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Negotiating the Confucian Religion in Indonesia:  
Invention, Resilience and Revival (1900 – 2010)

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A dissertation

Submitted in partial fulfillment of  
the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

University of Washington

2018

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Program Authorized to Offer Degree:

Anthropology

University of Washington

**Abstract**

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This dissertation investigates the process of inventing and negotiating the idiosyncratic Confucian religion in Indonesia. Widely known as a philosophy or ethics, even in China, its original place, I trace the trajectory that framed Confucianism as a religion from the period of Dutch colonialism (1900-1945) to post-colonial Indonesia (1945-2010). Combining historical methods and ethnography, I demonstrate the transformation, change, continuity and revival of religious ideas and practices, as well as the struggles of its believers to promote and institutionalize them in the contemporary time. The invention of the Confucian religion, I argue, was a result of the transmission of ideas and knowledge about Chinese culture and religion, which travelled globally from China to Europe and, eventually, from Europe to the Dutch East Indies, later known as Indonesia. The unavoidable influence of Christianity and modernity took place during a period when European knowledge came to the Dutch colony through the medium of printing materials. Ideas also traveled within the intra-Asian network, particularly from Singapore and China, where Confucian revival movements were inaugurated in the end of the nineteenth century. Both routes, however, were also influenced by Western ideas of religion. My analysis of Confucianism's invention sheds light on the multiple layers of translation politics and

the contestation of different interpretations about Confucianism, which involved different actors, whose power and sources of knowledge varied.

During different regimes of the Indonesian post-colonial period (1945-2010), I investigate the problematic position of the Confucian religion under the rise of Indonesian nationalism, hostility against China and communism, and practices of religious governance and cultural citizenship. Under strong pressures from Islamic majority groups, the Indonesian government began to apply “Belief in One and Omnipotent God.” Confucian adherents were not exempt from this principle, and thus the Confucian religion took its unique form, in part, to accommodate the Indonesian state’s criteria of religion. Despite efforts to comply with the state’s criteria of a religion, the Indonesian government under Suharto’s authoritarian regime (1966-1998) eventually degraded Confucianism to a sect in 1977. My analysis of the Indonesian state’s practices of governing religion demonstrates an alternative to secularism and the ways the state benefits from religious citizenship.

I analyze the Confucian believers’ complex survival strategies to cope with the Soeharto’s oppression. These strategies combined non-confrontational yet persistent bargains for their civil rights, the adoption of Indonesian principles and values, agentive maintenance of their connection with Chinese culture, legal actions against the Indonesian government, and raising of international awareness and support. The combination of passive and active agencies ensured resilience of their religiosity during and revival after Suharto’s regime, which ended in 1998. In the post-reformation regimes (1998-2010), Confucian believers revived their religion under the Indonesian government’s restorative policies and facilitation. I examine their efforts to reinvigorate the shrinking Confucian community, to re-connect themselves with China and to become involved in the global Confucian movement

## **Dedication**

For:

Widjajanti

Andri V. Harianja

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## **Acknowledgment**

I am indebted to many people who helped me at different stages of this dissertation research and writing. I thank to my dissertation committee for providing valuable and constructive feedback to enrich this dissertation, I also acknowledge that each of them has contributed in specific ways. From Celia Lowe, the chair of my committee, I learned how to make strategic decisions during the dissertation research and writing. I benefitted from Ann Anagnost's dissertation writing workshops for Anthropology graduate students, which proved to be a constructive forum to improve writing skills and to provide reviews among students. I owe Laurie Sears my understanding of history and Southeast Asia as well as abundant emotional support during my study. Kyoko Tokuno provided a great resource for deepening my understanding in Chinese philosophy and religions. I have been fortunate enough to have had the opportunity to meet with and learn from Charles (Biff) Keyes and Francesco (Kiko) Benitez, through whom I started my interests in the Anthropology of Religion and Confucianism. I thank Vincente Rafael who served as my representative during the dissertation defense and provided me resources and ideas for improving my dissertation.

I gratefully acknowledge the sponsors that provided financial support during my doctoral study at the University of Washington, Seattle. During the first three years, I received generous funding from the Fulbright Presidential scholarship. My dissertation research had been supported by the Anthropology Department Pre-Dissertation Research Grant and Jane and Charles Keyes Graduate Student Travel Grant. I received funding from the Southeast Asian Center and the University of Washington Libraries to preserve rare and endangered Confucian periodicals and Sino-Malay publications. During the last year of my study, the Chiang Ching-Kuo Foundation for International Scholarly Exchange in Taiwan provided dissertation writing grant.

While conducting research in Indonesia, I received help from many people. My huge debt is to the Confucian community in the *Boen Bio*, Surabaya. They welcomed me to be a part of their community and generously shared their stories with me. I enjoyed their patience, warmth, and humor. They accepted and tolerated what must have seemed my peculiar questions and curiosity. My special thanks go to Liem Tiong Yang, Siok Tjoe, Gatot Santoso, Bingky Irawan, Soekotjo, Budi Wijaya, Lany Guito, Surya Tan, Cakra Kelana, Sioe Ling, Aety, Arta Dewangga, Charles Tee, Anuraga, Tan Djin Meng, Handoko, Cik Ho Lan and pak Tho. The Confucian priests and activists in Solo and Jakarta generously shared their knowledge. The late Hs. Tjhie Tjay Ing, Budi S. Tanuwibowo, and Kris Tan have helped enormously with their hard work, friendship and humor. I could not have completed this project without them.

I have benefitted from the intellectual stimulation of my graduate student fellows in the Department of Anthropology at the University of Washington, Seattle, for which I am grateful. Yu Huang, Cheryll Alipio, Hsun-hui Tseng, Mia Siscawati, Trang Ta, Bonnie Tilland, Gladys Ge Jian, Joyce LeCompte, Luo Juan, Ulil Amri, Steph Cruz, Imam Subkhan, Anna Zogas, Acquanda Stanford, and Hollis Miller have shared with me the path of doctoral study with cheerful help, encouragement and strategies to survive. Hollis Miller and Anna Zogas offered extremely helpful and fastidious copyediting for my grant proposals and dissertation draft. Luo Juan helped me to investigate several Chinese sources and texts.

The Southeast Asian Studies community at the University of Washington, Seattle, provided intellectual stimulation and warm friendship. The gatherings with late Chris Grorud, Micaela Campbell, Pauli Sandjaja, Allan Lumba, Hoang Ngo, Christopher Brown, Christina and Senggo Sunardi, Judith Henchy, Tikka Sears were filled with friendship and lively discussions about life, theory and everything in between. The habit and enjoyment continued when

Hongxuan Lin, Ulil Amri, Imam Subkhan, Shannon Bush, Dimas Iqbal Romadhon, and Choirun Nisa Ristanty joined the community.

I wish to acknowledge many friends who were supportive and encouraging during the dissertation research and writing, either directly or indirectly. In Seattle, Arlene Lev, Christopher Brown, Anja Pryor, Harriet Phinney and Adam Berger have offered help and support in various ways. The Indonesian graduate student community in Seattle offered a home away from home. *Beribu terima kasih* to James Sasongko, Binziad Khadafi, Bivitri Susanti, Alfitri, Oktavianus Sinaga, Herliana Omara, Amira Paripurna, Linda Sulistyowati, Ulil Amri, Imam Subkhan, Dimas Iqbal Romadhon and their families for warm and cheerful gatherings with delicious food. From Indonesia, I benefitted intellectual exchanges with Sony Karsono and his wife, Nurchayati. Augustine continuously boosted up my spirit that I can finish my study. In Amsterdam, tante Sumi taught me to manage my positive energy, particularly during the roughest time in my life. Thanks to the telecommunication technology, Zhang Xia in Portland, OR, continued to be good intellectual partner over Skype conversation. In a Facebook group, I enjoyed exchanges of ideas, e-book and digital archive with Elizabeth Chandra, Didi Kwartanada, Sutrisno Murtiyoso, Endy Saputro, and Agni Malagina.

I also wish to acknowledge my mother and siblings for their encouragement to my academic interest even though our family is deeply rooted in business activities for living. My mother, who could not pursue higher education due to extreme poverty in her youth, considers my doctoral study an indirect fulfillment of her teenage dream to be a lawyer. My father died in 2012. It grieves me that he is not here to enjoy my achievement.

My two sons, Julius and Justinus, gave up their childhood in Indonesia and their bonds with Indonesian friends to start a new life adventure with their mother in Seattle. I am forever grateful to their love, support and understanding for their busy mom. It was an unforgettable

moment when both of them were busy cooking for their mom who was preparing her doctorate candidacy exam. Andri Harianja, my husband, flew from Amsterdam to Seattle, Indonesia and China to accompany me during my fieldwork. I benefitted enormously from his Chinese skills, endless and strong support, warmth, and patience, which served as a sanctuary after exhausting periods of writing. Andri's difficult life as an Indonesian exile had hindered him to obtain a degree higher than bachelor. As in the case of my mother, he considers my academic achievement as an indirect fulfillment of his dream. I dedicate this dissertation with much respect and love to my mother and my husband.

## **Note on Spelling**

Following the daily use by the Confucian communities in Indonesia, this dissertation keeps names, places and keywords in Hokkien dialect. I will provide the Mandarin version, the simplified Chinese characters, and English translation whenever available. The names, places and keywords in the Indonesian language follow the official spelling, which has been used since 1972.

## List of Terms and Abbreviations

|                      |   |
|----------------------|---|
| <i>Barongsay</i>     | Lion or dragon dance  |
| BPUPKI               | <i>Badan Penyelidik Usaha-usaha Persiapan Kemerdekaan</i> (The Investigative Committee for the Preparation of the Indonesia's Independence) |
| <i>Bunsu</i>         | <i>Wenshi</i> , 文士, The middle rank Confucian priest, commonly abbreviated as Ws.   |
| CHH                  | <i>Chung Hwa Hui</i> , Zhong Hua Hui, 中华会, the Chinese People Association   |
| <i>Cio Ko</i>        | see <i>King Hao Peng</i>  |
| DEROKH               | <i>Dewan Rokhaniwan Khonghucu</i> , The Confucian Priests Council   |
| GAPAKSI              | <i>Gabungan Perkumpulan Agama Khonghucu se-Indonesia</i> , The Union of Confucian Associations in Indonesia                                 |
| Golkar               | Golongan Karya  |
| <i>Haksu</i>         | <i>Xueshi</i> , 学士, the highest rank Confucian priest, commonly abbreviated as Xs.  |
| HCCH                 | <i>Hoa Ch'iao Chung Hui</i> , <i>Hua Qiao Zong Hui</i> , 华侨总会, the Overseas Chinese National Association                                    |
| HVA                  | <i>Handelsvereeniging van Amsterdam</i> , the Commerce Association of Amsterdam   |
| ICA                  | International Confucian Association   |
| <i>Kao Sing</i>      | <i>Jiaosheng</i> , 教生, the low rank Confucian priest, commonly abbreviated as Js.   |
| KKH                  | <i>Khong Kauw Hwee</i> , <i>Kong Jiao Hui</i> , 孔教会, the Confucian Association  |
| <i>King Hao Peng</i> | <i>Jing He Ping</i> , 敬和平, the hungry ghost festival.   |
| LASKI                | <i>Lembaga Agama Sang Khongcu Indonesia</i> (the Foundation of the Confucius' Religion in Indonesia)  |
| MAKIN                | <i>Majelis Agama Khonghucu Indonesia</i> , the Council of Confucian Religion in Indonesia   |

|                     |  |
|---------------------|--|
| MATAKIN             | <i>Majelis Tinggi Agama Khonghucu Indonesia</i> , the High Council of Confucian Religion in Indonesia            |
| MPRS                | <i>Majelis Permusyawaratan Rakyat Sementara</i> , the interim People's Consultative Assembly                     |
| <i>Orde Baru</i>    | New Order or Suharto's regime (1966-1998)  |
| <i>Peranakan</i>    | mixed-blood or hybrid origin   |
| PHDI                | <i>Parisadha Hindu Dharma Indonesia</i> , the Hindu Dharma Association of Indonesia                              |
| PKCHI               | <i>Perserikatan K'ung Chiao Hui Indonesia</i> , the Association of Kong Jiao Hui in Indonesia                    |
| PKI                 | <i>Partai Komunis Indonesia</i> , the Indonesian Communist Party   |
| PRC                 | People's Republic of China   |
| PTI                 | <i>Partai Tionghoa Indonesia</i> , the Chinese Indonesian Party  |
| PTITD               | <i>Perhimpunan Tempat Ibadah Tri-Dharma Indonesia</i> , the Federation of the Three-Teachings Worshipping Places |
| <i>Rohaniwan</i>    | Priest   |
| <i>Sam Kaww</i>     | <i>San Jiao</i> , 三教, Three-Teachings, see Tri-Dharma  |
| SGSK                | <i>Seri Genta Suci Konfusiani</i> (the Confucian Holy Bell Serial)   |
| <i>Shang-ti</i>     | <i>Shangdi</i> , 上帝, the Chinese concept of God originated in Shang dynasty                                      |
| SKH                 | <i>Sam Kaww Hwee</i> , <i>San Jiao Hui</i> , 三教会, the Association of Three Teachings                             |
| <i>Su Si/Su Shi</i> | <i>Si Shu</i> , 四書, Four Books or Confucian Classics   |
| <i>Tay Hak</i>      | <i>Da Xue</i> , 大学, the Book of Great Learning, the first part of <i>Su Si</i>                                   |
| THHK                | <i>Tiong Hoa Hwee Koan</i> , <i>Zhong Hua Hui Guan</i> , 中华会馆, Chinese Association                               |
| <i>Thian</i>        | <i>Tian</i> , 天, Lord of Heaven, the Chinese concept of God originated in Zhou dynasty                           |
| <i>Tiong Yong</i>   | <i>Zhong Yong</i> , 中庸, Doctrine of the Mean, the second part of <i>Su Si</i>                                    |

|                   |  |
|-------------------|--|
| TMI               | <i>Taman Mini Indonesia Indah</i> , the Beautiful Indonesia in Miniature Park  |
| <i>Totok</i>      | pure blood or single origin  |
| <i>Tri-Dharma</i> | Three-Teachings of Daoism, Buddhism, and Confucianism or <i>Sam Kauw</i>   |
| USDEK             | <i>Undang-Undang Dasar 1945, Sosialisme ala Indonesia, Demokrasi Terpimpin, Ekonomi Terpimpin, Kepribadian Indonesia</i> (1945 Constitution, Indonesian Socialism, Guided Democracy, Guided Economy and Indonesian Identity) |
| Walubi            | <i>Perwakilan Umat Buddha Indonesia</i> , the Buddhist National Council of Indonesia   |
| <i>Wu Ching</i>   | <i>Wu Jing</i> , 五经, Five Classics   |
| YHK               | <i>Yayasan Harapan Kita</i> , The Foundation of Our Hope   |

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# Chapter 1

## Introduction: Why Religion Matters in Indonesia

### Let the State Name It!

On a Sunday morning in September 2010, together with around fifty people, I attended a prayer ritual in *Boen Bio* (*Wen Miao*, 文庙), a 105-year old Chinese temple in Surabaya. At the end of the ritual, a temple staff member announced that a local walking tour club, *Nglenacer nang Petjinan* (Chinese Quarter Touring Club), would visit the temple later that day. He asked those who had the time to stay and welcome the club. Being interested in the activities of the temple, I chose to stay. At 1 pm, around thirty members of the club arrived. Organized by a young Chinese-Indonesian woman, the club's mission was to revive interest in Chinese *Peranakan*<sup>1</sup> culture and history by exploring the old Chinese quarter of Surabaya. The *Boen Bio* temple was one of their destinations. In terms of ethnicity, the members of the club were mainly Javanese and Chinese-Indonesian. Most of them were young or middle-aged people who were growing up when the authoritarian New Order regime (1966-1998) attempted to suppress Chinese culture. Although all were from Surabaya and had heard about the temple, many were visiting and seeing its interior for the first time. A temple guard and two staff guided the guests around, explaining the temple's history, the meaning of the carved and painted Chinese characters and other ornaments, and describing a few ceremonies Confucian adherents celebrate.

After exploring the temple and taking pictures enthusiastically, several visitors engaged in a conversation with a staff member who was, among the three, referred to as the most

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<sup>1</sup> *Chinese Peranakan* means the Chinese who have lived for generations in Indonesia. They are mostly mixed-blood because the male Chinese immigrants came to the archipelago without their female counterparts and married local women. Another common term is Chinese-Indonesian, which is mostly used during the post-colonial period. In this dissertation, I use both terms interchangeably.

knowledgeable about the history of the temple and of Confucian religion in Indonesia. Interested to know how the staff introduced Confucianism to visitors, I stood close enough to listen to their conversation. A Chinese-Indonesian couple asked why Confucianism in Indonesia is considered to be a religion. The husband said that he had heard Confucianism is closer to a “teaching” or “philosophy” than to a religion. The staff member’s facial expression turned stiff and uneasy. Apparently, he took the visitor’s query as a skeptical challenge. The staff member replied with rather loud voice, “What is your definition of religion? We have Confucius as our prophet, *Su Si* (*Si Shu*, 四书, the Four Books) as our holy book, priests, rituals and believers. Thus, according to the Indonesian government, we satisfy all the criteria to consider Confucianism a religion.” The visitor further replied, “I have visited China and nobody there considers Confucianism a religion. Yet, China is the homeland of Confucius and Confucianism, isn’t it?” The situation suddenly became awkward. Attempting to relieve the tension, the wife of the visitor apologized and explained that her husband intended neither to argue with nor to insult Confucian adherents. Rather, they were so curious, perhaps too eager, to learn about Indonesian Confucianism. She explained that her parents had been Confucians in the 1960s but had converted to Christianity in the 1980s. Since then, Confucian tradition had faded out from the family’s memory. The tour reignited their memory and curiosity about their family’s religion in the past. The staff member apologized for losing patience and mentioned briefly that the Communist regime in China with its notorious hostility against ancient religion and culture had unavoidably erased the people’s memory that Confucianism had once been a religion. He added that he was tired of people arguing about Confucianism was “merely” (*cuma*) a philosophy. He has answered the same question again and again since the mid-1970s, when he first became a temple activist.

Looking back on the history of Confucianism in Indonesia, the staff member’s annoyance is understandable. Since 1900, when Dutch colonization took place in the Dutch East Indies,

later known as Indonesia, Confucian adherents in Indonesia have struggled to get Confucianism recognized as a religion. Christian missionaries and Confucian followers and among the Chinese communities themselves debated whether Confucianism is a religion for the Chinese people and what indeed constitutes a religion. In post-colonial Indonesia, the debates are ongoing. For better or worse, the Indonesian state exercises the power to define what a religion is and whether Confucianism might be included among Indonesia's five formally recognized religions – Islam, Catholicism, Protestantism, Hinduism and Buddhism.

After a long negotiation, in 1965, the first president, Sukarno (1945-1966), finally acknowledged Confucianism as a formal religion.<sup>2</sup> However, a year later, when Suharto (1966-1998) seized power and became the second president of Indonesia, Chinese identity, beliefs and customs became severely repressed under the Presidential Instruction no. 14/1967 (Coppel 1977: 740). The influence of the Cold War legitimized the Suharto's government, known as the New Order regime, to take extra caution against the Communist infiltration of Indonesia by Chinese-Indonesians. While cutting off the diplomatic relationship between Indonesia and the People's Republic of China, Suharto targeted the Chinese *Peranakan* communities through programs of rigorous assimilation through which he expected the Chinese to give up their affiliations with China and develop greater loyalty to Indonesia. Thus, the repression of Confucianism in the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century went together with the erasure of Chinese identity and culture and aimed to accelerate the integration of the Chinese people into the Indonesian nation. In 1977, the New Order categorized Confucianism as a "sect" (*aliran kepercayaan*). This term had a derogatory connotation of a "backward" and "unsophisticated" belief system when compared to

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<sup>2</sup> The government's recognition of Confucianism as one of six formal religions in Indonesia was manifested in *Undang-Undang Nomor 1 PNPS Tahun 1965 Tentang Penyalahgunaan dan/atau Penodaan Agama*, (the Anti-Blasphemy Law, 1965).

the five formal religions. After the fall of Suharto in 1998, the state under President Abdurrachman Wahid re-acknowledged the status of Confucianism as a formal religion. This was both a means to address lingering issues of social justice in the country and an effort to reinvigorate economic and political ties between Indonesia and China. It has been a decade since President Wahid's recognition, yet questions about whether or not Confucianism is a religion remain.

The question posed by the visitor to the *Boen Bio* temple demonstrates that the Indonesian state's recognition of Confucianism as a religion, however, is not widely accepted. In his mind, if Confucianism falls into the category of philosophy, it cannot be a religion, and vice versa. This position/belief/opinion reflects the assumption that religion and philosophy are two separate categories. Insulting as it might be to the Confucian adherents, his opinion is not uncommon. My encounters with people – whether they be mainland Chinese, Chinese-Indonesians, Indonesians or Westerners – confirm the surprised and confused responses about the fact that Confucianism is considered a religion in Indonesia. In addition to the disputed categorization, non-Indonesians were particularly surprised by the fact that the Indonesian state plays such a role in determining religion. The majority find this fact extraordinary, strange or dubious. What they know at best is Confucianism functioned as a bureaucratic system and state philosophy during the Chinese imperial dynasties.<sup>3</sup> Upon hearing of the peculiar trajectory of Confucianism in Indonesia, the most frequently asked questions are “Does Confucianism have God?”, “Does it believe in afterlife?”, “Didn't Confucius himself see himself as a teacher and sage rather than a prophet?”

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<sup>3</sup> Anna Sun (2013) imposes a similar question when she found that Confucianism is classified as a world religion in a seminar held at Princeton University in 1999, as I will elaborate more below.

## **My Childhood Religion**

I was born into a Chinese *Peranakan* family during Suharto's New Order. We lived in the small town of Cepu, Central Java. Our house was located in a *kampung* or a small compound of around 80 households. Other than two other Chinese *Peranakan* families, most of our neighbors were Javanese Moslems. Our Chinese *Peranakan* neighbors were Christians, while we were the only Confucians in our neighborhood.

As a child, I did not have a clue about politics. I could, however, sense the oppression, self-erasure, and silence within our family. To keep up with the New Order's strict assimilationist policies toward the Chinese-Indonesians, my parents gave me and my siblings Indonesian names with an influence of popular European names. From daily conversation, I knew that several Chinese-Indonesian families also gave their children a Chinese alias beside an Indonesian name in their birth certificates to maintain their ethnic identity and tradition. Given the fact that hostilities and insults against the Chinese-Indonesians were increasing under the New Order, my father did not dare to risk our safety and complied with the state's order.

In terms of religion, our extended family celebrated Chinese rituals and tradition. My father brought me to a Chinese temple, where he once participated as a volunteer to organize prayer rituals. Every year, our uncles, aunts and cousins would come to our hometown and together we commemorated our late grandparents by praying with joss sticks in front of a table where we arranged food offering before their portraits. Then, we went to and prayed at their graves. For the children, this ritual meant having a get together with lots of good food and fun.

Strange as it might be for an eight-year-old, I already felt inferior when I compared our family's religion with those of other friends'. My Chinese-Indonesian best friend, Nik Na (pseudonym), was brought up in an observant Protestant family. Her family faithfully went to a local Protestant church every Sunday. She sometimes invited me to come to the church and

Sunday school, which I enjoyed very much. For schooling, she went to a public elementary school where as a Christian, she told me that she enjoyed free time of two hours per week at school. It was the time of Islamic religious lessons (*pelajaran agama Islam*). In her school, Islam was the only religion taught. The non-Moslem students, who were fewer than ten students in the entire school, simply left the classroom and played outside. I definitely envied her privilege. Hoping for a better education, my parents sent me to a private Catholic school. In our school, there was a rule that, regardless of the religion at home, every student should attend the Catholic religious lesson. I knew, however, that we were not observant Catholics.

My Javanese friend, Tari (pseudonym), and her family were Moslems. She went to the same public school as Nik Na and attended the Islamic religious class. In the afternoon, when we were playing in the yard, her mother or older sister called her to take a break and do *Asar* or the afternoon prayer. I followed her doing *wudhu*, the washing ritual before one goes for praying (*sholat*). She wore *mukenah*, a special prayer costume with all-white head cover, loose dress, and long sleeves. She gently but fluently quoted some Arabic sentences, apparently from the Quran. I sat next to her and listened attentively yet curiously while she was praying. “How do you pray at home?” she asked me. “I don’t pray at home,” I replied. “What is your religion?” she persisted. “I am not sure if I have one,” I replied. Looking puzzled, she continued, “How come? My teacher said that everyone should have a religion. She said we are Indonesian citizens and we believe in God.”<sup>4</sup> I felt confused and a little freakish.

When I got home, I asked my father what religion we observed. He did not answer my question in a direct manner. Instead, he showed me a thick green book with a title “*Su Si*” and

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<sup>4</sup> Believing in One and Omnipotent God is the first principle of *Pancasila* (Five Principle), the Indonesian state's ideology. The other principles are humanity, Indonesian unity, democracy and people's representation, and social justice.

Chinese characters I could not read.<sup>5</sup> My father told me, “This book is a good read if you want to know the source of human wisdom.” Even then, his answer did not satisfy my expectation and limited understanding of what constitutes a religion. As my father has already passed away, I cannot ask him whether his rhetorical and ambiguous answer was due to the banning of Confucianism from the state’s list of formal religions while he wished to keep it as our faith, or for another reason.

### **Making Sense of Religion and Religiosity in Indonesia: The Scope and Focus of This Dissertation**

My intellectual and personal curiosity led me to investigate the genealogy of Confucianism in Indonesia and the various forces that have shaped it into a state-recognized religion. Yet, it is not the intention of this dissertation to affirm or deny whether Confucianism is a religion, in the ways that several scholars, among others Rodney Taylor (1990), Tu Wei Ming (1989), emphasized its spiritual and religious dimensions. It concerns more with thoughts, knowledge and power relations that underlay its categorization as a religion, philosophy, ethics or something else.

Using Talal Asad’s *Genealogies of Religion* (1993) as a model, this dissertation traces the early period when Confucianism was introduced for the first time in the Dutch East Indies in 1898 (Salmon, 2005: 131) until its contemporary development in the first decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Conceived and introduced by Confucius in 551 B.C., Confucianism has inarguably influenced the Chinese tradition in China and abroad for more than two millennia. Its long evolution, which comprises twisting and fragmented interpretations and schools, its inclusion as

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<sup>5</sup> Only in my graduate study period, I learned that *Su Si* is the Hokkien dialect of *Si Shu* or 四書 – literally means “Four Books” in traditional Chinese character.

the official state religion during Ming and Qing dynasties, its application in the state's bureaucracy and schools during the Chinese imperial period and its rivalry with Daoism, Buddhism and folk religious traditions, is beyond the scope of this dissertation. The timeline of my work starts when several Chinese *Peranakan* in Batavia established the first civil organization, *Tiong Hoa Hwe Koan* (The Chinese Association, *Zhong Hua Hui Guan*, 中华会馆, hereafter THHK) in 1900 to promote Chinese culture, language and Confucianism. Their version of Confucianism had been relatively novel to the Chinese *Peranakans* of their era (Nio 1940: 8; Kwee 1969: 11-12). The construction of Confucianism as a religion, I argue, cannot be separated from the flows and exchanges of knowledge and modernity at large, which have travelled from China to Europe and, eventually, Indonesia. Due to their lack of Chinese language skills, Chinese *Peranakans* conceived Confucian religious ideas through works on Confucianism in China translated and interpreted by the European sinologists (Coppel, 1981, 1989; Sutrisno 2010). I pay attention to the global route that Confucianism has travelled and the roles of social actors – Western sinologists, Christian missionaries, and Chinese *Peranakans* – in granting meaning to its religious, philosophical and cultural concepts.

I discuss the introduction and implementation of Confucianism as a new religious tradition among the Chinese *Peranakans* to shed light on the intra-Asian network and the struggles to keep up with the Western modernization and yet to maintain their Chinese identity at the same time. The THHK aligned with the moral reforms proposed by Kang You Wei (康有为), a middle-ranking officer of the late Qing (清) dynasty and Lim Boon Keng (Lin Wen Qing, 林文庆), the British Strait Chinese leader (Frost 2005: 58). Both were concerned with China's crisis after their defeat in the Sino-Japan war in the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the rapid conversion among the Chinese to Christianity. Opposing the practices of superstition and syncretism, Kang

and Lim proposed the Confucian teaching to shape Chinese subjects who are rational, religious and deeply rooted in their own culture and religion. The conception of the so-called “rational” Confucianism has invited debates and controversies among the Chinese *Peranakans* communities. The switch from the ritual-based religion, which is mainly practiced by the adherents of the Chinese folk religion, to the teaching-based Confucianism has created frictions and divisions among the so-called “modernists” and “traditionalists” in interpreting religiosity and the formation of Chinese subjects. Therefore, internal frictions and struggles are also an issue discussed in this dissertation.

The introduction of Confucianism as the Chinese religion in the Dutch East Indies also created tensions and debates between, on one hand, the THHK and the proponents of Confucianism, who struggled to defend their religion and, on the other hand, the Christian missionaries, who challenged – if degraded – its status as a religion. Situated within competition to win followers, both sides attempted to legitimize their own religion. This dissertation concerns the ways Christianity informed and shaped the theological conception of Confucianism and its rituals during these prolonged debates, which took place and were published in several newspapers in 1901-1904.

My timeline continues into the Indonesian post-colonial period, which consists of three different regimes – Old Order (1945-1966), New Order (1966-1998), and Reformation (1998-present). Keeping in view the differences between the colonial and post-colonial states’ varied policies on religion, I will place Indonesian Confucianism’s construction of religious discourse within a framework of an incessant negotiation between the state and civil society over religion and religiosity. Inviting the supposed secular Indonesian state into the conversation, the position of Confucianism becomes even more curious. In this secular age, why does the Indonesian government even bother to determine whether Confucianism is a religion or not? What are the

functions of religion in the Indonesian nation-state? Given the fact that religion is far from disappearing in the secular and modern world, Prasenjit Duara (2010: 5) suggests more exploration is needed to understand “religious citizenship”, which refers to the complex phenomena of being “religious subjects and modern citizens” at the same time. From the Indonesian state’s perspective, I will investigate religion through Foucault’s concept of governmentality (1991). Using a Foucauldian approach, I investigate the state’s strategies to develop and reinforce desired religious moralities for its citizens, who, in turn, are expected to be loyal and supportive of the state’s goals. In the case of Confucianism, governing religion has a strong intersection with governing ethnic identity and international networks. The fact that Confucian adherents receive some influences from Chinese culture and teachings also leads to my investigation of how the Indonesian state ensures their loyalty to Indonesia, rather than China. I will pay attention to the post-colonial state’s citizenship project for the Chinese-Indonesians and the process of “Indonesianizing” Confucian teaching.<sup>6</sup>

From the perspective of the Confucian religious community, I will explore the Confucian adherents’ perspectives and strategies to cope with the Indonesian state’s nationalist goals. Conversation and negotiation between Chinese-Indonesian groups and the Indonesian state in defining their religion resonates with Renato Rosaldo’s ideas of cultural citizenship. In understanding the formation of a nation, Rosaldo (2003) focuses on the belongingness of marginalized and subordinated groups, who are mainly targeted within the state’s agenda of citizenship, yet their visions and perspectives are largely excluded and unheard. Within the

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<sup>6</sup> It is worth noted here that Indonesianizing religion is not a strategy unique to Confucianism. Catholicism and Protestantism also have to ensure their loyalties to Indonesian state. Boelaars (2005) describes the process of Indonesianizing (*Indonesianisasi*) the Catholic churches, which started in the mid-1950s. There are several activities associated with the ‘*Indonesianisasi*’ process, including the governmental supervision of the translation of Bible, stimulating and accelerating education for Indonesian priests, and the discontinuation of working authorization for foreign missionaries – some were even deported from Indonesia.

imbalanced power relation, he proposes to shift attention to the point of view of the marginal communities and the ways they respond to and resist the government's agenda in imposing the ideology of nationalism and/or defining their position(s) in a nation. While Rosaldo and his counterparts focus on the struggles of the hinterland communities, I use the case of the Confucian community as a representation of marginalized religious and ethnic minority groups in Indonesia. I describe their struggles, resistance and subversions of the state's project of religious citizenship and I ask what it means to be a Confucian believer in Indonesia. On a community level, I examine the process of negotiating religious concepts and values under the state's criteria. How far are they negotiable? I will also provide specific description of the struggles and survivals of the Confucian believers under the New Order's repression. A scholarly discussion of agency will frame my exploration of these issues.

In sum, this dissertation covers the multiple and intersecting layers of continuous competition, struggle and negotiation in implementing Confucianism as a religion. First, the rivalries between the older Chinese religious traditions and Christianity demonstrate how the Chinese *Peranakans* respond to the challenge of facing, on the one hand, modernity and Western values and, on the other hand, the desires to maintain their ethnic identity. Second, Confucianism has been utilized in both the Dutch colonial and Indonesia post-colonial periods to produce equal and respectful citizenship. Under Dutch colonization, Confucianism functions as an icon of the great and civilized Chinese culture, which could valorize their position equally to that of the Europeans. During the post-colonial period, Confucianism takes its subsequent formation as a formal religion, which shows its equivalence to the Abrahamic and other world religious traditions. Third, as a religion that owes its root to the Chinese tradition but is practiced by the Chinese diaspora community in Indonesia, Confucianism becomes a negotiating sphere where

issues of connectedness to China and loyalty to the Indonesian nation-state should be carefully crafted and balanced in people's religious and ethnic identity.

### **Dissertation Contribution**

Within the scholarship of China studies and Confucianism, there has been analysis and examinations of the contact between China and the West and its implication for the formation of Confucianism as a religion. The works of John Young (1983), Lionel Jensen (1997) and Liam Brockey (2007), for example, trace back the first encounter between the Jesuit missionaries and the Chinese in the sixteenth century. They analyze the ways the Jesuits framed Confucianism within the discourse of Christianity, which, intentionally or not, contributed to the formation of Confucianism as a monotheistic religion. In its later development, Anna Sun (2013)<sup>7</sup> demonstrates how Western knowledge formation, particularly the foundation of the sociology of comparative religion in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, influenced the inclusion of Confucianism as one of world religions. While these works demonstrate how ideas travel from China to the West, this dissertation offers an analysis of the next travel to the Dutch colony and, later, post-colonial Indonesia, which suggests the appropriation of Western knowledge by the Chinese *Peranakans*.

Within the study of religion in Indonesia, there are only a handful of publications on Confucianism compared to studies of Islam and Christianity. Several prominent scholars on Chinese-Indonesian studies were pioneers in the field. Leo Suryadinata (1974, 2002), Charles Coppel (1981, 1986, 1989), and Claudine Salmon (2005) dedicated their works to the initiation phase of Confucianism in the Dutch East Indies. These scholars acknowledge the vital borrowings from the European sinologists as most of the Chinese *Peranakans* spoke and understood very little Chinese language. There is little attention, however, to how the ideas and

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<sup>7</sup> I thank Ann Anagnost for bringing Sun's work to my attention.

knowledge of Confucianism and religion flowed from Europe to the colony. This dissertation adds a literature analysis of early publication about Confucianism written by the Chinese *Peranakans* and discusses their agency in appropriating the prevalent European orientalist perspectives and attitudes in the formation of Confucianism as a religion.

The work of Prasenjit Duara is one among a few, that locates the Confucian religion movement and the religiosity of the Chinese-Indonesian diaspora within the globalized situation. He draws the parallel between the Confucian religious movement in China, led by Kang You Wei, and that of the Chinese *Peranakans*. Both were, in one way or another, inspired by and responding to Christianity (Duara 2008: 52, 58). In analyzing both movements, he includes discussion on religious citizenship, which describes how the states influenced the Confucian religious movements in China and the Dutch East Indies. The conception of religious citizenship informs this dissertation as I will elaborate more in Chapter 3. As other scholars on Chinese-Indonesian studies have done, Duara focuses on the period of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. My work intends to continue the discussion to the post-colonial period, when the Indonesian state influences significantly the Confucian religious movement.

During the Indonesian post-colonial period, scholarly work focuses on the negotiation between the Confucian communities and the Indonesian state (Lasiyo, 1992; Suryadinata, 1998). These works demonstrate, on the one hand, how the Indonesian state regulated and disciplined Confucianism as one of the minority religions and, on the other hand, the strategies of the Confucian communities to meet the state's demands. None of these works question why the Indonesian state needs to control and regulate, even to repress, a minority religion. Examining the state frameworks of religion, nation-state and modernity through the speeches and policies of leading political figures, this dissertation offers a closer look at religious governmentality, through which the Indonesian state utilizes religious discourse as a disciplining tool to achieve its

developmental goals. It also adds a discussion on the various trajectories of secularism applied by modern states, including Indonesia, which demonstrates the local contexts and interpretations of the Western derived ideas of the modern nation-state (Heng and Ten 2010).

After the reformation period, when Confucian followers enjoy the Indonesian state's formal acknowledgment, scholarly discussions cover the issues of religious identity and legal aspects, such as access to civil record office, where they can register themselves as Confucian believers (Abalahin 2005; Suryadinata 2002: 157-193). To the best of my knowledge, there is no ethnographic work done on the Confucian communities in the post-New Order period. As the Confucian communities experienced a sharp decline during the New Order era, from 0.8% of total population in 1970 to 0.05% in 2010 (BPS 2011: 10), this dissertation presents the daily struggles of the Confucian community in Surabaya to revive their religion and rituals, strengthen the communities and channel themselves with the global Confucian movement.

### **Standing in a Grey Area: Entering the Field**

I went to Surabaya, the capital of East Java province, for my fieldwork, from mid-July 2010 to mid-August 2011. Even though I had lived in the city since 1996, I was not familiar with the Chinese temples nor with their communities. I decided to conduct the fieldwork in the *Boen Bio* temple for several reasons. The *Boen Bio* is the oldest Confucian temple in Indonesia, built in 1907. Since the 1920s, the *Boen Bio* community has been the pioneer in promoting Confucianism as a religion. They published two oldest Confucian bulletins in Indonesia, as I explore further in the archival research section of this dissertation.



Picture 1. The *Boen Bio* temple, at Kapanan Street, Surabaya.

Under the New Order's repression, the *Boen Bio* temple continued to maintain their community and rituals. They even spoke up against religious discrimination. Two exemplary cases received wide media coverage. On July 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1995, Budi Wijaya (Chinese name: Po Bing Bo) and Lanny Guito (Chinese name: Gwee Ai Lan) married under the Confucian ritual in the *Boen Bio*. The Civil Registry office (*Kantor Catatan Sipil*, KCS) in Surabaya, however, refused to provide them with a marriage certificate as it did not recognize the Confucian ceremony. In 1996, the couple filed a suit against the KCS. They finally won their case in March 2000 (Suryadinata, 2002: 189-192; Abalahin, 2005). The second case took place during the May 1998 riots in Surabaya. Bingky Irawan, the Confucian priest of *Boen Bio*, reported that several Chinese-Indonesian women were raped during the riot. Instead of investigating the cases, the police intimidated Mr. Irawan for his report and charged him with spreading rumors and creating social unrest. Thanks to the advocacy of women's organizations in Surabaya, he was able to escape detention.

When I visited the *Boen Bio*, it was literally the first time I entered a temple in my adulthood. It was an early evening when my husband and I visited the temple. Far from my expectation, we were the only visitors and the temple was very quiet. The temple guard greeted us. I explained to him that I was interested in learning Confucianism and wanted to participate in the rituals (*sembahyangan*). He explained that there is Sunday service and praying rituals on the 1<sup>st</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> days of the month, according to Chinese lunar calendar.

The temple has a single altar. There are several spirit tablets with Chinese characters on them. I asked the temple guard if he could explain what the tablets are. He replied that he knew very little about the symbols even though he has been working as a guard for more than 20 years. He suggested that I might ask a temple staff member who would come in 30 minutes. We decided to wait for him. I looked around while my husband was busy taking pictures after asking permission from the guard. The temple has a wide hall. There are two big Chinese characters on the right and left sides. There is also a wooden tablet with Chinese characters hanging on top of the altar.<sup>8</sup> Surrounded with Chinese characters without understanding their meaning, suddenly I felt anxious. I asked my husband who speaks and reads Chinese. He spelled them out for me. But, as a person who knows very little about Confucianism, he could not explain the meaning further. My anxiety grew, because he would spend a short time in Indonesia and then go back to the Netherlands, and therefore not be able to continue translating for me. How far could I understand their rituals if they use ritual terminology in Chinese or Hokkien language? Would I look like a fool when they discover I am Chinese but know so little about Confucianism? How could I fit in to the community? These questions were playing around in my head.

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<sup>8</sup> The staff later explained that the temple received the carved wooden tablet as an inauguration present from the Chinese emperor Guangxu (1871-1908). It has a message 暨南教聲 (*Sheng Jiao Nan Ji* – May the (Confucian) Teaching Sounds in the South).

Standing in the temple with a faded memory from my childhood, I realized for the first time that I was standing in a grey area. As a Chinese-Indonesian, I consider myself as having too little knowledge of and familiarity with Chinese *Peranakan* history and culture. In terms of religion, we were Confucian, but I didn't understand anything about its religious discourse. I was a Catholic, but I am now an agnostic. I speak Indonesian but, by the time of my fieldwork, I did not know Mandarin, not to mention Hokkien, which the Indonesian Confucian community used to explain their religious concepts. In other words, I was not really an insider, yet not totally an outsider, which resonates with Amanda Coffey's argument (1999: 20) that an ethnographer should be able to maintain "a duality of observed and observer." The position of observer requires ability to distance oneself from the observed community and culture, to develop curiosity and to avoid "over-familiarity." Maintaining the position of a stranger enables a researcher to develop critical approaches and new perspectives for understanding daily, yet complex, social phenomena. While as the observed, the ethnographer needs to scrutinize one's self, including one's personal background, emotions and struggles, which unavoidably shape one's understanding of the world. The balance between the two is crucial, yet far from straightforward and simple.

When the temple staff member arrived, I decided to tell him my research plans and to reveal my grey position. This introduction went smoothly. He welcomed me and promised to explain the meaning of the Chinese words and rituals. He invited me to join the Sunday service and offered to introduce me to the *Boen Bio* members. Later, I found the members also warmly welcomed me. In fact, the majority of them knew very limited Chinese. The fact that I am a Chinese Indonesian and interested in Confucianism amused them. My curiosity and interest gave them hope of reviving religiosity among younger generations. As it is commonly happened in other religious communities, my observation of the Confucian communities in several places

shows that around 60% to 75% of the congregations were adults and elder people. They warmly welcome young people to join the community and attempt to keep the young children attracted to Confucianism through fun activities.

The *Boen Bio* congregation helped me in many ways, ranging from explaining the rituals, inviting me to internal meetings and taking me to the Confucian national assembly. Some brought me to visit several temples in Java and Madura. As the relationship became closer, some of them were explicitly asking me to re-convert to Confucianism. In my view, it was a critical moment, on the one hand, to keep myself from social expectation and pressure and, on the other hand, to maintain my connectedness with the community. When I explained my choice of being agnostic, the common reaction was, “Take your time. After the hard time [of the New Order’s repression], I can imagine that you are still confused. But don’t wait too long, everybody needs religion as a guidance in one’s life (*pegangan hidup*).”

### **Doing the Ethnography**

In this research, the ethnographic data focuses on religious subjectivities, the structures of rituals, the language and network among Confucian communities. It aims to understand (1) the survival and revival of Confucian communities, especially after the long repression during the New Order regime and (2) the negotiation of religious concepts and values between the Indonesian Confucian community and the Indonesian state. In total, I visited 33 temples in Indonesia, one in Singapore and four in China. I conducted 108 interviews with the Confucian priests and believers, three interviews with the vice director, teacher and school guard of *Sihai Shuyuan* (四海书院, Confucian elementary boarding school) in Beijing, and one with the guide of the Confucius temple in Nanjing.

My research might be categorized as a multi-sited ethnography, through which an ethnographer can explore a “logic of associations or connections among sites that in fact defines the argument of the ethnography” (Marcus 1995: 105). I mainly conducted my fieldwork in Surabaya, but I also spent two months in Jakarta and Solo (Central Java) – roughly a month in each city respectively. In Surabaya, I conducted participant observations of the rituals, local activities and the connections between the *Boen Bio* with other temples, organizations, or governmental agencies. I conducted interviews with the temple’s members to understand their subjectivities as Confucian believers. I also talked to local priests (*rohaniwan*) to understand their main tasks and challenges. I conducted participant observations of a year-long ritual in Surabaya. I participated in Sunday services and the evening rituals on the 1<sup>st</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> days of the month and observed other important rituals, such as Cio Ko (*Gui jie*, 鬼節, hungry ghosts ritual), the birthday of Confucius, winter solstice, the lunar new year, the death anniversary of Confucius and the summer solstice. I attended Confucian wedding ceremonies, Confucian religious classes in elementary schools, activities for Confucian children, Chinese language lessons and trainings for Confucian religious teachers. The last activity was facilitated by the Ministry of Religious Affairs.

