan Bonang, a member of the nine saints of Java.⁶⁸ Likewise, Muljana added that Sunan Kali Jaga, who was identified by the BTJ as one of those nine saints (*wali songo*) with his Javanese name of Raden Said, was supposedly a son of Gan Eng Tju (Arya Teja) whose Chinese name was Gan Si Tjang. Gan Si Tjan was appointed by Kin San as a Chinese captain in Semarang. When Gan Eng Tju came to Demak, Djin Bun welcomed him to join Kin San in building a mosque in Demak. Muljana also noted the relationship between Sunan Gunung Djati and Sunan Kali Jaga (Gan Eng Tju). Supporting the SK's explanation of Sunan Gunung Djati's participation in establishing Demak's Mosque, Muljana referred to Chinese archives, namely Sam Po Kong manuscripts of Talang (Cerbon or Cirbon). Accordingly, Sunan Gunung Djati, the founder of the Cirebon state (1552), was one of Demak's army commanders who came to Demak and joined Gan Si Tjan and Kin San in building the mosque. Gunung Djati himself was recognised as Toh A Bo, a son of Tung Ka Lo alias Sultan Trenggana.⁶⁹ Other figures among the nine saints were Sunan Bonang (Raden Rachmat's son) and Sunang Giri (Sayid Iskak's son).⁷⁰ According to Poortman's archives, although they did not speak Chinese, they were of Chinese origins learning Islam from Bong Swi Hoo (Sunan Ampel/ Ngampel).

Not only did Muljana rely on those local sources, but he also supported his data on Chinese Muslims in Java with Tome Pires' notes.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 68-9.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 103.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 106-7

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 109. Sayid Iskak or Wali Lanang (BTJ) was Maulana Iskak or Malik Iskak from Pasai of Sumatera. He was son of Bong Tak Keng, a ruler of Champ, and Raden Rachmat's uncle who came from Champ to Java to spread Islam.

For example, in the case of Adipati Unus, Muljana compared Pires' notes with Poortman's archive (Sam Po Kong of Semarang). While Pires said that the origin of Pati Unus was from West Kalimantan, Poortman's archives draw that Pati Unus was no other than Yat Sun, son of Djin Bun (Raden Patah) of Demak. According to Muljana, in this case, Poortman's archives were more reliable than Pires', especially regarding Pati Unus' origin. Since Pati Unus did not live in Demak but in Jepara, Pires assumed that he could not be the son of Demak but Rodin Muda or Tung Ka Lo (Raden Trenggana, the brother of Yat Sun).⁷¹

Another important point on early Chinese Muslims of Java in Muljana's book was the relationship between Bong Tak Keng (Bong Swi Hoo's grandpa, alias the king of Champ as mentioned by the BTJ and the SK) and Admiral Cheng Ho, who was sent by emperor Yung-lo to maintain diplomatic relations between China and Southeast Asian states (Nan Yang). Bong Tak Keng himself was a coordinator of Chinese communities in Nan Yang, appointed by the emperor in 1419.⁷² Furthermore, based on this evidence, Muljana suggested that Islam in Java was not propagated by Muslim traders from Melaka or Pasai (North Sumatra) but by Chinese traders from Champ and Yunnan mandated by Emperor Yung-lo to maintain commercial and political connections with Southeast Asia under the leadership of Admiral Cheng Ho.⁷³ However, after the decline of Yung-lo's power, the connection between China and Southeast Asia began to cease. As a result, following the discontinuity of Yun-lo's mission in Southeast Asia, the relationship between China and its sojourns in Java weakened. Eventually, as a preacher, Bong Swi Hoo (Raden Rachmat/Sunan Ampel) started to develop a Muslim community in Ngampel (now Surabaya). Since 1451, Muljana asserts, Bing Swi Hoo prepared to establish an Islamic state in Demak ruled by his disciple, Raden Patah, alias Djin Bun.⁷⁴

2. *De Graff and Pigeaud*

Another comprehensive study on Javanese Islam that can be included in the narrative of Chinese Muslims was conducted by two

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 117-9.