In Jakarta, I interviewed the MATAKIN’s (The High Council of Confucian Religion in Indonesia) representative to understand the strategies of the organization at the national level, particularly how they organize the local communities and negotiate with the Indonesian government. The MATAKIN is the Confucian national organization, which functions as a federation that coordinates local Confucian organizations throughout Indonesia and the official representative to the Indonesian government. With recommendations from two *Boen Bio* activists, the MATAKIN allowed me to observe important occasions, such as attending the

opening ceremony of the Kong Miao, a Confucian temple, by President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, and participating in the MATAKIN's national congress in Jakarta.

In Solo, I conducted interviews with the leader of the Confucian Priest Council (*Dewan Rohaniwan Khonghucu – Derokh*), Hs. Tjhie Tjhay Ing, who explained the process of translating the Confucian canons, the invention of rituals and the struggles during the New Order regime. The DEROKH also nominates and conducts the ordination of priests. There are three ranks of priest: *Jiaosheng* (教生, the low rank priest), *Wenshi* (文士, the middle rank priests) and *Xueshi* (学士, the highest priests).

Thanks to the touring activities organized by several temple communities, I could visit 27 temples throughout Java (Kediri, Jombang, Mojokerto, Madiun, Tuban, Semarang, Tangerang, Banten) and Madura (Pamekasan, Bangkalan). Other than observing the temples and their communities in Java, I also had a chance to visit five temples in Sumatra (Medan and Bangka). I interviewed the local Confucian members to understand the religious activities in outer islands. My visits and observations in many temples in various places were an effort to understand the networks of association and connectivity among the Confucian communities in Indonesia as Marcus (1995: 96) suggests "...this mode investigates and ethnographically constructs aspects of the system itself through the associations and connections it suggests among sites." These visits also enable me to analyze how the Confucian religious ideas and values are interpreted and adjusted in various local contexts

I had several opportunities to observe praying rituals abroad. In early August 2010, I visited *Kwan Im Thong Hood Cho* in Singapore.<sup>9</sup> In October 2015, during a 3-weeks-trip to China, I visited three Confucian temples in Nanjing (Jiangsu), Qufu (Shandong) and Beijing as

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<sup>9</sup> I thank Cheryll Alipio who brought me to the temple.

well as *Tian Tan* (the Temple of Heaven) and *Lama Miao* (the Tibetan Buddhist temple) in Beijing. We also managed to go to the Confucian elementary boarding school, in the outer part of Beijing, where I conducted interviews with its vice director and a teacher.<sup>10</sup> I found the visit to China is to be both important and interesting. As in many conversations with the priests and members of *Boen Bio*, I discovered multiple imaginaries of being part of a Confucian revival movement in China and worldwide as one of my ethnographic notes shows:

On Sunday, September 19<sup>th</sup>, 2010, at 9 a.m., a low-rank Confucian priest, *Jiaosheng* Tansil Wonoadi (pseudonym),<sup>11</sup> delivered a sermon during the Sunday ritual. He opened his speech with his observation that being the smallest religious group compared to the other two and the most recently acknowledged by the Indonesian state as one of the six formal religions, the Confucian adherents in Indonesia might have a low self-confidence in their own religion. The inferior feeling should not occur if they understand that Confucianism is an excellent, if not the most complete teaching. He provided a comparison of fundamental values among Christianity, Buddhism and Confucianism. While Christianity emphasized the dimension of *Ren* (人, people) in a form of loving each other and Buddhism in the dimension of *Tian* through solitarily meditation to achieve perfection, Confucianism adds to the previous two, an additional dimension of the harmony between human beings and *Di* (地 – earth, nature).

Moreover, he told his audience that the revitalization of Confucianism was a matter of inevitability. He presented the fact that the People's Republic of China (PRC) government has been made aware of the spiritual necessity for the Chinese after achieving vast economic growth in the last twenty-five years. Not only reviving Confucianism in China, the PRC government is promoting Confucian teaching worldwide by establishing more than two hundred Confucius Institutes in many countries. He said that he just read the news about the most recently established institute, which is in San Diego. He asked in a rhetorical way, "Do you all know where San Diego is?" Without waiting any answer from the audience, he continued convincingly, "It is in Italy!"

Js. Wonoadi continued his explanation that the adherents of Confucianism will enjoy a golden period in a short future with the establishment of Confucius classrooms all over the world. Having been the essential pillar of the Chinese culture since the ancient time, the spreading of Confucianism through the Confucius Institutes promotes the core foundation of spiritual happiness. Quoting Yu Dan, a media studies professor in Beijing Normal University and a writer of the famous *Confucius from the Heart: Ancient Wisdom for Today's World*, he argued that a nation needs to juxtapose economic achievement and spiritual values to maintain their welfare and strengthen their position in the world politics. As Yu Dan reminded the Chinese, a stable gross national product should be followed with a high gross national happiness. Given the fact that China has been ruled under the Communist Party and had banned Confucianism for several decades, the Chinese gross national happiness index is not very high and they are now catching up. In comparison to Singapore, South Korea, Hong Kong and Taiwan where societies embrace

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<sup>10</sup> I owe Andri Harianja for his role as a translator and interpreter during the whole interview.

<sup>11</sup> Js. is an acronym of *Jiao sheng* (教书), the third order in the Confucian priesthood.

strongly Confucian values, they witness the steadiest development and welfare over years.

The work and power of imagination revealed its strongest sense when after the service, I approached Js. Wonoadi and asked if he was knowledgeable about the programs of the Confucius Institutes. He admitted that he had neither visited the institute nor read their programs in detail. However, he was convinced that the institutes must have spread Confucianism. If not, why would the Chinese government use Confucius to name the institute? When I asked whether he was familiar with similar institutions that use their national figures' names, such as the Göethe Institute of Germany and the Erasmus Huis of the Netherlands, he heard about their existence but was aware neither of their purposes nor programs.

Conversations like this one and the multi-sited ethnography have allowed me to analyze the imagined global connection among Indonesia, China and various places in the world, as Arjun Appadurai (2001: 5-6) suggests that anthropologists pay attention to the indispensable roles of imagination within global flows and disjunctures. In line with Appadurai's work, Charles Taylor (2002, 106) defines the social imaginary as "a faculty that informs the daily lives of ordinary people in myriad ways: It allows people to consider migration, resist state violence, seek social redress, and design new forms of civic association and collaboration, often across national boundaries." The work of imagination appears at many times in the making of Confucianism as a religion in Indonesia. The connection with China is imagined and materialized, for example, in the form of Kong Miao in Jakarta as the official representation of Confucianism as I will elaborate this issue in Chapter 6.

### **Archival Research: The Forgotten Periodicals<sup>12</sup>**

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<sup>12</sup> Several parts of this section have been published in Sutrisno, E. (2016) *Forgotten Confucian Periodicals in Indonesia*. *Cormosea Bulletin*, Vol. 34 Special Issue on Chinese Diaspora Material in Southeast Asia: 8-14.

After visiting *Boen Bio* for several times, the staff member brought me to a small library room of around 130 square feet, behind the main building. The room has a simple altar with a small statue of Confucius on it. He explained that the library room was the original temple before the renovation took place in 1907. There are three shelves of old books. Half of them are in Malay language<sup>13</sup> and the rest are in Chinese. The Malay language books were mainly the translations of *Si Shu*, Confucian religious textbooks (*buku agama Konghucu*) and periodicals published by the *Boen Bio* community since 1920s and by other Confucian communities in Java. According to him, the Chinese language books were donated by the Chinese government in 1920s to support the temple library and to provide textbooks for the Chinese schools. According to Siau Giok Tjhan (1981: 11), a prominent Chinese *Peranakan* leader who spent his childhood in Surabaya in the early 1920s, the *Boen Bio*, indeed, hosted the first Chinese school organized by the THHK in East Java.

The condition of these books appeared abandoned and pathetic. They were dusty, moldy and fragile. Rats and termites had destroyed many of them. He explained with a regretful feeling that the library was once the essential part of the temple since it carried the element of *Wen* (文), the literature. The miserable situation of the collection was the result of repressive political situation against the Chinese Indonesians under the Suharto's New Order regime. Assuming the Indonesian citizens of Chinese descent were strongly influenced by Chinese culture and possibly the communist ideology of People's Republic of China, the regime enforced assimilation policies. It banned Chinese schools, newspapers and publications. Chinese language, cultural and religious events were prohibited in public. The *Boen Bio* had to close the library. In the early

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<sup>13</sup> Malay was the lingua franca among the people of the Dutch East Indies before the declaration of Indonesian language in 1928. *Bahasa Indonesia* or Indonesian became the official language after the independence of Indonesia in 1945.

1980s, when the regime became even more oppressive to the Confucian communities, temple members hid the collection in the temple's attic to avoid confiscation by the state. The poor condition of this hiding place made the books' condition even worse. After the Reformation period (1998 – present), the temple management restored the books to the shelves, but the younger generation seems not interested to read or preserve these precious historical treasures.

Among the collection, I ran across several Confucian bulletins. Some of them had been published regularly for more than three decades. One of the oldest periodicals, *Djiep Tik Tjie Boen - Pemimpin ka Djalan Kabedjikan*, (Guidance to the Way of Virtue), was published by *Khong Kauw Hwee* (*Kong Jiao Hui*, 孔教会, the Confucian Association) of *Boen Bio* in 1922. It provides the verses of *Si shu* in three languages: Chinese, Hokkien and Malay. The latest volume was published in 1935. The *Djiep Tik Tjie Boen* has a predecessor, *Koempoelan Peroendingan-peroendingan* (The Collection of Ideas), published by the same organization in 1921.<sup>14</sup>

The Confucian communities in Bandung (West Java) and Solo (Central Java) also published bulletins. They were *Khong Kauw Goat Po* (*Kong Jiao Yue Bao*, 孔教月报, Confucian Monthly Bulletin) established in 1924 and *Maandblad Pembangoen Kebedjikan* (The Promotor of Virtue Monthly) in 1933. They published articles, opinions and updates of religious issues. These publications demonstrated that the Confucian communities made use of the printing technology of their time to promote and circulate religious ideas. By sharing, updating and collecting the publications of various places, the Confucian communities in Java were connected and producing a sense of belongingness and an imagined (religious) community (Anderson

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<sup>14</sup> I would like to thank Sutrisno Murtiyoso, a scholar of Chinese-Indonesian studies, who made me aware of this periodical and shared it with me in 2014.

1983). While most of the Confucian periodicals ceased to publish during the Japanese occupation (1942-1945) and continued to be inactive for a decade after that, due to the independence wars and unstable situation during the early post-colonial period, the bulletins later continued in 1955-1965 and during the New Order era (1966-1998).

As the temple's collection was far from complete, I searched and found some of the missing volumes in several personal collections of the Chinese-Indonesians in Surabaya. I continued the searching in the National Library in Jakarta, the KITLV collection in Leiden University and the Royal Dutch National Library in The Hague. An archival research trip to Jakarta and Leiden brought me into the early Confucian newspaper, *Li Po*, which was published in 1901 in Soekaboemi, West Java. The *Li Po* is a precious resource since it depicts the debate between Tiemersma, a Dutch missionary, and the religious council of Tiong Hoa Hwe Koan on whether or not Confucianism is a religion. Moreover, the *Li Po* was one of the early newspapers that allowed the readers to send their questions and opinions to participate in a public discussion. In Jürgen Habermas' perspective (1992), both early Confucian newspapers and bulletins are a form of public sphere for discussing religious and ethnicity issues as I will discuss it in a more detailed way in Chapter 2 and 3.

I analyze these print materials to understand the development and transformation of Confucian religious values by applying critical discourse analysis (CDA). It aims to examine the ideology behind language and its interconnectedness with broader social and political forces. In Ruth Wodak's words, CDA requires "a theorization and description of both the social processes and structures which give rise to the production of a text, and of the social structures and processes within which individuals or groups as social historical subjects, create meanings in their interaction with texts." (2001: 3). In short, CDA will allow me to analyze the concept of power, the concept of history and the concept of ideology.

## **Towards the Genealogical Approach and Cross-Cultural Translation**

The genealogical approach applied in this study borrows its idea from Michel Foucault (1961 [2006]) who traces the concept of madness, its institutionalization, economic, political and moral forces behind it. He analyses the transformation of the concept of madness in different periods. He begins with the mid thirteenth to fifteenth century when the mad in several parts of Europe received better and separate treatment, which might be influenced by the Arabic model of specific hospital for the insane (117). In the seventeenth century with the establishment of the *Hôpital Général* in Paris, the practices of confinement were aimed as a corrective house for unemployed, homeless, but also frenzied people. By that time, the confinement indistinctively functioned as a prison, corrective house and mental hospital. During the economic recession in the eighteenth century, while working was used as a therapeutic and corrective treatment, the confinement practices were also aimed at acquiring cheap labor. Foucault's work demonstrates the fluidity of the category of madness, as well as how to focus on the "phenomena of rupture, of discontinuity" in studying the history of ideas (1972: 4).

Foucault's fabulous work, however, is based heavily on the transformation of concepts within the European culture. In researching the genealogy of Confucianism in Indonesia, I demonstrate that the changing concepts of religion, God, prophet and ritual are the result of cultural encounters. This study, thus, benefits from Asad (1993) who demonstrates the influences of Christian concept of rituals to the Islamic ritual practices while he traces the transformation of ritual and religious practices in Christianity from the Medieval to contemporary era. Tracing the definitions of rites and ritual in *Encyclopaedia Britannica* and *Oxford English Dictionary*, he demonstrates that the changes were in line with the transformation of the Catholic and Christian reformed churches. In addition to the influence of the church, these conceptions of ritual and rites had been informed by the anthropological interpretations of primitive societies in the early

of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Consequently, they shaped the later anthropological work in interpretation and understanding of rituals and rites in the non-Western societies (Asad 1993: 56-62). In line with Edward Said's orientalism, Asad raises awareness of the contact between cultures, which were neither equal nor mutual, and how the Western perspectives are dominant in interpreting the religious discourse and practice in non-Western world.

Yet, a broader discussion than the asymmetrical contact between the West and the non-Western cultures is needed to understand the making of Confucianism in Indonesia, because its making cannot be separated from the revival of nationalism and Confucianism in China and Singapore. The last two places served as an alternative center against the West. Prasenjit Duara (2008: 46) proposes there are global and regional circulations in the making of religion and secularism in Asia. He argues that the encounters with the Dutch colonialism, Singapore and mainland China have made the religion of the Chinese-Indonesian diaspora follow into a unique trajectory. This dissertation benefits from and applies his framework of multiple layers of cultural encounters.

Putting the genealogy of Confucianism in Indonesia within multiple cultural encounters, the analysis of the flowing of ideas or cross-cultural translation becomes an imperative perspective. Based on global connections, Lydia Liu (1999: 1-2) suggests that cultural translation focuses on "the economy of symbolic and material exchange among peoples and civilizations in a study of the universalizing processes of modernity in the past and present." In efforts to understand cultural translation, she emphasizes the crucial analysis of the historical condition of translation, power relations during the exchange, agencies of the translators and the process of putting the translation into circulation as discursive knowledge. Anthony Pym (2010: 138) rightly proposes that cultural translation aims to understand "cultural *processes* rather than products" (italics in original). Asad (1993: 179) perceives translation as a process of power. In a

translation process, it is important to be aware of the translator's interpretation of other cultures, understanding of social contexts, interests and/or his/her readership. Yet, it is equally important whether the translators critically examine the limitations of his/her own language in presenting the foreign concepts and ideas. Inequality of translation takes place when the translators are not sensitive enough to catch and express the meaning of concepts in the ways that local people interpret them, yet s/he has more power to describe and present the foreign culture than the local people do. Or, in the case of untranslatable concepts, s/he does not acknowledge the limitation of his/her language and the possibilities of missing several connotations, while s/he keeps presenting the words. In another layer, Asad (1993: 191) also emphasizes that the Western languages, particularly English in the contemporary time, have more power and dominance than the other languages of other cultures. The translations of Euro-American works do not only bring knowledge to the rest of the world, they also change their mode of thinking, life style, and even language structure. Asad's idea of unequal language power and translation is useful to understand the influences of Christianity which came in European languages and shaped the structure of Confucian religion in China, Singapore and the Dutch East Indies. Yet, as the discussions in each chapter show, the process of translating and adopting European knowledge has included the agencies of local actors. The questions are how far the local people's agencies go in resisting the European hegemony and how significant their efforts are in shaping their own religious concepts. The discussion of agency follows in the next section.

Embedded in cultural translations, Homi Bhabha (1994: 34) argues, there are problems of incommensurability and untranslatability. The "third space", he proposes, forms new cultural meanings and production, through which the limitations of existing boundaries can be negotiated and redefined. The "third space" opens the possibilities of a new trajectory from which certain concepts cultivate their own history. As the chapters of this dissertation will show, the Western

modern concepts of religion and secularism are not necessarily translatable in post-colonial Indonesia and they occupy the so-called “third space.”

### **In Search of Local Agencies**

This study employs modernity and globalization as the main frameworks to understand the unique existence of Confucianism in Indonesia. Recent scholarship on modernity highlights the facts that there are different forms, origins and periods of modernity rather than a singular Western version of modernity (e.g. Mitchell 2000; Andaya 1997; Chakrabarty 2007). While it is important to acknowledge the existence of multiple modernities, this study is more compatible with those who refer modernity as the growing influence of European Enlightenment values towards non-Western societies. European expansion and colonialism, as Peter van der Veer (1989: 285) argues, has accelerated the spread of modernity.

The Subaltern studies, however, challenge the Western origin and superiority of modernity and question the agencies of non-Western people in creating and/or appropriating modernity in their own forms. Dipesh Chakrabarty (2000: xii-xiv), one prominent example, calls for provincializing Europe in order to better recognize the process of modernity that is bound to a specific place and culture. He argues that abstract modern political ideas and institutions, such as equality, democracy, development, and bureaucracy, cannot be translated exactly as those have been introduced by and applied in Europe. While these ideas are indisputably European in origin, he recognizes that different historical trajectories eventually lead them to be translated and configured differently by the non-Western societies as he writes "no concrete example of an abstract can claim to be an embodiment of the abstract alone. No country, thus, is a model to another country, though the discussion of modernity that thinks in terms of ‘catching up’ precisely posits such models" (Chakrabarty 2000: xii).

The agencies of the colonized, Homi Bhabha (1994) further argues, can be manifested through the practices of hybridity and the creating of third space. Hybridity refers to the subversive acts of the colonized to reproduce the culture of the colonizers in familiar ways, but not similar, which results “in-betweeness”, if not newness. It is “a kind of superior cultural intelligence owing to the advantage of in-betweeness, the straddling of two cultures and the consequent ability to negotiate the difference.” (Hoogevelt 1997: 58) Bhabha implies the notion of agencies in creating hybridity as innovation, negotiation, contestation, resistance and self-definition.

Talal Asad (1993) proposes a different approach than the Subaltern studies scholars. He argues that there is an unequal power relation between the modern West and local agencies in defining or creating local histories. He refers to the transformation power of Western ideas, which complicates the notions of *agent* and *subject* (16). Most of the local agents, he further argues, "are neither fully autonomous nor fully conscious of it" (18):

When a project is translated from one site to another, from one agent to another, versions of power are produced. As with translations of a text, one does not simply get a reproduction of identity. The acquisition of new forms of language from the modern West - whether by forcible imposition, insidious insertion, or voluntary borrowing - is part of what makes for new possibilities of action in non-Western societies (Asad 1993: 13).

Yet, he realizes that cultural borrowing must not result in total homogeneity and the loss of authenticity. Tensions may occur along the way, including local agents wanting to maintain their traditions and resist modern ideas. Critically revisiting the ideas of Subaltern studies, Asad demonstrates that the struggles of Indian agents to resist and/or appropriate modern Western political ideas has been nevertheless contained in the hegemonic language of "liberty, equality, reason, progress, human rights... and (more important) within new politico-legal spaces built up under British colonialism" (1993: 17). In the case of the reconfiguration of Islam in Colonial Egypt, Asad (2003: 35) demonstrates the influences of Christian hegemony which involves

“power – ranging all way from laws (imperial and ecclesiastical) and other sanctions (hellfire, death, salvation, good repute, peace, etc.), to the disciplinary activities of social institutions (family, school, city, church, etc.) and of human bodies (fasting, prayer, obedience, penance, etc.).”

Rather than finding a compromise from the different perspectives of social agency, this dissertation acknowledges different types of agencies and subjectivities. It benefits from these two poles of conceptual frameworks. As I shall demonstrate in the following chapters, in the beginning of its development in the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century to the early of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Western influences contributed to the idea of Confucian *is* a religion. The recently collected knowledge on China, including its philosophy and religion by Western sinologists of the time, the foundation of the field of comparative religion and Evangelical Christianity at large have shaped the institutionalization of Confucianism as a religion. While, on the later development, there are more agencies of the Confucian adherents to formulate their idiosyncratic teaching and rituals as it will be discussed in chapter 4.

## **Chapter Overview**

This dissertation is organized as follows. Chapter 2, “We Want Our Own Religion”, provides an investigation of the social, political and cultural dimensions of the making and translation politics of the Confucian religious concepts during the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. I describe the multiple routes, by which the modern concept of religion traveled globally – from China to Europe and eventually to the Dutch East Indies. Another travel that informed the formation of Confucianism as a religion took place within the Asian network, where China and Singapore provided alternative concepts of Confucian teachings to those of Western knowledge. I investigate the agency of the Confucian believers in choosing and translating their religious concepts from

various sources and their strategies to defend their religion from the Christian missionaries' challenges and skepticism. The debates between the Chinese Association that defended Confucianism and the Christian missionary evoked translation politics in efforts to find compatible terms in the local context and within the hegemonic Christian religious paradigm.

The third chapter, "Governing Confucianism in the Post-Colonial Indonesia (1945-1998)", discusses the struggles of the Confucian believers during the Indonesian postcolonial period, particularly under the Sukarno's regime (1945-1966) and the Suharto's New Order (1966-1998). I place the construction of the Confucian religious discourse within a framework of an incessant negotiation over religion and religiosity between the state and civil society. From the state's perspective, I scrutinize the government's strategies and policies of cultural citizenship and religious governance of Chinese-Indonesians under the rise of Indonesian nationalism. I discuss on the pressures and interests of the dominant Islamic power to the Indonesian government, which resulted in the adoption of monotheism as the decisive norm of formal religions in Indonesia. From the Confucian believers' perspective, I analyze strategies and agencies in adjusting their religious concepts to comply with the state's policies on cultural and religious citizenship and their abilities to maintain their (imagined) connections with Chinese culture.

The remaining chapters provide examples of the Confucian believers' efforts to conform to other essential requirements of a formal religion, which concern having the holy book(s), prophet(s), and religious doctrines and rituals for its believers. Chapter 4 examines the apotheosizing process of Confucius as a prophet and divine messenger in the Dutch East Indies and, later, in Indonesia, while Chapter 5 describes the invention of Confucian rituals, the struggles to standardize and institutionalize them, and the challenges and contestations from the Chinese community themselves. Chapter 6 investigates the social and power relations behind the construction of *li thangs* (worshipping halls) as the Confucian sacred place. This chapter

provides an update on the establishment of the most recent Confucian temple in *Taman Mini Indonesia Indah* (the Miniature Park of Beautiful Indonesia), the state's official monument of Indonesian culture in Jakarta in the reformation period (1999-present). The temple symbolizes the revival of Confucianism, the state's accommodation and the reconnection with China as their religious heritage. I dedicate the conclusion of this dissertation to describing Confucian believers' current efforts to engage with the Indonesian state and the majority Islamic groups, the anticipation of China's restorative policies on Confucianism, and the initiatives to be a part of the Confucian global movement.

## **Chapter 2**

### **We Want Our Own Religion: The Historical Background and the Making of the Confucian Religion in the Early 20<sup>th</sup> Century**

This chapter investigates the inception and development of the Confucian religion (*agama Khonghucu*) as the religion of the Chinese (*agama Tjina*) in the Dutch East Indies starting from 1897 to 1905. Despite the fact that Confucianism originated from an ancient teaching, I am concerned with its modern construction as a formal religion. I argue that it was the impact of European knowledge on China and Confucianism and the discursive formation of religion. Its formation took place within, at least, four interrelated layers of dynamics, and the roles of printed materials were imperative and indispensable in each layer.

The first dynamic relates to the situation experienced by the Chinese *Peranakans* under Dutch colonization. Coppel (1981: 195) argues that the development of Confucianism in the early of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was a result of rapid changes in colonial rule, economic exploitation, the spread of Western education and culture, such as secularism and rationalism, and a challenge towards the older pattern of authority. Yet, he does not provide enough explanation on how these changes stimulated the development of the so-called “original Chinese religion” (*agama asli Tjina*). With a closer look, I offer an argument that the Confucian religion is a by-product of the Dutch racial segregation politics, under which the Chinese and other ethnic groups developed more exclusive racial or ethnic identities. I shall demonstrate that while the newspapers stimulated the imagination of the community, the picture was far from homogenous and synchronous as it was idealized by Benedict Anderson (1991) when he discussed its roles in the formation of a nation and its accompanying nationalist project. My argument relates to the fact that newspapers and periodicals – specifically within the years of 1870 to 1905 – strengthened

the imagination of *segregated* ethnicity and religiosity as it was regulated by the Dutch colonial government. In their later development, the distinct and shared ethnicity among the Chinese had stimulated the search for a Chinese religion which was made up of cultural practices that were already taking place within the foundational organizations, such as common ancestral halls, funeral associations, and within modernly organized Chinese movement, *Tiong Hoa Hwe Koan* (THHK) in the early of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Amidst proselytization to Christianity, some Chinese promoted Confucianism as a better and more suitable religion for the Chinese.

The second dynamic concerns the dialectical process through which the acquisition of Western knowledge and the acts of negating Westernization and Christianity occurred, yet contradicted each other. Starting from the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, printed materials from Europe have delivered and disseminated knowledge of Confucianism to the Dutch East Indies. Books and dictionaries had been indispensable to implant Western conceptions and new vocabularies about religion in the colony, particularly because, as the works of Marianna Slocum (1958) and Talal Asad (1993) suggest through analysis and examples, they were constructed with unequal power and interpretation towards non-European cultures and religiosities. The literate Chinese *Peranakans* consumed them and with some degrees of agency appropriated them as their sources in constructing the Chinese religion, as it relates to the fourth dynamic.

Third, the Confucian religion was a proposal of both moral reform and Chinese ethno-nationalism. As a part of inter-Asian connectivity, the Chinese in the Dutch East Indies and in Singapore raised awareness and reform to improve their position under the Dutch and English colonialization and to build political loyalty to China. In addition to European knowledge, magazines and periodicals from Singapore offered alternative information and stimulation of solidarity and connection with Chinese fellows in Singapore, Malacca and the mainland China,

through which they used Confucianism as a platform to create modern and rational Chinese people who loved and were deeply rooted in their own culture.

Lastly, the Chinese exercised their agency to develop Confucianism through the foundation of the THHK. I explore the THHK's agency in translating and defending their theological concepts. They used European books and newspapers to propagate and discuss their religion, yet they refuted Christianity. They also used newspapers to defend their religion from the Dutch missionaries' criticism. Borrowing from Jürgen Habermas (1992), I demonstrate how newspapers were stimulating public debates and dialogues on the concepts of God, religion and religiosity. The opinion columns in newspapers facilitated the contestation between the Western framework of religion and that of the Chinese *Peranakans*.

I open this chapter with the European knowledge about Confucianism and Chinese culture starting in the 16<sup>th</sup> century and the formation of Sociology of Religion as an academic discipline, which contributed to the discursive formation of religion in the colony. It is followed with the historical background on the development of print capitalism in the Dutch-East Indies and examples on how newspapers perpetuated colonial politics based on the imagination of a racially segregated community. Through the writing of Tirto Adhi Soerjo, I show the consequences of racial segregation policy on the rising of ethno-religious sentiments. I, then, focus on the formation of Confucianism as a religion by the THHK and the debates between the THHK and the Dutch missionaries afterwards. This chapter ends with a general analysis of the agency of Confucian believers in constructing their religion.

### **Western Gaze on Confucianism: Cross-Cultural Translation and Christianization of Vocabulary**

As discussed in Chapter 1, the issues of cross-cultural translation are prevalent and complicated in understanding Confucianism. This section provides a brief history of the early

Europe-China nexus, through which I intend to highlight several complicated and interrelated issues within the practices of cross-cultural translation as mentioned by Lydia Liu (1999). They are (1) the phenomena of untranslatability and/or loss in translation in interpreting important religious concepts, (2) the prevalent orientalism among European missionaries, sinologists and/or social scientists through which they applied European frameworks in their representations of Chinese culture and religion, (3) the unequal power relations between Europeans and Chinese in representing Confucianism in front of a Western audience, and (4) the invention of comparative religious studies, through which the category of world religions was introduced and became hegemonic.

The earliest European writings about Chinese culture and religion might be traced back to 1583 when Matteo Ricci, a Jesuit priest, landed in Macao and lived in various parts of China during the Ming dynasty. Ricci, who received a Chinese name Li Ma Dou (利玛窦), observed and reported on Confucianism to the Vatican, as Lionel Jensen argues, not without the influence of the Catholic Church paradigm. He used, for example, the Catholic concept of holy figures in introducing Confucius, which placed more emphasis on the roles of Confucius in the religious sphere than his legacy in the bureaucratic system and governance.

“For sixteenth-century Chinese, the native entity, Kongzi, was a man-god, a *shengren*, who was the object of an imperial cult, the ancient ancestor of a celebrated rhetorical tradition, and a symbol of an honored scholarly fraternity (the *ru*, or “Confucians”) represented by a phalanx of officials who staffed every level of the imperial bureaucracy. But before the eyes of clerics newly arrived from the West he appeared as prophet, holy man, and saint (*santo*).” (Jensen 1997: 33)

Ricci had translated *Si shu*, which then were considered the Confucian canon, into Latin before he died in China in 1610 (Sun 2013: 32). Intentionally or not, Ricci had imagined and manufactured the figure of Confucius as the real symbol of Chinese culture and emphasized his teaching rather than the syncretic practices of Confucian, Daoist and Buddhist values, and the

beliefs in deities, which were manifested in daily rituals among the common Chinese people. Another early controversy arose when Ricci classified “*ru jiao*” (儒教) – simply translated as “Confucian religion” – as a Chinese religion. In the views of the Western audience, Ricci’s classification was confusing since not all criteria of (Western) religion can be applied to it. In 16<sup>th</sup> century China, “*ru*” has symbolized the imperial cult and rituals, the official doctrine of the state, the state examination system, ancestors worship and self-conscious scholarship,<sup>15</sup> while “*jiao*” may mean “teaching” as well as “religion.”

Ricci was the first European missionary who equated the Christian God (*Deus*) with *Shang-ti* (*Shangdi*, 上帝). He also recognized the concept of *Tian* (天) and considered both concepts interchangeable with the supreme being of the Christians. While both names are recognized to address the figure of “God,” they originated in different times. *Shang-ti* or the Most-High was an ancient Chinese concept, originating in the Shang dynasty (1576-1046 B.C.E.) while the concept of *Tian* or Lord of Heaven occurred during the Zhou dynasty (1046-771 B.C.E.) (Chang 2000: v). Ricci’s translation had the consequences that the Christian God was translatable in these Chinese terms and they could be used to explain the nature of the Christian God (Golden 2000: 204). Applying accommodative principles, Ricci maintained the word *Shang-ti* instead of using *Deus* and adopted a strategy of reinterpretation in translating religious concepts. Slocum (1958: 51) explains that reinterpretation is “the use of terms with already existing connotation in the language, but, by extending or reducing the area of meaning of such terms, remodeling the connotation to fit Christian context.” It is one of common strategies in translating and introducing the Christian concept into a local culture.<sup>16</sup> The

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<sup>15</sup> For extended meanings of “*ru*” see Jensen (1992: 87).

<sup>16</sup> The other two strategies are (1) innovation of new terms and (2) adaptation of the used terms but putting them in new combinations, which result in new meanings or connotations. See Slocum (1993: 51).

translation of God is particularly crucial in missionary projects for as many cases show the transformation of Christian faith or conversion to Christianity become easier and faster when pagan groups could identify their original concept(s) of God with that of the Christian God (Kim 2004: 4-5).

In equating *Shang-ti* and *Tian* with *Deus*, Ricci emphasized the monotheistic character as the *similitudo* or resemblance of both concepts to Catholic theology (Kim 2004: 63). Ricci's translation demonstrated that his missionary background, familiarity and preference to his own religious concepts fit the Chinese religious concepts into the Catholic framework and neglected their complexity and incommensurability. In another layer, Ricci's Chinese to Latin translation also reflects a politics of representation for he had more power to represent the Chinese religion to the Vatican and his Western fellows than the Chinese people had, and his work shaped missionary strategies in China, particularly in cross-cultural biblical translation, even though this occurred not without controversies (ibid.: 5-6). In the later period, many missionaries considered Ricci's translation and equation problematic for it ignored differences and untranslatability between the two concepts. First, by emphasizing the monotheistic character of *Shang-ti*, Ricci misrepresented the polytheistic beliefs of the Shang dynasty. Even though *Shang-ti* might possess more power as the highest religious entity, studies of oracle bones demonstrate that the Shang people also believed in other nature deities who controlled natural phenomena and ancestral deities who had power over both nature and state affairs (Chang 2000: 5-6). Second, in the old Chinese tradition, *Shang-ti* was distant from the common people. It was only the sovereign who had a direct relationship with *Shang-ti* and he became the intermediary between *Shang-ti* and his people (Standaert 1995: 143). In other words, *Shang-ti*'s blessings were believed by the Chinese to be obtained only through the kings, which made the position of the king more legitimate in front of his people while in Catholic theology, particularly in its later

evolution, the relationship between *Deus* and human beings was believed to be more direct and personal. (Chang 2000: 8; Standaert 1995: 143). Third, *Shang-ti* or *Tian* has never taken a human form while the Christians believe in Jesus as the incarnation of God on earth (Standaert 1995: 143). By emphasizing the differences between *Shang-ti* and *Deus*, several missionaries found opportunities to correct and supplement, if not replace, the local concept of God with the Christian one as James Legge, a Scottish Christian missionary (1877) suggests

“... the *Ti* (帝) and *Shang-ti* (上帝) of the Chinese classics is God – our God – the true God. The character *Ti* (帝) is one of the phonetic or primitive characters of the language. The fathers of the Chinese people had it – say at least 5,000 years ago – before they were a kingdom, when they were taking the grand step of social progress in forming their written characters. We may not be able to give the etymological significance (so to speak) of the character, any more than we can give the precise, original significance of our own term *God*; but all the predicates of *Ti*, excepting as it is now used in the imperial style, are such as we can adopt in speaking of God who in the beginning made the heavens and the earth, and who in the fulness of time went forth His Son, fully to reveal Him to men, and to die the just for the unjust. In order to bring our Chinese readers and hearers to think as we do about God, missionaries must supplement largely the statements in the Confucian books about Him...” (Legge 1877: 8)

Another controversy concerns Ricci’s equation between *Shang-ti* and *Tian*. Some missionaries agreed that they are synonyms, while others considered them different. Henri Borel, a Dutch sinologist, differentiated the two concepts. He explains that Confucianism acknowledges the existence of *Shang-ti* or the Supreme Lord (*den Oppersten Heer*). Confucius, however, replaced the term *Shang-ti* with *Tian*, of which the latter holds multiple meanings of Sky or Heaven and presents a more concrete idea that is easier for the Chinese people to grasp than the former (1911: 8-9). As I demonstrate later, this controversy matters in that the Strait Chinese and the Chinese *Peranakans* chose different figures of God even though both groups endorsed Confucianism.

After Ricci, there were more works and analysis on China and Confucianism, for example De la Brune (1724) *The Morals of Confucius a Chinese Philosopher who Flourished*

*above Five Hundred Years before the Coming of Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ*, De Pastoret (1790) *Zoroaster, Confucius, Mahomet Vergeleeken als Hoofden van Gezinheden, Wetgevers en Zedenmeesters* (Zoroaster, Confucius and Mohammad Compared as prominent philosophers, lawmakers and moral teachers), and James Legge (1877) *Confucianism in Relation to Christianity*. Each author classified Confucianism as either “morals”, “philosophy”, “law” or “religion.” The reason behind the different categories that Confucianism occupies within Euro-American knowledge was that there were the multiple facets of Confucianism while Europe underwent the secularization process. The facts that Confucianism is lacking supernatural concerns even though there are metaphysics and religious dimensions in it did not fit with the European paradigm of religion. In the formation of secularism in Europe, Charles Taylor (2007: 1) describes the separation of religion from politics. Those who proposed that Confucianism is a philosophy, law or ethics considered a section in the Analects of Confucius in which he refused to discuss “mysterious phenomena, feats of force, rebellious conduct, and spirits” (Analects 7-21) and preferred instead discussions of the five principal human relationships, which bind rulers with their subjects, parents with children, men and women, brotherhood and friendship. The facts that it has been endorsed as an imperial ideology and that it was the basis for the official examination for centuries strengthened the political dimensions of Confucianism. Even if some of these Sinologists called Confucianism a religion, they emphasized its lacks in supernaturalism, which made Confucianism an imperfect religion when compared to Christianity. Joseph Edkins (1859: 8), for example, wrote

“There is nothing ascetic, nothing spiritual in the religion of Confucius. The questions to which it replied, were – How shall I do my duty to my neighbor? How shall I best discharge the duty of a virtuous citizen? It attempted no reply to higher questions, How am I connected with the spiritual world beyond what I see? What is the destiny of my immaterial nature? How can I rise above the dominion of the passions and of the senses? Another religion [Daoism] attempted to reply to these inquiries, but it made poor work of the answers.”

In representing China and Confucianism, the works of the Jesuits, missionaries and sinologists, demonstrate strong Western perspectives reflecting what Edward Said (1978 [2003]) calls “Orientalism”. The Western gaze of the rest of the world, Said argues, often resulted in discursive knowledge of the “Other.” The West is positioned as superior, modern, and knowledgeable, while the latter is exotic, inferior and savage or less developed. In their encounter with Confucianism, the Jesuits, missionaries and sinologists were applying Western knowledge and taxonomy in understanding the Chinese world although they were not without complications. As Jensen (1997: 4) argues the European works on Confucianism also reflect “how Westerners understand, or wish to understand, themselves.”

In the 1870s, the foundation of a new scientific field, “comparative religion,” by Max Müller, a German born Oxford professor, philologist and an expert in Indian language and religion, had further strengthened his predecessors’ approach towards Chinese religion(s) in particular, and non-European religious traditions in general (Sun 2013: 56-58). By translating the *Rig Veda*, the Hindu oldest scripture, from Sanskrit to English and editing the fifty volume *Sacred Books of the East* (ibid.: 51-52), Müller initiated a scientific approach in which the so-called “sacred scriptures”, “biblical texts” or “religious texts” become an important – if not the main criteria in defining religion. He worked in collaboration with James Legge, a Scottish sinologist and former Protestant missionary, who was an expert on China and Chinese religion. Legge was also a productive and influential scholar whose works were translated into many languages, including Dutch. It was Müller, with Legge’s assistance, who included Confucianism as a world religion in the *Sacred Books of the East* (ibid.: xii, 64). By the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, many people in Europe considered Confucianism as one of the major world religions (ibid.: 45). More broadly, the invention of comparative religion and the translations of sacred texts were not only a matter of academic and linguistic interest per se, as Asad (1993: 172) argues, but also

entail an alteration of “modes of thought” in how people define and differentiate religion from animism, or superstitious beliefs.

The so-called comparative perspective, however, does not guarantee that the founders of scientific religious studies applied equality and critical perspective in studying other religious traditions. Even though Legge considers Confucianism as a religion, his orientalist attitude influenced his judgment with respect to it. In his perspective, Confucianism was lower than Christianity since “he [Confucius] did not speculate on the creation of things or the end of them. He was not troubled to account for the origin of man, nor did he seek to know about his hereafter. He meddled neither with physics nor metaphysics.” However, Legge acknowledges that the ancient Chinese recognized *Shang-ti* and *Tian*, of which he translates as the primitive concepts of God and Heaven respectively (ibid.: 8-11). It was a fault of Confucius that he made Chinese show more respect to their ancestors than to God (Hsia 2003: 99-100). As a productive writer, Legge’s works as well as the books of other European missionaries and sinologists were published and circulated widely. As I will discuss in the later part of this chapter, the (scientific) trend in Europe might influence thinking in the colonies when the European colonial officers, missionaries, scientists and travelers produced knowledge for colonized people even though none of their works was closer to the ways the Chinese produced the knowledge about themselves.

In producing knowledge about other religious texts in the field of comparative religion, translation seems unavoidable, yet problematic. In this case, the theological concepts of Christianity have been inarguably prevalent. When Legge translated the Chinese concept of *Shang-ti* to the Christian version of God, he risked simplification, if not misconception. *Shang-ti* might well be considered as the “High Lord” and the highest deity during the Shang dynasty. The same term, however, was used by the Shang emperors to honor their ancestors (Standaert 1995: 86-91). The problematic translations also happened in many other concepts, for example

*T'ienchu* as the Master of Heaven (Kim 2004: 145), *Tian* as heaven (ibid.: 86) and *qi* as spirit or air (Zhang 1999). While it is beyond the scope of this chapter to discuss the problematic equations of the Chinese religious and cosmological concepts to Western terms, my point is to propose awareness of an asymmetrical relation in cross-cultural translations as it influenced the development of the Confucian theology by the Chinese *Peranakans* in the Malay language.

### **The Coming of Newspapers and Books in the Dutch East Indies**

Starting from the 1870s, the Dutch East Indies witnessed rapid international trade, increased flows of goods, large scale migration, and the development of print capitalism (Booth, 2008). While many parts of the archipelago had been visited by Indian, Chinese and Arabian merchants and connected with other parts of the world for centuries, it had never happened before that the contacts and connections accelerated so rapidly. Steamship technology and the opening of Suez Canal which took place from the early 19<sup>th</sup> century to the 1870s facilitated not only faster commercial interactions, but also made ideas and knowledge travel globally. The establishment of telegraph lines in the same period made news from other parts of the world receivable and published within a few days. While the beginning of globalization is an issue debated among historians, the period of mid-19<sup>th</sup> century was a major turning point in the making of a global world (Stearns, 2010: 91).

As in the case of Europe in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, print capitalism played an important role in the development of modern society in the Dutch East Indies a century later. In his dissertation on the history of the vernacular press in Indonesia, Ahmat Adam (1984) demonstrates that as a product of Dutch colonialism, print capitalism was important and indispensable for accelerated knowledge circulation. In the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, print capitalism played an imperative role in raising socio-political consciousness among the Chinese-

Indonesians and Native Indonesians in the Netherlands Indies. Newspaper publications, which started as a monopolized Dutch colonial government official organ in 1744, became a flourishing business within a century. By the 1820s, evangelical Christian missionaries started publishing their periodicals, translations of Bible and catechism, which served as important tools to spread the theological discourse of Christianity.<sup>17</sup> After the bankruptcy of *Vereeniging Oost-Indie Compagnie* (VOC - The Dutch East Indies Company) in 1800, which consequently lifted the East Indies trading monopoly, including the restriction of advertising commercial goods outside the VOC's circulation, Dutch individuals and business companies joined the printing industry by publishing commercial papers (*advertentieblad*). It took more than fifty years, however, for the Javanese and the Chinese to join the industry when there were sufficient literacy rates among the Javanese and Chinese. The first Javanese newspapers, *Bromartani* (All-round Proclaimer) and bi-monthly magazine, *Poespitamantjawarna* (Multicolored Flowerbud), were published in Soerakarta (Central Java) in 1855, while the first Chinese Malay one, *Mataharie* (The Sun) circulated in Batavia in 1869. They became the milestones of the non-Dutch publications in the Netherlands Indies. While starting from the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century the Dutch Netherlands Indies witnessed the flourishing Dutch, Javanese and Chinese-Malay press, their development was far from liberal and free. In 1865, the colonial government implemented a stricter printing press regulation (*Drukpressreglement*), which authorized the Governor General of the Dutch East Indies to warn and confiscate any publication, that published critical articles and/or expressed opinions against the government's policies (ibid.: 38-39).

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<sup>17</sup> The categories of religious periodicals and supposedly general or 'secular' ones, however, were not strictly defined as several articles about religion and theology had appeared in the latter, juxtaposed with business news and criminal reports. For example, an article that discussed God in the perspective of Christianity was published in a 'secular' daily, *Bintang Barat* (No. 42, July 27<sup>th</sup>, 1870). In 1904, as another example of a later period, *Soenda Berita* – a weekly owned by a Javanese nobleman, R.M. Tirta Adhi Soerjo – published several articles about God and the definition of religion.

Most newspapers included various ads in their last pages. Among commercial goods, books were important commodities. For example, on January 25th, 1870, the *Bintang Barat's* (Western Star) regular rubric of imported commodities reported newly arrived items in Batavia, which were carried by a Dutch ship, the *Triton*. Among containers of wine, champagne, beer, cigars, perfume, furniture, glass, cheese, bacon, etc., three containers of books had been received and were ready to be delivered to G. Kolff & Co. and G. G. Batten - both were Batavian-based publishing houses, which also functioned as book stores. In other ads of delivered export items, books, writing paper and stationary supplies were almost always found. Ads for books of Chinese stories and language lessons, Javanese and Malay almanacs, law books for foreigners and native people also demonstrated a growing number of publications and a growing readership in the Netherlands East Indies.<sup>18</sup>

Critically revisiting Habermas' famous concept of the public sphere, Joad Raymond (2004) emphasizes the importance of understanding print culture in its fullest, interchangeable, sense. Print culture can include an analysis and circulation of ideas, concepts, values which were introduced in popular printed materials to the habit of writing, from impact that printing had upon the organization of society to the intellectual life of the writers, from the economy of printing and publication industries to the politics of representation in popular culture (ibid.: 6). In this chapter, I focus on the roles of newspapers and books in circulating Western knowledge and vocabularies that significantly changed the people's perspective of religion and ethnicity in the colony. To be more specific, I argue that the circulation of books, such as dictionaries and

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<sup>18</sup> A short report in *Bintang Barat* (No. 3, Jan 18<sup>th</sup>, 1870), however, demonstrates that performance was an alternative way to circulate Western values and knowledge among the common people. The ads reported the huge success of a popular British comedy show, *Wieland Troep* (The Wieland Troop). The group performed in three different places – two were in the Batavia centrum area and one was in its suburb (*oedik*) – for three weeks long. A large audience came to watch the performance because it was a hilarious show and, above all, the ticket price was affordable even for the common people.

encyclopedias, stimulated scientific studies for understanding religion. By scientific studies, I mean the ways religion had been situated as an object of analysis and comparison that resonated with the foundation of etymology, the sociology of religion and Sinology as academic disciplines in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries in Europe. Furthermore, a public debate in the newspapers which was initiated by the publication of personal opinions and knowledge about religious experience and the responses from fellow colonial subjects contributes to the development of the public sphere in 17<sup>th</sup> century Europe, as Habermas (1992) argues.

Various newspapers in Sino-Malay and Javanese languages in the Netherland Indies, such as *Bintang Timoor* (Eastern Star), *Selomporet Melayoe* (Trumpet of Malay), and *Bintang Barat*, nevertheless, had published interesting stories and news from different areas in the Netherlands Indies and all over the world. They ranged from the famous Chinese classics of the *Three Kingdoms* to the stories of European kings, from stories of visiting places in the Middle East to the war in Indo-China, which were randomly put next to domestic news. Other than government verdicts and announcements, common people and trivial daily events appeared as the focus of attention in the domestic news. Out of their commonality, ethnic and religious identities became important signifiers, as several examples will show.

Anderson argues that the rise of print capitalism has been crucial to the rise of a collective imagination and a sense of national community. Stories in printed novels and newspapers, according to him, create “an idea of simultaneity,” through which people begin to become aware of the existence of other community members and their activities, which serves as an indispensable requirement of imagined community (Anderson 1991: 24-26). To illustrate his argument, Anderson uses three examples, two of which will be briefly discussed here. The first example, Jose Rizal’s masterpiece, *Noli Me Tangere* (Touch Me Not, 1887), describes how people in Manila were enthusiastically preparing for a dinner party held by the city patron,

Capitan Tiago. The important message behind this description, Anderson argues, is the ways the people of Manila were *imagined* having some degree of intimacy and enough familiarity to talk to each other. The story evoked the imagination of a community, where hundreds of people who neither knew each other nor lived in the same parts of Manila, discussed and simultaneously acted in a particular event.

Mas Martodikromo's *Semarang Hitam* (Black Semarang, 1924), the other example, describes a reader's feeling of solidarity and anger after reading a news of the death of an unknown person on the street. It describes Semarang city landscape –neighborhoods (*kampongs*), carriages, offices, and street lamps – which had been a familiar scene of town life in the Netherlands Indies. In this story, Anderson argues, the description of a familiar city landscape strengthens the imagination of the readers as a community. Within the jargon of nationalism, the landscape will be transformed into the beloved homeland, for which patriots are willing to die (ibid.: 142-144). He further argues that an anonymous young man in the story who read about a tragic death personifies “the collective body of readers of *Indonesian*, and thus, implicitly, an embryonic Indonesian ‘imagined community.’” (ibid.: 30-32, italics in original text).

While Anderson's thesis has received acclaimed receptions, I modestly propose a further elaboration. First of all, in the Indonesian context, in his choice to present the *Black Semarang* story, there were no historical or political contexts to understand why this special imagination did not arise until 1924, when the story was published. Between 1855 and 1900 the Dutch East Indies had witnessed the publications of some 57 newspapers and periodicals (Adam 1995, appendix B & C: 341-346). Yet, Anderson does not provide any explanation of how the previous newspapers and periodicals presented the stories about communities. My research on articles written during the 1870s to the mid-1890s shows that community was already being imagined in segregated ways along racial and religious lines, as I will explain below.

Second, Anderson argues that the juxtaposition of various stories in the newspapers from different places in the world stimulated a new look at the concepts of time and community. The stories in newspapers stimulated a necessary mode of thinking – simultaneity, temporal coincidence and time measured by calendar and clock – in the readers’ minds which enabled the imagination of togetherness and connectedness among people who did not necessarily know each other (Anderson 1991: 24). It was the census that represented the society in divisions, in terms of race, ethnicity, religion, or occupation. In other words, the census represents the government’s imagination that “everyone has one – and only one – extremely clear place” within their community (ibid.: 166). The examples below shall clarify that newspapers *indeed* reflect and extend the Dutch colonial government’s imagination of segregated communities, where people should be able to identify one – only one – racial/ethnic identity. Furthermore, I provide the examples of how the imagination of segregated communities influenced the development of the Confucian religion and religiosity.

In the formation of a community or nation, my standpoint goes closer to that of Stuart Hall (1996: 448). Borrowing Jacques Derrida’s concept of *difference*, Hall argues that, instead of the homogenous (English) nationhood promoted by the Thatcher regime, “we are all *ethnically* located and our ethnic identities are crucial to our subjective sense of who we are” (italics in original). In the case of the Chinese in the post-colonial Philippines, Caroline Hau (2014) eloquently shows that the processes of developing and negotiating identities among the Chinese, the Mestizo and the Filipino become indispensable dynamics of developing a nation. Instead of imagining and accepting a homogenous Filipino nationhood, the processes of inclusion and exclusion of the Chinese and the Mestizo – and the Moro as an example of “religiously others” (Stark 2003: 196) – highlight the complicated and not necessarily harmonious and conforming forces even though the Philippines had already been declared *an* independent nation-state since

1898. In the next section, I show similar problems experienced by the Dutch colonial subjects, particularly with regard to the roles of the newspapers in stimulating the sense of otherness among different religious and ethnic groups in the Dutch East Indies, which stimulated the desire to have a “suitable” religion among the Chinese *Peranakans*.

### **Governing Race in the Dutch East Indies**

Based on the Constitution (*Grondwet*) of 1814, the Dutch colonial government had defined the colonial subjects within a racially stratified system. The first category was the Dutch people, the second was the Foreign Orientals (*Vreemde Oosterlingen*) and the third was the Natives. This stratification system had been applied to other policies. For example, there were separate courts for the three groups. The Chinese – who were classified under the second category, together with the Arabs – went to a special court and received regulations designed for their group. The similar treatment applied to the Natives. They had, however, additional courts and rules, which were *hukum adat* (customary laws) and *hukum Islam* (Islamic laws).<sup>19</sup>

In 1816, the Dutch colonial government applied *wijkenstelsel* (the quarter system)<sup>20</sup> and *passenstelsel* (the passport system). Tied to urban area development projects, the *wijkenstelsel* regulated settlement for colonial subjects based on their race. In many colonial urban settings, therefore, people found *Kampung Arab* (kampong for Arabs), *Kampung Melayu* (kampong for Malay and local people), and *Pecinan* (Chinese quarter).<sup>21</sup> In the name of *rust en orde* (safety and order), the colonial subjects were required to obtain passes before they travelled out of their settlement beyond three *paal* (around 5.5 km). Those who were caught travelling without a valid

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<sup>19</sup> The multi-legal system is still applied in post-colonial Indonesia.

<sup>20</sup> The Dutch colonial government Verslag der handelingen, 15de vergadering – 5 November 1907

<sup>21</sup> The *wijkenstelsel* applied mainly in Java. The full application of *wijkenstelsel*, however, was difficult to achieve. In Surabaya, for example, there were Javanese built their houses in the Chinese quarter and vice versa (Bloembergen, 2007: 125).

pass, could be fined or jailed. By 1863, the *passenstelsel* had been abolished for the Javanese.<sup>22</sup> The regulation, however, remained for the Chinese. In 1897, under the abolishment of opium trading,<sup>23</sup> the colonial government imposed the strictest supervision for the Chinese people's traveling activities. This regulation required them to obtain a pass each time they needed to travel away from home for more than four days for almost any reason. A pass was required even for a journey as short as an hour away from home and for any reason, including emergency or health conditions. Failure to present a valid pass was subject to a fine of 25 guilders or a month of imprisonment with hard labor. The Chinese experienced devastating financial losses since they were unable to travel on business to rural areas and were forced to limit their commercial activities to urban areas only (Tio 1958: 9; Williams 1960: 28-30). In 1911, the *passenstelsel* was abolished, but it was only in 1919, with the ending of the *wijkenstelsel*, that the Chinese were permitted to settle in other parts of town. (Bloembergen 2007: 124)

In the Dutch colonial government's imagination, enforcing laws and maintaining order in the pluralized colony would be far easier if each subject could be identified quickly and accurately based on their race. The clothing law was imposed to make sure the subjects maintained their appearance according to their ethnic or racial tradition. The Chinese men should not cut their braided pigtail (*bian zi*, 辫子),<sup>24</sup> the Native women should wear *sarong* and *kebaya*,<sup>25</sup> while the Arabs wore their native attire. Only the Dutch could wear suits, dresses and shoes.

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<sup>22</sup> *Tijdschrift voor Nederlandsch Indie*, 1863, Vol. 1, Issue 2: 236-239

<sup>23</sup> In *Opium to Java*, James Rush (1990) demonstrates that in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, opium trading, beside the plantation of cash crops, was the backbone of the Dutch colonial economy. The government sold monopolies to the wealthy Chinese to sell the opium in the rural areas. Under the pressure of an ethical commission in the homeland for reform in the colony, the colonial government had to abolish the opium trading. The strictest *passenstelsel* policy aimed to limit the Chinese opium business network to the rural areas.

<sup>24</sup> In the case of the Chinese *peranakan* women, their clothing was similar to the Native women since the majority of the Chinese women came from Native or *peranakan* communities.

<sup>25</sup> *Sarong* is a loose round cloth which was used to cover the lower part of body for both Native men and women. *Kebaya* is a traditional cloth for Javanese women. It is worn together with a *sarong* to cover the upper part of the body.

Punishment was applied to those who wore different clothing from his/her tradition under an accusation of disguising one's original identity. In 1872, the fine was 10-15 guilders or 1 – 6 days imprisonment (Kwartanada 2013a: 91). In 1904, the fine was raised to 16 to 20 guilders (*Soenda Berita*, April 3, 1904). Most of the cases which were reported in the newspapers discussed the transgressions committed by the Chinese or the Natives who wore Dutch clothing and not *vice versa*.

### **Imagining Segregated Communities**

In his theory of *governmentality*, Foucault (1991) argues that a strong government should be able to develop “the art of self-government.” Instead of putting the power solely in the hand of the prince (leader or government), the art of self-government involved various elements of society, ranging from fathers and teachers to community leaders, “to establish a continuity, in both an upwards and a downwards direction.” (91). An upwards direction indicates that these people must educate themselves, in line with the expectations of the prince. Then, they can educate other people to learn and comply with the expectations, which is called the downward direction. In this section, I demonstrate the roles of newspapers and periodicals in maintaining a Dutch colonial segregation policy in the colony. Contrary to Anderson's argument, these examples shall show how the reproduction of the Dutch colonial rules made the imagination of a homogenous and simultaneous national community unlikely to exist. From the perspective of Foucault's *governmentality*, the newspapers reproduced the downward directions of the racial segregation policy.

Banda. On Oct 20<sup>th</sup>, the honored Regent returned to his residency in Ambon (after visiting Banda). All Dutch, Chinese and Arabian gentlemen showed up and paid a tribute to him at the harbor. They decorated his ship with a dragon head and colorful flags and played pleasant music. All was to express their gratitude for his good conduct and fair government. Under his leadership, the Ambon area was kept in order and peaceful. The price of food was affordable. The only problem was the migrants of Palembang. They

made trouble and fought a lot. If one of the Palembang people became involved in a quarrel, it was most likely the whole group would stand behind him. So far, however, there has been no riot or a big scale fighting. But, people in Ambon avoid making contact with them at all costs. (*Selomporet Melayoe*, No. 1, Jan 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1885: 2).<sup>26</sup>

The first report somewhat reflects Anderson's hypothesis that there is *a* community in Banda who could work together to prepare the honorary farewell for their well-respected Regent. Beyond this imagination, this story, however, acknowledges the fact that they were heterogeneous and consisted of different racial groups – Dutch, Chinese, and Arab. The natives, however, were absent from the farewell. The exclusion of the Natives in the ceremony implies the possibilities of racial and class tensions between the Dutch and the Foreign Oriental gentlemen, on the one hand, and the Natives, on the other hand. Other than a sociopolitical and economic gap, this article represents a potential racial conflict within the Ambonese community. While several elements in the community could work together, the existence of the migrants from Palembang, nonetheless, create an imagination of a fragmented community, regardless of the good governance of the Regent. The phrase “people in Ambon avoid making contact with them (the Palembang people) at all costs” evokes an idea of a segregated community based on racial exclusion. Thus, far from harmonious, the Ambon community was described as racially divided and facing potential violence and conflict.

It is far from a coincidence that racial and religious identities were almost always mentioned to identify daily affairs, ranging from criminal stories to official announcements, from death announcements to bankruptcies.

Batavia. Last night, a *Selam* [Islam or Muslim] whose name is Tong, was walking in a dark alley after watching a puppet show in *Kemajoran*, when a man ran into him and hit him hard. He [Tong] was screaming for help but the assaulter ran away before anybody could catch him. The victim had not the slightest idea who the assaulter was and what was the reason behind the assault. (*Bintang Barat*, No. 54, March 6<sup>th</sup>, 1894: 2).

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<sup>26</sup> Unless otherwise mentioned, all translation from Dutch and Malay in this text is my translation.

The second short report described an incident that could have happened to anybody. Yet, the description of the victim as a *Selam* receives no further elaboration of why and how it related to the incident. In other words, *Selam*, as well as other markers of Dutch, Chinese, Arab, Javanese and Christian identity, works against the push toward commonality, and provides knowledge of the divisions in the society along racial and religious lines. In contrast to the imagination of a simultaneous and cooperative community united across time and space, this report furthermore implies that a member of a community can get hurt by another in their own familiar city landscape. The dark alleys of Batavia, which supposedly were a familiar place comparable to the intimate neighborhoods (kampongs), offices, and shops in Martodikromo's *Black Semarang*, provokes the readers' imagination of unexpected threats and insecurities for its inhabitants.

Masquerading. There are many Javanese women who wear Dutch ladies' outfit. Why don't the police arrest them? It is not a difficult task to reprimand and warn them. If the police interview these women, they will know the reasons behind the act of disguising one's identity. For this matter, punishment applies. (*Selomporet Melayoe*, Jan 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1885: 2)

The third example represents the art of self-government in its fullest sense. A successful governmentality, in my opinion, takes place when the citizens not only share the government's regulation and values, but they also ask for punishment when there is a violation of the rules by fellow colonial subjects.

With these three examples, I am not arguing that there was no subversion or transgression against the government's racial segregation policies in real actions or written statements in newspapers or periodicals. Regarding the quarter system, for example, Bloembergen (2007: 125) demonstrates that some Europeans felt more comfortable living in between the kampongs than in the chic quarter designed for them. Meanwhile, some wealthy Javanese elites managed to build their residences in the European quarter. In the case of masquerading, Tirta Adhi Soerjo, the

pioneer of Indonesian journalism, published a critique towards the legal interpretation of masquerading (*menjamarkan diri*) in his newspaper, *Soenda Berita*, (Soenda News), on April 03, 1904. Instead of criminal motivation to change one's identity, he argues that wearing the clothing of another racial group could be a result of fashion or religious obligation. The Chinese and Javanese women were eager to try the European fashion. The Javanese Muslims who were just back from the hajj pilgrimage might want to cover their heads with Arabic style turbans. The Chinese cut off their pigtailed because it was out of date. Even though his argument was convincing, Tirta did not ask for the abolition of the masquerading law (*wet samaran*).

In several cases, the transgression took place simply because the procedure did not work. In terms of the passport policy, for example, a report explained that a high number of the Natives who travelled beyond their quarters without a required pass became too difficult to manage and potentially created a huge economic loss. The report further analyzed that the people were not necessarily doing it intentionally. There were some geographical constraints since some villages were located in difficult areas and the village headmen from whom they obtained a pass were too difficult or too far to reach. Other cases show that people would have to follow a complicated and long procedure to obtain a pass, while they could not delay their trips until their passes were ready. Since the fine was unaffordable for the common people, a large number would be jailed on average of 10 days per person, which would have caused a total of 320.000 days of imprisonment and estimated cost of 26.000 to 27.000 guilders per year for single district alone. The government had no choice other than to abolish the regulation for the Natives (*Tijdschrift voor Nederlandsch Indië*, 1863: 236-237). They, however, maintained the policy for the Chinese in a strict sense as a surveillance over their business networks in rural areas.

Regardless of the transgressions and system failures in several cases, the racial segregation policies created tremendous impacts in the development of distinct identities and

belongingness among the colonial subjects. In the following sections, I demonstrate two consequences that played important roles in the formation of Confucianism as a religion. They are the growing ethnic pride and re-Sinicization movement among the Chinese *Peranakans* and the political loyalty and ties to China.

### **Let's Stick to Our Culture and Religion: Re-Sinicization Efforts in the Dutch East Indies**

Denys Lombard and Claudine Salmon (1993) demonstrate that prior to the Dutch arrival and before the application of the segregation policy, it was very common for the Chinese to assimilate themselves to local traditions, including conversion to Islam. Local rulers honored several Muslim Chinese and included them within their ruling structure. For the Chinese in Batavia, escaping persecution by the Dutch after the Chinese massacre in 1740 added another reason to make their Chinese identities invisible by adopting Islamic names and lifestyle and marrying Muslim women (Salmon 1996: 184).

While Chinese conversions to Islam were still happening throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the colonial government exercised its power to discourage it. W. Hoesoo, a Christian missionary, noted that in 1876, a Javanese imam was interrogated by a police officer since he made a number of Chinese in Semarang convert to Islam. Conversion to Islam, according to the colonial government, would cause transgressions of the clothing law since the Muslim Chinese converts were “suddenly appearing in Javanese dress” (*zich op eenmaal in een Javaansch pakean kwamen vertoonen*) (Lombard and Salmon 1993: 129). There were also changing attitudes toward Islam in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The Chinese started to look down on Islam and the Muslims. The Chinese tried to impede conversions to Islam. Even worse, such conversions sometimes led to heightened racial tensions and violence. There were attacks and violence

against the Chinese by the Natives that took place in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, such as the Semarang and Surabaya incidents in 1910 and the riot in Kudus in 1918 (ibid.: 126 – 128; Tan 1920).

Another consequence of the growing sense of racial identity and pride was re-Sinicization efforts. The majority of the Chinese in the Dutch Indies were *Peranakan*. Until the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Chinese female immigrants were rarely found in Southeast Asia. In mixed marriages with the first generation of Chinese male immigrants, the Native women or *Peranakan* Chinese women were raising their children in local tradition and languages. It was not surprising that the majority of East-Indies born Chinese lost their Chinese language skills and cultural ties. Yet, within the Dutch racial segregation policy, they were categorized as Chinese, felt themselves to be Chinese and were eager to make their Chinese identities more visible. As early as 1860s they developed ancestral halls, funeral associations and marriage associations in various towns in Java, Madura and Sulawesi. Beyond strengthening the network among the Chinese of Fujian origin, the foundation of *Hokkien Kong Tik Soe* (*Fujian Gongde Ci* - 福建功德祠, Fujian Collective Ancestral Hall) aimed for “the revival of good customs and the eradication of bad ones, so that the Chinese should no longer be ridiculed by other nations” (Salmon 1996: 195). What they meant by “bad customs” were, among others, syncretic practices, such as worshipping and/or praying at the tombs of the native Muslim heroes or saints, carrying out the Javanese Muslim fasting of Ramadan, and celebrating food offering ceremonies (*selametan*) in Hindu-Javanese tradition.

Fear of conversion did not only apply to Islam, but also to the growing popularity of Christianity among the Chinese *Peranakan*. When the first missionaries came to the Dutch East Indies in 1814, they mainly worked with the European Christian communities in Batavia. In 1835, they reported two growing Batavian parishes with 1200 members and 1100 members in 1859. A sharp drop, however, took place in 1897 when the members declined to 156 people

(Coppel 1986: 16).<sup>27</sup> Although these missionaries targeted mainly the Natives, the highest converts were among the Chinese *Peranakans*. It was reported that the Sundanese – an ethnic group in West Java – responded poorly to Christian proselytization since the majority of them were pious Muslims. Many of them even managed to make the pilgrimage to Mecca and grew hostile against Christianity and Christian missionaries. A few Sundanese who converted to Christianity faced a high risk of persecution from their community. As the colonial officials and the European community were worried about the possibility of violence and retaliation if there were too many Muslims converted to Christianity, the missionaries had little choice other than working with the Chinese communities (ibid.: 19).<sup>28</sup> The latter showed enthusiasm, particularly to the opportunity to send their children to the mission schools since the colonial government provided almost no access to education for the Chinese children (Coppel 1986: 19; Goovars-Tjia 2005). The implications of the Chinese children for the mission work were manifold. First, they were prospective converts whom most likely would introduce Christian values to their families and bring them up as subsequent converts. Second, former students were possibly recruited as teaching assistants, who extended the mission work for and by Chinese *Peranakans*.

The growing mission schools increased the demand for printed school textbooks, in which the Bible and Christian stories were translated and printed in local languages. In this sense, the roles of printed materials served the spread of Christianity in, at least, two directions. On the one hand, they accelerated the knowledge and values of Christianity. As Bliet (1933), a mission teacher, observed, the fact that the children brought the Bible and Christian textbooks home as school materials, the religious knowledge and values were introduced and circulated in

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<sup>27</sup> The drop might be caused by the growing re-Sinicization efforts, but it needs a further study to verify it.

<sup>28</sup> The missionary could only work in a community after obtaining a permit from the colonial government. West Java was among the first areas where they could start their missions (Coppel, 1986, Schröter 2010: 4).

a far less threatening way. In a wider and public circulation, the interpretations of the Bible were published both in the mission periodicals and regular newspapers. In *Bintang Barat* (Jul 27<sup>th</sup>, 1870), for example, an article titled “*Toehan Allah Paliharaken Segala Sasowatoe*” (God Takes Care of Everything), which was elaborated with Bible citations, was published and juxtaposed with a criminal story in Semarang and ads of shipping schedules. This juxtaposition of the religious article among the daily news and commercial ads further demonstrates that, unlike the secularization process in Europe (Habermas 1992), separation of religion and religious issues from public sphere had not yet come in the Dutch East Indies by the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century.

On the other hand, the newspapers might communicate the anxiety and tensions around conversion to Christianity that took form in short news, stories, opinions or public debates.

Bogor. In Bogor many Chinese are converted to Christianity, but in Soekaboemi there are a lot more (conversions). (*Bintang Barat*, No. 5, January 7<sup>th</sup>, 1895: 2)

In the middle of this re-Sinicization spirit, some Chinese *Peranakans* perceived conversion to Christianity by fellow Chinese men as a betrayal of their Chinese origin and an opportunistic choice to valorize their social and political status rather than an expression of their faith. Three opinion articles published in *Li Po* expressed concerns about changing ethnic categories (*salin bangsa*) as a way to obtain an equal status with the Europeans. According to Dutch Colonial Law, after conversion to Christianity, non-European colonial subjects could file an application to upgrade their racial and legal status to that of the Europeans.<sup>29</sup> Whenever it was granted, the subject gained privileges and bore similar legal rights and obligations as Europeans. They were exempted from humiliating punishments, such as imprisonment with hard work or public punishment. Granted applications came mostly from the noblemen, the wealthiest, most highly educated subjects, and preferably Christians. Two articles (*Li Po*, Jun 15,

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<sup>29</sup> Staatsbld van Nederlandsch-Indie, 1899, No. 202, Gelijkstelling van Japanners met Europeanen.

1901; Jan 11, 1902) criticized those who applied and were granted European status as devaluing their own Chinese customs and religion. One article (*Li Po*: Aug 10, 1901), however, defended the choice as a desire for equality, honor and respect.

### **Our God, Your God and Their God are Different: Segregation in the Religious Sphere**

In introducing Christianity, the missionaries believed in the universalism of their religion. It is their task to bring non-believers and Muslims into contact with Jesus Christ, the Son of God (Rooseboom 1908: 11). One of the greatest challenge for their work was, however, strong religious identities within the racially segregated community in the Dutch East Indies as this article shows.

“Are God, Hewang or Jang, Thiam and Thoehan (*sic.*) the same?”<sup>30</sup> R.M. Tirto Adhi Soerjo posted this question in his interesting article with a title “Allah, God, Heang, Thiam” after a meeting with his Chinese *Peranakan* fellow, Tan Gin Tiong of Soekaboemi (West Java) (*Soenda Berita*, May 5, 1904). Tan was a proponent of Confucianism, the editor of *Li Po Weekly* (*Li Bao* 理报) and the co-translator of *Tay Hak* (*Da Xue* 大学, the Book of Great Learning) and *Tiong Yong* (*Zhong Yong*, 中庸, Doctrine of the Mean) from Chinese to Malay. Tirto himself was a poor Javanese nobleman and the editor of several pioneering nationalist newspapers, such as *Medan Prijaji* (the Field of Noblemen), *Soenda Berita* (The Sundanese News), and women’s weekly, *Poetri Hindia* (The Indies Ladies), which all were based in Bogor (West Java). Regarding his question, Tirto reports that there were, at least, two antagonistic opinions. On the one hand, there were people who considered God as an equation of *Allah*, *Jang*, *Thiam* and

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<sup>30</sup> All terms define the concepts of God from different religious traditions. *Allah* or *Kaallahan* is Arabic, *God* or *Godheid* Dutch, *Hewang* or *Jang* (or *Hyang* in contemporary Indonesian) Hindu-Buddhism, *Thiam* (Tian, 天) Chinese, and *Thoehan* (or *Tuhan* in contemporary Indonesian) Malay.

*Toehan*. They argued that *Allah* and *Jang* were translated as God in a dictionary. The translatability of these concepts, thus, guarantees the equation of meaning. On the other hand, Tan and many other disagreed. Tan argued that before Islam came to the archipelago and introduced its concept of *Allah*, people believed in the Hindu-Buddhist concept of *Jang*. Both concepts, according to Tan, are different since *Hewang* represents godlike characters (*Godheid* or *kaalahan*) and not God itself.

Judging the two poles of these arguments, Tirto expressed his in-between position. Using folk etymology, mythology and after consultation with several dictionaries, he demonstrates that these concepts come from different religious traditions. Responding to those who proposed that these concepts are translatable and interchangeable, Tirto accepts it for legal, translation and common purposes only. Thus, people may take an oath to God in the court in their own language. Whether the oath is in Malay, Dutch, Javanese or Arabic, it is equally justifiable.

In the realm of faith, on the other hand, he argued that these concepts were untranslatable for several reasons. First, there is a fact that monotheism has conceived a different concept of God than that of polytheism. *Allah*, for example, can be used by Muslims and non-Muslims in the Arab world. The Buddhists and Hindus, however, cannot adopt the concept of *Allah*, for they believe in the polytheistic Gods. Thus, the concept of Gods in Buddhism and Hinduism is closer to those of polytheist Greeks and Romans from the ancient past. He cited the *Mythology Dictionary*, written by T. T. Kroon (1875), as a source to understand the Greek and Roman mythology.

Second, within monotheism itself, he pointed out, there are different concepts of God. He cited Qur'an, section CXII, to demonstrate that in Islam, people believe in *Allah hoe akbar*, which means 'Almighty God'.

It (*Allah hoe akbar*) comes under four principles:

1. I say to you, Mohammad, "God is one, the only one"
2. He is the God of all creatures
3. He does not have children and he was not born from anybody
4. He is not comparable to anything else

These principles, according to Tirto, make the God of Islam unique and inapplicable to that of Christianity. For the Christians, "Jesus Christ is the son of God, while in Islam they believe that God has no child. Thus, in many ways, these concepts are in disagreement."

He closed his argument with information on how the coming of Islam and Christianity had brought new concepts of God, which the latter became dominant and erased the previous concept(s).

In fact, the Arabs had their own gods before and after Islam came. Under Islam, these gods were merged (*dipersatoekan*). (The old gods were) *hoedjoet = boekti, ada* (the god of facts), *kidam = langgeng, senantiasa* (the god of eternity), *baka = djoemeneng, berdiri* (the god of stand point/perspective), etc.

The Greek and Roman gods and goddess were also replaced by Jesus Christ. They were abandoned after Christianity. Only God is worshipped.

In my opinion, this article highlights the first and second dynamics as I mentioned in the opening pages. First, Tirto shows the use of Western knowledge by treating religion as an object of scientific study. He leads to the analysis of God as an object or concept that is subjected to scrutiny and comparison. His citation style and reference to dictionaries<sup>31</sup> and a specific quote of a section from the Qur'an further supports his scientific manner in discussing religious concepts. Dictionaries and encyclopedias gave him, and subsequently his readers, the knowledge that there was the rise and fall of ancient civilizations, the transformation and changing patterns from old to new values, which became closer to the study of mythology and history. The comparison among Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, and Christianity in this article might come from his friend's

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<sup>31</sup>Reading T. T. Kroon's *Mythologie Woordenboek* (1875) provokes me to think of the differences between dictionary and encyclopedia in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century Europe. In my opinion, *Mythologie Woordenboek* is closer to an encyclopedia and more informative than a *woordenboek* (dictionary). Further research and elaboration are needed.

problem, but his approach was not so different from that of the Comparative Studies of Religion (Sun 2013: 59-60).

Even though Tirto demonstrates his adoption of Western knowledge, I suggest that his writing was a subversion to European supremacy and the Dutch colonial government. Although Tirto found the applications of the (Christian) God concept in legal documents and translated works acceptable, he, nevertheless, drew a clear line that it was not applicable within the realm of faith. To put it differently, he demonstrated resistance and struggle against the domination of Christianity or monotheism in the private sphere. Highlighting the origins of *Allah*, *God*, *Hewang/Jang*, *Thiam* and *Toehan*, he emphasized the uniqueness and differences of each concept, in which Christianity could not, or should not, ignorantly replace them with its concept of God as Ricci or other missionaries did. His remarks about the fading Greek and Roman civilizations following the rise of Christianity may also evoke an awareness, or alertness, to the future of the indigenous traditions in the archipelago under the coming of Christianity as it was happened with Islam in Arabia. In highlighting the second dynamics, I argue that Tirto's subversion, nevertheless, was contained within the Dutch colonial segregation politics in which he applied the division of racial groups created by the colonial government within his resistance against Christianity and European supremacy. In Asad's terms, although Tirto had tried to resist the White supremacy, he was still a colonial subject. A similar pattern and reaction to Western hegemony took place within the Chinese *Peranakan*'s struggle in defending Confucianism as their religion.

### **We Want Our Own Religion: Inter-Asian Network and Competition with Christianity**

One of the most important re-Sinicization efforts took place on March 17<sup>th</sup>, 1900, when several Chinese *Peranakans* established the earliest modern organization in the Dutch East

Indies, the *Tiong Hoa Hwee Koan* (Chinese Association, THHK), in Batavia. Using Confucian teaching (*atoerannja Nabi Khong Hoe Tjoe*) as their guide, the THHK aimed to reform Chinese customs as far as possible in accordance with the teachings of the Prophet (*Nabi*) Confucius, to enhance knowledge about China and Chinese literature among the Chinese *Peranakans* and to provide education for Chinese children (Nio 1940: 7). To justify their calling to Confucianism, they used the appraisals of European sinologists, who acknowledged the superior quality of Confucian teaching. In its introductory pamphlet, the THHK cited and appropriated the writing of De Lanessan, the French Governor General of Indo China,

“If people follow the teaching of Confucius and his disciple, Beng Tjoe [Mengzi, 孟子, Mencius] wholeheartedly, they will receive respect and appreciation not only in China, but also in Europe.” (Nio 1940: 201)

They cited another appraisal from the Christian priests, who came to China and felt compelled to praise Confucianism as an excellent and the most influential teaching in Chinese civilization (ibid.). In a similar pattern to that of Tirta, therefore, they applied the European positive opinions and knowledge of Confucianism to imagine equality and respect and this can be seen as a subversion of the Dutch racial segregation policy, which positioned them as second-class subjects.

In addition to the racially segregated politics in the Dutch East Indies, the foundation of the THHK was a result of growing connectivity to and solidarity with China. In the last years of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Batavia became more connected to other parts of the world. The growing media and newspapers had enabled the Chinese *Peranakans* of the Dutch East Indies regularly following updates about the situations in China. For example, *Pembrita Betawi* (1885 – 1901), a Batavia-based daily, had a special column “*Riwajat Negri Tjina*” (The stories of China), which provided various news on an almost daily basis; from the growing foreign power in China to

domestic riots and social unrests, from hunger and poverty issues to natural disasters and criminal cases. *Bintang Barat* daily reported the Sino-Japanese war two or three times in a week. Even though it took about a month or two for the news to circulate in Batavia, the discernible message was about the declining position of China in facing the European and Russian threats and alerts about deteriorating welfare and socio-political situation, due to its loss in the Sino-Japanese war.

The Straits (nowadays known as Singapore) provided another important connectivity and alternative news source through the *Straits Chinese Magazine* whose editor was Dr. Lim Boon Keng, an initiator of the Straits Chinese reform. It reported the political turmoil in China when the Empress Dowager Tz'u Hsi (Ci Xi, 慈禧) seized the power from the Emperor Kwang Hsu (Guang Xu, 光緒) within few weeks (*Straits Chinese Magazine* vol. 2, No. 7, September 1898: 123) while the *Pembrita Betawi* published it on Nov 1, 1898. As I discuss later, the Singapore-Batavia nexus has developed a more significant network other than exchanging news and information. *The Straits Chinese Magazine* provided reform ideas that influenced the THHK' reform movement.

Nio Joe Lan (1940: 4) and Kwee Tek Hoay (1939 [2001]: 401-406) demonstrate that prior to the foundation of the THHK, the Chinese *Peranakans* were concerned with at least three important events in China. These were China's defeat in the Sino-Japanese War in 1894-1895, Kang You Wei's failed reform in 1898 and the Boxer Uprising in 1899-1901. The losing position of China in the war evoked reflections that the Chinese needed a reform to better cope with the growing foreign threats and challenges. In 1898, Kang You Wei, a middle rank officer of the late Qing dynasty, initiated a reform, in which he used Confucianism to purify "the soul of the Chinese nation." He argued that the lack of civic virtues or public morality (*gongde*, 公德) caused moral degeneration and the humiliation that the Chinese recently experienced from the

foreigners and Confucianism is the best moral guidance for the Chinese people to achieve great harmony (*Datong*, 大同) (Tay 2010: 105). He proposed the foundation of Confucian churches<sup>32</sup> nationwide alongside governmental reform and initiated the *Kongjiao* (Confucianism) Movement to protect the Chinese culture and religion against the massive works and influences of Christian missionaries (ibid.: 104-106). However, Kang's reform only lasted a hundred days since the Empress Dowager Tz'u Hsi and conservatives officers seized power and overthrew the Emperor Kwang Hsu. Kang and several advisors managed to escape the death penalty and travelled to thirty-one foreign countries, including Singapore and Batavia to seek support among the overseas Chinese (Hummel 1935: 343, Kwee 1939 [1969]: 25). After the failed reform, the Chinese continued to perceive foreign power as dangerous threats. The Boxer Uprising (1899-1901), also known as the *Pak Koen Tauw* riot (*hoeroe-hara Pak Koen Tauw*) among the Chinese of Batavia, launched attacks against Christian missionaries and foreigners. In order to save China, they proposed to protect the Qing dynasty and to preserve Chinese culture (Nio 1940: 5, Kwee 1939 [2001]: 403-404).

These three events had stimulated the THHK to launch the reform movement among the Chinese *Peranakans*. Even though they might have heard about Kang You Wei's movement, I argue that it is more likely the THHK shared Lim Boon Keng's ideas of reform, which were published in the *Straits Chinese Magazine*, starting from 1897, even though the THHK also had agency to define their own version of Confucianism. The lack of Chinese language skills among the board of the THHK and the Chinese *Peranakans* generally may have hindered their ability to directly access Kang's ideas of reform, which was written in Chinese. Published in English, Lim's ideas became more accessible since many Chinese *Peranakans* studied under the Dutch

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<sup>32</sup> Kang's idea of Confucian churches was originated from the structure of and the service in Christian churches in which Kang envisioned weekly service and a sermon to spread the Confucian teaching (Kay 2010: 104).

missionary schools and were fluent in Dutch and European languages but less literate in Chinese. The exchanges of ideas and information between Singapore and Java occurred when *The Straits Chinese Magazine* published several notes about the foundation of the THHK and its schools across Java (Dec 1900, March 14<sup>th</sup>, 1902, and Sept 8<sup>th</sup>, 1902), while the *Li Po* of Soekaboemi (West Java) summarized Lim's reform points in its article on May 18<sup>th</sup>, 1901. On December 24, 1899, Lim met Tan Gin Tiong, a Chinese *Peranakan* translator from Batavia, and gave his support and encouragement to Tan's translation project of two Confucian Classics – *Tay Hak (Da Xue)* and *Tiong Yong (Zhong Yong)* – into Malay (Kwee 1969: 5).

Born as an overseas Chinese and trained as a physician in the University of Edinburgh, Lim was both eager to search for his Chinese roots and concerned with the decline of China. He proposed that the Chinese people in British Malacca should catch up with modernity and rationality, while also embracing Confucianism as their moral guidance and cultural root. Even though Lim's ideas of reform were similar to those of Kang, there was no evidence that Lim knew Kang's ideas beforehand. Lim had published his ideas in the *Straits Chinese Magazine* in March 1897 or a year earlier than Kang's reform movement. The THHK borrowed several important points from Lim, such as the simplification or even elimination of burdensome and superstitious Chinese rituals, in which I elaborate it in Chapter 5. Lim suggested Chinese language and culture should be taught in schools as complementary to the English curriculum, so that young Chinese students could learn and feel proud of their culture (Lim 1897: 55). This suggestion might inspire the THHK to develop the Chinese schools and Lim shared English curriculum and provided Chinese teachers for them. Lim himself was a co-founder of Singapore Chinese Girls' Schools and delivered his reform ideas through public lectures and discussions. Lim considered Confucianism as “the ideal religion for which the thinking and critical world is seeking. To put it very tersely, Confucianism is the religion of humanity with the

acknowledgement of God... There can be no question that the best religion for the Chinese is pure Confucianism.” (Lim 1897: 57-58).

In the beginning of its foundation, however, the THHK did not endorse Confucianism as the Chinese religion, rather as the teaching of Confucius (*pengadjaran Khong Tjoe*), that could improve the Chinese customs (*bikin madjoe istiadat bangsa Tjina*) (Nio 1940: 7). Yet, they shared Lim’s ideas that Confucianism is the best teaching for the Chinese. It was not until Tiemersma from *Nederlandsche Zending Vereeniging* (henceforth NZV – The Dutch Missionary Union) questioned whether the Chinese people have their own religion (*agama aseli*), then the long debate among the THHK, Tiemersma and other Chinese people sparked. The debate also problematized whether Confucianism has a figure of God, and whether its followers believe in the existence of heaven and hell. This debate was published in *Li Po* and in Tiemersma’s mission periodical, *Bentara Hindia* (The Indies Legion) in 1902 to 1906.

In dealing with the debate, the THHK formed a special commission, who raised several important points, such as the definition of the “authentic” Chinese religion, the concept of God, the holy books, and their proposal to reform the old-fashioned Chinese customs. In defining the authentic religion of the Chinese people, the THHK’s view was agreeable to that of Tirta that every nation (*bangsa*) has their own civilization and religion, which may be different from one to another and every nation should follow their own tradition (Nio 1940: 213). Yet, the THHK admitted that for centuries the Chinese have already embraced *Sam Kauw* (the three teachings) and some of them believe in Islam so that their belief system somehow became diluted by these syncretic religious practices. Moreover, other than borrowing from Daoist and Buddhist teachings, the syncretic *Sam Kauw*, they argued, has no sacred text of its own. They proposed that Confucius’ teaching is the Chinese religion (*adjaran Khong Hoe Tjoe ada djadi agama Tjina*). They perceived Confucianism as more valuable for its purity (*bresih*) from superstitious

influences and argued that it has sacred texts, written in *Su Si* (Si Shu) and *Hauw Keng* (*Xiao Jing*, 孝经, The Book of Filial Piety) (ibid.: 214). In this issue, the THHK's point of view is agreeable to that of Lim. Praising Confucius for his preservation of the Chinese ancient monotheistic religion, Lim blamed Daoism and Buddhism to influence superstition and worshipping deities and genii among the Chinese people (ibid.: 164, 166).

The committee also introduced their concept of God, which in this matter, there were differences with those of Lim. According to the THHK, Confucius believed in *Thian* (*Tian*, 天), a Supreme and Sacred Spirit (*satoe roh Agoeng jang soetji*), who is omnipotent and omnipresent in governing the earth and universe (Nio 1940: 215, Coppel 1981: 185). Among the Chinese *Peranakans*, *Thian* was also known as *Thi Kong* (*Toehan Allah* or God) whom they worshipped regularly. They also believed in somewhat more personal relationship between *Thian* and human being. Praying and asking for *Thian*'s blessings and help are appropriate things to do as these acts can alleviate human sorrow. It can be done at any time with simple offerings or even without offerings, even though they suggested that people should worship *Thian* or *Thi Kong* with appropriate offerings at least once in a year. Lim Boon Keng, however, considered *Shang-ti* the "Supreme Lord – the Creator and Sustainer of us all" as the God in Confucianism (1900a: 165). He adopted the distant and non-interference concept:

"Heaven does not interfere with human beings by supernatural means... Heaven cannot and does not intervene as a *deus ex machina* to deliver us from our troubles." (1904: 84)

As I have discussed, the choice of *Tian*, *Thi-Kong* or *Shang-ti* as the translations of God in Chinese has invited debates and controversies for centuries, starting from the first contact with Christian missionaries in the late 16<sup>th</sup> century. Considering the early history and politics of translation behind the names and concepts of the Chinese God, my aim here is to evaluate how far the hegemony of Christian concepts or what Eugene Nida formulates as "the Christianization

of vocabulary”, took place in the early Confucianism in the Dutch East Indies and the Straits (Kim 2004: 14-15). In both cases, I argue that the Christianization of vocabulary partially happened. On one hand, both emphasized Confucianism is a belief of monotheism and acknowledges the existence of an omnipotent God. There was a radical shift from orthopraxy to orthodoxy for they valued rationalism and the teaching-based approach through Confucian sacred text over syncretic practices and superstitious beliefs. These attitudes marked the adoption of modernity and rationalism among the Confucian believers, which resembled the missionary strategies in eliminating the pagan superstitions to ensure the Christian faith (Aragon 2003: 132).

On the other hand, their struggles against and subversions of Christianity manifested in several ways. Lim Boon Keng refused the Christian concept of personal and directly influential relationship between God and human being. Contrary to another important aspect of Christianity, Lim did not believe in an afterlife. He regarded that “both rewards and punishments are to be meted out in this life and on the earth” (Lim 1900a: 165). In the case of the THHK, the subversion towards the Christian concept of praying and worshipping God took place when they defined filial piety as the best and expected practices in Confucianism. Honoring the spirits of one’s late parents and ancestors by praying in front of their ashes is also an act of filial piety (Nio 1940: 216). For this practice, Legge criticizes Confucius as a faulty sage since he made the Chinese show more respect to their ancestors than to their God (Hsia 2003: 99-100). Another conflicting concept between the THHK and Christian missionaries is the reluctance to talk about afterlife. Unlike Christianity, Confucianism does not speculate whether afterlife exists. Confucius himself emphasized doing good deeds in this world. He neither scared his followers with punishment in the afterlife nor lure them with any rewards. In a debate with Christians, the Confucian believers considered Confucianism a religion for civilized and mature people who do not need any promise of rewards or punishment in afterlife to maintain their good deeds. On the

contrary, Christianity is a religion for childish people (*agamanja anak ketjil*) who can be tricked easily with the hypothetical concepts (*Li Po*, Aug 23, 1902).