⁷² *Ibid.*, p. 166. Chinese communities widespread in many important trading centers and three Chinese captains that Bong Tak Keng appointed as the leaders were Swan Liong (Arya Damar) of Palembang, Gan Eng Tju of Tuban, and Bong Swi Hoo of Brantas Kiri.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 169.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 170.

Dutch historians, de Graff and Pigeaud. Both historians focused their study on Parlindungan's archives received from Poortman entitled *Malays annal of Semarang and Cerbon*. This study was a comparative analysis of Parlindungan's texts on Chinese Muslims pointed out in his *Tuankeu Rao* (1964?) with the local and foreign sources: Javanese chronicles (*Babad*), original Chinese, European (Portuguese, Dutch and English), and Indian sources.⁷⁵ The authors noted that the Malay Annals collected by Parlindungan were quite problematic as a reference study on Islam and Chineseness in Indonesia. Both historians expressed their cautiousness, especially with Parlindungan's narrative marked by "supposition". In addition, according to them, editorial problems of the Malay Annals included: the lack of verification and disapproval of its collectors of separate data in the book, such as Poortman himself, Parlindungan and people before them.⁷⁶ To reduce unreliable elements in the Malay annals, both historians mentioned that collation efforts of the texts with other historical sources were necessarily needed.

Employing Groeneveldt's notes and the continental Chinese texts, Graaf and Pigeaud examined Parlindungan texts relating to Sam Po Bo. Accordingly, Sam Po Bo was the name given throughout the Malay annals to the famous Chinese Admiral, Cheng Ho. However, Admiral Cheng Ho was not mentioned in Parlindungan texts.⁷⁷ Likewise, some years regarding Chinese Muslims in Java mentioned in Parlindungan's texts (years of 1413, 1419, 1423, and 1424-1449) were not in accordance with the information from the continental Chinese texts. De Graff and Pigeaud argued that Cheng Ho did not depart Fukien before January 1414, as this was the date of his fourth expedition. Surprisingly, Ma Huan, Cheng Ho's interpreter and the writer of his expedition, did include Semarang among the four towns of Java, which he mentioned in his travel notes. As such, de Graff and Pigeaud concluded, "Cheng Ho's staying in Semarang for a month was unlikely to be true."⁷⁸

A few names like Nyi Ageng Manila and Bong Swi Hoo (Raden Rachmat or Sunan Ngampel) in Parlindungan texts were also assessed by Graff and Pigeaud. Referring to Javanese resources (*babad*), they were convinced that Nyi Ageng Manila (Nyi Gde Manila) was the wife

⁷⁵ H.J. de Graaf and Th. G.Th. Pigeaud, "Chinese Muslims in Java in the 15th and 16th Centuries", *Monash Papers on Southeast Asia*, vol. 12 (1984), p. 48.

⁷⁶ Graaf and Pigeaud, "Chinese Muslims", pp. 2-6.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 51.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 55.

of Raden Rachmat. “Her marriage with Sayyid Rachmat, later called Sunan Ngampel, who was also a foreigner born in Champa, according to Javanese tradition,” they said, “would have been most suitable.” Indeed, they pointed out, in accordance with Raden Rachmat’s Champ origin, that both Javanese and Chinese archives were the same.⁷⁹ The similarity between Parlindungan’s texts and Javanese *babad* also occurred in the story of the relationship between Arya Damar (a Muslim officer of Majapahit in Palembang) and three Chinese Muslim figures in Java: Raden Rachmat, Raden Patah (Djin Bun) of Demak and Raden Husen (Kin San) of Semarang.⁸⁰

Finally, Graff and Pigeaud concluded that Parlindungan’s texts as “recapitulation”.⁸¹ This recapitulation supports Pigeaud’s continued discussion of the fourteenth-century Java, as written in his *Java in the 14th century*. Due to the continuity of Chinese and Indian presence in Java in the fourteenth century, the number of Chinese traders from the Champ and Southern provinces of China increased. Their presence had impacted the emergence of coastal trading centres in Java, where Muslim traders inhabited. Probably, both said, those Chinese Muslims had been there as early as the twelfth century.⁸²