### **Conclusion: Is Social Agency Possible?**

I have discussed in this chapter the dialectical dynamic of adoption, cooptation and resistance of the THHK in relation to the European knowledge and Christianity. As a result of the Dutch racial segregation politics, distinct and exclusive ethnic identities among colonial subjects have negated Christian universalism and endorsed the need to have their own religion, in which they chose China as their religious and cultural root with some inputs from Singapore. Yet, in their refusal of Christianity, which was manifested in the adoption of the Chinese concepts of God, they were not able to fully counter Western values. Instead, they applied a modern and rational approach to develop Confucianism as an authentic and pure Chinese religion. Therefore, the THHK's Confucianism was the result of Chinese *Peranakans'* strategy to accommodate knowledge from the West, while also defending their position against the West.

Revisiting the debate between Talal Asad and the scholars of subaltern studies I mentioned in Chapter 1, the foundation of Confucianism as a religion in Batavia leaves several questions about social agency. Can we call the Confucianism that was developed by the Chinese *Peranakans* what Homi Bhabha calls hybridity? Or is it closer to a form of the transformation of Western ideas as Asad suggests? How influential was the agency of the THHK and the proponents of Confucianism in the making of their own religion? In answering these questions, I have to admit that the development of Confucianism in the Dutch East Indies is closer to Talal Asad's argument. In understanding the power of Western hegemony and local agency, he suggests

“...each historical phenomenon is determined by the way it is constituted, that some of its constitutive elements are essential to its historical identity and some are not. It is like

saying that the constitutive rules of a game define its essence – which is by no means to assert that that game can never be subverted or changed; it is merely to point to what determines its essential historical identity, to imply that certain changes (though not others) will mean that the game is no longer the same game. The project of modernization (Westernization), including its aim of material and moral progress, is certainly a matter of history making. But it is a project whose innumerable agents are neither fully autonomous nor fully conscious of it.” (Asad 1993: 18)

In the case of Confucianism in the Dutch East Indies, we see Western hegemony and power to be unavoidably prevalent and influential in many ways. Yet, it is not my intention to suggest this was a total submission. My aim is to identify, on one hand, influences, if not hegemony, and, on the other hand, resistances, struggles, and creativities, which exist together and create tensions along the way. It would also be a mistake to regard this as unique to Confucianism as other religious tradition, such as Islam, also negotiated with ideas of rationalism and modernity. In the later period, Islam will join as a hegemonic power in shaping Confucianism as I will demonstrate in Chapter 3 and 4.

In its later development, the THHK focused more on their efforts to provide education for the younger generation. Starting from 1920s, several Chinese *Peranakans* founded *Khong Kauw Hwees* (Kong Jiao Hui, 孔教会, Confucian Associations) in several towns across Java. They held a national congress in Yogyakarta in March 1923 during which they agreed on the missions, among others, to further propagate the teaching of Confucius, to provide books and materials for teaching, to provide guidelines for rituals, to provide supports for members, to resolve conflicts among members, if any, and to establish a publishing house and an official Confucian newspaper. As in the case of the THHK, the foundation of the *Khong Kauw Tjong Hui* (Kong Jiao Zhong Hui, 孔教中会) received harsh criticism. Instead of coming from Christian missionaries, the challenges this time came from the Chinese *Peranakans*, who supported the nationalist and new cultural movement in China (Coppel 1989: 127). Published in their own

daily *Sin Po* (Xin Bao, 新报), the Chinese nationalist movement supporters argued that instead of bringing morality and good virtue among the Chinese people as stated in its missions, the *Khong Kauw Hwee* in China in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century had struggled to bring monarchical power back. The *Sin Po* mentioned Yuan Shi-Kai and Kang You Wei as two leaders who invented the association for their own political ambitions albeit unsuccessful. Therefore, the *Khong Kauw Hwee* in China had been counter-productive for the development of Chinese society.

In the case of the Chinese *Peranakans* in the Dutch East Indies, the *Sin Po* shared its concerns. It questioned whether Confucianism is a religion and comparable to Christianity and Islam, Confucius neither claimed himself a superhuman as the founders of other religions did nor did he teach superstitious beliefs (*kapertjajaan tachajoel*) of hell and heaven in the afterlife. Categorizing Confucianism as a religion, according to the *Sin Po*, is to downgrade its position since it had enjoyed a well-known recognition as a philosophy, science of statecraft (*staatskunde*) and sociology, ethics, and educational system. Confucius' disciples, such as Tjoe Hie (Chu Hsi or Zhu Xi, 朱熹) and Ong Yang Beng (Wang Yang Ming, 王阳明), considered the teaching of Confucius *Kang Hak* (a stimulation of discussions and critical thinking, *meroendingken peladjaran*) and not *Thoan Kauw* (a transmission of religion, *menyiarken igama*) (*Sin Po Weekly*, No. 3, 1923: 35). It further warned of the difficulties to interpret the Confucian ancient teaching in the modern context and the danger of multiple interpretations. Using the example of Christianity, different interpretations of the religion had led to frictions, even killings and wars against each other, moving people away from the essence of their religion. The *Sin Po* doubted that the translation of the Confucian Classics as one of the *Khong Kauw Hwee*'s missions would foster good Confucian followers since good deeds are more important than being knowledgeable and fluent in citing *Su Si* (*ibid.*: 36).

In their reply to the *Sin Po*, the *Khong Kauw Hwee* borrowed Dr. Tan Hwan Tjiang's (Chen Huan Zhang, 陳煥章) writing (1923 [1939]) which was translated by Lim Hok Gan of the *Khong Kauw Hwee* Solo (Central Java). Tan was Kang You Wei's disciple and a Ph.D. graduate from Columbia University. During his studies, he founded the Kong Jiao Hui in New York in 1907 and another one in Shanghai in 1912 (Coppel 1989: 132, Tay 2012: 60). In his explanation about the importance of Confucianism and Confucian Associations for the Chinese people, Tan's arguments mainly supported Kang's ideas. He emphasized that Confucianism is the real religion for the Chinese since it originated and was rooted in Chinese civilization for thousands of years. He was concerned with loss of position due to the fast proselytization of foreign religions. In fact, to be able to compete with Confucianism, the foreign religions mischievously degraded it and categorized it as a non-religion. This is a serious insult to the Chinese nation since only animals have no religion (Tan 1939: 7). While the *Khong Kauw Hwees* did not intend to attack other religions, they had a mission to save the Chinese civilization from extinction under the massive expansion of foreign religions by acknowledging Confucianism as the real religion (*agama sedjati*) of the Chinese people. They suggested the Chinese to embrace their own religion and culture, instead of the foreign ones. They regretted those Chinese who disowned their own longstanding and excellent religion, including the Republic of China which ignored its duties to preserve and revive Confucianism and even discouraged the *Khong Kauw Hwees* in China.

Despite *Sin Po*'s harsh criticism and the Republic of China's negative attitudes, the *Khong Kauw Hwee* in the Dutch East Indies continued their activities. The Chinese *Peranakans*, they proposed, should support the *Khong Kauw Hwees* if they wanted to maintain their Chinese identity (*ka-Tionghoa-an*) (Coppel 1989: 134). In the following years, they productively published various periodicals that translated the *Si Shu* into Malay language and conducted

regular public speeches to disseminate the Confucian teaching. In Chapter 5, I discuss the roles of the *Khong Kauw Hwee* in inventing the Confucian collective ritual. Needless to say, that in the *Khong Kauw Hwee's* perspective, the Confucian religion is a currency to achieve respect and dignity from other nations, particularly from the Westerners.

### Chapter 3

## Governing Confucianism in Post-Colonial Indonesia (1945-1998)

The position of religion in the [Indonesian] society is an indispensable element for our efforts in nation building. Nation building [is important] in every sector: politics, economics, physical, society's life, international relations.  
(Sukarno, the first Indonesian President [1945-1966] 1962: 8).

Indonesia is not an Islamic state although almost 90% of its populations is Moslems...  
Indonesia is neither a secular state nor a theocratic one.  
Indonesia is a state based on five principles, called *Pancasila*.  
(Tarmizi Taher, the Minister of Religious Affairs [1995-1998] 1995: 90)

The independence of Indonesia in 1945 required a drastic transformation from the Dutch colonial territory and subjects to a sovereign nation-state, during which the Indonesian nationalist leaders proposed an imagination of a national community. As the post-colonial Indonesian government inherited the racially segregated community, one of its serious tasks was to integrate different ethnic and racial groups into the Indonesian nation (*bangsa Indonesia*). The integration of the Chinese minority groups became one of the serious challenges since they were excluded from the narrative of the Indonesian nation. Originated from the Youth Pledge (*Sumpah Pemuda*) in late October 1928,<sup>33</sup> the narrative considers the people whose origin is within the Indonesian territory as the real *bangsa Indonesia*, whom they call the ethnic groups (*suku*) or customary groups (*masyarakat adat*). The society's patriarchal values further disregard the fact that mixed-marriages between Chinese male immigrants and local women produced *Peranakan* off spring who are rooted in their maternal cultures and local languages. While the Chinese were

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<sup>33</sup> *Sumpah Pemuda* was a declaration made during the second youth congress attended by nationalist youth organizations in Jakarta. The delegates of various indigenous ethnic groups in Indonesia, except from Papua, took an oath to assert their loyalty to "one nation called Indonesia, one homeland called Indonesia, and one common language called *bahasa Indonesia*." The oath becomes the landmark of the Indonesian nationalism. There was no representation of Chinese youth organizations in the conference (Suryadinata 2005: 10).

not the only group excluded from the national narrative, the outsider position of other foreign oriental groups, specifically the Arabs, was mitigated by their religious identity, through which Islam as the majority religion in Indonesia bridged them with the Natives.

Since national independence, religion has far from disappeared in the modern post-colonial Indonesian nation-state. As the dominant power during the anti-colonial movement, Islamic groups have incessantly negotiated with the post-colonial Indonesian government to ensure the accommodation of their political interests as I demonstrate later.<sup>34</sup> Unlike Western secularism, which assumes religion as a private domain, the intertwined relations between the Indonesian state and religion has created the *Pancasila* state, as Tarmizi Taher, the Minister of Religious Affairs, defines in the aforementioned quote. Sukarno's quote indicates how religion has been used as the government's essential strategy in building the Indonesian nation. The first principle of *Pancasila* (the Five Principles)<sup>35</sup> – Believing in One and Omnipotent God – becomes the instrument of the Indonesian government to discipline religious communities and to build the citizens' character. During the Sukarno period (1945-1966), the belief in one God became the state's propaganda to accelerate modernity and development, particularly among the indigenous communities who were considered to be primitive and animistic. During Suharto's New Order (1966-1998), the government used religion to combat communism, which is associated with atheism.

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<sup>34</sup> The majority of the Indonesian leaders and elites were Moslems. Their political views, however, were divided and heterogenous. As A.B. Kusuma (2004: 19) mentions, it would be a mistake and oversimplification to consider Moslem leaders in general as supporting an Islamic state. In fact, the Islamic leaders were divided into two: the nationalists (*golongan Kebangsaan*) and the Islamic groups (*golongan Islam*). The nationalists proposed state's "neutrality" over religious affairs, while the Islamic group considered state affairs should not be separated from religion. The nationalists were divided again into two sub-groups. The first supported the total separation (*sepenuhnya memisahkan*) between state affairs and religious issues while the second did not require a total separation (*tidak sepenuhnya memisahkan*) between the two. Sukarno is an example of the nationalist leaders who did not require a total separation between religion and state. In his speeches, he used religious greeting and/or vocabularies. According to Kusuma, Sukarno himself was a devout Moslem.

<sup>35</sup> The other principles are humanity, Indonesian unity, representational democracy, and social justice for all Indonesians.

This chapter examines the ways the Indonesian state governs and regulates Chinese ethnicity and religion after independence. Borrowing the concepts of cultural and religious citizenship from Renato Rosaldo (2003) and Prasenjit Duara (2010) respectively, it aims to investigate the identity politics behind the exclusion and inclusion of the Chinese ethnicity and religion within Indonesian nation building. Cultural citizenship is an issue for marginalized groups whose desires to be full citizens have been deliberately neglected or relegated to second-class by the state (Rosaldo 2003: 3). While Rosaldo and other authors focus on the marginalization and/or oppression of indigenous groups under the state's nation building project, the negotiations, resistances and struggles of these groups are framed in dichotomous contradictions to a powerful state. The case of the Chinese in early post-colonial Indonesia demonstrates that as an immigrant group, they situate and negotiate their identities between Indonesia as their country of residence and China as the country of their ancestors. It means that in understanding the position of a diasporic group, we need another analytical concept as Aihwa Ong (1996: 738) suggests in her well-known idea of flexible citizenship. In addition to the negotiation with both countries, cultural citizenship, she argues, requires "a dual process of self-making and being-made within webs of power linked to the nation-state and civil society. Becoming a citizen depends on how one is constituted as a subject who exercises or submits to power relations." I benefit from Ong's recognition of "self-making" which implies some degree of agency and/or flexibility to remake one's identity. The degree of agency, however, changes from one regime to another. In the Suharto's period, the agency of Chinese-Indonesians decreased significantly. Due to the banning of the Chinese identity expression and the closing of the diplomatic relationship between Indonesia and the People's Republic of China in 1967, the position of Chinese-Indonesians was closer to Rosaldo's marginalized hinterland groups. Based

on this observation, I would like to add that agency fluctuates and shifts with changing geopolitics.

The concept of religious citizenship challenges the myth of secularism in modern nation-state. Instead of supporting the assumption that a modern state can maintain neutrality from religious influence, Duara (2010: 6) asks, “to what extent do religion and the religious subject become subordinated to the national project and subsumed by national and nationalist goals?” I use this question to analyze the Indonesian state's policies in religious affairs and their application to the so-called "Chinese religion". In their concepts of citizenship, Rosaldo and Duara consider the state and citizens as dichotomous entities and contradict each other. Using the case of the Indonesian state, I demonstrate that the boundary between the two is porous and fluid since some citizens and civil groups – particularly the majority religious groups, intellectual elites and/or the well-offs – are powerful enough to influence the state’s citizenship policies and projects. I show that the Indonesian state, rather than functioning as an independent entity which envisions governing the citizens in equal and fair ways, has been a site of struggles and tensions among different political and religious ideologies, particularly from the Islamic groups and the nationalist elites. The pressures of the Islamic groups have debunked the myth of the state’s neutrality. Rather than “the centralized and rational” state, the post-colonial Indonesian state is an example of a state that practices, in José Victoria’s (2016: 250) words, multiple irrational configurations of power, political languages, techniques and social mechanics used to exert control over bodies and objects.”

The first section of this chapter traces the Chinese dilemma during the formation of Indonesia as a newly independent nation-state. It shows the divided political aspirations among Chinese communities, which reflect the agency to apply flexible citizenship between Indonesia and China. The second part depicts the formation of the *Pancasila* state and the cultural and

religious governance during the Sukarno period (1945-1965). This part also describes the strategies of religious minority groups, including Confucian believers, in fitting their religious concepts in to the state's religious discourse. It is followed with the drastic changing policies towards the Chinese ethnicity and religion during the Suharto's period or the New Order (1966-1998). Then, I present the resistance and resilience of the Confucian believers in responding to the state's coercion, which resulted in the unique formation of Indonesian Confucianism. The epilogue depicts the role of Abdurrachman Wahid, the fourth Indonesian president, a statesman and humanist, who then accommodated Confucianism as a formal religion in Indonesia.

### **Where are the Chinese in the Making of Indonesia?**

The rise of Indonesian nationalism brought tremendous impacts for the Chinese whose distinct category and identity during the Dutch colonial period created a dilemma for integrating them into the emerging Indonesian nation-state. Dutch colonial policies, which prohibited inter-racial contacts and integration among the colonial subjects, caused the Chinese – be they *Peranakans* or *Totoks* – to develop as a distinct identity. The intensifying Chinese identity was a result of multiple factors. While classified as second-class subjects under the Dutch racial segregation politics, Chinese identity has been self-reiterated through various re-Sinification efforts and their exclusion was strengthened by the prejudices of the other groups (Salmon 2009: 46; Coppel 1983: 8, 16). The last Qing dynasty added another layer of ambiguity when in 1909, the Qing ruler launched an imperial decree to define a Chinese subject based on *jus sanguinis* or the blood principle. This meant that China could claim every child of a Chinese father or mother as a Chinese subject, regardless of their birthplace. In 1929, after the collapse of the Qing dynasty, the Republic of China imposed the nationality law, in which it claimed the overseas Chinese in a way that was similar to that of the Qing decree. The Chinese nationality law created

a problem of dual-nationality for the Chinese *Peranakan* in the Dutch East Indies as the Dutch colonial government claimed them as Dutch subjects based on Holland's decree of *ius soli* or the land principle, launched in 1910 (Aguilar 2001: 513-514; Chandra 2012: 90). The dual nationality raised a stronger imagination of China-oriented nationalism among the Chinese in the Dutch East Indies.

After Indonesian independence, China-oriented nationalism created serious doubts about Chinese loyalty to the Indonesian nation-state. The distrust and prejudice among the Indonesians overshadowed the nature of political heterogeneity within the Chinese communities. Coppel (1983: 24-26) identifies at least three political orientations among the Chinese – the pro-Dutch, pro-China nationalism and pro-Indonesia – while Chandra (2012: 98-99) adds the fourth as those who supported a pan-Asian identity under the leadership of Japan. Most of the Chinese, however, remained distant from politics. Coppel (1983: 24) observes that regardless their political affiliation, prejudices and stereotypes against the Chinese have placed them in the category of being subversive to the Indonesian government or opportunistic for their economic benefits.

The political divides among the Chinese manifested in the non-unitary, and even contradictory, responses of the Chinese representatives during the meetings of the *Badan Penyelidik Usaha-usaha Persiapan Kemerdekaan* (The Investigative Committee for the Preparation of the Indonesia's Independence – BPUPKI). Joining sixty-one Indonesian leaders, the BPUPKI assigned four representatives from the Chinese communities, one from the Arabs and one from the Eurasians to discuss and decide various issues prior to the Indonesian independence, from the foundation of the state, territory, economic system, political representations in parliament to citizenship. During the session on citizenship issues, the representatives of the Arabs and the Eurasians agreed to the naturalization plan, which allowed

their communities to adopt Indonesian citizenship automatically and share equal status with Indonesians. In the case of the Chinese, as Elizabeth Chandra (2012: 93-98) clearly demonstrates, only Liem Koen Hian, a leftist *Peranakan* journalist of East Java and the founder of the *Partai Tionghoa Indonesia* (The Chinese-Indonesian Party), supported the idea of naturalization. Liem argued that most of the Chinese in Indonesia had already been absorbed into local cultures and had lost their cultural affinities with China. The other two disagreed with Liem, even though they supported wholeheartedly the Indonesian independence, and there was no record of the fourth representative's perspective. Oei Tjong Hauw, the second Chinese representative, the son of the wealthiest Chinese conglomerate of Semarang (Central Java), and the leader of a pro-Dutch *Chung Hwa Hui* (中华会, *Zhonghua Hui*, the Chinese People Association), considered many of the Chinese in Indonesia to have opted for China-oriented nationalism even though they were born overseas and lacked in Chinese language and cultural knowledge. After Indonesian independence, he proposed "extra-national constituent" as the legal designation for the Chinese so that they were able to maintain Chinese citizenship and obtain residency and working permits in Indonesia. Oei Tiang Tjoei, a pro-Japan journalist and editor of West Java and the president of *Hoa Ch'iao Chung Hui* (Hua Qiao Zong Hui, 华侨总会, The Overseas Chinese National Association), supported Oei Tjong Hauw's stand point and advocated for individual options to retain Chinese citizenship after Indonesian independence. Supporting Ong's flexible citizenship, Chandra argues that Oei Tjong Hauw's plea to maintain Chinese citizenship relates to his transnational business network, which required mobility and flexibility to maintain. He assumed that many Chinese businesses needed a similar accommodation. Upon hearing the Chinese representatives, the BPUPKI decided to create a special clause to determine the citizenship of the Chinese by legislative acts after the transfer of sovereignty. This decision

was in favor of Oei Tjong Hauw and Oei Tiang Tjoei, and Liem Koen Hian walked out in protest (ibid.: 101).

The problematic citizenship of the Chinese in Indonesia is an example of “a dual process of self-making and being-made” (Ong 1996: 738). While their sense of belonging and imagination to China resulted from the legacy of the Dutch racial segregation politics, as I discussed in Chapter 2, their non-unitary voice concerning the Indonesian citizenship demonstrates their agency as to whether they decided to join Indonesia, China or the pan-Asia under Japan. It shows that the process and speed of assimilation were also heterogenous. As Anderson (1983) indicates, language and print capitalism are the main two factors to stimulate sense of belongingness in an imagined community, the self-exclusion among many Chinese-Indonesians needs further explanations. Instead of Chinese language, most of the Chinese in Indonesia at that time spoke Bahasa Indonesia or Malay and shared printed publication with the Natives. Claudine Salmon (1987: 39-40) indicates the Chinese *Peranakan* writers published more stories about the indigenous tribes of Java, Sumatra, Sulawesi, and Bali, compared to the Indonesian Native writers whose attention was mainly for their own communities. Thus, in Anderson’s criteria of developing an imagined political community, the Chinese had fulfilled the requirement to include themselves within the Indonesian nation. He is well aware that the Dutch racial segregation politics and the superior politico-legal status had excluded Foreign Orientals and Europeans from the Indonesian imagined community (Anderson 1983: 122-123). Yet, there is no explanation of why they were difficult to be a part of the Indonesian nation. The Chinese exclusive identity was strenuous to deconstruct because, I argue, their superior economic status implied moral subjectivity, hierarchy, and discrimination that were self-sustained by both sides. In the common stereotypes, which misunderstood the daily forms of peasant resistance, the Natives were considered as lazy and lacking in creativity and initiative (Scott 1985, Stoler 1986).

On the contrary, while the Chinese perceived themselves as “bright, ever-adaptable and highly self-interested and people of the future”, the Natives labelled them as “yellow peril”, “native’s bloodsucker” and cunning (Rush 1990: 203-204). Within the patterns of moral discrimination, the Chinese perceived assimilation as downward mobility and the Natives reserved their suspicion and rejection for the Chinese.

The citizenship status of the Chinese-Indonesians changed drastically in 1955, when the Indonesian government signed a treaty with China to end dual citizenship. The treaty replaced the passive system with an active one. Based on the 1946 Act and the 1948 Round Table Agreement, the passive system considered all Chinese who were born in Indonesia as Dutch subjects and were automatically made to the Indonesian citizens unless they declared to maintain their Chinese citizenship. By contrast, the 1955 Treaty required the Chinese to actively declare Indonesian citizenship and repudiate the Chinese one, even if they had been considered Indonesian citizens under the previous agreements. Those who failed to do so by the end of 1957 would be considered automatically as Chinese citizens (Willmott 1956: 35). For many Chinese in Indonesia, the 1955 Treaty created confusion and trouble, particularly to the common people who were not familiar with the legal terms. For the Indonesian government, it stimulated stricter policies to ensure the loyalty of the newly defined Indonesian citizens.

### **Unmaking Diaspora: Inventing New Subjectivity for the Chinese (1945-1965)**

Even though the Chinese population was politically and socially heterogenous, the two Chinese representatives’ refusal to join the new nation-state strengthened the common stereotypes and were seen as signs of Chinese ethnocentrism, ambiguous loyalty and, thus, barriers to the unity and development of the Indonesian nation-state (Suryadinata 1997: 10). Disciplining the Chinese took various forms, ranging from using coercion to ban Chinese

economic activities in rural areas, confiscating of the Chinese property, to pressuring them to adopt Indonesian culture and language. In his efforts promoting the socialist economic system, Mohammad Hatta, the first Indonesian vice president, considered the Chinese capitalistic economic power and network to be the main hindrance to grow solidarity with the Native citizens and to exclude themselves from the Indonesian nation. He proposed that the Chinese give up their capitalistic economic activities and embrace a new subjectivity in solidarity with their fellow natives. Hatta himself was born to a wealthy merchant Minangkabau family, but he claimed *Pancasila* has saved him from the egoistic and exclusive mentality of the rich:

In economic field, [the Chinese] should change the exclusive habits by inviting the natives in joint ventures with shared responsibilities. A new spirit should be introduced to the economy, by increasing businesses morality and honesty and attacking fraudulence and smuggling. These all can be stimulated by the self-disciplined propaganda [sic.] towards the way of truth, justice, compassion and honesty (Hatta 1957: 9)

Culture and education were two other main strategies to build the nation after independence in 1945 (Lindsay 2012: 6; Hanafiah 1977: 56). Under the Dutch colonialism, the Indonesians lost their character (*kepribadian*) and the existing culture led the nation in negative direction (Wongsonegoro, cited in Toer, Toer & Kamil 2003: 421). The government sponsored the construction of the Indonesian culture which reflected the real dynamics of the society and cultivated Indonesian nationalism. In 1948, the first Culture Congress in Magelang suggested the reinstatement of the arts from the heydays of Indonesian history and nationalistic movement, freedom of expression, and the establishment of art academies in various places of Indonesia (Toer, Toer and Kamil 2003: 912-915; Bandem 2008: 7). Since then, art and history education at schools were the state's political instrument to cultivate the imagined Indonesian nation (Lee 1995: xv). The identification of indigenous arts went back as early as the golden times of Sriwijaya (ca 8<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> century A.D.), Majapahit (12<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> century A.D.), and Mataram (ca. mid-17<sup>th</sup> century A.D.). There were indispensable influences from Indian, Middle Eastern, Chinese

and Western cultures, however, the golden period mainly represented the achievement of the indigenous kings of the Indonesian archipelago. Indonesian history and art were installed in the national curriculum and taught in the public schools.

In the case of the Chinese-language schools, the Indonesian government gradually disciplined the Chinese curriculum and school activities and modified them into the Indonesian curriculum (Hanafiah 1977: 58-60). Starting from 1950, the government registered the Chinese-language schools and required them to teach Indonesian language at least four hours per week alongside the Chinese language starting from the third grade of elementary school. In 1957, the Indonesian government exercised stricter supervision over the Chinese-language schools curriculum and material. All textbooks had to be approved by the Ministry of Education. Indonesian history and geography were added as compulsory subjects even though they could be taught either in Indonesian or Chinese language. Indonesian nationalism was the primary value to teach to the younger Chinese generation as Mohammad Hatta instructed:

The Chinese should gradually give up their exclusive habits both in social life and education. Conscious parents should grow a feeling of [being] one homeland, one nation and one language to their children's spirit since they are young in their family. A method to teach them [the young children] is to love the [national] flag and national anthem *Indonesia Raya* (the Great Indonesia) (Hatta 1957: 9)

While the existing Chinese-language schools could still operate, no permission was granted for the establishment of new Chinese-language schools (Suryadinata 1972: 67-69).

In daily life, however, it took more time and efforts for the government to discipline the ordinary people. In her personal history, Melani Budianta (2012: 274), a Chinese *Peranakan* who grew up in Malang (East Java), notes that in 1950s the Chinese were still capable of organizing or performing leisure activities, such as sport, dance, music and theatre, which represented the mixing of the Chinese *Totok*, *Peranakan*, Javanese and Western cultures. In 1960s, there was a drastic change in which the Chinese art and cultural landscape became more politicized in

accordance with the political frictions in the national level. Leftist parties and organizations used art and culture as their propaganda and they were in competition with religious and nationalist wings.

### **Governing Religion in Indonesia: *Pancasila* as a Disciplining Tool (1945-1965)**

The contestation about the place and function of religion, specifically Islam, in the Indonesian nation-state started during the Investigative Committee's meeting when they formulated the national constitution. Referring to the major contributions during the anti-colonial struggles, such as the Padri War (1821-1837) in Minangkabau (Central Sumatra), the Diponegoro War (1825-1830) in Yogyakarta (Central Java), and the Aceh War (1873-1903), during which the leaders mobilized people and support under Islamic principles, several leaders equated Islam with anti-colonialism and proposed it to be the foundation of Indonesian nationalism (Song 2008: 50). The proposal of the Islamic leaders to create an Islamic state and to apply Syariah Law received challenges and objections from the nationalist secular leaders and the non-Moslem groups (Kusuma 2004: 19). Sukarno, then to be the first Indonesian President, and other nationalist leaders facilitated the negotiation to reconcile both sides by installing the first principle of *Pancasila*, "Believing in one supreme God with an obligation to implement the Syariah for the Islamic believers." Under additional pressure from the delegation of Eastern Indonesia, which was predominantly non-Moslem, prior to its validation the tenet was changed to "Believing in One and Almighty God", not without the reluctance of several Moslem leaders (Effendy 2003: 31-33). The first principle of *Pancasila* has been reiterated in the 1945 Constitution, article 27.1. In the article 27.2., the Indonesian state guarantees all people's freedom of worship, according to their religion and faith. The first principle and article 27 in the 1945 Constitution become the root of religious citizenship in Indonesia.

From the perspective of the Indonesian government, religion plays an important role to nationalism and character building, in war and peace. During the colonial war (1945-1949), the Ministry of Religious Affairs called for solidarity among the people using the analogy of religious wars during the time of Prophet Mohammad:

Considering that many people are seeking refuge to safe places and they devastatingly lost their belongings, we suggest accepting them as the Ansors<sup>36</sup> provided protection for the Prophet Mohammad and his fellow refugees migrated from Mecca to Madinah... We call for branch offices to support our citizens' faith (*meneguhkan imannja penduduk*), so that they keep calming and believing in our victory (*Instruksi Menteri Agama "Menghadapi Perang Kolonial"*) (The Instruction of the Minister of Religious Affairs in "Facing the Colonial War", 1949: 933)

In the post-colonial context, a good society needs religious members since religion should be able to prevent people from committing crimes and corruption and violating law and regulation. Religious people are well-aware that they may be able to avoid legal sanctions but there is no way to escape from God's punishment (*Kementrian Agama* 1950: 343). In personal life, religion is a moral guidance and gives comfort and strength during hardships.

Instead of being defined solely by the state, the concept of religion has been negotiated with the Islamic group as the dominant religious force in Indonesia. During the Ministry of Religious Affairs' first conference in 1950, the representatives of Islamic groups requested that the Indonesian government set up a clear definition of religion and the concept of God (*Ketuhanan*), which the Minister of Religious Affairs managed to elude (*Kementrian Agama* 1950: 74, 76). Yet, the conference finally launched a memorandum for religious education in elementary and high schools, in which the concepts of religion and God were included. Even though there were Catholic and Christian participants in the conference, there was only one

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<sup>36</sup> Ansor were the people in Madinah who supported Mohammad and his followers during their migration from Mecca to escape prosecutions.

definition and function of religion and they were mainly derived from Islamic eschatology as the summary shows:

During the history of the mankind, the concept of God(s) has evolved. The ancient and primitive societies acknowledged various gods and goddesses while more civilized societies tend to recognize lesser gods. Ultimately, the modern societies believe in the One and Omnipotent God, as the Indonesian nation does. Since thousands of years, religion has been indispensable part of human civilization and, therefore, it becomes the “flesh and blood” (*sedarah dan sedaging*) and natural character (*gharizah, tabi’at asli*), that are inseparable for the human soul. In Arabic, religion (*agama*) concerns with the Last Judgement (*akhirat*) in afterlife when God will fairly determine whether people receive punishment or reward (*pahala*) for their deeds. Religious people (*orang jang beragama*) are those who believe in the existence of the Supreme and Fair God (*Tuhan Allah jang Maha Adil*) and afterlife, which consists of two realms: heaven (*syurga*) for good people and hell (*neraka*) for the bad.

Those, who consider death as the end of everything and do not believe in afterlife, are no better than animals. They tend to be materialistic (*kebendaan*), greedy, oppressive and cruel to their fellows. They cultivate desire for unlimited pleasure and power because they care mainly about the present life. They consider afterlife a fairytale of the ancient people. These people are categorized as atheist. If there are many atheists, the world becomes unsafe, even though we create many peace treaties. (Kementerian Agama 1950: 338-340).

While these criteria of religion are suitable for Islam, Protestantism and Catholicism, which originated in the Abrahamic religious tradition, the other religious believers, such as indigenous religious groups, struggled to fit themselves in this theological framework. Rita Kipp and Susan Rodgers (1987) edited an insightful volume that analyses the transformations, struggles and resistances of several indigenous beliefs, among others Kaharingan, Perlebu, Kejawen and Sunda Wiwitan, under the pressures of the *Pancasila*’s first principle. Using the evolutionary logic, in which monotheism is a marker of high and advanced civilization, the ethnic groups who embrace their traditional beliefs were identified as animistic, mystical and backward. They do not have a religion yet (*belum beragama*) since their beliefs are closer to ethnic customs (*adat*). The government started using propaganda to convert them into one of the three acknowledged religions.

The pressures to convert to Islam or Christianity – either Protestantism or Catholicism – contradict with and infringe the religious freedom guaranteed in the article 27.2. The promise to promote another foundational value, “unity in diversity” (*Bhinneka Tunggal Ika*), emphasizes conformity and uniformity rather than acceptance of and respect for differences (Ramsted 2005: 1). The Indonesian government, however, argues that those who resist conversion violate the first article of *Pancasila* since *adat* are not religions and the *adat* laws were once used by the Dutch colonial government to weaken the nationalist movement and, thus, hinder the nation building (Ramstedt 2005: 10). They should embrace one of the three acknowledged religions to catch up with the state’s modernity and developmental projects which require rational and progressive modes of thinking. In Rosaldo’s perspective, the first principle of *Pancasila*, the article 27.2 and the *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika*, become the cultural and religious tools of the state to discipline the peripheral groups by giving up and/or remaking their religious identities to be included in the Indonesian nation. This discipline was tightened even more during the Suharto’s New Order.<sup>37</sup>

At the same time, the Indonesian government applied a similar discipline to Buddhism and Hinduism, which were embraced by many people in the archipelago before Islam arrived in the thirteenth century. The irony became stronger since the word “*agama*” (religion) in Indonesian is borrowed from Sanskrit. Both were denied as religion because Hinduism, mainly practiced in Bali, was identified as animistic and polytheistic, while Buddhism was non-theistic (Ramstedt 2005: 10; Brown 1987: 108). Due to the nature of their beliefs, the Hindu and Buddhist adherents were able to negotiate with the Indonesian government, in which both coincidentally used several parallel strategies. First, they redefined their concepts of God. The

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<sup>37</sup> In November 7<sup>th</sup>, 2017, the Indonesian Constitutional Court approved the indigenous religions to receive an equal status to six formal religions (*Putusan* No. 7/PUU-XIV/2016).

Balinese-Hinduism considered *Ida Sanghyang Widhi Wasa* (Old Javanese), which has two meanings – the Divine Ruler of the Universe and Divine and Absolute Cosmic Law – as an equal concept to the *Pancasila*'s One Supreme God. The other gods and goddesses in Hinduism are the representations of the *Ida Sanghyang Widhi Wasa* characters. Buddhism refers to *Sang Hyang Adi Buddha* (the Supreme Buddha) as their God. Second, both combine the Indian and Javanese traditions. The Balinese Hinduism lists *Catur Veda*, *Upanisad*, and *Bhagavad Gita* of India as well as the Old Javanese *Sarasamuccaya* and *Sanghyang Kamahayanikan* as its holy texts. The writers of these books are the Hindu prophets. Under the leadership of Ashin Jinarakkhita, the first Indonesian monk after the Majapahit era, the Buddhists founded the Buddhayana school, which claims its root from an Old Javanese text, the *Sang Hyang Kamahayanikan*, which is also one of the sacred texts in the Balinese Hinduism. They emphasize the Buddhist teachings, such as the Four Noble Truths and The Three Gems. Furthermore, Balinese Hinduism represents previously considered animistic rituals in a structure that is comparable to Islamic rituals, such as the *Trisandhya* and the recitation of the mantras as their daily praying and five other religious duties, such as worship to God, devotions to the ancestors, human fellows, spiritual leaders, and animals and plants. The Indonesian government finally acknowledged Hinduism and Buddhism in 1963 and ca. 1965-1967 respectively (Brown 1987: 111-113; Ramstedt 2005: 11-12).

### **The Art of Self-Making and Being-Made: Confucianism during 1945-1966**

The cases of Hinduism and Buddhism show that religious citizenship takes a dual process of making. Using comparative strategies, the Hindu and Buddhist organizations reframe their concepts of God, teachings and rituals to make them equal to Islam, which the indigenous religions unfortunately have no claim to compare with. The emphasis on the anthropomorphic figure of God and on sacred scriptures in the modern conception of religion has marginalized the

indigenous religions and put them into the category of “sect” (*aliran kepercayaan*), which affirms the state’s justification to discipline and deny them full civil rights.

The Confucian believers were following a similar path of the Buddhists and Hinduists to negotiate the state’s recognition, yet they faced greater barriers in “Indonesianizing” their version of Confucianism. According to the national narrative, the Chinese civilization had no strong root in the old local civilizations compared to the Hindu and Buddhist traditions, which once became the core values and beliefs during the Sriwijaya and Majapahit kingdoms. In the contemporary time, the distinct Chinese identity under the Dutch and the re-Sinicization movement in the end of the nineteenth and the early twentieth century had shaped stronger imagination and ties with China, as I discussed in Chapter 2. However, in line with the Indonesian nationalistic sentiment, in 1956, after a long vacuum during the Japanese occupation (1942-1945) and wars of Indonesian independence (1945-1949), the Confucian believers held a national assembly to reestablish the *Khong Kauw Tjong Hwee* (the Confucian National Association). The assembly changed its name into *Perserikatan K’ung Chiao Hui Indonesia* (PKCHI – The Association of Kong Jiao Hui in Indonesia), which in 1961 was changed to *Lembaga Agama Sang Khongcu Indonesia* (LASKI – the Foundation of the Confucius’ Religion in Indonesia) and *Gabungan Perkumpulan Agama Khonghucu se-Indonesia* (GAPAKSI – The Union of Confucian Associations in Indonesia). In 1967 it was changed again into *Majelis Tinggi Agama Konghucu Indonesia* (MATAKIN). A similar case happened with other Chinese organizations. In 1963, the *Sam Kauw Hwee* also changed its Hokkien name into a Sanskrit one – *Tri-Dharma* – which bears a similar meaning of the Three Teachings (Brown 1983: 110). The changing of names appeared to comply with the policy to use Bahasa Indonesia in early 1950s and also a struggle to find a correct translation of Confucianism into the definition of “agama” and a suitable organizational formation.

Regarding the theological concepts, my reading of the Confucian periodicals in the Sukarno era shows that Tian and *Tuhan yang Maha Kuasa* (the Almighty God) were used interchangeably without further explanation as if there was a tacit assumption that the concept of Tian previously developed by the THHK has satisfied the first principle of *Pancasila*. Through its official publication, *Suara Kung Chiao* (The Voice of Kong Jiao), the PKCHI declared that they followed Neo-Confucianism, instead of the old school. Founded by Wang Yang Ming (王阳明) in 1484, according to Thung Tiong Wie, the national chair of the PKCHI, Neo-Confucianism promotes a critical approach, open-mindedness, tolerant to critics and a spirit of renewal and self-development (1956: 27-29). While the knowledge of Confucius' teaching is important, Neo-Confucianism strives for its application in daily life and in the society. The *Wu Ching* (Five Classics, *Wu Jing*, 五经) and *Su Si* (Four Books, *Si Shu*, 四书) are altogether the teaching foundation of Confucianism. Thung, however, realized that there are problems with the interpretation of these books. Instead of applying the Confucian teaching literally, he calls for contextualizing them in contemporary situation. Confucianism, he argued, is not a static religion. It should be actively (re)interpreted within the dynamics of the society. Thung further explained the five Confucian values to develop:

- 1) Confucius advises his followers to carry out their duties, including implement humanity (*Peri-kemanusiaan*) among their fellows
- 2) Confucius teaches people to understand and be aware of the Almighty THIAN's words (*Firman*)
- 3) Confucius suggests a government which focuses on and commits to principles of humanity and social justice (*Keadilan sosial*)
- 4) Confucius explains the places of Heaven and Hell in the Real Life.
- 5) Confucius proposes the human being to help each other, to live harmoniously and happily, and to love thy neighbor as your own siblings or parents for the sake of World Peace. (Thung 1957: 7-9, capital letters are in original).

The Confucian definition of religion dedicates more attention to humanity, good governance and harmonious society, as Confucius famously preferred to address these matters rather than

speculating about spirits or afterlife. In another essay, Tan Tiong Toan – the chair of the Jakarta branch – supports the definition by arguing that religion should not pay too much attention to the labels of God. *Agama* is no other than an abbreviation of “*agam2an (sic.) manusia*” (grip [for] human), which provides direction and guidance in human life (Tan 1957: 13). During the national conference in 1964, the PKCHI, then changed its name into the GAPAKSI, launched its official version of Confucian Theology and Ritual (*Tata Agama dan Tata Upacara Laksana Agama Khonghucu*), of which I discuss in Chapter 5 (MATAKIN 2013: 5)

In promoting their version of Confucianism, the PKCHI showed efforts to balance their affinities with China and Indonesia. They were concerned with Mao Zedong’s anti-Confucianism campaign and considered that there were misinterpretations and misuse of Confucian teaching, particularly during the Manchu period. The PKCHI explained that the feudal government appropriated Confucianism to gain loyalty and obedience among the people, yet they did the least to improve the nation and allowed the landlords to oppress the poor. Upon the Manchu dynasty’s abuse of power, the contemporary regimes in China blamed Confucianism. The correct interpretation of Confucianism should lead to the government’s commitment to end the oppression and to promote social justice and people’s happiness. Quoting the conversation between Tjan Tju Som, a *Peranakan* sinologist and Chinese philosophy scholar, with several officials of the People’s Republic of China (PRC), such as Kuo Mo-jo (Guo Moruo 郭沫若), the PKCHI came to a conclusion that Mao’s government did not intend to abolish Confucianism completely.<sup>38</sup> Instead, the PRC government acknowledged Confucius as a figure who defended the interest of common people (*membela kepentingan rakyat djelata*) (*Khong Kauw Hwee Solo*

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<sup>38</sup> This conclusion was taken prior to the Cultural Revolution period (1966-1976), when the Criticize Confucius and Lin Biao Campaign took place.

1957: 16). The choice to develop Neo-Confucianism in Indonesia was actually aligned with Mao's policy of new spirit (Thung 1957: 27).

Towards the Indonesian government, the PKCHI demonstrated full support of Sukarno's Guided Democracy. Launched in 1959, Sukarno declared the Political Manifesto and attempted to restore the 1945 Constitution, Socialism, Guided Democracy, Guided Economy and Indonesian Identity, abbreviated as "USDEK." The manifesto aimed to resolve the government's declining political authority, marked by separatist movements, political frictions among parties and disagreements between the parliament and the cabinet. Sukarno abolished the parliament and set up the National Council through which the political leaders were expected to collaborate and consolidate their political aspirations using the Indonesian values of cooperation, consensus and agreement (*gotong royong, musyawarah dan mufakat*). Under the guided democracy, he expected the acceleration of economic development and restoration of Indonesian pride. In the editorial note of *Suara K'ung Chiao* (No. 17, 1961: 1-2), the PKCHI supported Sukarno's political manifesto and equated his efforts to guide the Indonesian democracy with the Confucian value, *li* (禮). While the translation of *li* can be as broad as custom, decorum, law and tradition, these concepts refer to a "lead" (*pimpinan*) to follow and to achieve social order and welfare. Within the Confucian communities, the Confucian teaching is *li*. Yet, the concept is applicable beyond Confucianism. In the Indonesian context, the USDEK is *li* since it provides the direction to achieve freedom and sovereignty (*merdeka dan berdaulat*). As Confucius considered *li* is important in human life, the PKCHI expected that its application would contribute to the making of courteous, responsible, loving and wise individuals as well as loyal and dutiful citizens.

In their efforts to get official recognition as a religion, in 1961 the PKCHI sent a representative to the Ministry of Religious Affairs. They requested an official division for Confucianism, which provides the state's accommodation as Islam, Protestantism and

Catholicism enjoyed since the beginning of the Indonesian independence. While the Ministry of Religious Affairs had not responded to the plea, the presidential decree of anti-blasphemy signed by Sukarno on January 27<sup>th</sup>, 1965, acknowledges Confucianism as one of the religions in Indonesia, together with Islam, Protestantism, Catholicism, Hinduism and Buddhism (PNPS No.1/1965: 5).

### **“No More Chinese Identity and Religion”: Confucianism under the New Order (1966-1998)**

Despite Sukarno’s effort to consolidate the nationalists, communists, religious groups and the army, the last years of his regime saw heightened political tension. On September 30<sup>th</sup>, 1965 there were killings of six army generals and one middle-rank officer, followed by a political chaos. The Indonesian Communist Party (*Partai Komunis Indonesia* – PKI) was accused of being responsible for the killings and it was believed that the PKI arranged a failed coup d’état to seize power from Sukarno. In March 1966, under an emergency order, Sukarno assigned Suharto, a middle-rank army officer – to handle the situation and restore public order. The latter used his authority to ban the PKI and organized mass killings, during which around 500.000 of its members and associates were assassinated.<sup>39</sup> In March 1967, the interim People’s Consultative Assembly (*Majelis Permusyawaratan Rakyat Sementara* – MPRS) terminated Sukarno’s presidency and appointed Suharto to be interim president of Indonesia until the next election. Suharto named his period “New Order.”