3. *Denis Lombard and Claudine Salmon*

Enriched Muljana’s and Graff and Pigeaud’s works, Denis Lombard and Claudine Salmon extended their coverage of Chineseness in Indonesia and their access to European resources from the 17th century onwards, including Chinese tombstones, Chinese architectural heritages, literature, and contemporary social and Islamic religious activities. In their article “Islam and Chineseness”, both French historians began their discussions with the importance of Chinese Muslim traders in Canton coast of Southern China in the early 9th century. Accordingly, their importance of trading in this coastal area continued up to the 13th and 14th centuries when they employed Quanzhou as their main trading

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 60.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 66.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 171-190. This section contains of ten items: social order; religion; economy and trade; material culture; art, language and literature; plays and games; political organization; the Majapahit court; the royal family of Majapahit; and the rise of the sultanate of Cerbon.

⁸² *Ibid.*, p. 172.

port connecting with Champa and Java alike.⁸³

Similar to Muljana and de Graaf-Pigeaud, Lombard and Salmon employed Chinese Ma Huan sources to demonstrate some Chinese persons living in Java, such as Nyai Pinatih, who was born in Palembang from Chinese origin and converted to Islam. Later on, Pinatih took care of Raden Paku, the first lord of Giri (East Java). In addition, referring to a Chinese Muslim community in Surabaya, they mentioned *Pecat Tanda*, “the head of Market” of Terung (near Surabaya) within Majapahit’s reign, who was responsible for protecting Chinese immigrants from Champa. Then, *Pecat Tanda* was known as Raden Rachmat.⁸⁴

Different from previous studies on the Chinese Muslim communities in the 14th -15th centuries Java, Lombard and Salmon extended their discussion by showing evidence of Chinese Muslims in the 17th century as written in Dutch and English archives. Accordingly, since the beginning of the 17th century, Chinese Muslim dignitaries were found in Javanese ports and other important ports in outer Java. Quoting Edmund Scott (1603-1605), Lombard and Salmon said that those Chinese trading in Banten were Muslims. As noted by John Jourdain (1614) and Cornelis Buysero (1617), two advisors of the regent of Banten and its high officers were Chinese Muslims.⁸⁵ In addition, Lombard and Salmon mentioned some Chinese Muslim Captains (*Syabbandar*) of Banten and other ports in West Java, notably *Kyai*⁸⁶ Abdul Wakki (1656), Sincko alias Abdul Mopit (1682), Lim Lacco (d. 1645), So Bing Kong, and Kyai Aria Martanata.⁸⁷

As Dutch engagement in the Archipelago increased from the 18th century onwards, data on the Chinese Muslims were more varied and easier to access. According to Lombard and Salmon, Dutch archives recorded events related to Chinese social life, particularly their conversion to Islam and their assimilation to local tradition in many regions other than Java: Aceh, Makassar (Celebes), Muntok of Bangka, and Palembang.⁸⁸ In this sense, Chinese villages (*Kampung Peranakan*) and Chinese cultural identities appeared and can be accounted as further evidence of their

⁸³ Denys Lombard and Claudine Salmon, “Islam and Chineseness”, *Indonesia*, no. 57 (1994), pp. 115-116.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 116.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 117.

⁸⁶ *Kyai* is a Javanese title for religious teacher; see Lombard and Salmon, “Islam and Chineseness”, p. 118.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 118-120.

contribution to local tradition. For example, Banten's *Mesjid Pecinan* (Chinese Mosque) traditionally symbolised the Chinese *Peranakan* groups; the *Mesjid Krukut* of Jakarta (founded in 1785) was attributed to its founder of Tamien Dosol Seeng, a Captain Commander of *Peranakan*; a famous tomb of Lady Cai dated 1792 which is close to *Mesjid Kebon Jeruk* of Jakarta; and Muslim tombstones with Chinese inscription in the mosque of Angke (north Jakarta).⁸⁹