During his first months in power, Suharto launched massive anti-communist propaganda campaign. Even though the Chinese-Indonesians were not targeted to be killed, they experienced a perilous situation. Without convincing evidence, several Indonesian army officers accused the

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<sup>39</sup> The lack of official record has made the number of the victims disputable. The estimation ranges from 78,500 to three million. The consensus among scholar estimates around half million victims were killed (Robinson 2018: 315)

PRC of supporting the failed coup. In 1965 to 1967, there were demonstrations and attacks in the Chinese embassy and consulate offices where people demolished Mao Zedong's pictures or statues. The agitations were followed with violence against the Chinese. Even though there was only a small number of the Chinese *Peranakans* involved in the PKI, the anti-Chinese sentiments were driven by the projection of anger and hostility towards the PRC government and suspicions that the PRC might use the Chinese (Coppel 1983: 55, Suryadinata 1981: 198). The longstanding resentment of huge social and wealth gaps between the Chinese and the Natives, the exclusive and arrogant attitudes among the Chinese and their dubious loyalty to Indonesia, particularly among those who maintained the Chinese citizenship, might have contributed to the scale of violence. Anti-Chinese riots were sparked in several cities and towns where thousands of Chinese lost their homes and shops, almost two thousand were killed and the Chinese women were raped. While some of these actions came from people's resentment and anger, the *Xin Hua News* reports the roles of the Indonesian military in the violence (Cribb and Coppel 2009: 450-451). Following this social unrest, on October 9<sup>th</sup>, 1967, the China-Indonesia diplomatic relationship was frozen. Several thousands of Chinese national citizens left Indonesia under the pressure of the Indonesian government in 1967-1969, while around a million opted to stay and maintain their Chinese citizenship or become stateless (Williams 1991: 158; Suryadinata 1981: 203).

In 1967, Suharto launched the Presidential Instruction (*Instruksi Presiden – Inpres*) No. 14/1967 to prohibit the expression of Chinese religion, beliefs and customs in public sphere to accelerate the integration of the Chinese in the Indonesian culture. The decree endorsed the closures of Chinese schools, press, and organizations and the banning of Chinese language and/or character in firm/business names and personal names. Compared to that of the Sukarno era, Ariel Heryanto (1998) argues that the New Order's assimilationist policy became a stricter

disciplining tool that is closer to identity erasure and total absorption to the Indonesian culture. The Chinese identity and culture became dangerous and undesirable, yet they were not completely wiped out and/or assimilated, due to ambiguous discriminatory policies. Regardless of their compliance in giving up Chinese citizenship, changing one's Chinese name, converting to Islam, and/or marrying the native people, the New Order maintained the category of "Indonesian of the Chinese descent" (*WNI Keturunan Cina*), which could be identified in one's identity card. The Chinese-Indonesians continue to experience discrimination in politics, social life and civil administration.

While the New Order banned Chinese religious celebrations and cultural festivals in public, during its early period it still acknowledged Confucianism as a religion and only rebuked and degraded it since 1977. In my opinion, there were at least three reasons behind Suharto's ambivalent approach. First, the New Order used *Pancasila* and religion as tools to combat communism, which came under an assumption that communism associates itself with atheism and is hostile towards religion. In his opening speech in the GAPAKSI Congress in August 1967, Suharto welcomed and guaranteed Confucianism as "having a decent place (*mendapat tempat jang layak*) in our country" which is based on *Pancasila* and the article 29 of the 1945 Constitution. He emphasized the important roles of religion while the nation was striving to eradicate the negative impacts of communism (Suharto, Aug 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1967). In this sense, he differentiated religion from sects and mysticism (*aliran kepertjajaan dan aliran kebatinan*) under a suspicion that the latter two have been used by the surviving PKI members to spread communism and atheism. He nonetheless provided neither evidence nor explanation to back up his assumption.

In this congress, the GAPAKSI demonstrated compliance with the state's definition of religion, which has at least four aspects: believing in One God, possessing holy scripture(s), a

prophet, and a system of law or rituals (Darmaputera 1988: 84). Confirming the decision of the earlier PKCHI congress, the GAPAKSI announced the Confucian theology and ritual (*tata agama dan tata ibadah*) and Si Shu and Wu Jing as their holy books. The institutionalization of Confucianism as a religion went further when the GAPAKSI set up the system of priesthood, which has three ranks. The lower-rank is *kausing* (*jiaosheng*, 教生, *penebar agama*, religious propagator), the middle-rank *bunsu* (*wenshi*, 文士, *guru agama*, religious teacher) and the highest *haksu* (*xueshi*, 学士, *pendeta*, priest) (Coppel 1977: 745-746; Suryadinata 2002: 182). Needless to say, the GAPAKSI acknowledged *Thian* as their God and Confucius as the prophet.

During the period when the Indonesian army, with the help of paramilitary gangs and the Islamic youth groups, conducted mass-killings of alleged Communists and their allies, Confucianism received several forms of state's accommodation. In October 1967, the Ministry of Religious Affairs requested the MATAKIN to send two Confucian representatives in the directorate-general Buddhism and Hinduism (The Directorate-General Hinduism, letter dated on October 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1967). In 1969, as a part of the nation and character building strategies, the Ministry of Education invited the MATAKIN to submit the curriculum of the Confucian religious education for university students (The Ministry of Higher Education and Science, letter dated on December 15<sup>th</sup>, 1969). In the following national congresses in 1967 and 1971, Abdul Haris Nasution, the chair of the MPRS, and other important officials provided speeches which demonstrated their approval of Confucianism as a religion in Indonesia. In 1969, the previous presidential decree of anti-blasphemy signed by Sukarno was reissued into the Anti-Blasphemy Law No. 5/1969, which strengthened the status of Confucianism as one of six formal religions in Indonesia.

The second possible reason behind the New Order's ambivalence was Suharto's expectation to secure votes and support for the incoming election in 1971, which would be the

second after the Indonesian independence. As an interim president, Suharto needed people's support to continue in power. Surjo Hutomo, the chair of the MATAKIN, claimed exaggeratedly to have three million members (*Tempo* March 27, 1971: 35).



Umat Agama Khonghutju yang terwadahi dalam Makin/Kebaktian/Kelenteng langgal 1 Dulu 1971 akan mengadakan aljara pemandjatan doa menjongsong Pemilu. Gambar atas ketika Presiden Soeharto menerima utjapan selamat berkenaan dengan hari ulangtahun ke 50 Kepala Negara dari Ketua Umum M djelis Tinggi Agama Khonghutju Indonesia (Matakini) Surjo Hutomo BA dalam suatu kesempatan di Kalitan Sala. Foto Istimewa —

Picture 2. Suharto met Suryo Hutomo , the chair of the MATAKIN (1970 - 1971).  
Source: *Sinar Harapan*, June 30<sup>th</sup>, 1971

Coppel (1977: 743) indicates that the MATAKIN had changed its political standing from non-political to support the *Golongan Karya (Golkar)*, a political party founded by Suharto. In its national congress in March 1971, the MATAKIN suggested its members, who had not yet determined their political commitment to vote for the Golkar. Several days before the election, Surjo Hutomo symbolically demonstrated the MATAKIN's support to Suharto, as the caption of Picture 1 mentions.

The Confucian believers under the MAKIN/Congregations/Temples will conduct a praying on July 1<sup>st</sup> prior to the election [on July 5<sup>th</sup>, 1971]. The picture was taken when President Suharto received a congratulation on his birthday [June 8<sup>th</sup>, 1971] from the chair of the MATAKIN, Surjo Hutomo, BA in an occasion in Kalitan, Solo (*Sinar Harapan*, June 30<sup>th</sup>, 1971).

In the subsequent congresses, the high-ranked New Order officials and the Golkar leaders delivered keynote speeches, which can be seen as a welcoming gesture towards Confucianism in Indonesia (Suryadinata 2002: 184). However, not long after Suharto won the election and secured his presidency, which he was able to maintain until 1998, Confucianism ironically lost its status as a religion.

Third, as an effort to de-sinicize the Chinese religion and tradition, to combat the exclusive attitudes among the Chinese *Peranakans* and to accelerate the assimilation of the Chinese, the New Order preferred Tri-Dharma to Confucianism. In 1967, when a meeting of the *Tri-Dharma* associations was conducted in Lawang (East Java), Ong Kie Tjay of Surabaya was appointed by the New Order to initiate the foundation of *Perhimpunan Tempat Ibadah Tri-Dharma* (PTITD - The Association of *Tri-Dharma* Religious Places) (Haedari 1990: 6).

Preserving the spirit of nationalism, the New Order valued the element of Buddhism, which was praised as the Indonesian previous great civilization during the Sriwijaya and Majapahit, while recognized its blending with Daoism and Confucianism (Asry & Sariyah 1990: 6). As the *Tri-Dharma* organizations align themselves with the Buddhist National Council of Indonesia (*Perwakilan Umat Buddha Indonesia*, hereafter WALUBI), the New Order considered it as a sect of Buddhism. Many *kelentengs* – if not most of them – should change their status into *Tempat Ibadah Tri-Dharma* (the *Tri-Dharma* worship shrine) or even more preferably into *vihara*. In an interview, Surjo Hutomo indicates the rising dominance of Buddhism among the Chinese temples even though the main deities come from Confucianism or Daoism (*Tempo*, March 27, 1971).

Since 1973, the New Order gradually unacknowledged Confucianism by removing it from the Ministry of Religious Affairs. There were cultural and religious justifications to problematize its status as a religion in Indonesia. In cultural context, the high-ranked state

officials started to call it “*agama Cina*” and emphasized its stronger cultural affinities with Chinese tradition. As was done by Mohammad Hatta, some officials applied moral discrimination to the better-off Confucian believers by calling them exclusive, having little solidarity and not contributing enough to the Indonesian people and economy (*Suara Merdeka*, December 27, 1971). Under the New Order’s stricter assimilation policies, these attitudes became a serious hindrance to assimilate the Chinese with the Indonesian culture (Letter of Coordinating Minister of Social Welfare No. 764/Menko Kesra/X/1983, dated on October 15, 1983). In the religious context, the state problematized the Confucian concept of God, belief of afterlife and holy books after hearing the suggestion and investigation done by the Special Committee for the Chinese Affairs under the Indonesian Intelligence Office. To justify its judgement that Confucianism is lacking metaphysical and spiritual concerns, the Special Committee used *Lun Gi* (Lun Yu, 论语, the Analects) XI, 12, which they interpreted as Confucius deliberately refusing to discuss serving spirits and death.<sup>40</sup> The Special Committee further argued that Confucius did not teach about God and he is not a prophet. In terms of holy books, the *Si Shu* and *Wu Jing* are closer to the writing compilation of human ethics whose writers and origins are questionable. Considering the arguments of several *Peranakan* and foreign writers and sinologists, the Special Committee concluded that Confucianism is a living philosophy (*filosofiah hidup*) and not a religion (Memo BKMC-BAKIN, No. M.039/XI/1973 dated on November 17<sup>th</sup>, 1973 and Memo BKMC-BAKIN, No. R.004/I/1981 dated on January 26<sup>th</sup>, 1981). The Minister of Religious Affairs justified the Special Committee’s decision with an argument that even in its homeland, China, people consider Confucianism as a philosophy (Suryadinata 2002: 185).

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<sup>40</sup> James Legge’s translation of the Lun Yu XI, 12 is “Chî Lû asked about serving the spirits of the dead. The Master said, ‘While you are not able to serve men, how can you serve their spirits?’ Chî Lû added, ‘I venture to ask about death?’ He was answered, ‘While you do not know life, how can you know about death?’”

The changing status of Confucianism deprived its believers' rights and recognition entitled in cultural and religious citizenship. In 1977, the New Order discontinued the Confucian religious lesson in schools and cancelled the plan for the Confucian religion program (*Mimbar Agama Khonghucu*) in the only national television channel (TVRI). The Confucian students started to receive pressures to convert to another religion (*Kompas*, December 22, 1977). The government also excluded Confucianism as a formal religion in Indonesia by withdrawing its plan to build the Confucian temple in the *Taman Mini Indonesia Indah* (The Beautiful Indonesia Miniature Park). The Confucian temples were put under pressure to change themselves into the *Tri-Dharma* ones as I discuss further in Chapter 6. In 1979, the New Order dismissed the MATAKIN national congress and banned the MATAKIN from organizing a national congress in the following years. For civil administration purposes, Confucian believers were suggested to adopt another religion to put in the identity card as religious identity is compulsory to declare. Putting the religious column blank is definitely not an option since it is associated with atheism and/or communism. Those who refused to comply with the regulation were deprived their access to the civil registration. For example, Budi Wijaya (Po Bing Bo) and Lanny Guito (Gui Ay Lan), who were married under a Confucian ritual in Surabaya in 1995, could not obtain a marriage certificate. The Civil Registry Office of Surabaya considered their marriage invalid because it was conducted under a religion that is unrecognized by the Indonesian government.<sup>41</sup> Without a proper marriage certificate, their children are born "out of wedlock" and prone to discrimination and stigmatization. Under this situation, many Confucian believers, including my family, were compelled to convert to another religion to avoid the administrative hassles and other negative consequences. When the couple decided to sue against the Civil Registry Office of Surabaya,

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<sup>41</sup> Under the Marriage Law No. 1/1974, the Indonesians should marry according their religion first before they register it to the Civil Registry Office.

none other than Abdurrachman Wahid, known as Gus Dur – a humanist, the Nahdlatul Ulama leader,<sup>42</sup> and the fourth Indonesian president to be – came in person to the court to support the couple and the Confucian believers. Yet, it was only in 2002 (four years after the Suharto’s regime ended) that the couple finally received their rights (Alabahin 2005: 119-120; Suryadinata 2002: 189-192; MAKIN *Boen Bio* 1996).

### **Compliance as Resistance: (Re)defining Confucian Theology and Eschatology**

Regardless of the New Order’s coercion and pressures to Confucianism to be a part of the *Tri-Dharma*, the MATAKIN was determined to bring Confucianism closer to the Indonesian values and definition of religion. Thanks to the rich and various interpretations done and compiled by the Chinese philosophers and thinkers during the two-millennia-long history of Confucianism, the MATAKIN were able to select and combine the closest interpretation to fit in the Indonesian government’s religious discourse. Their efforts may show compliance, but I also consider it an agency of resilience, resistance and self-making altogether towards the state’s cultural and religious politics. Using Rosaldo’s cultural citizenship concept, I argue that (re)defining Confucianism as a religion is an effort to be included as first-class citizens and gain back their full civil rights. The religious citizenship applied by the Indonesian government shows that the believers of the state acknowledged religions are the first-class, while the believers of sects and unacknowledged religions are the marginalized or even oppressed groups.

The *Seri Genta Suci Konfusiani* (the Confucian Holy Bell Serial – SGSK), the official MATAKIN’s publication since 1983, provides supplements on the aspects that the government considered to be lacking, such as the Confucian concept of God, afterlife, sins and hell. The

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<sup>42</sup> Nahdlatul Ulama is one of two largest and most influential Islamic organization in Indonesia. The other is Muhammadiyah.

essays concerning the Confucian metaphysics were mainly written by Oei Lee Tjiek (Huang Lide, 1934-2008) and Tjhie Tjay Ing (1935-2016). Oei was a Chinese *Peranakan* of Semarang (Central Java) and a professor of Chinese Philosophy in the Comparative Religious Studies department at the Fordham University. Tjhie was a Chinese *Peranakan* of Blora (Central Java) and the chair of the *Dewan Rokhaniwan Khonghucu* (the Confucian Priesthood Council – *Derokh*) (1969-2015), whose conceptions of the Confucian theology and rituals in Indonesia are the most influential, particularly during the New Order period. While it is beyond the scope of this dissertation to apply a close analysis the argument and/or hermeneutics of the Chinese Classics, I summarize several main points of Oei's and Tjhie's writings which are crucial to understand their counter-arguments to the New Order's rebuttal.

In his extensive essay about the Confucian concepts of God, Oei (1990) applies an evolutionary approach to explain the different thoughts and disagreements about *Tian* among the Chinese philosophers from time to time. He argues that Confucius and Mencius (371 – 289 B.C.) consider *Tian* as an anthropomorphic supreme figure, whose power might directly influence human life and universe. It was Hsun Tzu (Xunzi 298-238 B.C.) who began to interpret *Tian* in a rational and impersonal way, which resulted in a long-standing split between the rational and spiritual approaches (Oei 1990: 20). For several centuries, Xunzi's interpretation was dominant and well-developed to the point that it totally rejects any ideas of personal and aware-full God (*sampai taraf mutlak menolak atau mengabaikan kepribadian atau kesadaran Ti'en*) (Ibid.). Thanks to Chu Hsi (1130-1200 A.D.) of the Song dynasty, who was known for his synthetic approach of both schools and blended them with several other key concepts, such as *li*, translated by Oei as *azas* (principle), and *Chi* (*qi*, 气) or the highest ideal, the origin (*purwa-rupa*), essence and integration of everything, including the *li*. It is called *Tai-Chi*, the supreme high and essence (*Mahatinggi dan Mahapokok* [sic.]). Oei equates *Tai-Chi* to Plato's Idea of Good, God or

Aristotle's First Principle, which becomes the foundation of monotheism (*faham keesaan*) and subsequently becomes the core of Christianity and Islam. Therefore, these concepts are all compatible to the first principle of *Pancasila* (Oei 1990: 16, 21).

Chu Hsi restored the spiritual approach by equating *Tian* and *li*, which can be the basic of everything (*mendasari segala sesuatu*), including the anthropomorphic characters (Oei 1990: 21). However, Chu Hsi did not consider *Tian* a judge of the people, on which Oei disagrees. Oei offers his reinterpretation that *Tian* does not directly judge the people's faults and sins as other religions believe, but It sends guidance for people to find *Tao* (*Dao*, 道, the Way) through the prophets. Using the guidance, people should understand that what *Tian* commands and judges from them. From the rational perspective, Chu Hsi also acknowledged *Tian* as cosmic energy and blue sky (*cakrawala biru*), which determines everything. *Tian* must have ruling energy (*tenaga penguasa*), absolute strength and be continuously moving (*berkisar tanpa berhenti*). It cannot be defined by words, but it should be experienced and felt (ibid.: 22). *Tian* can manifest within people (*rakyat*), ourselves, (*dalam diri*) and in nature; it can be formless and manifests itself in a form at the same time (ibid.: 23). Notwithstanding the complexity of *Tian*, Oei emphasizes one more time that, *Tian* is compatible to the *Pancasila's* first principle as Chu Hsi acknowledged its anthropomorphic characters (ibid.: 22). To confirm that Confucius believed in *Tian's* influences and power in human life, Tjhie supplements Oei's essays with verses from the Analects.

Regarding the issues of afterlife, Oei (1996: 12) criticizes the Western dichotomy of life and death as two totally separate and exclusive concepts, in which death means the discontinuity of life. The power of religion, specifically Christianity, lays in its guarantee of salvation from the ultimate death. In the Chinese tradition, on the contrary, death and life are an inseparable dialectic. Referring to the famous concept of *yin-yang* (阴阳), Oei argues that both death and life,

no matter how they look as a contrast to each other, are a unified realm. Death occurs in life and inversely, as it was said by Chuang-tzu (Zhuangzi, 庄子), “Where there is life, there is death. Where there is death, there is life.” (14). While in other religions people conduct good behaviors to prepare for the final judgement in their afterlife, the Confucians pursue virtue for the current life because they do not separate life from death. Supplementing Oei’s philosophical explanation, Tjhie Tjaj Ing describes the notion of Confucian eschatology (1994: viii – x). Even though Confucius was determined to pay attention to life than death, Tjhie argues that Confucius believes in afterlife as his quotes in *Lee Kie* (*Li Ji*, 礼记 the Book of Rites) demonstrate.

“The breathing-body (our physical body) will go to the earth (to be exact, to the grave); but our intelligent spirit (our living soul) will be on high.” (Li Ji, section Li Yun, article 5)<sup>43</sup>

“All living creatures must die. When they die, they will return to the earth. Spirits will fly above, invisible, unformed, but there is life in the other side” (Li Ji, section Tjee Gie (?), both quotes are translated from Tjhie’s Indonesian version).<sup>44</sup>

Notwithstanding the afterlife belief, the Confucians should have responsibility and commitment to conduct virtue and morality and to follow the Way (*Jalan Suci*) while they are alive. Confucianism believes that human is good by nature (性, *xing*, *watak sejati*), yet it should be continuously developed so that people can avoid making *cwee* (*zui*, 罪, *dosa*, sin), *koo* (*guo*, 过, *kesalahan*, faults) and *thi* (*chi*, 耻, *rasa malu*, shame, disgrace or humiliation). The three are the manifestation of hell (*neraka*). *Thi* occurs when people loose *lee* (*li*, *kesadaran Susila*, moral conscience), which equals to losing one’s humanity. In Tjhie’s words, “people who lost conscience resemble to be dead

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<sup>43</sup> As a comparison, James Legge’s translation on the same article is “The body and the animal soul go downwards; and the intelligent spirit is on high.” (Chinese text project, <https://ctext.org/liji/li-yun>)

<sup>44</sup> All living creatures must die and return to the earth when they do so; this is called ghost. Bones and flesh decompose in the ground and darkly become the fields. Its *qi* rises up and radiates brilliantly (昭明) above, its odor and rising vapor saddens those who sense it. (Li Ji Zhengyi 47.1595, cited in and translated by Wilson 2014: 12)

(*sudah mati*); people who have conscience live in their realest sense (*benar-benar hidup*)” (1994: viii). This perspective supports Zhuang Zi’s tenet of the unity of death and life as one does not have to die physically to experience hell.

Comparing the MATAKIN’s publication under the New Order with those of the Sukarno’s period, the SGSK themes under the New Order show more efforts to prove the Confucian religious and eschatological concepts than the previous publications. While the publications during the Sukarno’s period connect Confucianism in Indonesia with that of China, those under the New Order could not relate itself to China for two reasons. First, the New Order opposed and oppressed Chinese ideology and identity. Second, after the Cultural Revolution, China’s politics were notoriously hostile to Confucianism and bourgeoisie culture. The SGSK alternatively highlights the accommodations of Confucianism as a religion by several international organizations such as the UNESCO, the Religions for Peace in Geneva, and the Hong Kong Academy (SGSK 1995: 38-40). The MATAKIN also features Dr. Oei Lee Tjiek and Dr. Thomas Hosuck-Kang, both are Asian scholars in Confucian Studies whose careers were well-established at U.S.- based universities. The summary of Hosuck-Kang’s *Confucian Studies in the West, 1662-1990*, appears in the SGSK (No. 19, 1998). The article discusses the history of East and West contacts, starting from Matteo Ricci to Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz (1646-1716). While Ricci’s work and interpretation about Confucianism were used by the Catholic missionaries to convert the Chinese into Christianity, the article places higher appreciation of Leibniz as the first (Western) person who realized the universal values of Chinese civilization and the importance of Chinese culture to Western development (Kang 1998: 37). While I discuss the enthusiasm to include Confucianism in Indonesia as a part of the global movement more in Chapter 7, my point in this section is to emphasize MATAKIN’s strategies to challenge the New Order’s exclusion by putting the works of international scholars and organizations on the top of the national concept of religion.

## **Epilogue: Confucianism in the Post-Reformation (1998-2010)**

Regardless of MATAKIN's efforts to comply with the state's definition of religion, the New Order did not revise its exclusion of Confucianism until the fall of Suharto in 1998. Following the devastating Asian economic crisis in 1997, the notorious anti-Chinese May 1998 Riots and the pressures of large-scale student and mass protests, Suharto stepped down. He handed over his presidency to the vice president, B.J. Habibie, who has been known as a more democratic leader than Suharto. Under Habibie's short period of presidency (May 1998 – October 1999), the status of Confucianism received a little better recognition. Referring to the fact that the Anti-Blasphemy Law No. 5/1969 is still valid and legally binding, the Minister of Religious Affairs, Malik Fajar, (re)acknowledged Confucianism as one of six formal religions in Indonesia. The (re)acknowledgement, however, did not automatically improve the political status and civil rights of the Confucian believers (Suryadinata 2002: 191). For example, they were denied a representative in the People's Consultative Assembly and the civil registry regulations had not accommodated the Confucian believers.

After a short period of B. J. Habibie's presidency, Abdurrachman Wahid, as famously known as Gus Dur, was elected as the fourth Indonesian president (1999 – 2001). He was the leader of the largest Islamic group in Indonesia and the son of Wahid Hasyim, who advocated for the Islamic state during the Investigative Committee debate prior to the independence of Indonesia (Kusuma 2004: 23) After the independence, Wahid Hasyim was the first Minister of Religious Affairs, who died in a car accident at the age of 38 in 1953. On the contrary to his father's political view, Gus Dur has been known as a moderate and liberal Moslem leader, humanist, and supporter of democracy and pluralism. His well-known book, *Tuhan Tidak Perlu Dibela* (God Does Not Need Any Defense, 1982) criticizes religiocentrism and promotes tolerance among religious groups. He supported the struggles of the Confucian believers to gain

their civil rights in 1995, during which Budi Wijaya and Lanny Guito sued the Civil Registry Office of Surabaya to obtain their marriage certificate. Several months before his death in December 2009, Gus Dur and several human rights activists appealed to the Constitutional Court to conduct judicial review towards the Anti-Blasphemy Law No. 5/1969, which has been used to persecute the so-called “deviant” sects and religious minority groups. The Constitutional Court, however, rejected the appeal.

Besides his humanistic principles, there was a speculation that Gus Dur’s support of the Confucian believers was because he himself was of Chinese descent (Suryadinata 2002: 192, *Kompas*, January 30, 2008). I suggest that his acknowledgement of Confucianism was facilitated through his close friendship with Bingky Irawan, a Confucian priest of the *Boen Bio*, Surabaya. In the mid-1970s, Gus Dur and Bingky were learning spirituality under the same teacher, Romo Semono of Purworejo (Central Java). During the first days of presidency, Gus Dur invited Bingky to visit the Presidential Palace in Jakarta. In their conversation, Bingky requested Gus Dur to withdraw Suharto’s *Inpres* No. 14/1967 which prohibits the expression of Chinese religion, beliefs and customs in public sphere. He reminded, “Gus, when you arrive in China, don’t forget your promise. What is the point to develop a collaboration with China if you ignore the Chinese-Indonesians (*Tionghoa*)?” This conversation occurred as Gus Dur was very concerned with the high deficit that Indonesia experienced after the 1997 economic crisis. He explained his plan to visit the People’s Republic of China as an emerging economic power to improve the diplomatic and economic cooperation between China and Indonesia (Personal interview, March 29, 2011). Beside Bingky Irawan, Gus Dur also invited several MATAKIN activists to discuss the conditions of the Chinese-Indonesians and Confucian believers (*Kompas*, January 30, 2017). After returning from China, Gus Dur kept his promise and signed the Presidential Decree No. 6/2000, which abolishes the *Inpres* No. 14/1967. In 2000, for the first

time in more than 32 years, the Chinese-Indonesians celebrated the *Imlek* (Chinese New Year) in public. Amidst the euphoria, he was endowed a title “*Bapak Tionghoa-Indonesia*” (The Father of the Chinese-Indonesians). The Confucian community of the *Boen Bio* celebrates Gus Dur’s birthday and, later, his death anniversary as a part of annual praying rituals.

While the returning Chinese culture was well-accepted by public, Gus Dur’s accommodation of Confucianism invited debates and controversies. A national magazine, *Tempo*, conducted a survey with two questions. The first asked: “Would you agree if Confucianism was legalized as a *new religion (agama baru)* in Indonesia?” (my italics). The responses show that 52% disagreed, 24% agreed, and 24% abstained from responding. The second asked: “Who has the authority to decide whether Confucianism is a religion?” Approximately, 37% of respondents did not know who should authorize a religion, 25% chose the Minister of Religious Affairs, 16% felt nobody has the right to decide, 12% chose the President, 6% Confucian believers, and 3% Confucian leaders (*Tempo*, December 26, 1999). K.H. Tholhah Hasan, the Minister of Religious Affairs under Gus Dur’s cabinet, also resisted the accommodation and demanded, “they (the Confucian believers) should first prove that Confucianism is a religion.” (*Tempo*, January 03, 2000). Regardless the controversies, Gus Dur continued his commitment to end the discrimination against the Chinese-Indonesians and Confucians believers. After he stepped down in 2001, the subsequent presidents – Megawati Sukarno Putri (2001 – 2004) and Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono (2004 – 2014) – continued Gus Dur’s policy by including, among others, the *Imlek* as a national holiday and the changing of the derogatory term “Cina” into a more respectful term “Tionghoa” respectively. In Rosaldo’s cultural citizenship concept, these policies revise the exclusion of the marginalized group and signal their recognition as a part of the Indonesian nation (2003: 3)



Picture 3. Praying for Gus Dur's death anniversary in the *Boen Bio* on December 30<sup>th</sup>, 2010.

Tracing the history of the Chinese-Indonesians during the different post-colonial regimes shows the fluidity of cultural and religious citizenship. While state power and governance indeed influence the status of the marginalized groups, the case of Confucianism in Indonesia requires an understanding beyond the dialectical approach between the state and marginalized groups as two struggling and bargaining entities in defining citizenship. On the one hand, the state is far from a solid and independent entity. The formation of the *Pancasila* state and the predominant monotheistic discourse in Indonesia signify the power of the Islamic groups as the privileged majority that the Indonesian government of different regimes struggles to conquer and discipline. The international geopolitics, particularly the relations between Indonesia and the People's Republic of China and the Cold War, unavoidably influence the strategies and policies of the Indonesian state in governing the Chinese cultural and religious identity. While the president's or national leader's personal value and vision may determine policy and regulation, more often than not, they are contextualized within the national and international politics and economics. When

Gus Dur acknowledged the civil rights of the Chinese-Indonesians, his personal values indeed contributed significantly to his decision, of which he deserves the full honor as a humanist leader. Yet, he also used the acknowledgment of the Chinese-Indonesians' rights to improve the diplomatic and economic bargain with the PRC, the overseas Chinese and the Chinese-Indonesian whose moved out their investment abroad after the May 1998 riots (*Tempo*, November 24, 1999; *Tempo*, December 12, 1999).

On the other hand, the Chinese-Indonesian as the marginalized group is far from isolated either. As a diaspora group, they always find ways to define their relationship between Indonesia and China, either imagined through education, language, news and publications or directly experienced through visits. While most of them are rooted in local cultures as it is manifested in the hybrid *Peranakan* culture, the degrees of assimilation vary. In the perspective of the post-colonial Indonesian state, hybridity is a sign of foreignness and the Chinese-Indonesians' failure to assimilate fully into the Indonesian nation. Out of the expectations to be loyal, cohesive and solidary, the *Peranakan* culture and better-off economic status become the reasons for the state's discipline, control, or even erasure. The state's pressure and oppression made the Chinese-Indonesians the second-class citizens politically, culturally and religiously.

Agency and resistance towards the Indonesian state's pressure and oppression occur. In their efforts to defend Confucianism as a religion, as Aihwa Ong (1996: 738) suggests, a dual process of being made and self-making occur. I have demonstrated that strategies of compliance, resistance and resilience take place at the same time, which may remind us to Hommi Bhabha's concept of mimicry. By discussing the Confucian theology and eschatology, the MATAKIN practices the "ambivalence of mimicry" or "almost the same, but *not quite*", show the agency to resist the dominant Islamic or Christian religious discourse (Bhabha 1994: 86, italics is in original). The negotiation with the Indonesian state was further developed by putting

international support and accommodation towards Confucianism. In the following chapters, I discuss how the dual process of being-made and self-making manifests in the concept of Confucian prophecy and rituals.

## Chapter 4

### Confucius is Our Prophet: The Discourse of Prophecy and Religious Agency in Indonesian Confucianism<sup>45</sup>

All the religious traditions of the world not only are but throughout have been,  
slowly or swiftly, in a process of historical change.  
(Wilfred Cantwell Smith 1983: 2)

The mystical also represents the conceptual site of a historical struggle  
for power and authority.  
(Richard King 2013: 171-172)

Who is Confucius? Is he a prophet, philosopher or sage? Why and how is the role ascribed to him important? What are its consequences for Confucianism in Indonesia? A short performance at the *Boen Bio* (Wen Miao, 文庙) temple in Surabaya on 10 October 2010, when the community celebrated the two thousand five hundred sixty-first birthday of Confucius, triggered my research into these questions. The performance introduced the early period of Confucius's life as follows.

A grey-bearded man and a young lady – both dressed in long, loose red Chinese-style gowns of the kind typically worn by brides and grooms – entered the main hall. The man was Shuh Liang Heih (Shu Liang He, 叔梁紇), Confucius's father-to-be, who was believed to be in his seventies when he married Gan Tien Tjay (Yan Zheng Zai, 颜征在). She was then a young woman, possibly in her late teens or early twenties, and would become Confucius's mother. They looked like newlyweds. The narrator commented that they loved each other very much and wished to have a son. They went to a mountain to worship. Using joss sticks, they prayed together, asking for a son. Not long after, a mystical animal, a *qilin* (麒麟) – here performed by a *barongsay* (dragon dance) player – appeared. Accompanied with vibrant music, it moved back and forth in an agile manner before approaching Tien Tjay and dancing in front of her. Tien Tjay tied a red cloth to one of its horns. The narrator explained that *Tian* (天, God) had heard the couple's prayer and sent the mystical animal, which symbolized *Tian*'s blessing. The three

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<sup>45</sup> A slightly different version of this chapter has been published in Sutrisno, E. Confucius is our prophet: The discourse of prophecy and religious agency in Indonesian Confucianism. *Sojourn: Journal of Social Issues in Southeast Asia*, 32 (3): 660-718.

stepped backwards and off-stage. The narrator said that Tien Tjay had become pregnant and that the couple went home. A moment later, they appeared again. This time, Tien Tjay held a baby in her arms. The narrator ended the performance with a statement that she gave birth to a healthy and beautiful baby boy. They named him Tiong Ni (Zhong Ni, 仲尼), after the mountain on which they had worshipped. He was later known as Confucius, the prophet and great sage of *agama Khonghucu* (the Confucian religion) (Fieldnote, Surabaya 10 October 2010).



Picture 4. Confucius's parents pray and ask for a son



Picture 5. A *qilin* appears before Confucius's mother



Picture 6. Tian heard their prayer. Confucius's mother holds the baby in her arms

I was in the audience watching the performance, together with around a hundred community members, representatives of the Ministry of Religious Affairs and other guests. I found the drama intriguing. As I took notes on the performance, I could not help comparing it to the biographies of Confucius written by the Indonesian Chinese authors Lie Kim Hok (1897) and Kwee Tek Hoay (1934). Its depiction of Confucius's parents as a couple who loved each other and decided to marry out of their own will, for example, differed from older stories, with their depictions of an arranged marriage in which the Gan family felt obliged to accept Shuh's proposal because of his high social status and nobility even though there was a huge age gap between him and their daughter (Lie 1897: 15, *Khong Kauw Hwe Soerabaia* 1936(?): 6). The presence of a *qilin* as a heavenly messenger also drew my attention. It represented an element of mysticism and supernaturalism in the story of Confucius, one that Lie's and Kwee's versions did not mention. Familiar with the notorious and lengthy debates about whether Confucianism is a religion and the struggles of Indonesian adherents of Confucianism to defend their faith, I kept wondering whether the representation of the *qilin* was an affirmation that Confucius was a

prophet who received divine blessings, like Jesus or Mohammad. These reflections led me to wonder about changes in the representation of Confucius that take place in Indonesia over time. What accounted for the differences among various versions of his biography, and how did those differences shed light on the social and political forces that affected representations of his status as prophet?

This chapter investigates the fluid representation of Confucius and Confucianism in Indonesia as it has reflected the changing discourse on religion in the country and the socio-political forces that have influenced adherents to represent Confucius in particular ways. I argue that the concept of prophecy and other religious ideas have a degree of flexibility that undermines the dichotomy of “secular” and “religious” and make possible the fluid representation of Confucius. This position affirms that of Wilfred Smith (1983: 2, 4), who proposes that all religions undergo “an unending process of dynamic religious evolution” that becomes “an intrinsic quality of religious traditions.” In comparing sacred biographies of Confucius and analyzing them in particular historical contexts, I borrow Michel Foucault’s genealogical approach to explain that the fluid meaning of a concept represents the “phenomena of rupture, of discontinuity” in studying the history of ideas (Foucault 2002: 4). Changing representations of Confucius offer a series of windows for understanding different interpretations and memories of Confucius as a historical figure across more than two millennia. Through these interpretations contemporary adherents of Confucianism can exercise their religious agency by selecting and adjusting the previous version that serves their contemporary need and situation.

While in his history of madness, Foucault (2006) emphasizes the transformation of ideas in a single culture or society, I investigate the process as it occurs when religious ideas travel across contexts. In the case of Buddhism and Neo-Confucianism, which reached Japan from

China in the eighth and twelfth centuries, respectively, David Pollack (1986) demonstrates the patterns of adoption, and also of antagonism, on the part of Japanese encountering Chinese culture and values. This encounter involved continuous negotiations and strategies, through which Japanese invented *wakan* - the mixing of Japanese and Chinese and resulted in the transformation of the religious doctrines from Ch'an (禪) to Zen Buddhism. During the post-colonial period in Indonesia, the process of negotiating between Chinese religious concepts and the state's policy on the governance of religion has contributed to the singularity of the Indonesian Confucianism.

Even though Confucius clearly stands as the main figure of Confucianism, his position is the subject of ongoing debates, over whether he was a philosopher, a law-maker or a prophet. These debates influence the status of Confucianism as a philosophy, a moral system or a religion. Since the publication of the *Hikajat Khonghoetjoe* (The Life Story of Confucius) - the first biography of Confucius written in Malay by Lie Kim Hok in 1897, other version of the life of Confucius appeared and re-appeared in the forms of prose, illustrated stories and school textbooks. There have also been stories present in oral form, through dramas and performances. As no recordings or other account of these, with an exception of my notes on the one that I attended, seem to exist, this chapter focuses mainly on the written materials. It goes without saying that each story has its own emphasis and interpretation. Some authors may underline the historical facts of Confucius's life and teaching, others may highlight the mythical or superhuman power of the prophet, and still other authors were interested in him as an exemplary person of high morality. These fluid representations give rise to a series of concerns. One relates to the flows of ideas from Europe, Singapore and China as they influenced views of supernaturalism and the definition of Chinese religion and prophecy in Indonesia. A second is the degree to which fluid representation has resulted from contacts with and among Buddhism,

Christianity and Islam and their impact on the concept of prophecy. A third concern is the changing discourse on religion in Indonesia and the socio-political forces that have caused Confucian communities to represent Confucius in a particular way. Finally, the agency of adherents of Confucianism in revising and (re)constructing the representation of their religious icon as a mode of survival and existence merits attention.

A sacred biography is a text written by a believer to introduce the founder of a religion or another notable individual (Reynolds and Capps 1976: 3). The authors of sacred biographies usually contextualize the lives of religious leaders in ways that speak to the contemporary situation. The concern of sacred biography with a particular time often emerge from “marginal situations” can take the form of personal or family distress – such illness or death of a family member – or a larger crisis of an entire community (Keyes 1982: 8). Sacred biographies of Confucius and their relevance to the Chinese *Peranakans* of the Dutch East Indies or post-colonial Indonesia served as a means of coping with unfavorable socio-political situations. This chapter analyzes and compares four sacred biographies of Confucius dating from the end of the nineteenth century to the middle of the twentieth, along with the drama mentioned above. As the authors of these biographies were either Chinese *Peranakan* writers or people associated with the *Khong Kauw Hwee Soerabaia* (Kong Jiao Hui, 孔教会, Confucian Association of Surabaya) or the *Sam Kauw Hwee* (San Jiao Hui, 三教会, the Association of Three Teachings), they represent a Chinese *Peranakan* emic perspective. The earliest two biographies were written in Low Malay, and the later two in Indonesian. The article focuses on the representation of events in Confucius’s life – his birth, religious life, work and death – as Reynolds and Capps (1973: 4) suggest that authors commonly use such events use to depict and establish the “mythical ideal” of a particular religious figure and to lead readers to view that figure as exemplary.

The analysis draws on the argument of Wendy Doniger (2011: xiii) that a religious idea, be it in the form of text or myth, appears in a particular time to meet people's need to relate to and understand their society and the cosmological realm. Myths and other stories or texts are always "context-sensitive" (ibid.: xii). Doniger suggests two ways to analyze myths: through synchronic and diachronic approaches. The synchronic approach emphasizes the specific context of each occurrence of the myth and shows its relationship with the socio-political and economic situation of the time. The diachronic approach analyzes the reasons for changes in a myth over time. The synchronic approach applied here permits analysis of the four biographies of Confucius and their contextualization with reference to the socio-political forces of their times. The goal is to shed light on the pressures and tensions that the Chinese *Peranakan* community experienced. At the same time, application of the diachronic approach permits an analysis behind the switch from rationalist to spiritualist approach. The rationalist approach features strong portrayals of Confucius's humanity, moral superiority and status as a sage, while the spiritualist approach emphasizes his contact with supernatural figures as an endorsement of his teachings.

The first biography, written by Lie Kim Hok in 1897, exemplifies the rationalist approach to Confucius's life, while Kwee Tek Hoay's 1934 biography combines the rationalist and spiritualist approaches. A publication of the *Khong Kauw Hwee* (dating perhaps from 1936) and one of the *Perserikatan Khong Chiao Hui Indonesia* (Federation of Confucian Associations in Indonesia, PKCHI) dating from 1957 illustrate the spiritualist approach. The latter publication was prototype for the 1982 publication of the *Majelis Tinggi Agama Khonghucu Indonesia* (High Council of the Confucian Religion in Indonesia, MATAKIN). The change from the rationalist to the spiritualist approach demonstrates changes in religious ideas over time as the result of the contact with, challenges from or competition with Christianity and Buddhism during the Dutch

colonial period and the transmission of ideas from Europe and China to Indonesia. It also reflected the internal dynamics of the Chinese *Peranakan* groups and political pressure from successive Indonesian governments, pressure heavily informed by Islam, during the post-colonial period.

The chapter first provides a brief description of the religious life of the Chinese *Peranakans* before the coming of Confucianism, followed by an outline of the competition between the Old Text and the New Text in China. The former inspires the so-called rationalist approach, while the latter influences the spiritualist one. While far from comprehensive, the outline discusses the use supernaturalism and metaphysics as parameters to consider whether Confucius is just a human being or a divine messenger. The contestation between these approaches influenced the interpretations of European missionary sinologists and diasporic Chinese in Singapore. Attention to European interpretations of Confucius and his teaching are crucial to understand the Indonesian Confucianism, as early Chinese *Peranakan* writers depended on European knowledge of Confucianism and China. The lack of Chinese proficiency among the Chinese *Peranakans* the main reason for this dependence, which was complicated by the fact that European perspectives on Confucianism had been filtered through Christianity and orientalist attitudes (Chan 2009: 1-4, Na 2016: 27). The discussion of Lim Boon Keng, a proponent of the Old Text, below sheds light on the connection between the Chinese communities in Singapore and Batavia in the late 1890s and early of 1900s, and the role of that connection defining the ethnic and religious identities of Indonesian Chinese. An account of the introduction of Confucius as a prophet in Indonesia through sacred biographies and synchronic and diachronic analysis of those biographies then follow.

## **The Religious Life of Chinese Indonesians Prior to the Twentieth Century**

Trade and contacts between the archipelago and China date to the tenth century, and a growing number of Chinese settlements in several ports in the archipelago emerged from the sixteenth century onward. Despite this long history of interaction, the doctrines of Confucianism were little known in the archipelago. Knowledge about Confucianism and Confucius came to the Dutch East Indies in the early 1880s and took several forms, such as the introduction of the Confucian calendar by several Chinese *Peranakans* in Surabaya in 1879 (Salmon 2005: 133) and the establishment of an altar to worship him at a Chinese school of Surabaya in the mid-1890s (Albrecht 1897: 231-233). Confucius's name was also mentioned in several publications. In 1888 *Serat Angdok* (The Angdok Tale), a story that narrates a conversation between Confucius and a brilliant boy, appeared in Javanese (Chambert-Loir 2015, Oetomo 1987). The story mentions briefly that Confucius was very noble and had a distinguished name in China. He established a religious school in Lo Kok (Lu Guo, 鲁国, Lu kingdom), where he worshipped and meditated in solitude (Oetomo 1987: 184). In 1896, Njio Tjoen Ean, a Chinese captain of Ambon, translated *Soe Sie Pek Boen*, the Confucian canon, from Dutch to Malay. These developments did not, however, introduce substantive knowledge of Confucius or of his life story to Chinese communities in the Dutch East Indies, even though a few of them used Confucian classics as a basis of moral teaching and observed Chinese holidays.

The *Hikajat Khonghoetjoe* or Life Story of Confucius, published in Malay in 1897, treated Confucius and his life more comprehensively. Confucianism received wider attention during the early part of the twentieth century, after the founding of the *Tiong Hoa Hwe Koan* (Zhong Hua Hui Guan, 中华会馆, The Chinese Association, THHK) in Batavia in 1900. One of its goals was “to enhance Chinese culture, in as much conformity as possible with the rules of the prophet Confucius” (Nio 1940: 7). These efforts focused on changing the religious customs of

the Chinese *Peranakans* in two ways. First, they emphasized the reform and purification of Chinese religion from somewhat “chaotic”, “burdensome” and “old fashioned” *Peranakan* traditions, in which indigenous and Chinese customs were commonly practiced in tandem (Kwee 1969: 8-12). Second, they call for a move from rituals or customs to stress on teaching.

The introduction of Confucian teachings and the figure of Confucius through writings was timely because of the arrival of print capitalism in the Dutch East Indies and an increasing rate of literacy among the Chinese *Peranakans*. The THHK and several *Khong Kauw Hwees* across Java, the latter were established starting in 1918, regularly published religious texts and circulated parts of the Confucian canon in the Malay language. Their periodicals and other publications aimed to educate their members and promote mutual contacts among them. Interest in and readership of Confucian teachings were relatively vibrant. Periodicals such as *Khong Kauw Goat Po* (*Kong Jiao Yue Bao*, 孔教月报, Confucian Monthly Bulletin) and *Bok Tok Gwat Khan* (*Mu Duo Yue Kan*, 木铎月刊) provided opinion columns in which members and subscribers could discuss Confucian teachings and concepts. A few periodicals, such as *Djiep Tik Tjie Boen* (*Ru De Zhi Men*, 入德之门) published by the *Khong Kauw Hwe Soerabaia*, sustained publication for as long as 25 years and circulated in many other cities of Java. They fostered an imagined Confucian community and a sense of belonging (Sutrisno 2016: 10-11).

### **The Old Text and New Text Contestations in China: The Inspiration of the Confucius Biographies in Indonesia**

After Confucius died in 479 B.C., there were at least two contested categories of Confucianism - the Old Text and New Text - in China. The source of the debates between them lay in the question of how to interpret Confucius’s the *Spring and Autumn Annals* (*Chun Qiu*, 春秋), which describe the life, chaotic politics and rites of the Lu kingdom. The fortunes of the two

competing approaches depended on a given dynasty's endorsement. The earliest interpretation of the Annals was that of Zuo Qiu Ming, (左丘明), a disciple of Confucius himself. His commentary, known as the Zuo commentary (*Zuo zhuan*, 左传), provided supplementary explanatory information and contextualized the events or incidents through which the readers may reconstruct the history of Confucius's era. Zuo's commentary becomes the inspiration for the rationalist approach to Confucius (Wakeman 1973: 103).

The early Han dynasty (206 BC – 220 AD), some two and a half centuries after Confucius died, brought the prominence of interpretations of Confucius that emphasized the moral and spiritual dimensions of the *Spring and Autumn Annals* or the so-called New Text approach (*Jin Wen*, 今文). These interpretations were in the Gongyang commentary (*Gong Yang zhuan*, 公羊传) and the Guliang commentary (*Gu Liang zhuan*, 谷梁传). The former describes Confucian secular ethics as well as the spiritual and metaphysical aspects of Confucian teaching and principles, such as the relationship between Heaven and humans (Ou 2006: 71, citing Queen 1996), while the later emphasizes and interprets the moral obligations relating to political events (Ulrich 2010, Section Chunqiu-Zuozhuan, Spring and Autumn Annals). Starting from the 1930s the Gongyang commentary influenced the development of Confucianism in contemporary Indonesia.

The early development of the Gongyang commentary was attributed to Dong Zhong Shu (董仲舒, 179-42 BC), a philosopher and scholar, who wrote a note to commemorate Confucius. It appeared in the context of efforts to elevate Confucius as a divine figure and to promote the Confucian religion by adding not only the school of the *yin yang*, the male and female principles of Chinese cosmology, but also the Five Elements or Powers of earth, wood, metal, fire and water into Confucian doctrines (Fung 1983a: 17). The Gongyang commentary aims to reveal “the hidden meaning” behind the Confucius's texts (Wakeman 1973: 104). Dong considered Confucius

someone who had received a mandate from Heaven since there was an appearance of a *lin* before him. A *lin* or *qilin* is a mystical animal, believed to be a sign of the arrival of a sage on earth (ibid.: 105). Following Dong's suggestion, during the Han dynasty Confucianism was considered as a religion and incorporated into the curriculum in the national university (*tai xue*, 太学), exams in schools and the recruitment system of officers—all at the cost of banishing other interpretations and philosophies (Fung 1983a: 17).

With the decline of the Han dynasty and the rise of the Sui dynasty (589-618 AD), the Gongyang commentary faced challenges from the Old Text approach (*Gu wen*, 古文), which emphasized the historicity of Confucius's writings. In not accepting the mystical and spiritual dimensions of Confucianism, the Old Text philosophers took a position closer to that of the earlier Zuo commentary (Fung 1983b: 135). Even though not all Old Text interpretation accorded with that of the *Zuo*, the two concurred that the teaching of Confucius was essentially concerned with human situations, not with divine figures (Dull 1966: 3). In its later development, for almost fourteen centuries, many dynasties accepted the Old Text as the state ideology. Supported and ritualized by the state, the rationalist Old Text promotes Confucius as the “King of Cultural Propagation” (*Wen xuan wang*, 文宣王) (Murray 1992: 11-12) and the thoroughly human figure of “teacher, transmitter and frustrated statesman” (Murray 1996: 273). This long history of endorsement has made his human figure and roles known and accepted. Therefore, it is unsurprising that, at the time of contact between the West and China in the sixteenth century, the Old Text enjoyed general recognition as the official version of Confucianism.

While the Old Text flourished for almost fourteen centuries, the New Text was underrepresented in official historical documents. However, it survived by other means. Murray (1997: 3) notes the existence of devotional rites to honour Confucius as a deity as well as a philosopher and teacher in several Chinese temples during the Tang dynasty (618-906 AD).

Another effort was the creation of *sheng ji tu* (圣迹图, pictures of the Sage's traces or illustrated biographies of Confucius) during the late Ming dynasty (1368-1644 AD). These pictorial biographies adopted the supernatural elements of the New Text to apotheosize Confucius as *su wang* (素王, the Uncrowned King) (Murray 1997: 10). Furthermore, Murray (1996: 272) argues that the pictorial biographies of Confucius were inspired by those of the Buddha, Lao Tze (Lao Zi, 老子) and various local gods or goddesses. These biographies embodied a strategy to convert people and as an educational tool for explaining religious doctrines. They were unsurprisingly popular and enduring among common people, regardless the state's political view on Confucianism. In other words, the early pictorial biographies of Confucius may have reflected the contact, competition and accommodation among the three religions – Confucianism, Buddhism and Daoism – in what Smith (1983: 4) defines it as a process of “permeable dynamism.”

The Gongyang commentary regained its influence during the middle part of the Qing (清) dynasty (1644-1911). Long-forgotten debates were revived, since Qing philosophers considered the Gongyang interpretation of Confucian morals more authentic and the Old Text interpretation false (Wakeman 1973: 108-109). In 1895, Kang You Wei (康有为), then a young middle-ranking officer, proposed a thorough governmental reform as a response to the Chinese defeat in the Sino-Japanese War. Kang argued that the New Text, particularly the Gongyang commentary, could serve as an important moral foundation for the purification of Chinese culture and the nation (Hsiao 1959: 99, 101). He proposed that Chinese appreciate their own tradition, as he was concerned with the large number of conversions to Christianity among Chinese. Kang, however, acknowledged the efficiency of Christian churches and organizations in spreading their teaching (Duara 2008: 50). He recommended weekly preaching and worship, the application of Confucian calendar and the foundation of Confucian association on the Christian model.

Kang's choice of endorsing the New Text instead of other Confucian schools led to debate and speculation, whose details are beyond the scope of this article. Hsiao (1959: 180) considers Kang's interest in spirituality, supernaturalism and his earlier conversion to Mahayana Buddhism with a heavy influence of Neo-Confucianism as the main factors behind his adoption of the Gongyang commentary. Taking a utilitarian approach, Levenson (1958: 79-81) argues that the doctrines of the New Text helped Kang bridge Western and Chinese values and stake a claim for a Chinese way of dealing with his country's situation. For example, he combined the Gongyang concept of harmony with the Western geometry. Many scholars view Kang's syncretic approach as creative, yet contradictory. Wakeman (1973: 113, 133) points out that Kang found great ideas in the Gongyang commentary after a long search and comparison of different Chinese classics. He particularly was captivated by its concept of *jen* (*ren* 仁), which can be translated as "love" (Hsiao 1959: 146) and "as human beings living together" (Wakeman 1973: 113). This became one of foundational ideas in his masterpiece *Da Tong Shu* (大同書) or the Book of "Great Unity." He was fascinated by Confucius's thoughts to a degree that he believed Confucius to be a divine figure.

For present purposes, the important fact to highlight is that Kang perceived Confucius as "the King of Constitutions and Institutions, the New King, the Uncrowned King, the King of Culture and the Sage King" (Yao 2000: 250), who received the heavenly mandate to bring morality to his people (Elman 1990: xxvii, 207-208). In the earlier apotheosis of Confucius, his contact with divine figures took place even before his life began. One of the earlier versions mentioned that Tien Tjaj had conceived Confucius with the Black Emperor (Fung 1938b: 129). Kang endorsed this apotheosis in his introduction to *A Study of Confucius as a Reformer*.

Heaven having pity for the many afflictions suffered by the men who live on this great earth, [caused] the Black Emperor to send down his semen so as to create a being who would rescue the people from their troubles – a being of divine intelligence, who would

be a sage-king, a teacher for his age, a bulwark for all men, and a religious leader for the whole world. Born as he was in the Age of Disorder, he proceeded, on the basis of this disorder, to establish the pattern of the Three Ages, progressing with increasing refinement until they arrive at Universal Peace (Fung 1983b: 675 citing Kang 1913).

Kang's attempt at reform failed in a hundred days,<sup>46</sup> and, escaping the death penalty, he fled to Hong Kong, Japan and Singapore, and visited many other places, including the Dutch East Indies, during his long period in exile. In 1900, during Kang's stay in Singapore, the Straits Chinese leader Lim Boon Keng (Lin Wen Qing, 林文庆) had close contact with him (Lo 1967: 183-184). Lim was a supporter of Kang's reform movement and shared his vision of modernity as a way to enhance the position of the Straits Chinese. Lim was also a strong proponent of Zuo commentary of the Old Text. Regardless his close contact with Kang, he consistently maintained his rationalist approach and refused to apotheosize Confucius. He perceived Confucianism as "the ideal religion for which the thinking and critical world is seeking... Confucianism is the religion of humanity with the acknowledgment of God" (Lim 1897: 57). Yet he rejected supernatural doctrines by advising, "Remove from your religious life all superstition, all senseless fear of the Unseen and try to practice toleration towards those with whom you differ" (ibid.: 58). Later, he wrote,

Heaven having endowed man with human nature and having bestowed the noble gifts which separate us from beasts does not interfere with us by supernatural means... The sages learnt to recognize this by patient study, by deep penetration and by indefatigable labour... Heaven cannot and does not intervene as a *deus ex machina* to deliver us from our troubles (1904: 84).

Lim maintained a correspondence with the THHK in Batavia in 1900 and for several years thereafter, during a period that saw the THHK face challenges from Dutch missionaries.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> After a long effort to convince the emperor to adopt his proposals, Kang's reforms were approved by the Emperor Kwang-Hsu (Guang Xu, 光绪) on 11 June 1898. However, the Empress Dowager Ci Xi (慈禧) and conservative officials, who felt threatened by Kang's ideas, seized the power back on 21 September 1898. For further details on the reform, see Wong (1992).

<sup>47</sup> The relatively active correspondence between Lim Boon Keng and the leaders of the THHK is evident from updates and notes between the two, published in several volumes of the *Straits Chinese Magazine* in 1900-1903 and

Lim's ideas on reforms and religion make it possible that his rational approach to Confucianism informed the THHK's point of view. I return to this possibility below.

During his visit to Batavia in 1903, Kang gave lectures to various Chinese *Peranakan* groups known to be competitive with and hostile to one another. He helped end the fractiousness and fighting among them (Kwee 1969: 24-25). During his visit to Surabaya in 1904, Kang suggested that Chinese *Peranakans* renovate the *Boen Bio* Temple and relocate it from a small alley to a main street (Rahayu 2005: 41). But there is no evidence that he introduced the Gongyang commentary during his visit to the Dutch East Indies.

When the European missionary Sinologists started their work in China in the late sixteenth century, some of them might be aware of the religious dimensions of Confucianism as well as the Old Text and New Text controversies. Their preference for considering Confucianism as either "morals", "philosophy", "law" or "religion" depended on their understanding and interests. Christianity and Western culture might shape that understanding and those interests. The rise of rationalism as a part of modernity and secular discourses in mid-seventeenth-century Europe resulted on the segregation of religion and other realms, such as politics, science and history (Asad 1993, King 2013). It also excluded the mystical literature from other cultural spheres and left it exclusively in the domain of religion.

The European categorization of religious and secular doctrines works differently than that of the Chinese. Even though the Old Text was less superstitious and refused the apotheosis of Confucius, its adherent and philosophers might include in their discussions notions of mystery, heaven, and fate (Fung 1983b: 139-167). The same applies to Kang You Wei, an adherent of the

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*Li Po* in 1901. While several notes in the *Straits Chinese Magazine* shared the progress and achievement of the THHK's schools for Chinese children, the articles in *Li Po* summarized Lim's ideas of reform for the Straits Chinese.

New Text who also he applied religious discourse in his political, economic, cultural and educational reforms. Orientalism also played a role in framing and shaping European understanding of Asian religious traditions. When the Europeans used elements of mysticism and supernaturalism to denote Asian religious traditions, they worked as markers of “other” traditions, inferior to Christianity (Masuzawa 2005: 102).

The next section discusses the four sacred biographies of Confucius. I juxtapose them with their original sources, if any, in order to understand the agency of the Chinese *Peranakan* writers in adjusting and appropriating the works of the European sinologists for purposes of their own. It focuses on their views of supernaturalism in defining Confucianism and the position of Confucius as a “teacher”, “philosopher”, “law-maker” or “prophet.”

### **Introducing Confucius: The Four Biographies**

#### ***Hikajat Khonghoetjoe***

The *Hikajat Khonghoetjoe* (The Life Story of Confucius) was the first biography of Confucius in Malay, written by Lie Kim Hok (Li Jin Fu, 李金福). A Chinese *Peranakan* writer without Chinese language skills and educated in Dutch missionary schools,<sup>48</sup> Lie based his biography on French and Dutch texts. These included J.L. de Lanessan’s *La Morale des Philosophes Chinois: Extrait des Livres Classiques de La Chine et de L’Annam* (1896), whose author was a former Governor General of Indochina. The book compares Confucianism in Vietnam and China with Christianity in Europe and recognizes the similarity between the two as influential teachings that have shaped people’s mentalities in the respective cultures. However, de Lanessan notices that metaphysical concerns are almost entirely absent from the Chinese doctrines:

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<sup>48</sup> For a detailed biography of Lie, see Tio (1958)

The issues of free will, soul, divinity and afterlife do not appear to get any place in their meditations. *Their kingdom is in this world*, their moral teaching addresses how men during their whole existence must progress and, consequently, will find the reward for their virtues, as well as punishment for their misdeeds on this earth” (De Lanessan 1896,: 6-7, italics in original).

He therefore considers Confucius and Mencius as the Chinese philosophers par excellence (ibid.: 9, Fn. 1).

A second source, the one most cited by Lie, was Salomo Keijzer’s *De Heilige boeken der Chinezen of de vier klassiek van Confucius en Mencius*, published in 1862. Keijzer worked as an editor of a Dutch-German edition of the Qur’an and a professor at the Royal Academie in Delft, the Netherlands. While his main expertise was Islamic studies in the Dutch East Indies, Keijzer nevertheless demonstrated an admiration for Confucius. This admiration was due particularly to the lack of a divine endorsement to keep his teaching vibrant for more than two thousand years. In contrast to Mohammad, who claimed his prophecy through the angel Gabriel, Confucius “had no ambition to propose himself higher than his human fellows, or to set up greater power for his writing through pretentious relationship and connection with archangels and angels” (1862: 2). It was nothing other than his loving character, comprehensive spirit, broad view and superior principles regarding human being that made his teaching remarkably enduring.

Their appraisals of Confucianism and classification of it as a philosophy make it is likely that de Lanessan and Keijzer were not aware of the elements of divinity and supernaturalism in Confucianism and the apotheosis of Confucius endorsed by the New Text. The lack of metaphysics led them to categorize Confucianism as a philosophy and not a religion. Their rationalist approach influenced Lie Kim Hok’s life story of Confucius even though Lie exercised clear agency in his selection of material from and his quotation of the sources. For example, while De Lanessan sees in the working of Confucianism in China a parallel to that of Christianity

in Europe, Lie explains to his readers that Confucianism is a form of universal humanism suitable to both the Western and Eastern worlds.<sup>49</sup>

Lie emphasizes that Confucius is a historical figure by covering the genealogy of Confucius's noble ancestors and including the years of their life or reigns as well as the important events in Confucius's own – his birth and travels; his conversations with kings, state officials and students; and his death. He introduces Confucius as a sage whose teaching is superb, and which Europeans, including Christian priests who had visited China, could not help praising (*merasa ada terpaksa aken poedji*) (Lie 1897: 5). He describes Confucius as a human who never claimed for himself that status of a divine messenger. Comparing Confucius with other religious figures, he wrote:

If we remember the religious kings, as the tales say, whose left hands held a sword and whose hearts did not care if the people's blood poured out on to the land in which they wanted to spread their teachings, we have to admit that Confucius was very different. Confucius neither had the slightest intention to place himself above other people nor made ambitious claims that he quoted the [words of] God Almighty in his writing or that the angels delivered the words to him or any other similar claims, in order to make his books more influential. He strived and received the wide influence of his books since he had the purest heart and superb thoughts. He had superior knowledge of human characters and social problems... (Lie 1897: 3-4).

In Lie's description, Confucius had only limited connection with supernatural elements; an example was his mother's trip to Nikioe Mountain to pray to the Almighty (*memoedja pada Maha Koewasa*) for a son. Her prayer was granted and ten months later Confucius was born (ibid.: 15-16). During his life time, Confucius was a great moral teacher (*goeroe besar*) and the king of literature (*radja poedjonggo*) (ibid.: 7) who used his deep thoughts and superior character to analyze issues ranging from filial piety to appropriate rituals, from art to criminal law, from fair and just leadership to good governance. He endorsed morals as the main guide to people's

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<sup>49</sup> For a further discussion of Lie's strategies in selecting, citing, and appropriating the European texts in the *Hikajat Khonghoetjoe*, see Sutrisno (2017).

lives, be they fathers, teachers, citizens or kings. In Lie's account, Confucius is a role model for the active citizen. He gave advice on good governance to kings and high officials and urged them to be the servants of their people. Confucius was an uncompromising figure who preferred to leave his job or country whenever he found the leaders were corrupt and irredeemable (Sutrisno 2017: 206). Only once in Lie's description does Confucius take an interest in God. In his later years, after finishing his sixth book, Confucius sets up an altar, on which he puts flowers and his books and in front of which he kneels to thank God for his kindness in giving a long life, strength and health to work and to contribute to this world (Lie: 112). Shortly before his death, Confucius experiences drowsiness and lethargy. He passes away with a smile on his face, as commonly happened in the cases of pure-hearted people (ibid.: 114).

Emphasizing that Confucius was a human figure, Lie opted for the rational approach rather than the spiritual one. The rational approach becomes a sort of guarantee that the teaching of Confucius is applicable to real life, as the historical facts show that Chinese rulers have used it for more than two thousand years and that it had become the indispensable foundation of the great Chinese civilization. The fact that Confucius did not need divine endorsement for promotion of his teaching has made him even greater than religious kings (*radja-radja agama*).

The figure of Confucius as an active citizen could serve as a role model for the Chinese *Peranakans* in dealing with the unjust situation of the Dutch East Indies, in which they faced vilification and humiliation during the government's anti-opium campaign in mid-1890s.<sup>50</sup> At the time when Lie wrote the *Hikajat Khonghoetjoe*, the Dutch colonial government had banned the sale of opium. The campaigns against opium vilified the Chinese as a yellow peril and sucker of the blood of native people, who were addicted to opium and trapped in poverty, but without

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<sup>50</sup> The anti-opium campaign started in the Netherlands in 1880s. Yet, it reached the stronger form in the colony in mid-1890s (Rush 1990: 198-216).

acknowledging the colonial government's role in the trade (Rush 1990: 198-216). The anti-opium campaign resulted in the restriction of Chinese businesses in general and tight surveillance of the movement of Chinese. The latter measure jeopardized their livelihoods. Lie envisioned a more equal power relationship between the ruler and the ruled. Confucianism obligated both sides to adhere to their duties and rights. A ruler had responsibilities to ensure welfare and justice among his people. The figure of Confucius served as an exemplary model of a citizen who, far from passive, could or even should negotiate with the government. When a ruler neglected his people or governed in unjust ways, citizens might withdraw their support (Sutrisno 2017: 209-210).

In 1900, Lie and several other Chinese *Peranakans* leaders founded the THHK, through which the ideas of active citizenship materialized in several ways. The THHK actively negotiated with the Dutch colonial government to provide schools for Chinese children and to abolish the pass and quarter systems, which restricted their movements and places of residence. These concessions were granted in 1908, 1911 and 1919, respectively (Williams 1960: 191-201; Bloembergen 2007: 124). Among Chinese *Peranakans*, the THHK promoted the “teaching of Prophet Confucius” (*atoerannja Nabi Khong Hoe Tjoe*) as a foundation for life and the improvement of Chinese customs (Nio 1940: 7). The usage of the term “*nabi*” or prophet as the Confucius's title signified a step toward considering his teaching as “*agama Tjina*” (the Chinese religion), even though in its 1900 organizational statute, the THHK's leaders used the term “*adat istiadat Tionghoa*” (the Chinese customs) instead (ibid.).

As I discussed in Chapter 2, the THHK's introduction of Confucianism was challenged, particularly by L. Tiemersma – a member of the Nederlandsche Zendingsvereeniging (Dutch Missionary Union) and the editor of the Christian periodical *Bentara Hindia* (The Indies Legion) (Coppel 1986: 26). He countered the idea that Confucianism was a religion since it worked

mainly as a source of moral guidance for people seeking to reach harmony in the world. This disagreement turned into a debate running from 1901 to 1904. Tiemersma raised five questions for the THHK, of which the first was, “what is the real religion [*agama sedjati*] of the Chinese?” The THHK formed a special committee, with Lie Kim Hok as its chair, to respond to them. The answer to the first question was:

The religion of a nation must have a close relation to its customs [*adat istiadat*]. The Chinese customs, as was mentioned in *Soe Si* [Si Shu 四书, the Four Books] and *Hauw King* [Xiao Jing, 孝经, Book on Filial Piety], are called “The Teaching of the Prophet Confucius.”... Thus, the teaching of the Prophet Confucius is the Chinese religion.” (Nio 1940: 213, *op. cit.*)

The association of “customs” and “religion” and the use of the term “prophet” on the part of the THHK’s special committee on Confucius demonstrates that religious change results from opposition, competition and denial. The debate between Tiemersma and the THHK forced the latter to defend Confucianism with terms and concepts commonly applied in other religious traditions and thus eventually led to its formation as a religion (Coppel 1989: 126).

In defining Confucianism as a religion and Confucius as a prophet, the THHK did not, however, elevate Confucius to the status of a divine figure, as the New Text proponents did. Instead, they emphasized that Confucius believed in and worshipped the supreme being, called “*Thian*” (Tian, 天), “*Roh Agung*” (the Great Spirit) or “*Thi Kong*” (Tian Di Gong, 天帝公, *Toehan Allah*, God) in Chinese. Furthermore, it considered Confucius’s teaching superior in the development of people’s virtue, particularly through the practices of filial piety—the repayment of obligations to parents and ancestors in this world and after their passing (Nio 1940: 215-217). To some extent, the THHK agreed with Lim Boon Keng’s rationalist approach, in which Confucianism recognized God but focused on justice and harmony among human beings in the world.

After the debate, the title of Lie's *Hikajat Khonghoetjoe* was changed to "*Hikajatnja Nabi Khonghoetjoe*" (The Life Story of the Prophet Confucius) when Kho Tjeng Bie was reprinted it in 1910. Yet it appeared again as "*Hikajat Khonghoetjoe*" in an edition printed by Goan Hong in 1913.<sup>51</sup> Despite the addition and the excision of the word "prophet", the contents of these books were exactly the same as those of the first one. Lie maintained his rationalist approach in introducing Confucius to his Malay readers, as his reliance on European sources suggested. In the later period, when he was in accordance with the THHK in promoting Confucianism as the Chinese religion, both Lie and the THHK believed that Confucius was a true prophet, regardless of the absence of divine endorsement for his prophecy and the limited supernaturalism in his teachings. Even though they might have not known the Old Text directly, the position of Lie and the THHK position was close to it; each acknowledged several supernatural elements in Confucian teaching without apotheosizing him through any divine power.

### ***Hikajat Penghidoepan dan Peladjarannja Nabi Khong Hoe Tjoe***

Kwee Tek Hoay (Guo De Huai, 郭德怀), a Malay-language writer of a younger generation than that of Lie and a spiritualist, wrote the second biography of Confucius in Malay, the *Hikajat Penghidoepan dan Peladjarannja Nabi Khong Hoe Tjoe* (The Story of the Prophet Confucius's Life and Teaching) in 1934.<sup>52</sup> Kwee dedicated his work to Lie Kim Hok and apparently followed the example of Lie's agency in matching his sources to his aims. Kwee also shared Lie's

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<sup>51</sup> Both publishers were located in Batavia (Jakarta).

<sup>52</sup> In its cover page, there is a slightly different title "Nabi Khong Hoe Tjoe (Confucius): Hikajat Ringkes dari Penghidoepan dan Peladjarannja" (Prophet Confucius: His Short Life Story and Teaching). The earlier version was published as a serial in Kwee's monthly bulletin, *Moestika Dharma*, from May 1932 to December 1933. In the preface of the *Prophet Confucius* (1934: ii), Kwee indicated that there were several stories of Confucius circulated in the bulletins of the Confucian Association, but his book was the second after that of Lie's.

rationalist approach to Confucius. Yet there were differences between the two men and their books. In a reflection of his personal spiritual search, Kwee's version of the sage's life took an approach between the rationalist and the spiritualist.

Kwee based his work on the writing of C. E. Couling in the *Encyclopaedia Sinica* (1917).<sup>53</sup> The juxtaposition of Kwee's writing and its source shows that Kwee's far longer account discusses several issues not treated in Couling's, such as Confucius's views on law, charity and good deeds (*dharma*) and his relationship with his disciples. These differences suggest that Kwee drew on additional sources, possibly including Lie's *Hikajat Khonghoetjoe*.

Kwee appropriated Couling's writing and added his own knowledge. For example, Couling considered the legend and mystical circumstances of Confucius's birth invented, "evidently in imitation of those concerning Buddha" (1917: 127). Kwee believed, however, that the legend might be true, in which case it demonstrated the equal positions and holy signs (*tanda kasoetjian*) of Confucius and Buddha (1934: 7).<sup>54</sup> Couling mentions that Confucius presumably divorced his wife and had an odd relationship with his only son, even though there were unresolved debates about this issue. Kwee's disregards these details. Of Confucius's learning that his wife had died in Lu while he was visiting Wei state, he wrote:

He praised her loyalty and said, "My life will also be over soon, since my age is now 66. Starting from now, I should use my short time in the best way I can. Please provide comfort for my son's heart and take care of him so that he would not go into deep grieving." (Kwee, 1934: 77)

In presenting Confucius as a loving husband and father, Kwee's position contrasted with that of Couling. Kwee presumably shared the position of Lie (1897: 106), who was inspired by Keijzer (1862: lxxii). On the other hand, Couling possibly drew on Parker (1897: 10) or Legge (1861:

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<sup>53</sup> For the entries of Confucianism and Confucius, Couling cited the works of three other sinologists – Legge (1861), Giles (1898, 1915) and Parker (1897, 1910).

<sup>54</sup> Kwee emphasized again the similarities between Confucius and Buddha in several parts of his writing, noting things such as their relationships with their disciples and the excellence of their teachings (1934: 62, 64, 67).

71), which suggested the likelihood of divorce because Confucius discouraged his son from expressing his loss and sorrow after the passing of his mother.<sup>55</sup>

In the *Hikajat Penghidoepan dan Peladjarannja Nabi Khong Hoe Tjoe*, Kwee introduced Confucius as a “regular human being” (*satoe manoesia biasa*) and yet noted that those who studied his teachings could not agree more that he was truly a prophet. Kwee also affirmed, “We, the Chinese people, have a prophet (*nabi*) and savior (*Djoeroe Slamet*) whose position is not lower than other prophets or religious leaders who were reincarnated (*mendjelma*) to the world to work for the human being’s sake” (Kwee 1934: ii). In claiming Confucius as the prophet of the Chinese people, Kwee did not incorporate any kind of divine contacts or supernatural elements into Confucius’s life story. Instead, he used a physical marker – a small knob on Confucius’s head – as a sign of his holiness (*tanda dari iapoenja kasoetjian*) also believed to have been found on Buddha’s head (*ibid.*: 7).

One may trace Kwee’s syncretic vocabulary to his personal interest in various religious traditions and in the Theosophy movement (Gunadharma 1989: 262-263). The words that he used were a combination of Christian concepts such as “*nabi*” (prophet)<sup>56</sup> and “*Djoeroe Slamet*” (Savior) and Buddhist terms such as *mendjelma* (reincarnated) and *dharma* (good deeds, duties and obligation). He equated the physical signs of Confucius’s and Buddha’s holiness. His borrowing of Christian concepts may demonstrate Kwee’s emphasis on and struggle for equal status between Confucius and Jesus Christ.

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<sup>55</sup> Compared to De Lanessan and Keijzer, Legge’s attitude toward Confucianism was negative. He considered it of lower status than Christianity (1896: 99) and saw Confucius a faulty sage since he made the Chinese show more respect to their ancestors than to their God (Hsia 2003: 99-100).

<sup>56</sup> This word is also used for Mohammad and Sidharta Buddha Gautama

The debate between the THHK and Tiemersma may have influenced Kwee's effort to promote the equality of Confucianism and Christianity. As a defender of the THHK, Kwee shared its view that Chinese *Peranakans* should maintain their own customs and religious traditions (Rees 1989: 192). He was also concerned about conversion to Christianity among Chinese *Peranakans*. As a counter to the role of Jesus as a savior, Kwee emphasized the prophecy of Confucius and his role in saving China. Confucius acted, that is, as a savior when he chose to leave his country and travel to different areas to spread his teaching. He was willing to be a teacher to people of different ages and backgrounds and proposed morality and good governance (1934: 20-21), which he considered as his *dharma*. Thus, for Kwee, teaching people to reach the highest possible moral level and to fulfill their duties is the main task of a savior. Kwee's concept of savior was different from the Christian concept, which is more concerned with connecting the human beings to the divine and thus to eternal salvation. In this sense, Kwee's approach was close to the rationalist approach, as was evident in his description of the end of Confucius's life:

In his last days, Confucius had never spoken even a word about what would happen with his spirit after his death. He had never lived in this world with an expectation of gaining happiness in the afterlife. He faced his death with bravery, without being afraid of anything, and he breathed to the last with a smile (ibid.: 90).

At the same time when he wrote the *Hikajat Penghidoepan dan Peladjarannja Nabi Khong Hoe Tjoe*, it is likely that Kwee was developing an interest in the *Sam Kauw* (the Three Teachings). His meeting with several Chinese *Peranakan* spiritual leaders in Solo on August 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1931 may have stimulated his curiosity. Instead of coming from the older Chinese philosophical texts, a certain Mr. Tjoa Sie Wan had given him sources to research the so-called *Agama Tionghoa* (Chinese Religion), about which Kwee wrote the following.

The so-called *Agama Tionghoa* includes the three religions – *Khong Kauw* (Confucianism), *Hoed Kauw* (Buddhism) and *To Kauw* (Taoism). They have been officially acknowledged as a state religion during the *Tjhingtauw* period [Qing dynasty],

In fact, the religion of the majority of Chinese people is the syncretic or combination [*ratjikan atawa gaboengan*] of the three religions, so that only a few embrace Confucianism, Buddhism or Daoism in its singularity. (Kwee, 1932: 8)<sup>57</sup>

In May 1934, Kwee established *Sam Kauw Hwee*, through which he argued that Confucianism was not the only religion of the Chinese people. Instead, he proposed the *Sam Kauw* as the real religion of the Chinese (Rees 1989: 164-195). Even though he still appreciated Confucianism as excellent teaching for the Chinese, his preference was for its practice in combination with Buddhism and Daoism. His changing attitude thus distanced him from the *Khong Kauw Hwee*.

In his later publication in 1940s, Kwee's ideas about the *Sam Kauw* resonated with those of Lin Yu Tang (林语堂, 1895-1976), a well-known Chinese writer who had studied at Harvard and Leipzig. Lin's writing about Chinese culture and people, in both English and Chinese, enjoyed widespread admiration (Buck 1937: 9). Kwee cited his 1936 book *My Country and My People* in several of his publications about the *Sam Kauw* (1941b; 1961). Brought up as a Christian, Lin had struggled to negotiate his Christian faith and Chinese identity and spirituality. It eventually led him to studies of Chinese philosophy and religion and their relevance to Chinese people's inner needs (Buck 1937: ix). Lin argued that the spiritual elements of Daoism and Buddhism should complete the philosophical aspects of Confucianism, especially to cater the spiritual needs of common people.

But has Confucian humanism been sufficient for the Chinese people? It has and it has not. If it had completely satisfied man's instincts, there would have been no room for Taoism or Buddhism. The middle-class morality of Confucianism has worked wonderfully for the common people, both those who wear official buttons and those who kowtow to them. But there are people who do not wear or kowtow to the official buttons. Man has a deeper nature in him which Confucianism does not quite touch. Confucianism, in the strict sense of the word, is too decorous, too reasonable, too correct. Man has a hidden desire to go about with disheveled hair, which Confucianism does not quite

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<sup>57</sup> While in this article Kwee mentioned the *Tjingtiau* or the Qing dynasty as the period during which the Three Teachings became the state religion, in another article, he cited Lin Yu Tang, who referred to the Song dynasty (960-1127 AD) as the period during which the Three Teachings was formalized (Kwee 1961: 14-15).

permit. The man who enjoys slightly rebellious hair and bare feet goes to Taoism... Buddhism, in short, means to the Chinese people what religion means to people in other countries, namely, something that comes to the rescue when human reason falters or fails (Lin 1937: 109-110, 117)

Kwee shared Lin's perspective that Confucian teachings were useful for those concerned with worldly matters, Buddhism stimulated people's thoughts on the roots of and solutions to sorrow and misery, and Daoism functioned as a soothing source of balance through which people could find consolation from the hardship in their lives (Kwee 1941b: 13-21). Thus, the combination of the three religions equipped people with a comprehensive approach to dealing with reality and spirituality.

While Lie's biography of Confucius and the endorsement by the THHK reflect the struggles of the Chinese *Peranakans* against the humiliation during the anti-opium campaign and the Dutch colonial discriminative policies in general, Kwee's led to reinterpretation of the Chinese religion within the Chinese communities. Rather than considering Confucianism exclusively as the Chinese religion, the blending vocabulary of Buddhism and Confucianism stimulated a closer step to the definition of the *Sam Kauw* as the "real" Chinese religion.<sup>58</sup>

### ***Kong Tjoe Tji Soe Tjek***

The 1936 *Kong Tjoe Tji Soe Tjek* (Kongzi zhi shi ji, 孔子之事迹, Biography of Confucius) was the first official biography of Confucius published by the *Khong Kauw Hwe* in Surabaya. It is in Malay, with many proverbs in Chinese characters. Unlike the earlier biographies of Confucius discussed here, the *Kong Tjoe Tji Soe Tjek* mentioned neither its sources nor its author. Its story starts with the genealogy of Confucius and continues to the marriage of Confucius's parents. Prior to Confucius's birth, his mother had a dream in which she met an

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<sup>58</sup> Interestingly, Kwee's interest was of Theravada Buddhism school from Sri Lanka (Rees 1989: 198), rather than of the Mahayana school, even though the latter has been more popular in China.

angel of the North Pole who proclaimed that *Thian* (God) would bestow on her and her husband a kind and smart son. Not long after, she became pregnant. Shortly before Confucius's birth, amazing and wonderful signals (*voerteken*) appeared, such as two dragons flying around the house, five very bright stars in the sky and the beautiful sound of musical instruments from the clouds, followed by a voice saying, “*Thian* has created the birth of a holy son [*satoe poetra jang soetji*]” (*Kong Tjoe Tji Soe Tjek* 1936: 7). After the son was born the weather became very clear, with a soft breeze and warm sunlight. The sky released a fragrant smell, and a *qilin* appeared and brought a piece of paper with a writing on it saying, “the son of the purest essence of life” (*poetra dari sarinja idoep jang sedjati*) (*ibid.*: 8). The baby showed special physical marks that distinguished him from ordinary people.

After the birth of Confucius, the *Kong Tjoe Tji Soe Tjek* continues with a description of the childhood and adulthood of Confucius. In his young adulthood Confucius had physical markers similar to those of the noblemen and great kings. These markers convinced his teacher that he would be a prophet (*nabi*) (*ibid.*: 15). The book depicts scenarios in which Confucius demonstrated a superb character and wise thoughts. He left kings and students inspired each time they talked to him. The *Kong Tjoe Tji Soe Tjek* also describes Confucius as having a very sharp intuition. He could predict the future, and the *Kong Tjoe Tji Soe Tjek* uses this point to develop the image of Confucius's holiness (*soetji*).

Khongtjoe [Confucius] was talking to the Lord 冀景公 Tjee King Kong [Ji Jing Gong],<sup>59</sup> in his private room. In the middle of their conversation, a maid came in panic and let them know that a temple<sup>60</sup> dedicated to the late kings who reigned during 周朝 Tjioe Tiao [Zhou Chao, Zhou dynasty] was burned down. The prophet Khongtjoe answered, “If

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<sup>59</sup> The Chinese characters and Hokkien names are provided in the original text, while I supplement the pinyin.

<sup>60</sup> Interestingly, the *Kong Tjoe Tji Soe Tjek* borrowed the Christian term of Portuguese origin *gredja* (church) to mean “temple”. This may have been due to the fact that, during the Dutch colonial period, *Boen Bio*, the Confucian temple of Surabaya and the site of Khong Kauw Hwee, was known as “de Kerk van Confucius” (the Church of Confucius). It hosted a weekly Sunday prayer ritual.

there is a fire, it should destroy the place of the late king 周釐王 Tjioe Li Ong [Zhou Li Wang].” Tjee King Kong asked, “Why should it be?” Khongtjoe explained the reason [by saying that] as in his reigning period, Tioe Li Ong did not follow the good examples of his ancestors... On the contrary, he used the state’s wealth for his own sake, oppressed the folk and spent great expenses to build luxurious pavilions and beautiful gardens...” Not long after, another messenger came with news that the fire occurred in the place of the Tjio Li Ong. Tjee King Kong was surprised and told himself, “This is the first time I become a witness of the pure and sharp intuition of the holy person as Khongtjoe, who can foresee the future” (*Kong Tjoe Tji Soe Tjek* 1936: 19-20, the Chinese characters are in original).

The *Kong Tjoe Tji Soe Tjek* also notes that that prior to his death Confucius saw a *qilin* killed by a prince. Looking at the dead animal, he cried and concluded that his time in this world to be almost over (ibid.: 108).

Compared to Lie’s and Kwee’s approaches, the *Kong Tjoe Tji Soe Tjek* shows a rather abrupt change in content; elements of mysticism and supernaturalism were now presented in the life story of Confucius. Two points merit emphasis here. First, even though there is no evidence that Kang You Wei had the opportunity to introduce his version of the New Text to the Chinese *Peranakans* during his visit to Batavia and Surabaya in 1903-1904, this biography appears closer to his interpretation than to those of Western narratives. It suggests changing sources of knowledge of Confucius, from Western to Chinese ones. Confucius’s sharp intuition in predicting the future, for example, makes one assume that that the writer referred to the Gongyang commentary of the late Han dynasty. Wakeman (1973: 102) mentions that during that period, the commentary was split into at least two branches. One was based on Dong Zhong Shu’s ideas of the divine elements in Confucius’s life, while the other was depended on the “apocrypha” tradition, which highlighted Confucius’s ability to foresee the future. Younger Chinese *Peranakan* writers may thus have acquired knowledge directly from China, unlike writers in the generations of Lie Kim Hok and Kwee Tek Hoay. Chinese literacy among the

younger generation of writers was increasingly possible, thanks to the establishment of THHK schools offering Chinese language in a modern curriculum. Chinese literacy allowed the graduates of THHK schools not only to continue their educations in China (Kwartanada 2013: 36) but also to translate Chinese texts into Malay. According to Salmon (2013: 263) and Chandra (2016: 47-48), prolific translations of Chinese fiction and novels began to take off in the mid-1920s. This phenomenon may not, however, have only been limited to fiction. It may also have extended to religious texts; further study of translations of religious text is needed. At the very least, in translations of the Confucian canon the use of Chinese proverbs and Chinese characters was already common in the *Khong Kauw Goat Po*, the official publication of the *Khong Kauw Hwee* (1925 – 1927).

The second reason behind this change was a reaction to the split within Chinese religious communities, marked by the Kwee Tek Hoay's founding the *Sam Kauw Hwee* in 1934 (Rees 1989: 196). The articles and opinion columns in the *Sam Kauw Goat Po* (*San Jiao Yue Bao*, 三教月报, the Bulletin of the Three Teachings) and the *Soeara Sam Kauw Hwee* (The Voice of Three Religions Association) featured enough discussion of spirituality, the divine realm and the afterlife that readers might easily regard the Confucian teaching as merely a worldly teaching. In an article in the *Soeara Sam Kauw Hwee* (1935, Vol. 1), Tan Soe Djwan from Ngawi, East Java, wrote:

the teaching of Khong Tjoe is excellent, but it has been strongly influenced by worldly matters. This influence makes the finest essence [*sari aloes*] of Confucian teaching difficult to discover... [even though] Confucius has said that the most important thing is spirituality [*kebatinan*] (Tan, 1935: 20).

Like Kwee, Tan argued that the Chinese people should consider Taoism and Buddhism appropriate ways to find spirituality. Might the the *Khong Kauw Hwee* of Surabaya have adopted

the Gongyang school's version of Confucianism in order to demonstrate its elements of supernaturalism in response to such criticism?

The depiction of supernaturalism and mysticism in the life story of Confucius in the *Kong Tjoe Tji Soe Tjek* might have been specific to the local Confucian organization in Surabaya, while the rationalist approach of the *Khong Kauw Tjong Hwee* (*Kong Jiao Zhong Hui*, 孔教总会, National Confucian Assembly) had not changed. In 1941, Kwee Tek Hoay, who had become a strong proponent of the Three Teachings, criticized the majority of Confucian adherents (*kaoem Kong Kauw*) for their lack of interest in the magical elements (*tanda-tanda adjaib*) that accompanied Confucius's birth. The lack of these elements had made the position of Confucius lower than that of other prophets and religious figures who had a direct relationship with God and angels (*mempoenjai perhoeboengan langsoeng dengen Toehan dan malaikat-malaikat*) (Kwee 1941a: vi). It is clear that Kwee shared Lin Yu Tang's opinion on the functions of religion for common people:

Religion as an embodiment of priestcraft (sic.), with its dogmas, its apostolic succession, its appeal to miracles, its patent cures for sins and selling of pardons, its salvation "made easy" and its good solid heaven and hell. This religion, so eminently saleable, is common to all peoples, the Chinese included, and may be regarded as satisfying man's needs in certain stages of human culture. Because there is need for these things among the people, Taoism and Buddhism have furnished them to the Chinese, since Confucianism refused to furnish them (Lin 1936: 101).

To valorize Confucius's position, Kwee wrote *Beberapa Bagian Resia dari Kahidoepannya Khong Tjoe* (Several Secrets from Confucius's Life). As promised in its sub-title, this book "describes the discovery of ancient secret documents that uncover the mystical events during the birth of Confucius." In the preface, Kwee wrote:

Now we publish this book to make up for a particular lack in Confucianism. If people want to spread the teaching of Confucius among laymen who do not come from the category of philosopher, we should give them materials for interest. If the evangelists of other religions generously offer [*obral*] various [*mystical*] tales [*dongengan*], why does

the *Khong Kauw* not apply a similar approach to valorize and glorify our *Sengdjin* [holy figure]? People do not need to clarify whether this story is true or not, but they will remember the *aim* of the author. (Kwee 1941a: vi, italics in original)

Kwee Tek Hoay's idea here is very interesting, as he was fully aware that lay people associate supernaturalism with charisma. He clearly understood that a sacred biography could or should promote the charisma of its subject. He tailored a biography that better resonated with people's expectation and departed from the rational approach of his 1932 publication about Confucius to embrace a position of mysticism nine years later. Thus, the change from the rationalist to the spiritualist approach might be a combination of several forces. The access to the Chinese sources had apparently enabled the younger generation Chinese *Peranakan* writers to consider the spiritual elements of the New Text. The mystical elements of Confucius's life might promote greater interests on Confucianism and attract more followers, as Kwee suggested.