Lombard and Salmon also considered Chinese influences on mosque buildings as evidence of their contribution to the pattern of Islam in Indonesia: the pagoda image was easily recognised in *Mesjid Jepara* (Central Java) as well as the image of the circular door of Suzhou's gardens in the ancient architecture of *Mesjid Hasan Suleiman* of Ambon in the Moluccas. In addition to these Chinese architectural influences, both France historians asserted that the existence of some Chinese tombstones of the 15th and 16th centuries, such as the tomb of Nyai Pinatih at Gresik, the tomb of Chinese Captain known as Pangeran Hadiri at Mantingan, the tomb of Kiyai Thelingsing at Kudus, the tomb of Mas Jong and Bagus Jong at Banten, and the tomb of Admiral Zheng He, were believed to be Chinese contribution to Islamization in those regions. People have been visiting these sacred tombstones (*keramat*) for centuries to seek blessings (*barakah*).⁹⁰

Finally, Lombard and Salmon noted Chinese Muslim *Peranakan* literary contributions to Islamization in Indonesia in 19th century Java and their Islamic propagations (*dakwah*) in the 20th century of Indonesia. A spiritual corpus (*Serat Tasawuf*), namely *Bab Kawroeb Agama Islam*, was written by Tan Ing Soen and printed in Surakarta in 1853; *Sjair Ilmoe Sedjati dan Sjair Nasehat* was written by Kyai Kiem Mas (1834-1896). Kyai Kiem Mas, recognised as Tjekong Mas or Kyai Mas Asemgiri, had many disciples (*santri*). His tombstone has been one of the *keramat* sites in East Java where people usually come to obtain blessings. In relation to Chinese *Peranakan* contribution to Islamization among the Chinese community in contemporary Indonesia, both Lombard and Salmon concluded that the role of Muslim *Peranakan* in various *dakwah* and Islamic associations was evident.⁹¹

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 121. See also "Tapak Cina di Batu Kuburan", *Tempo* (30 Aug 1980), <https://majalah.tempo.co/read/ilustrasi/53739/tapak-cina-di-batu-kuburan>, accessed 30 Jun 2022.

⁹⁰ Lombard and Salmon, "Islam and Chineseness", p. 123.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 128-131.

These notable works by Indonesian and European historians are valuable, comprehensive references to Chinese Muslims and their roles in Indonesian Islam in the past and present, which could be included in the new narratives of Indonesian history or Indonesian Islam history. These studies have shown the significant impact and roles of Chinese figures and religious leaders in the Islamization process in Java. Including these references in the new narration of Indonesian history will not only enrich the historical facts that the Chinese Muslims also disseminated Islam but also will break long-withstanding negative stereotypes towards the Chinese ethnics by the majority group.

F. Concluding Remarks

The politics of anti-Communism held by the New Order, which initially referred to Beijing, was the main reason for the unproportionate representation of Chinese in Indonesia's national historical narrative of the *Sejarah Nasional Indonesia* (SNI) and history textbooks for educational institutions. The anti-Beijing government of Suharto had ignored the historical importance of the Chinese, as marked by the absence of recognition towards the Chinese in the state-made historical references. The New Order's assimilation policy also contributed to the absence of an integrated Chinese history in Indonesia's national historiography. The old SNI reflected the combination of these two. However, there were changes, though not much, indicating the importance of the Chinese in the latest updated SNI and history books for schools and universities in the post-Suharto era. The state policy under President Wahid upon the Chinese minority group made the history of Chinese or *Tionghoa* in Indonesia re-making. President Wahid's extraordinary policy has been the historical breakthrough of the Indonesian Chinese community to rejuvenate their three pillars of identity of Chineseness: language education, media, and organisations. President Wahid's humanist policy on the Chinese group in 2000 was the main reason for the changing perspective on the existence of Indonesian Chinese.

This study has pointed out some significant points of history regarding the Chinese and Chinese Muslims in Indonesia that were unwritten in the national history and provided supporting references for the narrative rewriting. Further study on Chinese in Indonesia remains in need. Studies about Chinese contribution to Indonesian Islam can be further explored, especially regarding religious literature, architecture,

trade, and politics. Re-reading sources from different perspectives and rewriting the history textbooks for Islamic schools and universities, including comprehensive studies and findings on the Chinese contribution to Islam, are urgently needed. As this study has shown that Chinese and Islam in Indonesia were positively related and contributed, it is expected that this scholarly endeavor will help eliminate the use of religion as a weapon for political identity.

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