### ***Bagan Riwayat K'ung Tze***

The *Bagan Riwayat K'ung Tze* (The Outline of Confucius's Life) (1957) is an illustrated sacred biography of Confucius published by the PKCHI after Indonesian independence. It resulted from the collaboration of the writer Ko Sing Giok and the illustrator Lie Hwat Swie. The PKCHI aimed the book at both a general audience and at middle and high school students, for whom it could serve as a textbook. Ko and Lie based their work on three sources. The first was the German sinologist and missionary Richard Wilhelm's *Kung-tse, Leben und Werk* (Confucius, Life and Work), published in 1950.<sup>61</sup> The second was *Confucius: Wijsgeer van het Oude China* (The Philosopher of the Ancient China), a 1951 Dutch translation of Carl Crow's 1937 *Story of Confucius: Master Kung*. The last was Arthur Waley's 1945 *Analects of Confucius*. Reading and

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<sup>61</sup> I have only been able to access the 1925 first edition of Wilhelm, while Ko and Li used the 1950 second edition. To the best of my knowledge, there is no Dutch or English translation of this work.

juxtaposing the *Bagan Riwayat K'ung Tze* with its sources show that Ko and Li might have found their inspiration for an illustrated biography from Crow, the sequence of Confucius's life from Wilhelm, and the sayings of Confucius from Waley.

Prior to 1950s, illustrated biographies were rare among the numerous works on the life story of Confucius published in Europe and America. Crow's 1937 book and the Dutch translation that appeared fourteen years later were among the few published in the West to provide an illustration depicting the sage's life, and the 1957 *Bagan Riwayat K'ung Tze* was the first illustrated biography of Confucius published in Indonesia. But Murray (1996: 269) notes that *sheng ji tu* or pictorial biographies of Confucius had circulated among Chinese people since the Ming dynasty. In fact, *sheng ji tu* were more popular than the state-owned Confucian doctrines. These pictures were not, however, permitted in official Confucian temples,<sup>62</sup> where the use of wooden name emphasizing his humanity prevailed. The pattern in interpreting Confucius's *Spring and Autumn Annals* that divided the Old Text and the New Text also characterized different illustrations of Confucius's life (Murray 1996: 273-274). An early illustration from 1444 emphasizes Confucius as a human being, teacher, and frustrated statesman. A 1497 illustration, however, included three pictures describing mystical events prior to the birth of Confucius. In the first, a *qilin* appears before Confucius's mother, bringing a jade tablet. The inscription on the tablet announces the sage's conception. In the second, two dragons and five divine emissaries in the clouds celebrate his birth. In the third illustration, a heavenly orchestra plays harmonious music right after Confucius's birth, and the infant's body bears forty-nine unusual signs (ibid.: 275). The reference to signs on Confucius's body may reveal competition with Buddhism, as since the Shakyamuni Buddha had only thirty-two signs. This

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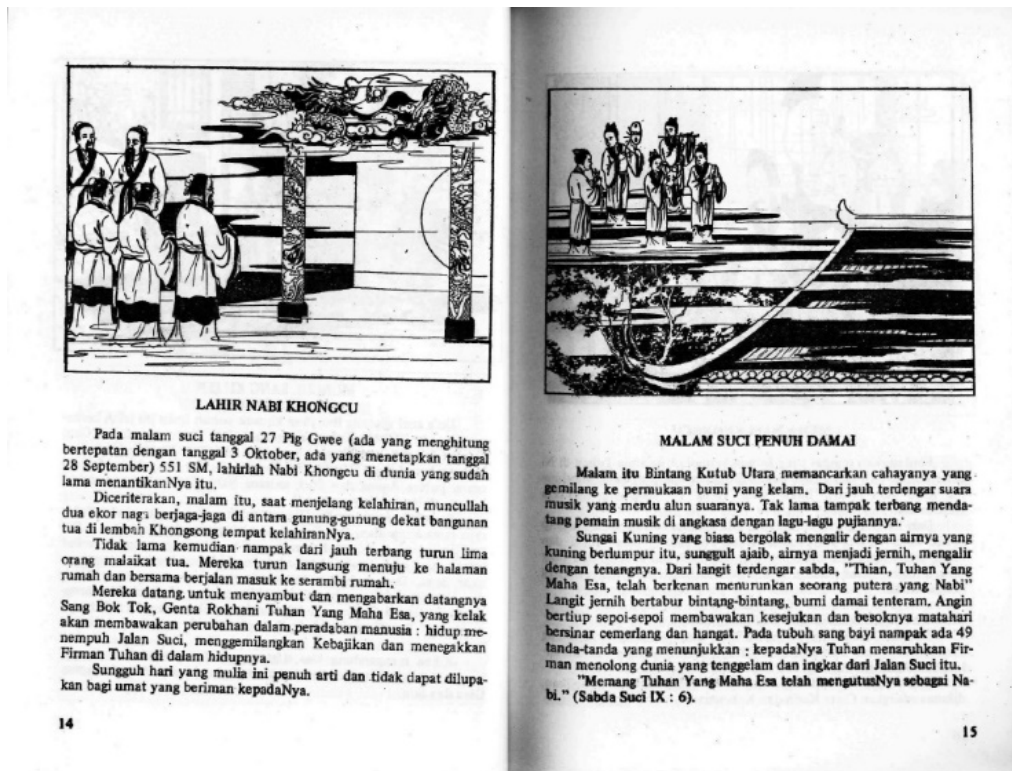
<sup>62</sup> The only exception was in the temple in Qufu, the birth place of Confucius, which is managed by Confucius's descendants (Murray 1996: 276).

last illustration became very popular for its importance in promoting equal status for Confucius and Daoist and Buddhist religious figures. It also provided a “more heroic” Confucius than the state’s version, with its emphasis on his humanity (ibid.).

Crow was apparently aware of the different versions of life stories of Confucius and of the disagreements among them. He wrote, “I have tried to select the one [version] which appeared to be most generally accepted by the Chinese themselves” (Crow 1937: 15-16). His adoption of the Gongyang commentary is obvious in three pictures highlighting the supernatural before and during Confucius’s birth. These show his mother praying on the mountain, the appearance of two dragons and five old men who represented the spirits of the five planets, and the strange music from a mysterious source and the announcement from the sky accompanying the birth of the extraordinary baby (Crow 1937: 30, 46, 50).

The pattern of the mystical events that accompany Confucius’s life in the *Bagan Riwayat K’ung Tze* are similar to those of Crow’s although there are several differences. To the three noted pictures from Crow’s book, for example, the *Bagan Riwayat K’ung Tze* adds additional pictures. In the first, a *qilin* threw a holy book with the sentence, “The Son of the Purest Essence of Water will continue [to lead] the Chow [周, Zhou] kingdom which is now weak. He will be a king without crown.” The accompanying text mentions the five divine emissaries from the sky and the forty-nine signs in his body that God gave him to make the world peaceful (Ko and Lie, 1957: 3; see Picture 7). The second picture explains the meaning behind Confucius’s childhood name (ibid.: 5). In illustrating Confucius’s childhood and adulthood, the *Bagan Riwayat K’ung Tze* takes a rational approach, likely to have been influenced by Wilhelm. The role of Confucius as a teacher and his interactions and conversations with his four closest students receive pronounced attention, perhaps reflecting the intention that this book serves as a school textbook.

It mentions a mystical event at the end of life Confucius's life, but without details or particular emphasis.



Picture 7. The *Bagan Riwayat K'ung Tze*. Qilin and Five Divine Emissaries

It is important to note that no other than the federation of Confucianism in Indonesia published the *Bagan Riwayat K'ung Tze*. The adoption of mysticism and supernaturalism in accounts of Confucius's life was a development on the national level, not merely the decision of a single branch—as in the case of the *Kong Tjoe Tji Soe Tjek* of the *Khong Kaw Hwee Soerabaia*. More importantly, this illustrated book was meant to serve as a learning tool for young students. In other words, the PKCHI had embraced the suggestion that Kwee Tek Hoay made in 1941. The PKCHI's spiritualist approach, however, did not represent a homogeneity of perspectives among all adherents of Confucianism. In 1956, a year before the publication of the *Bagan Riwayat K'ung Tze*, an anonymous article in the sixth anniversary booklet of the *Khong Khaw Hwee Tjirebon* (Confucian Association of Cirebon) warned Confucianist believers to

contextualize and reinterpret Confucian texts critically in the atomic era (*zaman atom*) if they intended to keep the teaching applicable and relevant. In order to ensure the compatibility of Confucian teaching with the modern era, the writer suggested moving away from the apotheosis of Confucius (*djangan “diperdewakan”*) (Anonymous 1956: 55). The author predicted that making Confucius a god whose teaching was equal to absolute truth would inhibit people’s critical questioning of outdated and irrelevant dogmas.

This dissent notwithstanding, one may understand the PKCHI’s endorsement of supernatural and mystical elements in the life of Confucius as a possible response to the Indonesian government’s policies toward religion. The post-colonial Indonesian state had adopted the *Pancasila* (Five Principles) as the state’s ideology, among which the first principle was “belief in one omnipotent God.” All Indonesian citizens are expected to adhere to this principle, even though the state also guaranteed their religious freedom.

In 1946, a year after independence, the state established the Ministry of Religious Affairs. A report on its first conference in 1950 included the strong demand that it should identify, discipline and, if possible, ban the mystical sects (*aliran kebatinan*) which were popular among the public. Religious groups, particularly the representatives of Islamic organizations, urged the ministry to develop an official definition of what it considered a religion (Kementrian Agama 1950: 79). Even though the Ministry of Religious Affairs did not officially define religion, it did propose the idea that Indonesia was a nation that acknowledged the omnipotent God and prophet (*Indonesia adalah satu bangsa jang ber-Tuhan, satu bangsa jang ber-Nabi*) (Kementrian Agama 1950: 365).

In a later development, the Ministry of Religious Affairs defined religion as follows.

- 1) Acknowledging and believing in the existence of One Almighty God
- 2) Having one’s own bible or holy text, which consists of a compilation of God’s revelation.

- 3) Having a prophet (*rasul*) who delivered the revelation of God, which he received from an angel.
- 4) Having laws and a moral system that can be a way of life and moral guidance for believers. (Kertorahardjo 1980?: 59)

It goes without saying that the ministry very much modelled the requirement to have a *rasul* or prophet, the messenger of God on image of Mohammad and, to certain extent, Jesus Christ. In the case of Confucian believers, adopting Confucius as a prophet and a messenger of divinity became very important.

The push for the banishment of mystical sects continued in later decades. In 1980, the Department of Religious Affairs began of the Project for Monitoring of Religious Activities, Sects and Beliefs (*Proyek Pengawasan Kegiatan Keagamaan dan Aliran atau Paham-paham*) (ibid.: 3). The mystical sects had to register with the Ministry of Education and Culture. This measure carried the implication that they could exist as a part of Indonesian culture, but not as religions. It is unsurprising that in a sacred biography of Confucius published in 1983, the MATAKIN, as the successor to the PKCHI, maintained the emphasis on prophecy of the *Bagan Riwayat K'ung Tze* in order to justify the divinity of Confucius's message upon Confucians. In the foreword to this biography, the MATAKIN wrote:

After the publication of the *Bagan Riwayat Hidup K'ung Tse* (The BR) in December 1957, the MATAKIN's publication division has not issued any life story of Prophet Confucius even though there are pressing needs from the congregation [*umat*]. Therefore, in this combined volume 2 and 3 of *Suara Genta Suci Konfusian*,<sup>63</sup> we publish RIWAYAT HIDUP NABI KHONGCU [The Biography of Prophet Confucius].

This book is illustrated with the pictures of Mr. Lie Hwat Swie but with a slightly different style from the previous publication. The structure and the flow of the life story remain the same with the BR, which was written by Mr. Ko Sing Giok, but with several adjustments to keep it up to date with the Indonesian language and appropriate religious terms in contemporary time.

To follow the life story of the Prophet in a stronger nuance of religious spirit and faith [*jiwa dan keimanan agama*], we insert religious maxims and terms, as well as the

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<sup>63</sup> The *Suara Genta Suci Konfusian* (The Voice of the Confucian Sacred Bell) is the official bulletin of the MATAKIN, published starting in 1981.

names cited from our holy book, which has been translated into Indonesian. (Tjhie 1983: 6)

Indeed, in the *Riwayat Hidup Nabi Khongcu* the MATAKIN carefully crafted its words in explaining its conception of “God” and “prophet”. Each time the mention of “*Thian*” is followed with “*Tuhan Yang Maha Esa*” [God Almighty]. Juxtaposing the two, the MATAKIN apparently aimed to emphasize their resemblance or compatibility. The MATAKIN’s publication is more informative than the *Bagan Riwayat Hidup K’ung Tse* concerning prophecy. It provides Confucius’s genealogy in the rationalist style found in Lie’s and Kwee’s books, while it accommodates the spiritualist approach in the pictures of Confucius’s birth. In the *Riwayat Hidup Nabi Khongcu*, the MATAKIN thus combines the advantages of both approaches. It emphasizes that Confucius was a real historical figure who received the mandate from God as a prophet, since at the time of his birth a divine voice claimed “*Thian, Tuhan Yang Maha Esa, telah berkenan menurunkan seorang putera yang Nabi.*” (“Thian, God Almighty, has a will to send a son [who is] a Prophet”) (*The Riwayat Hidup Nabi Khongcu* 1983: 15).

In the reformation period (2000 – present), the MATAKIN republishes *the Riwayat Hidup Nabi Khongcu* under a new title *Jejak Nabi Kongzi dalam Lukisan* (The Traces of Prophet Kongzi in Pictures) in their official magazine *Genta Harmoni* (The Harmonious Bell).<sup>64</sup> Albeit a much shorter narrative, the *Jejak Nabi Kongzi dalam Lukisan* still uses Lie Hwat Swie’s pictures and there is no substantial change from *The Riwayat Hidup K’ung Tze*. In its introduction, the MATAKIN emphasizes the multiple roles of Confucius as “a prophet, a messenger (*rasul*) of Tian, a philosopher, a thinker, a statesman, a great teacher who put the foundation of Confucian religion/teaching (*agama/ajaran Ru atau Ru Jiao*) (Indarto 2004: 33)

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<sup>64</sup> The *Genta Harmoni* includes the *Jejak Nabi Kongzi dalam Lukisan* as a serial starting from vol. 2 (2004) until vol. 11 (2007).

## Conclusion

The four biographies of Confucius analyzed here represent the use of supernaturalism and metaphysics criteria for the categorization of Confucianism as a religion, a philosophy or both and as a means of indicating whether Confucius was a prophet, a philosopher, a sage or a figure who merits some combination of these titles. These biographies demonstrate flows of ideas from Europe, Singapore and China that have influenced the Confucian community in Indonesia. Both the European and Chinese sources reflected, however, the fact that, far from a matter of a consensus or consistency, the interpretation of Confucius's status as prophet and his contacts with supernatural elements were matters of struggle and competition. In the contemporary era, the Chinese government shows the tendency to adopt the spiritualist approach in introducing Confucius, even though it still does not recognize Confucianism as a religion. On a 2015 visit, I found in the Nan Jing Fu Zi Miao (南京夫子廟) Confucian temple in Nanjing an illustrated biography of Confucius made in the form of ceramic paintings. On his birth, the official transcript says:

The Sage from Heaven. It was said that when Confucius was born, his mother Ms. Yan heard the music from heaven as well as the words, "Merry music falls because of baby was a sage from heaven." Besides, the sage was born with a unique look including a protruding forehead, big eyes and wide mouth, his chest with the words, "Making the rules of settling the world" (Observation, 17 October 2015).

In Liu Ying's 孔子圣迹图 (Kongzi Sheng Ji Tu, The Pictures of the Confucius's holy traces) (2005) sold in the temple official bookstore, a similar story appears. The adoption of the spiritualist approach in China highlights flexibility in switching and adjusting narratives in a more convincing way, particularly if contextualized in the historical context of China since the revolution of 1911, which reveals hostility toward and attacks against Confucianism.

Through diachronic analysis, these biographies show the patterns of contacts, struggles and exchange among religions, as well as splits and different interpretations within Chinese

*Peranakan* communities and the Indonesian state's regulation of religion. Viewed with a synchronic approach, the biographies reflect the agency of their authors in adjusting sources and content to respond to changing social and political situations and thus contextualizing and modify the idea of Confucius's status as a prophet over time. While the biographies and the drama about the birth of Confucius that I observed at the *Boen Bio* temple in Surabaya may have similar intentions in introducing the figure of Confucius to readers or an audience, they also show differences. The authors of the biographies were able to introduce the figure of Confucius in his full life-span, and some included his genealogy. They sought to establish a role model for Confucian adherents. The temple drama, however, mainly covers the divine blessing that accompanied Confucius's conception and birth and thus serves as a religious and political act. The inclusion in the performance of *qilin* affirms divine blessings, justifies seeing Confucius as a prophet, and thus offers a religious message. The drama represents a political performance since, according to one activist, the MATAKIN is negotiating with the Indonesian government for designation of the birthday of Confucius as a national holiday—just as the government acknowledges other prophets' birthdays, such as Christmas, the Maulid of Mohammad and the Vesak of the Buddha (Personal Interview, Jakarta, December 26<sup>th</sup>, 2010). Thus, the performance, which resembles a Christmas drama, not only valorizes Confucius's position as equal to that of Jesus, but also strengthens the position of Confucianism as a religion in Indonesia.

## Chapter 5

### Contested Confucian Ritual: Invention, Authority and Legitimacy

Ritual is a “window” on the cultural dynamics by which people make and remake their worlds  
(Catherine Bell 2000: 3)

In the fourth week at the end of July 2010, I attended a Sunday service in the *Boen Bio* for the first time. On my way to the *Boen Bio*, my mind wandered to the blurry memory of my childhood when my father brought me to the only temple in Cepu, our hometown in Central Java. I remembered that the temple was mostly quiet. People prayed individually in the front of the statues of deities and then left at any time. In front of each statue, there were delicious food offerings and several cups of tea. When I entered the *Boen Bio*, the situation was very different from my childhood experience. There were around 40 to 50 people gathered to attend a weekly prayer at 9 a.m. Most of them were adults in their early-40s to early-60s and fewer than ten in teen age or twenties. They all sat in several wooden benches and were facing the main altar. This setting irresistibly invoked the image of a Christian church setting. The main difference with the church was that, instead of a cross, on the altar they placed crafted wooden tablets. These tablets bear the names of Confucius and his disciples. Food offerings, consisted of several types of cakes, fruits and tea, were organized in the front of the tablets.

The service began when the metal bell in the corner was knocked three times. The congregation stood up. The leader of ceremony and two assistants in white and black attire lighted a pair of red candles on the main altar. They burned and distributed joss sticks to every participant. Following the leader, the congregation raised the sticks three times while singing a song, *Wie Tik Tong Thian* (*Wei De Dong Thian*, 惟德动天, Only righteousness enthuses Thian). The two assistants, then, collected the joss sticks back and erected them in a big metal vase on the altar. They all read the Eight (Verses) of Faith Creed (*Delapan Pengakuan Iman, Ba Cheng*

*Zhen Gui*),<sup>65</sup> followed by bowing three times to the main altar. They sat and sang a song from the Book of Hymns. A person took a podium and read several verses from the holy book, *Sushi* (The Four Classics, *Si Shu*, 四书). A sermon by a Confucian priest followed, in which s/he explained and elaborated the reading.<sup>66</sup> After the sermon, the congregation sang several songs under the lead of the master of ceremony or the music team. It was followed with announcement during which the donation box was circulated. As the closing, the master of ceremony sounded the bell once and the congregation stood up. The master read the closing prayer in front of the altar, together with the two assistants. They bowed three times to Confucius' and his disciples' tablets and, then, turned themselves to the congregation and bowed to them once. The congregation responded with a bowing. Thereafter, the master of ceremony and his/her assistants left the room and the congregation dismissed themselves.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> The Eight (Verses) of Faith Declaration consists of (1) Belief in God Almighty (*Tian*), (2) Belief in revering Virtue, (3) Belief in upholding the Glorious Commandment, (4) Belief in the existence of Souls and Spirits, (5) Belief in cherishing the Ideal of Service, (6) Belief in following Confucius' Spiritual Bell (7) Belief in glorifying *Sishu* (the Four Classics) and *Wujing* (the Five Canons), and (8) Belief in following the Holy Way. (Translation is based on Coppel (1979: 748, with a slight adjustment to comply with the MATAKIN's version of the creed in 2011: ii).

<sup>66</sup> My observation shows that some of the Confucian priests may preach topics of their interests that are totally different from the reading.

<sup>67</sup> Charles Coppel (1979: 750-751) mentions a slightly different version. He cites the MATAKIN's guideline of ritual while mine is based on the observation in the *Boen Bio*. My other observation shows that there was a slight difference of the collective ritual in Medan. Yet, sitting and praying collectively were the main characteristics of the Confucian ritual in the places I observed.



Picture 8. The collective praying ritual in the *Boen Bio*

This weekly ritual caught my attention for several reasons. First, it is the most frequent ritual, since others are conducted monthly or yearly. Second, compared to the ceremonies of other temples across Java, Medan and Bangka, where I observed the varieties of Chinese religious rituals, the collective praying is the most visible and important difference between the Confucian rituals and those of other Chinese *Peranakan* temples. The collective praying is performed by the congregations associated with the *Majelis Tinggi Agama Khonghucu Indonesia* (The High Council of Confucian Religion in Indonesia – hereafter MATAKIN), while the individual worship is mostly practiced in other Chinese temples. In the Chinese temples I visited, the ritual involves individual worship. Many temples are open to public from very early in the morning until mid-night. People come and pray at any time individually and seldom interact with other visitors. When they enter a temple, people prepare and burn several joss sticks. In the first place, they pray to *Thian* (God, Heaven or Sky) and, then, to the *Toapekong* (the Grand Uncle or

the main deity of the temple). Subsequently, they visited other deities, which are symbolized in the form of statues and/or name tablets, in an appropriate order. They whisper their prayers and wishes to each of them. On average, many visitors leave the temple within thirty minutes or less. Before leaving, they donate some amount of money in the donation box. Third, in the *Boen Bio* and Confucian praying places, Confucius and his disciples are the only figures to worship, while other temples host many gods and goddesses. The temple *Hok Tek Bio* of Pasar Baru, Jakarta has almost a hundred of holy figures, including the local gods and goddess, such as *Mbah Jugo* of Central Java and *Embah Raden Suria Kencana Winata* of West Java as well as animal figures, for example *Houw Ya Kong* (*Hu Jiang Jun* - 虎將君) in a form of tiger.

Siauw Giok Tjhan, a prominent Chinese *Peranakan*, who spent his childhood in the Chinese quarter of Surabaya in the 1920s, confirms the differences between the *Boen Bio* and other Chinese temples. In his memoir, Siauw (1981: 11), describes that compared to the Daoist or Buddhist temples, the *Boen Bio* was indeed unique. In the *Boen Bio*, people could only find the figure of Confucius and they held the ceremonies on his birthday and death anniversary while in other temple, people can go and pray at any day. In front of the deities, people consulted their fate with *ciamsi*<sup>68</sup> and ask for the solution of their problems.

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<sup>68</sup> Ciamsi is a fortune telling technique in which a prayer shakes a bamboo tube until a bamboo stick with a certain number pop out. Each number represents a certain poem, through which people can interpret the answer of their praying or request.



Picture 9. The individual worship in the Hong Tiek Hian temple, Surabaya

Talal Asad (1993) suggests that ritual is a result of changing definitions and evolving concepts. From the definition of ‘a book directing the order and manner to be observed in performing divine service’ in 1797, it becomes what we now commonly agree as ‘a type of routine behavior that symbolizes or express something’, which relates to ‘individual consciousness and social organization’ (56-57). Even though a ritual can be performed in a non-religious sphere, in the religious context a ritual relates to appropriate performance as a service to God or divine figure(s), which may require religious specialists to conduct it or/and a requirement of proper preparation, such as fasting, praying or being celibate. In this chapter, I take the contemporary understanding of ritual as the concept to be used with many concerns that I discuss in the theoretical section.

Provoked by the idiosyncratic collective ritual in the *Boen Bio*, this chapter aims to understand the making of the Confucian rituals and seeks to answer these questions: how do the Confucian rituals have a different structure than those of other Chinese temples? How did the

process of the invention take place? What were the reasons and purposes behind it? Starting from its invention to its enactment, I shall demonstrate that the Confucian ritual is a site of struggle and competition among different religious beliefs and paradigms; in this case, the major contenders are Chinese folk religion and Christianity. It also works as a response to secular values – mainly rationality and modernity – and to the crisis experienced by the Chinese *Peranakans* in the beginning of the twentieth century, during which they needed strategies to improve their social and political status. The Confucian ritual is socially constructed to shape particular beliefs and normative behaviors, through which the innovator(s) consider important for the lay people (*umat*) to respond to teaching-based rituals aims to cultivate rational, reformed, and believers. In Etzioni and Bloom’s words rituals have the role of “seedbeds of virtue” (2004: 6). The process of introducing the newly invented ritual, however, is far from straightforward and not without resistance.

I discuss three aspects of ritual: (1) the invention. I propose that the innovation process of Confucian rituals reflects shifting paradigms within the Chinese *Peranakan* community about their religious beliefs and thoughts in the beginning of the twentieth century. Older rituals were based on Chinese tradition and/or mythical beliefs while new ones emphasize teaching and rationalism. This shifting paradigm demonstrates the influences of modernity, Christianity and the reform ideas of Lim Boon Keng of Singapore and K’ang Yu Wei of China. (2) The ritualization process, involves power relationships, through which certain social groups enact beliefs, ideologies, and legitimation and power to maintain the constructed ritual. It may, however, results in several responses, such as acceptance, resistance, appropriation, or modification of a ritual. I demonstrate the roles of the Confucian Associations and the MATAKIN in the later period in disciplining and maintaining their unique rituals. I also describe the responses of the Confucian priests (*rohaniwan*) and the lay people (*umat*) in performing

rituals. (3) Contestation and struggle. I shall demonstrate that far from fixed and standardized the Confucian rituals were negotiated through daily contestations, which took place within the Confucian communities and beyond. There were challenges from other doctrines and organizations, such as Sam Kauw (San Jiao, 三教, the three teachings) under the *Perhimpunan Tempat Ibadah Tri-Dharma Indonesia* (The Federation of the Three-Teachings Worshipping Places – hereafter PTITD), to win legitimacy in defining the Chinese rituals and tradition. To add another layer, I shall discuss the impact of the Indonesian state’s official acknowledgement in legitimating Confucian rituals. In this case, I argue that the religious competition is closer to that of the liberal market.

I open the chapter with a theoretical perspective from ritual studies. It is followed with a brief history of religious life and ritual habit among the Chinese *Peranakans* prior to the twentieth century to provide a background prior to the invention of the Confucian rituals. I divide the rest of the chapter into the three topics – invention, ritualization process and contestation and struggle – even though there are overlaps between topics. In the invention topic, I explain the reform of the “old” Chinese ritual habits, suggested by the *Tiong Hoa Hwee Koan*, founded in 1900. I show the making process of collective ritual and the flows of ideas that influenced the process. The ritualization process as the second topic covers the roles and struggles of the *Khong Kauw Hwee* (孔教会, Confucian Association) and the MATAKIN as the reform institutions to promote and regulate the weekly praying and sermon. I divide their struggles into two periods: 1955-1998 and 2000-2011. The last part covers the reactions, resistance and competition within the Confucian communities, but also the challenge from the PTITD temples.

## Understanding Ritual: A Theoretical Perspective

Ritual is one of the most important aspects in religion and has been studied by many anthropologists for more than a century. These studies can be roughly categorized into three approaches – functional, structural, and interpretative – and they may overlap each other. Initiated by Durkheim (1995), the functional approach argues that ritual serves as a binding system, through which the connection and communion between the believers and the sacred and among the believers themselves, is performed and maintained periodically. Ritual promotes shared identity and sense of belongingness, which eventually affirms social cohesion. The other works within this approach show different functions of rituals. Marcel Mauss (1990), for example, argues that ritual particularly that of exchanging gifts establishes a particular social order in a society. Bronislaw Malinowski focuses on the functions of rituals in reducing anxiety and to overcome possible psychological crisis, which accompanies physiological changes in life, such as birth, puberty and death (Olson 2002: 248).

The structural approach focuses how ritual reflects and affirms the belief or cognitive system of a community. For Levi-Strauss, ritual and belief are two opposite processes. Belief is commonly expressed in a form of verbal myth, while ritual is non-verbal. Some ritual may be seen as the symbolic performance or action of the myth (Bell 1997: 19). In his later work, Levi-Strauss focused mainly on the analysis of myth (Roberts 2011: 335). In his famous linguistic theory, myth is comparable to *langue* or language as a structured system and ritual to *parole* or speech. The analysis of symbols and symbolic actions in a ritual can be used as a window to understand the collective thoughts of a group.

In analyzing ritual, the interpretive approach investigates the symbolic systems which work as “models for” and “models of” reality (Bell 1997: 26). Expanding and criticizing the functionalist model, Geertz proposes that ritual does not only promote directly social cohesion.

Ritual is a set of world view that is set up and maintained by a community, which in turns controls and shapes indirectly their assumption of the world. The task of a researcher is to find the deeper layer of meaning behind the actual performance of a ritual, which reveals the understanding of “the paradigmatic foundation of power relations” (Kreinath et al. 2006: 146)

The various approaches in ritual studies show that there is no universally-applicable definition of ritual. Each approach has its own emphasis and incisiveness. I choose to apply a holistic approach, with which I acknowledge the function, structure and symbolic system of the Confucian rituals. I propose, however, another approach to understand the history of ideas behind its making. Many theorists consider rituals as an established act or tradition and only a few consider it as a dynamic construction of collective action (Bell 1997: ix). Hobsbawm (1983: 1) argues that apparently old traditions are often recently invented. Considering religion as a site of construction, Williams et al (1992) proposes that the actual old traditions are undergone innovation and reconstruction throughout times. To understand the genealogy of a ritual, I benefit from Michel Foucault (1972) who suggests tracing back the history of ideas behind contemporary practices and concepts. In investigating the origin of an idea, he points out the tasks of the historian to describe ‘the history of inventions, changes, (and) transformations’ and to demonstrate ‘how new forms rose up in turn to produce the landscape that we know today’ (141). In the case of Confucian rituals, Foucault’s idea resonates to Wilfred Smith’s approach (1983: 2), in which he recognizes the ‘unceasing evolution’, ‘process’ and ‘historical change’ within religious traditions, which results in an unending process of dynamic religious evolution. Using the concepts of ‘cumulative’ and ‘permeable dynamism’, Smith argues that because of contacts with other religion(s), every religious tradition accumulates influences, transforms and changes itself either slowly or abruptly over time, so that its current condition becomes a form of “crystallization of religious communities” (22). Smith, however, does not discuss the contacts

between religious traditions with secular values, such as modernity. As I will demonstrate in this chapter, the origin of the Confucian ritual in Indonesia reflects the struggles between traditional customs and modernity and contacts with and influences from Christianity and Islam among the Chinese *Peranakans*. The ‘modern’, and ‘rational’ Confucian ritual becomes an opposition against the so-called ‘old-fashioned’ and ‘superstitious’ ones while Christianity and Islam provide it with the model of teaching-based religions. The innovation of a new ritual may reflect the effort to avoid the old values to reiterate (Bell 1997: 210).

After inventing new rituals, ritualization strategies become an important topic to focus on. Bell (1997: 169) proposes the roles of “authoritative order” in endorsing the invented rituals with their interpretations of theology and ethos. The authority to invent and establish a ritual may be held by religious and non-institutions, such as the school, state, or family. The key is to set up “the simple imperative to *do* something in such a way that the doing itself gives the acts a special or privileged status,” be it sitting silently, citing mantras, praying together or other activities (ibid.: 168). The ritualization process unavoidably involves a power relationship, through which the community develops a consensus to enact certain practices even though this consensus may still face some degrees of resistance, appropriation, or modification of rituals.

Bell’s argument on “authoritative order” can be expanded by a Bourdieu’s approach to religion. Drawing from his analysis of the Roman Catholic Church, Bourdieu (1987: 121) proposes the religious field as an arena where religious dynamics takes place among religious actors in forms of domination, rivalry, and conflict. Those who win religious power have authority and legitimacy “to modify, in a deep and lasting fashion, the practice and world-view of lay people, by imposing on and inculcating in them a particular religious habitus.” (Bourdieu 1987: 126). In Bourdieu’s perspective, the religious field is structured within the maneuvers of religious institutions, religious actors or specialists, and lay people, in which the lay people have

the least capital to compete with. Verter (2003: 151), however, criticizes Bourdieu's perspective in limiting the forms of capital and agency of the lay people. He argues that Bourdieu undermines the power of lay people as social actors in challenging and manipulating religious symbols on their own behalf. In understanding the dynamic of the Confucian community, Bourdieu's theory is useful to understand the maneuvers of the MATAKIN to legitimize its power through establishing its version of holy books, the Confucian priesthood system, and rituals. I find, however, Verter's argument important to acknowledge the facts that the Confucian communities may develop their own interpretations and adjust the rituals, which may not thoroughly consistent to the MATAKIN's version as I will demonstrate in the section below.

Bourdieu draws his analysis from the establishment of the Roman Catholic Church's religious legitimacy in opposition to sorcery during the medieval period (Verter 2003: 156; Bourdieu 1987: 128). However, this theory considers implicitly that there is only one religious institution in competition with another tradition. In Verter's words (2003: 156), "his (Bourdieu's) vision of the religious field – perhaps of fields generally – is too insular... every field may be viewed as an independent game, each with its own species of capital." I will demonstrate that in the case of Indonesian Confucianism the religious field is more complicated since there are more than one "religious game" and, at least, three institutions competing with each other. These are the Confucian association, the Three-Teaching organization, and the Buddhist federation, which have their own doctrines, priesthood systems, rituals and congregations as their symbolic capital to challenge and oppose each other in the field of Chinese religion. To add to the complexity, there is also the role of the Indonesian state in adding political capital in the form of legitimation and formalization by acknowledging the MATAKIN as a formal representative institution of Confucianism in Indonesia. In this sense, religious field overlaps to larger political forces.

I also propose that in looking at the competition among these religious institutions, the agencies of lay people are significantly more crucial than Bourdieu's consideration. Bourdieu recognizes the agencies of religious actors, who play with their religious capital and compete to establish their religious interpretation (Verter 2003: 156) while the lay people occupy subordinate positions. Following the logic of supply and demand, the lay people need religion to justify their lives, existence and social positions (Rey 2007: 77). It is the tasks and opportunities for the priests as the suppliers to offer their religious visions and fulfill the spiritual need of the followers. Bourdieu leaves a very little room, if any, for the lay people to explore, combine and/or re-interpret their own version of spirituality (Verter 2003: 156). Taking Verter's criticism against Bourdieu into account, I shall demonstrate these forms of agencies among the Confucian believers below.

The last approach I apply is the function of rituals in shaping a certain type of faith and the religious self. Analyzing the changes and transformation during the history of Christianity in Europe, Bell (1997: 212-213) suggests that the invention of 'new' rituals usually aims to shape a particular type of faith that marks a break up from the older way of life. For example, baptism, which comes from the Jewish tradition as a repentance of one's sin, was given a different meaning in the era of Christianity. In the sixteenth century, putting Jesus Christ as the role model, baptism in Christianity symbolizes a rebirth and adoption of Christian doctrines, which are marked with the total cessation of idolatry and other un-Christian practices and/or beliefs. "...what it meant to become a Christian was consciously streamlined and simplified; Christianity was deliberately distinguished as a new dispensation of personal faith in contrast to the old order, now depicted as involving excessive "empty" ritualism" (Bell 1997: 215). The transformation of rituals in the history of Christianity is particularly helpful to understand the break-up between

Confucianism and older Chinese tradition and its consequences in the shaping of the devout Confucian self.

Ritual, borrowing Foucault's perspective (1988: 40-43) is a form of the technologies of self, through which people are willing to transform themselves and to achieve feelings of perfection, virtue, transcendent and/or wisdom by practicing certain actions individually or collectively. In the case of the confessional ritual in Christianity, he argues that knowing and admitting one's sin create the feeling of purification which is believed as indispensable to acquire a connection with God. (Religious) ritual is a type of governmentality which requires obedience and acceptance towards institutional or personal power who creates and/or maintains it. Thus, similar to Bourdieu's perspective, Foucault emphasizes compliance with a little acknowledgment of agency among the lay people. I will show in the case of Confucianism that agency exists and is negotiated throughout time. Another proposal in looking at the technologies of self is that the religious rituals can be aimed at shaping secular values among the believers, such as modernity, rationality and simplicity.

### **The "Old" Rituals of the Chinese communities in the Netherlands East Indies Prior to the Twentieth Century**

The Chinese arrived in the Indonesian archipelago since the eighth century. They came as traders and some of them settled in the northern coastal harbors of Java long before the Dutch colonization started in the late sixteenth century. According to Denys Lombard and Claudine Salmon (1993), the earlier Chinese settlers naturally integrated to the local cultures and many of them converted to Islam. They developed the mixed or *Peranakan* culture. Starting from the mid-1850s, there was a high influx of migration due to the opening of plantation and mining businesses by the Dutch. The large number of Chinese workers from mainland China

unavoidably affected religious and social life among the Chinese *Peranakans* in Java. The newcomers had closer ties to China and maintained Chinese lifestyles, customs, and values.

One of the earliest documentations about rituals and religious ceremonies among the Chinese was written by Hoffman (1856: 266-267) who recorded six Chinese festivals in a year. They were *Tang tjiq* (sic.) (*Dong Zhi*, -冬至),<sup>69</sup> the Chinese New Year, *Tjap Go Mek* (*Cap Go Meh*, 十五名),<sup>70</sup> *Tjing-bing* (*Qing ming*, 清明),<sup>71</sup> *Pek Tjoen* (*Peh Cun*, 扒船),<sup>72</sup> *Tjijoka* (*Gui jie*, 鬼節 or in the later period was also known as *King Hao Peng*).<sup>73</sup> In his brief record, Hoffman identified the dates of these festivals and mentioned the mythologies or traditions behind them. He did not explain how the Chinese in the Netherlands East-Indies celebrated them.

From the emic perspective, in 1887, Tjoa Tjoe Koan, a Chinese *Peranakan* writer of Surakarta, wrote *Hari Raja Orang Tjina* (The Holidays of the Chinese People). Being far more complete and detailed than Hoffman's record, Tjoa listed thirty Chinese rituals and festivals in a year and their roots in Chinese mythology, history and/or tradition. Tjoa describes that the Chinese rituals in Surakarta were also mixed with local customs. It was common that during Chinese festivals, such as New Year celebration, people set up a table with food offerings and pray with joss sticks to pay respect to their ancestors' ashes and/or the holy spirits (*Sin Bing*, *shen ming*, 神明). After praying ceremony, many people were playing Javanese music orchestra (*gamelan*), Javanese shadow puppets (*wayang*), and other entertainment to cheer up the day.

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<sup>69</sup> *Tangcik* is the shortest day in a year or winter solstice.

<sup>70</sup> *Cap Go Meh* is celebrated on the 15<sup>th</sup> day after the New Year. In China, this festival is known as the Lantern festival (*Yuan xiao jie*, 元宵节), while *Cap Go Meh* is derived from the Cantonese dialect.

<sup>71</sup> *Qing ming* or tomb sweeping day is celebrated on April 4<sup>th</sup> or 5<sup>th</sup> every year. It is the time when the descendants pay respect to their deceased parents or ancestors by cleaning up their tombs and offering them food and paper money.

<sup>72</sup> *Peh cun* is a Hokkien dialect of the Dragon Boat festival, which is celebrated on the fifth day of the fifth month, based on the lunar calendar.

<sup>73</sup> *Tjijoka* or *Cioko* is the public mourning and commemoration for those who died and have no family to worship them or also known as *Jing He Ping*, the hungry ghost festival, (敬和平). It aims to take care and honor the neglected spirits and ghosts.

They invited or hosted various local dances, such as *tandak bonang*, *tandak angklung*, *tandak srengganen*, (Tjoa 1887: 10-14).

Out of these thirty rituals, Tjoa (1887: 64, 69, 74) identifies that, one was rooted in Daoism and two were in Buddhism. None, however, was affiliated with Confucianism. Two rituals – *tjeng beng* (*qing ming*) and *king hao ping* (*cioko* or *Jing Hao Peng*) which can be considered as the manifestations of filial piety, were not associated with Confucianism at all. The *king hao ping*, instead, was based on Buddhist tradition. Prior to the twentieth century, the knowledge of Confucianism was presumably very limited among the Chinese *Peranakans*. Ebrey (1991) demonstrates that Confucian family rituals have been written and (re)formulated throughout times during the imperial China by various Confucian philosophers. These philosophical texts were circulated among and interpreted by the literati and state officials into more concrete and practical ideas in conducting rituals. The common people applied them into practices without necessarily tracing the Confucian philosophy behind the practices. When Buddhism arrived in China in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century C.E., it had to accommodate the local culture and beliefs, especially those of Confucianism and Daoism. In the case of Confucianism, Buddhism had to adopt and incorporate filial piety into their teaching and rituals, in order to ensure acceptance and conversion from the Chinese folk. In its later development, the Buddhist practitioners claim their version of filial piety is superior to that of Confucianism (Guang 2010: 248).<sup>74</sup> The long history of permeable dynamism among the three teachings – Daoism, Confucianism and Buddhism – in China makes difficult for people to identify the root of a ritual. As immigrants who have lived outside China for several generations, it was unsurprising if the

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<sup>74</sup> I thank Kyoko Tokuno who brought this issue into my awareness during her teaching of the Religions in China in Winter 2017.

Chinese people of Surakarta performed Confucian rituals as Chinese customs and traditions without having access to the philosophy and knowledge behind them.

As a diaspora group, the Chinese *Peranakan* have agencies to adapt and embrace local cultures into their rituals, which led into religious syncretic practices. Lombard and Salmon (1980: xxii) demonstrate that it was not uncommon the Chinese *Peranakans* pray for local gods and goddess. They noted that several Chinese temples in West Java and other places represented “a certain degree of assimilation of Chinese cults to local beliefs. Worshippers from the indigenous population may be seen alongside *Peranakan* and occasionally *Totok*...” In addition to the tendencies of syncretism and assimilation, the public ceremonies were attended by the Chinese people in general regardless their religions. Tjoa (1887) had never mentioned the religions of the Chinese people of Surakarta. In other words, Chineseness as an ethnic identity played a greater role than their religious affiliations, if any. Another consideration comes from the idea that religious identities in the mid-nineteenth century has not been considered as a distinct and important identity as they were treated in the beginning of the twentieth century.

Tjoa’s record shows that important ceremonies need a longer and detailed preparation (1887: 77-90). In the case of *King Ho Ping* (*Ji Hao Peng*, 敬好朋), which literally means the ceremony to respect (dead) good friends and celebrated on the seventh month every year, the preparation could take a month in advance. The ceremony aims to pay respect to the dead who did not have family and descendants to take care of them. In order to keep these spirits peaceful and harmless, people feed them once a year with abundant offerings. After the ceremony, they let poor people to come, fight and grab the offerings. Therefore, the ceremony was also popular as “*sembahyang rebutan*” (the fighting ritual). To understand the structure and scope of the “old style” ritual, it is worth to describe the process in detail.

The preparation started with collecting money donations. A team led by a *Lo Tjoe* (the care taker of a local temple) went to each Chinese household to collect the money. The contribution was closer to social obligation than free-will charity since they had already identified the social status of each household and expected them to donate a specific amount of money. The wealthy class was expected to donate *f*(Dutch gulden) 20, the middle-upper class was *f*12, while the common people's donation might vary from *f*6 to *f*1, but the minimum donation was *f*0.50. The ceremony needed funding of around *f*2000, which they spent for ritual necessities, food, beverage, transportation and entertainment.

Several days before the ceremony, the *Lo Tjoe* and *Thau Ke* or his aids wore their regalia and walked around the Chinese quarter in the morning and in the evening, during which they brought lampions and candles. The parade aimed to invite the spirits to come and join the ceremony. Another invitation was made for the spirits who live in the water by establishing a small altar on a small river next to the Chinese quarter and papers with candles were kept floating on the river. At the temple yard, people prepared two stages, one high and one low, to put the food offerings and donations. The high stage was aimed for the hungry spirits, while the lower one was for the poor. On the high stage, they put 120 piles of food. In each pile, there were cakes, liquor, a whole roasted pork, a whole roasted lamb, tea, eating utensils, and other daily necessities, such as money papers, cigarettes, opium, gambling cards, paper-made clothes, and shoes. On the lower stage, people set up tens of huge and high piles of food which came mainly from the money donation. They consisted of different varieties of cakes, bread, fish, chickens and ducks, rice, tens of whole roasted pork and lamb. On the top of these piles, there were flags with written messages asking for blessings. In between the high and low stages, they set up a white cloth, which symbolizes a staircase or bridge for the spirits. Next to these stages, there were several palm trees, where people put opium and money on their tops. Meanwhile, in the

temple people were preparing offerings for *Kwan Im (Guan Yin)*, to whom they asked for blessings.

In the morning of the ceremony day, the *Lo Tjoe* and his aids wore their regalia and went to the houses of the Chinese captain (*Padoeka Baba Kapiten*), the Chinese lieutenant and the chief of the district (*wijkmeesters*). The *Lo Tjoe* invited these leaders to join the ceremony. At 3 p.m. the Chinese captain and the *luitenant* arrived with a group of 36 military soldiers. People saluted them while the Chinese, Javanese and Dutch music were played to honor these leaders. The military troops were invited to guard public order and safety because thousands of people came to compete and fight for the food offerings after the praying ceremony.

Wearing their regalia, the Chinese captain led the ceremony, followed by other leaders and the *Lo Tjoe* and his aids. He approached the main altar of *Hok Tik Tjing Sin* (Fu De Zheng Sheng, 福德正神), on which they had provided:

- 1 set of burning red candles
- 3 cups of tea
- 3 cups of arrack
- 12 bowls with dried fruits, put vertically in skewers
- 5 plates of a roasted whole small pig, a chicken, a duck, steamed mussels and crabs
- 3 plates of cakes
- 1 *Tjiok Boen* (praying letter) (Tjoa 1887: 85)

He lit joss sticks, knelt and did kowtows before the main altar. One of his assistants read the *Tjiok Boen* to *Hok Tik Tjing Sin* – also known as Toa Pek Kong (Grand Uncle) – acknowledging his kindness and asking for his blessings. This action was followed by his subordinates. Then, the captain moved to other gods and goddesses. The last place to visit was the stages. The captain prayed once again in front of the stages. In his praying statement, he welcomed the spirits who have been neglected or have no families or descendants to receive and enjoy care from the

donators. He wished the hungry spirits to get along well with the Chinese residents in the area. After the praying, the music was played.

At 5 pm, the piles of food were removed from the stages and ready for donation to the poor people. Tjoa (1887: 90) noted that

“the music becomes louder and boisterous, while the people are ready to compete, fight for and grab the food. They ran chaotically. While plenty of them were running to the stages, some climbed the palm trees to get the presents (opium and money). The money paper should be burned until 6 pm.”

The day after, they organized *Koai Ham Khau* or the closing of the afterlife window (*upacara toetoep acherat*), during which they sent back the spirits to their realm.

In analyzing the *King Hao Peng* ritual in the late of the nineteenth century of Surakarta, there are several important points to note. First, the *King Hao Peng* ritual was funded with a large amount of donation, with which they provided offerings and ritual utilities. The contribution worked as a social marker and an establishment of the social class within the Chinese community since people were expected to donate a certain amount of money based on their socio-economic status. As I will show later, this donation system was considered burdensome and in need of reform by the THHK. Second, the ritual was structured out of tradition and might be varied from place to place. The worship of *Hok Tik Tjing Sin* and other gods and goddesses comes from Chinese folk religious tradition, which in the later period was considered superstitious and in need of reform. Third, the *King Hao Peng* was a multifaceted ritual in which there was a mixed of religious, cultural, entertainment and competition elements, especially during the ‘fighting’ and ‘grabbing’ for food by thousands of poor people. The competition of the poor and common people made this ritual both chaotic and exciting. The THHK wanted to discipline and put it in order although not without resistance. Fourth, the ceremony was organized by the *Lo Tjoe* and his aids, but the public praying was led by the

Chinese officer, who was a political, economic and community leader rather than a priest or religious specialist. During the Dutch colonial period, the Chinese officers held a prestigious position since they were usually the wealthiest people in the community who were appointed by the Dutch colonial government to be a liaison officer between the Dutch government and the Chinese community. They were granted privileges to collect taxes, to hold monopoly in trading and to keep peace and order (*rust en orde*) in their communities (Lohanda 2002; Erkelens 2013: 115-121). Borrowing Bourdieu's concept, the *King Hao Peng* ritual reflect the overlap of religious, political, and cultural fields, in which the Chinese officer held accumulated symbolic power. In the later period, when the *Khong Kauw Hwe* (Confucian Associations) started their roles as a religious institution in 1950s, they establish a priesthood system, through which they created their religious actors.

### ***Tiong Hoa Hwee Koan and Ritual Reform in the Beginning of the Twentieth Century***

In 1900, several Chinese *Peranakan* elites who were mostly educated in Dutch missionary schools established *Tiong Hoa Hwee Koan* (*Zhong Hua Hui Guan* - The Chinese Association, hereafter THHK) in Batavia. The foundation of the THHK turned the Chinese religious life into a different paradigm. Starting from the beginning, the THHK aimed to reform the Chinese customs under several reasons. First, they proposed Confucian teaching as their exemplary model (*pedoman*) (Nio 1940: 7) while the older rituals were based on mythology and tradition. Second, the THHK campaigned for simpler rituals by cutting practices considered as “irrelevant” or “contaminated by local culture(s).” Instead of conducting lavish and big-scale rituals, they suggested Chinese people to learn the principles of Confucianism and to broaden the knowledge of the Chinese in language and literature. The widely practiced *Peranakan* rituals were criticized as “chaotic”, “burdensome”, and “old-fashioned” in contrary to the so-called

“pure” Confucian teaching. Third, the THHK also endeavored to rationalize the ritual by cutting off the costs and unnecessary and/or superstitious practices during public ceremonies.

The Straits Chinese movement in Singapore, led by Dr. Lim Boon Keng, might influence the THHK’s reform.<sup>75</sup> Published as an article in the *Straits Chinese Magazine*, in 1897, Lim suggested the Straits Chinese to embrace Confucianism as “the ideal religion for which the thinking and critical world is seeking. To put it very tersely, Confucianism is the religion of humanity with the acknowledgement of God.” (1897: 57). Starting from March 1899, Lim appealed the Straits Chinese Reform, of which the simplification and rationalization of the Chinese *Peranakan* rituals became one of his concerns. In the case of rites to pay respect to the ancestors, he suggested that it is unnecessary to provide food offerings as he introduced the scientific notion of death in which “the dead cannot and will not require food.” (1900b: 30). In funeral rites, he proposed to abolish the practices of *feng shui* in finding an ideal burial location or position, to cut off the long period of keeping the coffin at home, and to avoid a lavish and high cost ceremony (1900c: 56-57).

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<sup>75</sup> There is, however, no solid consensus whether the Singaporean Chinese, especially their reform movement, impacted on that of the Batavian Chinese. On the one hand, Kwee (1969: 1) argues that the K’ang Yu Wei’s reform or Dr. Lim Boon Keng’s brought only indirect impact, if any, to the THHK movement in Jakarta. There were, indeed, very limited direct contacts between the Chinese in Batavia and K’ang Yu Wei, who visited Batavia and Surabaya in 1903, or Dr. Lim Boon Keng whose meeting with Tan Gin Tiong and Yoe Tjay Siang of Soekaboemi (West Java) in 1899 resulted in the first Malay translation of *Tai Hak* (*Da Xue*, 大學) and *Tiong Yong* (*Zhong Yong*, 中庸), both are Confucian Classics. On the other hand, Williams (1960: 54-55) considers that Singaporean Chinese was the role model and an “intellectual center” of the Batavian *Peranakan* Chinese. Her argument was followed by several scholars, such as Coppel (1981: 183) and Suryadinata (1974: 883). In this issue, I consider Dr. Lim Boon Keng and his Confucian movement had influenced on some of the THHK programs, such as the Chinese schools (Nio 1940: 17) and the ritual reform. My consideration comes from the analysis of the *Straits Chinese Magazine* (1897-1906), a periodical edited by Dr. Lim Boon Keng, through which he published his reform ideas based on Confucianism. The periodicals had circulated in Batavia, Kuala Lumpur, Sarawak, Saigon and other places (Frost 2005: 53). In the period earlier than 1897, I follow Claudine Salmon’s argument (2005: 130), which demonstrates that the Confucian movement in Surabaya was started 15 years earlier than that of Kang Yu Wei. I also demonstrate that the figure of Confucius was introduced for the first time in the Netherlands East Indies through European sources, instead of the Chinese or Singaporean ones (Sutrisno 2017).

I use three examples to demonstrate the reform efforts and the responses of the Chinese *Peranakans* toward the THHK's proposal. In the case of *King Hau Peng*, as the first example, the THHK had an opportunity to implement their version of ritual when the THHK treasurer, Mr. Khouw Lam Tjiang was appointed to be a *Lo Tjoe* whose one of his responsibilities was preparing the ceremony. He proposed to change the system of donation. Instead of picking up the donation door-to-door, he advertised it in several local newspapers and the people who wanted to donate have to go to his office. While in the previous system the amount of donation was determined by social status, during the leadership of Mr. Khouw the donors might determine the amount out of their free-will. In the end, Mr. Khouw could only collect *f*75. Even though the new donation system failed to reach a bigger amount of donation, Mr. Khouw and the THHK Board were successful in deconstructing the deception and falsity of the older donation system, in which they found out that the previous *Lo Tjoe*, backed up by the *Kong Koan* (the Chinese Council), marked up the donation. Before going to meet and ask people to donate, the previous *Lo Tjoe* had written in the donation list that several wealthy people contributed no less than *f*250 or *f*200. The large amount of money would make people feel compelled to donate higher than their ability because they needed to keep their social status. This strategy worked for a long time since the *Lo Tjoe* only needed to report the donation to the *Kong Koan* and they kept the donation record inaccessible for public. The THHK's donation system lifted the pressure, through which people could contribute voluntarily. Mr. Khouw also made the donation publicly accountable, which ended corruption and misuse of the donation money. Even further, the THHK demanded the *Kong Koan* and the wealthy people to pay their previous fictitious donations and threatened to publicize their false tactic. Being worried of their reputations, the latter agreed to fulfill their obligation. As the *Kong Koan* was considered as the representation of

the old forces, the payment symbolized the winning of the progressive group against the old customs and institution (Kwee 1969: 29-31).

The THHK also suggested the elimination of fighting and grabbing (*rebutan*) activities since they noticed that it was the thugs and their groups who were fighting for the food, while the poor could not compete with them. In previous rituals, there were brutal fighting and injured victims. When Mr. Khouw was authorized to prepare and manage the ritual, he banned the stages and the food donation was divided and distributed among the poor without fighting and grabbing. The THHK also banned entertainment associated with gambling during the ritual. It had been the annual custom that the Chinese of Batavia went to the King Ho Ping ceremony and later went to the gambling houses. Kwee (1969: 32-33) describes that under Mr. Khouw, the Toosebie temple witnessed the first *King Ho Peng* ritual without fighting. The ritual was peaceful and the donation was orderly delivered.

The THHK's version of *King Ho Peng* however received resistance from many Chinese. The year after, Mr. Khouw was not selected as the *Lo Tjoe* anymore and another person replaced his position. The new *Lo Tjoe* restored the competition and fighting ritual. It was, however, the last time of the old-style ritual since people have already been aware of the fact that it is improper to keep the poor fighting to receive donation.

The second reform suggested by the THHK was related to the death ritual. The effort to introduce their version of Confucian death ritual occurred when a member of the THHK from Sukabumi (West Java) asked for an advice for the burial of his father in 1900. In the beginning of the twentieth century, the burial ritual consisted of 25 actions and obligations, of which the majority came from myths or local customs. The THHK formed a commission to evaluate these actions and decided to abolish seventeen practices and modified or simplified the rest. Four months later, they added several rules, such as the prohibition of gambling and drinking alcohol

in a bereaved house, the abolition of *pang tjoa*,<sup>76</sup> and the relieve of the mourners from the obligation to provide full meal for the funeral guests.<sup>77</sup> Their version of the burial ritual resulted in controversies and resistance among the Chinese community. The so-called “the young generation” (*kaum muda*) was enthusiastic with the reform initiative. They were mainly the proponents of modernity who were progressive, educated and rational. Beyond this group, Kwee (1969: 41) notes that the THHK version of ritual was not easily accepted by most of the Chinese community, particularly the older Chinese *Peranakan* women.<sup>78</sup> These women fiercely defended their rituals. They resisted the THHK’s version and called their children “*puthauw*” (unfilial) for changing the rituals. The THHK blamed them as the agents through whom the local customs interfered the Chinese rituals. Nio (1940: 18) noticed that even after the THHK’s 40 years anniversary, the public commonly conducted the superstitious death rituals.

In addition to the death ritual, the THHK also formed another commission to re-evaluate and simplify the marriage ritual. Like the case of the death ritual, the unnecessary or superstitious parts were abolished. In 1906, they proposed a brand-new marriage ritual, which was considered as “modern” and inspired by the marriage ceremony in (Christian) church (Kwee 1969: 53). Instead of being held at the house of the bride or the groom as it was customized in the older tradition, the THHK suggested wedding ceremonies should be conducted at the THHK building.

At the ceremony, the wedding vows were to be read to the couple by the President or the Vice President of THHK who would then make a speech wishing the newly-weds good health and security. In that way, the President or Vice President served in the manner of clergymen (Kwee 1969: 53).

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<sup>76</sup> *Pang tjoa* is a custom of throwing paper money on road. It aims to give presents and calm down the evil spirits along the way to the cemetery (Kwee 1969: 39).

<sup>77</sup> For the complete list of the THHK’s version of the burial ritual, see Nio (1940: 204-205) and Kwee (1969: 35-40).

<sup>78</sup> Until 1930s, the Chinese immigrants who came to Indonesia were mostly male. They were commonly married the local women, who had limited knowledge about Chinese customs and taught their children the local languages and rituals, which resulted the mixed traditions.

As in the case of the death ritual, the THHK's marriage ritual received low interests, if not oppositions, in which there were only about six couples conducted their wedding in the THHK building. According to Kwee Tek Hoay (1969: 57), a Sino-Malay writer and a defender of the THHK, there were two possible reasons for the unpopularity of the THHK's version of marriage ritual. First, the Civil Registry for the Chinese was established so that the Chinese couples could simply conduct their marriage in the front of the Civil Register without religious or traditional rituals. This reason, however, may still be questionable since the Civil Registry office for the Foreign Orientals was established in 1917 (Winarta 2008: 58) or 11 years after the launching of the THHK's version. Second, the THHK switched their focus from cultural and religious reform to Chinese educational movement. In the longer term, however, the THHK's cultural and religious reform had encouraged the younger generation of the Chinese *Peranakan* to rationalize and simplify their rituals.

Citing Bourdieu, Catherine Bell (1997: 36-37) discusses that ritual may function as a split between the "old order" and the "new order" or a reflection of social contradiction. The THHK's reform indicated the coming of modernity and rationality among the Chinese *Peranakans* in the beginning of the twentieth century. The reform demonstrated the struggles and the split within the Chinese *Peranakans* between those who maintained the old tradition and the modern one. In Bell's words, the reform based on Confucian teaching can be considered as "orthodoxic" or a style of religion which considered itself as "ortho" (correct, right, straight) and "doxa" (belief, thought, opinion). Prior to the THHK period, the so-called Chinese tradition (*adat istiadat*) was closer to "orthopraxic" or based on the correct action or "praxis." (Bell 1997: 191). While it is not uncommon that both approaches are at odd to each other, they have some degree of

compromise as the THHK mentioned that it was not their intention to destroy the ritual but their goal was to end the burdensome cost and irrational or superstitious practices.

The Confucian orthodoxic approach encouraged by the THHK received a better momentum in the beginning of the twentieth century. First of all, it was the period when there was an era of cultural change from orality to literacy. There were enough literate Chinese *Peranakans* or the so-called “*kaoem moeda*” (younger generation) whose vision and opinion were influenced by printed materials. Since most of them were educated in the Dutch colonial school system, their knowledge of Chinese history, culture and religion came from European sources. Sun (2013) discusses that in the end of the nineteenth century in Europe, the foundation of the comparative religious studies, which was based on the studies of ancient religious texts, have shaped a widely accepted orthodoxic approach in understanding Confucianism and other Asiatic religions. Second, Christianity and white supremacy had challenged the Chinese to redefine their religion and rituals. As I have discussed in Chapter 2 and 3, Christianity as well as Islam, which justify their teaching from Bible and Al Qur’an, valorize the teaching-based religions as “real” and “rational” compared to customary beliefs or indigenous practices. Third, the Confucian teaching was also being used to redefine Chineseness among the Chinese *Peranakan* community. Prior to the twentieth century, Chineseness was not a single identity. It acknowledged different ethnic groups, such as Hokkian, Hakka, and Teochiu, and different ethnic dialects and traditions. In the beginning of the twentieth century, the THHK proposed that the real Chinese tradition should be based on Confucian teaching by claiming that Confucianism is the core of Chinese civilization for centuries (Nio 1940: 7). Confucianism became the common reference for the Chinese (*bangsa Tjina*) regardless the original ethnic groups, dialects or customs of the Chinese *Peranakans*.

The three examples of ritual reform initiated by the THHK demonstrates that transformation may takes time and not without resistance. Applying Bourdieu's theory of social practice in religious studies, changes and transformations of rituals can be seen as the alteration of religious habitus. Bourdieu (1987: 126) defines habitus as "a lasting, generalized and transposable disposition to act in conformity with a (quasi-) systematic view of the world and human existence." Prior to the THHK, the Chinese *Peranakans* had conformed to the old-style rituals organized under the authority of the *Lo Tjoe*, the Chinese captain and the *Kong Koan*. They were the social actors whose symbolic capital were acknowledged and accepted by the Chinese community in sociopolitical, economic, and religious spheres. The repetitive and regular characters of rituals contributed to the habitus. When the THHK stepped in the religious field, they disrupted the existing habitus and applied the knowledge of the Confucian teaching as a different symbolic capital.

The THHK's efforts, however, faced various degrees of resistance and rejection among the lay people. In the case of *King Hao Peng*, the backlash was relatively short, but there were longer and stronger resistance in the cases of death and marriage rituals. The resistance and rejection of the lay people demonstrate that they also possess agency and use it to repudiate, block or oppose the THHK's reforms. These lay responses challenge Bourdieu's assumption that only the religious professionals and institutions who possess capabilities to introduce, justify and influence, or even manipulate, their religious visions while lay people are "dispossessed of the instruments of symbolic production" (*op cit*, Verter 2003: 156). Even further, I consider that accepting and defending a particular religious view is far from being passive. Taking a side with a religious authority or institution is another type of agency for lay people. In the case of the contested death ritual, the young man whose father died was struggling to keep up with the THHK's burial ritual and facing the defenders of the old-style ritual who applied social sanctions

by excluding or calling him “*puthauw*” (unfilial). Reflecting from the transformation processes of the three rituals, I conclude that religious professionals, institutions and the lay people may accumulate and exercise religious capital. Instead of involving only the religious specialists and institutions, the contestation may take place in different levels and interconnected ways, for example – but not limited to – a battle of two institutions, lay people against another religious institution, between two different religious specialists or lay people versus religious specialists.

### **The Invention of the Collective Ritual: The Roles of THHK Schools and Confucian Associations**

The ritualization process, Bell (1997: 7) argues, is useful to understand the strategic way of acting and then turn to explore how and why this way of acting differentiates itself from other practices. Bell suggests that there are two elements to investigate ritualization. First, the social construction of a ritual, which include the process of selecting and/or forming particular actions to be considered specific for a ritual. Acting ritually, according to Bell, “emerges as a cultural strategy of differentiation linked to particular social effects and rooted in a distinctive interplay of a socialized body and the environment it structures” (1997: 7). Second, the ritualization process involves power relationship, through which a certain social group enacts certain belief, ideology, legitimation and power to maintain the constructed ritual. It may, however, results in acceptance, resistance, appropriation, or modification of rituals. In this part, I demonstrate the social construction of the Confucian collective ritual which involves several institutions. In the later part, I discuss the institutional power of the MATAKIN and the response of the Chinese community towards the Confucian rituals.

Not long after the foundation of the THHK and the launching of the cultural and religious reform, the THHK Board also established the schools for the Chinese *Peranakan* children in

1901. The education reform was far more successful and gradually became the THHK's focus (Nio 1940: 21-27). The THHK schools were not only promoting scientific knowledge, Chinese language and culture, they became a flourishing place to invent a new ritual. In 1919 or 18 years after the first THHK school was opened, there were more than 250 THHK schools were opened in many cities and towns in Indonesia (Jusuf 2011: 72-73).

Perhaps not many know that the association and schools of the THHK were first established with the principal aim of promoting the teaching of the Prophet Confucius. The school which was established in 1900 by the THHK Batavia was a kind of *religious school*, and its teachers were like priests who were required once or twice on the first and fifteenth of every month to give a public sermon to disseminate the teachings of the Prophet Confucius.

Thus, the initial purpose of the THHK school for the Confucian religion was like the Bible or mission school for Christianity or the Mohammadjah school for the Moslems. People felt it was necessary to revive the teachings of Confucius among the overseas Chinese here because thirty or forty years ago our marriage and funeral precepts and customs were so confused, full of superstition which caused difficulties and burdensome, that they had to be changed and improved..." (*op cit.*, Coppel 1981: 184)

The ideas of introducing Confucianism through education were apparently influenced by the proposals of K'ang Yu-Wei and Lim Boon Keng. Responding to the defeats of China in the war against Japan in 1895, K'ang proposed a drastic reform, which aimed to sustain and strengthen the Chinese national sovereignty. Endorsed by Emperor Kwang Hsu, in 1897 K'ang launched a reform in various sectors, in which education was one of his important agendas. K'ang proposed the dissemination of the teaching of Confucius in combating "moral degeneration" among the Chinese (Hsiao 1959: 101). In K'ang's vision of education, Confucianism should be taught together with modern sciences since "the pursuit of Western learning should not entail the abandonment of China's cultural legacy (Hsiao 1975: 383). To accelerate education and the re-introduction of Confucianism, every unauthorized shrine should be used as elementary schools and the government required all children to attend school (*ibid.*: 380). For a wider public, K'ang proposed the establishment of Confucianism as a state religion

(*guo jiao*, 国教), the recognition of Confucius as the founder of religion, the application of a calendar system starting from Confucius' birth year in 551 B.C., and the foundation of Confucian Association (*Kong Jiao Hui*, 孔教会) across empire. He suggested the establishment of Confucian "churches" that conduct weekly services (Hsiao 1959: 101, Coppel 1981: 182).

In Singapore, in 1897, Dr. Lim Boon Keng also propagated the ideas to provide education which combined the Eastern values and Western knowledge. He argued that the secular education provided by the British colonial government made the Chinese children lacking moral teaching, of which the effect could be disastrous for them. Not only these children lost their cultural identity and root but they were deprived from important character development. The education for girls was particularly important in Lim's reform proposal since they are the future mothers, through whom the education of the next generation should be prepared (Lim 1899: 102-103).

The Chinese must have moral schools for the young – schools in which the young may be regularly taught the great ethical system of Confucius, which as everyone knows, is the foundation of all is good in Chinese culture... Parents ought to do everything in their power to induce their children to attend our Confucian schools when they are started... The Mohammedans read their Koran, and if they do not understand the Arabic, they receive an exposition in the vernacular of all salient points in the teaching of the prophet of Arabia. The Christian teach their children the ethics as embodied in the Gospels. The Straits Chinese children alone are left as a rule to grow up without moral training to find their proper place in this "wicked world." (105)

It was generally considered that Lim was inspired by K'ang's ideas of reform even though the reform in China lasted for only three months since the Dowager Empress seized power and K'ang fled away to escape death penalty. Considering the parallel Confucian movements in China and Singapore, it was likely that the Chinese *Peranakan* in Batavia had more access to the ideas of Lim Boon Keng, which was published in the *Straits Chinese Magazine* in English rather than to that of K'ang in Chinese language. K'ang had more influences when he finally visited Batavia and Surabaya in 1903. In his conversation with the

THHK board committee, K'ang figured out that the THHK discouraged the cult of Confucius since the board refused to put an altar at schools where students can pray and pay respect to Confucius and his disciples. In K'ang's perspective, the THHK should promote the figure of Confucius as a prophet and encouraged their pupils to worship him. The THHK board argued that it was more important to learn the teaching of Confucius rather than worshipping him. Moreover, they attempted to end superstitious practices among the Chinese, such as worshipping gods and goddesses in the temples with expectation of wealth, longevity or health in return. K'ang finally understood and agreed with the THHK's standpoint (Kwee 1969: 26). In his visit to Surabaya, K'ang visited *Boen Bio* (Wen Miao), a small temple where Confucius and his disciples are worshipped. Built in 1884, the temple was originally dedicated to Boen Tjang (*Wenchang*, 文昌, the God of Literature,). In 1899, it was changed into the temple of Confucius although the cult of Wenchang was maintained (Salmon 2005: 133). K'ang encouraged the Chinese of Surabaya to renovate the *Wen Miao* into a bigger temple and relocate it in the main street of Kapasan, the Chinese district in Surabaya. The renovation designed the temple with Chinese architecture and ornaments, which made the temple magnificent. It was completed in 1906 and the Surabaya branch of the THHK school was built behind the temple (Tjiong 1978: 75, Siau 1981).

Other than the THHK schools, the *Boen Bio* initiated the Confucian rituals as early as the 1900s. It was possibly the first temple in the Netherlands East Indies where the birthday and death anniversary of Confucius were commemorated every year. In 1900, *De Locomotief*, a Semarang based newspaper, reported the Confucius' birthday ceremony plan.

Khong Hoe Tjoe alias Confucius

Throughout the Netherlands East Indies, there is only one temple dedicated to this holy figure (Confucius) and it is in Soerabaja, known as *Boen Bio*. Two days from now, on September 20<sup>th</sup> or the 27<sup>th</sup> of *Peegoewik* in Chinese lunar calendar, is the birthday of

Confucius. The Chinese announced in *Bintang Soerabaja* that they will celebrate the day with appropriate gratitude (*De Locomotief*, September 18, 1900).

Quoting *Ik Po*, a Chinese daily based in Solo, Salmon (2005: 135) shows the structure of the Confucian ritual when the temple renovation was completed and inaugurated on the same day with the Confucius' birthday.

The tablet of Confucius and those of his disciples were placed on the altars; Captain The Toan Ing (Zheng Taixing) and the master of ceremonies Lin Kunlian knelt three times and made nine kowtow, while presenting incense in front of the altars; they were accompanied by some four hundred followers who, in groups, came and worshipped Confucius while singing songs in praise of the Sage (*op cit. Ik Po*, 20 October 1906)

Sharing his childhood memory, Siau Giok Tjhan (1981: 19) observed that these rituals were solemn. The praying hall was decorated and they provided a whole roasted pork, roasted beef, fruitful banana trees and sugar canes as offering.

It is important to note here that there was a strong connection between the Confucian sermon or lecture and the school setting to the collective praying ritual in the Confucian temples. As a modern institution, the THHK schools, which applied knowledge-based learning in classical or collective setting, had replaced the older education system run by the *Kong Koan* (The Chinese Major's office) in Batavia. The *Kong Koan*'s educational system emphasized memorizing the Chinese classical texts without explaining the meaning to the children. The teacher was usually working with a small group fewer than eight children. Through a competition between both schools, the THHK pupils demonstrated convincingly higher achievement. The *Kong Koan*, therefore, subsidized and permitted the THHK to manage the *Kong Koan* schools using their modern curriculum (Kwee 1969: 23).

According to Siau Giok Tjhan, the *Boen Bio* hosted the first THHK school in East Java. There was a possibility the temple incorporated the lecture style of the school in their ritual. The case of *Khong Kauw Hwee* (Kong Jiao Hui, 孔教会, Confucian Association, hereafter KKH) in

Solo demonstrates the merging process between the two. In the 35<sup>th</sup> anniversary booklet of the KKH Solo, Auw Ing Kiong explains that since ca. 1925, every Sunday, the KKH hosted a lecture (*tjeramah*) for children, but it was then aimed for adults, too. The activity continued until 1950s with a pause during the Japanese occupation (1942-1945). In addition to the Sunday morning sermon, in the eve of full moon (*purnama-sidhi*) every the 14<sup>th</sup> day of the Chinese [lunar] calendar, there was a sermon (*chotbah*) for public, but mostly attended by adults, which covered the topic of Chinese classics and Confucian teaching. The leader and founder of the KKH also provided a free lesson in his house for those who were interested to recite the Confucian Classics (Auw 1953: 21-23). Prior to the lecture or sermon, there was a public praying (*kebaktian*) (Tjhie 1968: 15)

The setting of praying ritual in the THHK schools and the *Boen Bio* demonstrates discontinuity from the old-style Chinese rituals in the era of 1880s since the emphasis on sermons and lectures in the weekly meeting or praying suggests an invention of the Confucian ritual which had never been existed prior to the 1900s. The figure of Confucius and his teaching becomes the center of ritualization. There are several reasons that may underlay religious innovation. The innovation may work as a response to crisis, a creation of a charismatic and genius person, or an inherent quality of religious tradition itself (Williams 1992: 7-9). In the case of the Confucian collective praying ritual, I argue, it was created in a coinciding time when the Chinese *Peranakans* had to valorize their status as a civilized nation, a defensive response towards Christian proselytization and desire to re-channeling themselves with China.

The introduction of Confucianism in the Netherlands East-Indies<sup>79</sup> occurred as a reaction to the expansion of the missionary works, which took place in the second half of the nineteenth

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<sup>79</sup> K'ang Yu Wei in China and Lim Boon Keng in Singapore expressed a similar concern to the Christian proselytization.

century. Avoiding possible conflicts with the Muslim communities, the Dutch colonial government delayed the permit for the missionary groups to promote Christianity among the local people. In 1860s, when the missionaries who arrived in Java, particularly in West Java, experienced resistance and hostilities from the local communities, who have embraced Islam devoutly. The interests towards Christianity and missionary educational programs, instead, unexpectedly came from the Chinese *Peranakans*, who were struggling to find education for their children. In 1868, the family of Yoe Ong Pauw, a Chinese Lieutenant of Cirebon, converted to Christianity, in which their case became a role model for the Chinese community in the West Java to send their children to the Christian school. In a short time, there were more than one hundred Chinese children attended the missionary's educational program (Coppel 1986: 18-21).

From the missionary's perspective, the Chinese *Peranakans'* conversion to Christianity were both promising and fulfilling their obligation to save them from the heathen tradition. Compare to Christianity and Islam, the Chinese rituals were considered superstitious and the Chinese had no religion.<sup>80</sup> In response to this opinion and to reduce Christian proselytization, the THHK, and the KKH in the later period, aimed to reappraise Confucianism as a comparable religion to Christianity and Islam. Their strategies were to emphasize the teaching of Confucius and to abandon the irrational rituals as it was mentioned in the speech of Tan Siau Tjhan, the initiator of the KKH Semarang (Central Java).

“I am very sorry to see our brothers and sisters (*tongpauw*) in this area pay more respect and worship idols in the temples than pay attention to our prophet. We should be ashamed not only to ourselves because we keep the superstitious beliefs, but also to other nations (*laen bangsa*), against whom we hang our face in shame (*tida ada moeka*). Look at the White people who worship their prophet and his teaching, they go to church every Sunday, during which their priests address the teaching of Jesus. The local people (*Boemipoetra*) go regularly to the mosque every Friday to listen to the religious teachers reading the Quran, in which they find the saying of Prophet Mohammad.

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<sup>80</sup> I address the debate between the THHK and the Christian missionaries about whether Confucianism a religion of the Chinese in Chapter 2.

... the teaching of our Prophet has been praised by our own folk and admired by the White people. They are very interested to the trajectory of our prophet so that many European philosophical association funded the translation of Confucian classical books to European languages... In sum, with our spirit as Chinese (*kitapoenja soemanget kaTionghoan*), I expect our people support the activities of the Khong Kauw Hwee and value the teaching of our prophet, so that in the perspectives of other nations, the Chinese becomes a respectful nation (*bangsa Tionghoa djadi terhormat*) (*Khong Kauw Goat Po*, March 1925: 20).

The ritualization of the weekly sermon in opposition to the old-style lavish and traditional Chinese rituals reminds us to the similar transformation in Christianity, particularly in the sixteenth century when the Protestants challenged the Roman Catholic Church with their ideology of simplicity and purity. In Confucianism case, the break-up with older tradition was not a way to challenge any religious institution. It worked rather as a strategy to deal with and against the west supremacy. In Foucauldian perspective, the weekly sermon attempts to create a certain type of Confucian (religious) self, which is oriented to simplicity, rationality and modernity. However, the teaching through which they construct the self should cultivate closer religious, cultural, and political ties to China than to the west. In Bourdieu's words, the regularity of the weekly praying works as "the habit-forming force", which educates the Chinese people to acquire knowledge and belief in Confucian people (Dianteill 2003: 529-530).

### **MATAKIN and the Rise of Institutional and State Power in 1955s - 1980s**

During the World War II (1942-1945) and the Indonesian independence war (1945-1949), there is no record found about the Confucian community in Indonesia and their religious activities. It was not until 1956 that they organized a national congress in Solo to revive the national board of Confucian Associations, which they named it *Perserikatan Kung Chiao Hui Indonesia* (PKCHI – The federation of Confucian Associations in Indonesia). The PKCHI carried on the missions of the THHK and the KKH to banish the superstitious rituals and to

concentrate on the teaching of Confucius. They maintained the weekly lecture as the main structure of Confucian ritual (*Suara K'ung Chiao* 1957: 32). In terms of offerings, they omitted the tradition to provide *sam sing* or the three kinds of animal meat or *ngo sing* or the five kinds of animal meat under the precept that simplicity is an indispensable Confucian morality (Thung 1957: 22-23). This was contrary to the tradition suggested by Tjoa Tjoe Koan in Surakarta that either *sam sing* or *ngo sing* was always included in the Chinese rituals in the 1880s.



Picture 10. Food Offering in the birthday of Confucius ceremony in the *Boen Bio*

In the 4<sup>th</sup> national congress in Solo in 1961, the PKCHI proposed to standardize (*penyeragaman*) the religious doctrines and rituals in a firmer manner to meet the Indonesian state's criteria of a religion (<http://matakin.or.id/page/sekilas-riwayat-matakin>). The government applies four criteria in considering the formally acknowledged religions in Indonesia, in which a religion should believe in one God have prophet(s), holy book(s), religious doctrines, and rituals for its followers. These criteria are applied to differentiate religion from mystical sect and/or cult (*aliran kebatinan dan kepercayaan*), which continued to flourish. From the state's point of view,

mystical sects and practices are heretic, dangerous for the national unity and many of their followers committed illegal acts (*Penjelasan atas Penetapan Presiden RI No. 1/1965 tentang Pencegahan Penyalahgunaan dan/atau Penodaan Agama, point 2*). As their efforts to fulfill the criteria, in January 1965 the Indonesian government acknowledged Confucianism as one of six formal religions in Indonesia and has an equal position to Islam, Catholicism, Protestantism, Hinduism and Buddhism.

In September 1965 and afterwards, during which Suharto stepped into power and established the New Order regime after the massive killings of the Indonesian Communist Party members in 1965-1967, the conformity to the state's definition of religion became more crucial than before. Amidst the belief that Communism embraces atheism, the Confucian believers proved their detachment to Communism by adding the Eight (Verses) of Faith Declaration<sup>81</sup> in the beginning of their praying ritual. When the PKCHI was transformed into the MATAKIN in 1967,<sup>82</sup> they maintained the role to improve and standardize the Confucian rituals.

During the New Order regime (1966-1998), there were restrictions to celebrate Confucian rituals and Chinese ceremonies publicly in order to cut off the cultural affinity between the Chinese *Peranakans* and China. In 1977, the Confucian classrooms were excluded from public and private schools. The Confucian students were encouraged to convert to other religions. In 1979, President Suharto declared Confucianism is not a religion but only a sect of Buddhism.<sup>83</sup> Regardless the state's refutation of Confucianism status, the MATAKIN continued to

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<sup>81</sup> The complete declaration can be read in Fn. 65

<sup>82</sup> The transformation was not straightforward. In 1961, the PKCHI was changed into *Lembaga Agama Khonghucu Indonesia* (LASKI – the Institute of Confucian Religion in Indonesia). Another change took place in 1963 when the LASKI became *Gabungan Perkumpulan Agama Khonghucu se-Indonesia* (GAPAKSI - The Union of the Confucian Religion Assemblies in Indonesia). In 1967, during the sixth congress of GAPAKSI, it changed again to the MATAKIN. The reasons of the organizational changes were still unknown.

<sup>83</sup> I discuss the rationale behind the state's refutation in Chapter 3.

demonstrate their loyalty to Indonesia by accepting *Pancasila*,<sup>84</sup> the Indonesian state's ideology, and translating all religious texts, praying and songs into Indonesian. They, however, refused the state's decision to put Confucianism as a Buddhist sect, even though many Chinese temples throughout Indonesia complied with the state's decision and changed their status into *viharas*. The MATAKIN maintains the weekly collective praying and the teaching-based ritual to detach themselves from the so-called practices of mystical sects. The weekly ritual in the *Boen Bio* as I described in the beginning of this chapter is the contemporary standard of a Confucian ritual (MATAKIN 1984).

When Suharto stepped down in 1998, Abdurrachman Wahid, the fourth president of Indonesia, re-acknowledged Confucianism as the sixth formal religion. The Confucian rituals and Chinese festivals regains the recognition in public sphere. The *Boen Bio* and other temples open the big ceremonies with *barongsay* or dragon dance, which was once forbidden during the New Order regime. Since 2000 until now, the MATAKIN functions as the representative of Confucian communities. It negotiates on their behalf with the Indonesian state. Even though the MATAKIN enjoys significantly greater political power and recognition by the state than ever before, the struggles to standardize and discipline the Confucian rituals continue. The field notes below reflect the challenges that come from the Confucian priests and communities.

### **Dealing with the Syncretic Practices in Reformation Period (2000-2011)**

During the National Congress held by the MATAKIN in Dec 2010, I attended a session which discussed the planning to establish an academy for Confucian teachers. This academy is needed since there is a shortage of religious teachers who can teach the Confucian religion in

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<sup>84</sup> Pancasila literally means the Five Principle, which states the belief of One Omnipotent God, humanity, national unity, democracy and social justice.

schools.<sup>85</sup> The participants deliberated about the location, funding and curriculum and the conversation slipped into a different topic when a participant suggested that the prospective Confucian priests need to go to the academy prior to their initiation. He reflected on how poor the quality of the Confucian priests is that they have today. He continued with criticism of the priests who did syncretic practices by visiting different temples and attending different rituals other than those of the Confucian. He named this type of priests “*rohaniwan abu-abu*”, which literally means the “gray” or ambiguous priests. He expected the MATAKIN to promote a standard practice of Confucian rituals, in which the Confucian priests should only involve in Confucian rituals. According to him, syncretic practices reflect “unclear faith” (*iman yang serba tidak jelas*) and they should be disciplined (*ditertibkan*). His criticism and concern were applauded by many participants until a representative of Madura (East Java), who was happened to be a Confucian priest, stood up and shared his perspective.

“It is most likely that you all will call me the *rohaniwan abu-abu* (the gray priest). I admitted that I lead praying in the *li thang*,<sup>86</sup> but I also visited frequently and involved in two other temples – a Buddhist and a Daoist – in my area. My reason of doing the syncretism because my late father was a devout Buddhist and my late mother was closer to Daoism. By visiting and praying for them in the temples where they were actively involved during their lives, I consider myself doing my duty as a Confucian disciple. I believe that my late parents would be happy that I remembered them as a Buddhist and a Daoist. Did Confucius tell us that we should do *hauw* (*bakti* or pay respect to our parents and ancestors), didn’t he? So, I don’t feel that I contradict myself with the Confucian virtue. I supported the ideas to introduce Confucian teaching and rituals through schools, but I suggest that we don’t use a single criterion to judge the piety of Confucian followers.”

The statement of the Madurese representative was endorsed by the representative of Pontianak (West Kalimantan) and several other representatives who raised a concern that in

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<sup>85</sup> Religion is a part of compulsory curriculum for students in Indonesia. Starting from elementary to high school, students are expected to learn one’s own religion in school. After the Indonesian government re-acknowledge Confucianism as one of six formal religion in Indonesia, the public schools should provide Confucian religious classrooms for Confucian students.

<sup>86</sup> *Li thang* is a praying hall for Confucian believers.

many places, the “pure” (*murni*) followers of Confucianism are, in fact, much smaller compared to the Buddhists and syncretic practitioners. Endorsing the criteria strictly in near future would discourage people to apply for being a Confucian priest or teacher while they need them badly. After several opinions from other participants, the forum in general agreed that they should not apply a strict standard and the future academy will help them establish the expected practices in a gradual way.

My observation beyond the conference room confirmed the facts that despite a long struggle of combating the so-called superstitious and mythological-based rituals, the syncretic practices are still popular among the Confucian people. A Confucian priest in Surabaya admitted that besides observing the Confucian rituals, he practiced Javanese rituals (*Kejawen*), such as fasting every Monday and Thursday (*puasa Senin-Kamis*) and meditating at sacred tombs and caves in rural areas of Java. Being a Chinese *Peranakan* who unavoidably lives in a mixed culture of Javanese and Chinese, he was interested in spirituality (*kebatinan*) since he was young. As a *feng shui* practitioner, he considers fasting and meditating to sharpen his intuition and sensation of place and direction. The Javanese fasting and meditation rituals are good complement to Confucianism since the latter does not provide any mean to reach spirituality, but it provides moral guidance through the Confucian canon. (private interview, January 21<sup>st</sup>, 2011). Among the lay people, I also found that the syncretism is commonly practiced.

The concern about syncretism, which suggests connotations of being “impure”, “ambiguous” and “contaminated” comes from the modern and rigid category of religion. Rosaline Shaw and Charles Stewart (1994: 4) discuss that during the Reformation period in Europe, when Protestantism endorsed stricter attitudes of reading Christian texts, syncretism was used to denote the “confused mixing of religions”, which could be applied to the hybrid practices of Catholicism and other cults. Embedded to the notion of syncretism, therefore, there were

efforts to shape “loyal” and “pure” Christian faith or religious governmentality, through which the Protestant Church exercises its disciplining power towards the congregation.

In the case of Indonesian Confucianism and other religions, it is not only the religious institutions that endorsed this type of governmentality. Administratively, the Indonesian state applies the principle of “one person, one religion” by registering its citizens’ religion in the identity card (*Kartu Tanda Penduduk*). Borrowing from Ian Hacking’s words (1991: 193), this bureaucratic power classifies the citizens’ religiosity and changes them into statistical figures. But more importantly, it also shapes the citizen’s religious identity, which ostracizes the mystical sect (*aliran kebatinan*) and syncretism.

Despite the bureaucratic and institutional power in regulating religiosity, the persistent syncretic practices show that there are agencies of the Confucian believers to meet their spiritual needs in the ways that they feel comfortable and fulfilling. In this context, I consider syncretism similar to Homi Bhabha’s concept of hybridity (1994), in which people play with combinations and mixtures of religious doctrines and practices as a way of resisting the discipline of a certain regime. The resistance among the Confucian lay community was strong so that the MATAKIN should reconsider or at least be cautious with its policies and planning, which refutes Bourdieu’s and Foucault’s argument of the submission of lay people in facing institutional power. In the last chapter, I will demonstrate, however, that the MATAKIN’s perspective on syncretism is not necessarily consistent.

### **The Voice of Lay People: Competition and Struggles in Conducting Rituals**

In a late afternoon in November 2010, a priest, five people (*umat*) from the *Boen Bio* and I went to a small village in Jombang regency, for about two hours and a half driving from Surabaya. We went to a funeral of a Chinese *Peranakan* woman, whose one of her children

requested a Confucian praying service for her late mother. Since there was no Confucian priest in the area, she sent the request to the *Boen Bio*. When we arrived, the coffin had been closed and the family members –all wore white and black attire – were standing next to the coffin to take condolences from the guests. She was survived by her husband and five adult children. The food offering was prepared on a table in front of the coffin. After greeting the family, the priest led the ritual. The oldest son raised the joss stick and kowtowed in front of the coffin on behalf of the family. The priest, then, raised the joss stick three times and bowed to the coffin, followed by the *Boen Bio* people. He read a praying statement:

“We are gathering and worshipping *Tian* in this sacred ceremony, in the moment when the physical body of Mrs. Tan Kim Tjoen, whose obligation in this world has been accomplished, is relocating to the last settlement. We raise our praying so that her soul is endowed with peace and serenity in the *Tian*’s benevolent lap (*di haribaan Kebajikan Thian*) as each human being, who has accomplished duties in his/her life, will return (to *Tian*). We wish *Tian* grants sanctity to this place so that it can enlighten her spirit to find her way to the eternity. Praise.”

The rest of the praying expresses deep condolences to the family and hope *Tian* gives them strength to deal with the lost. In the end of the praying, the priest burned the praying letter. Next to the coffin, the whole family bowed deeply to the ground to express their respect and farewell. It was the end of the ritual. The *Boen Bio* group, then, mixed themselves with other guests who spent time to accompany the grieving family.



Picture 11. The grieving family bowed deeply under the coffin.

We stayed overnight in Jombang so that the priest could lead the ceremony in the morning before the cremation. There was no hotel in this remote area so the family had arranged us to stay in the guest house of the local temple, which was affiliated with the PTITD. In the morning, we went to the mourning house at 07:00 a.m. The ceremony started with the family bowed deeply to the ground to express their respect and farewell. The priest led a prayer to release the coffin to the cremation house. After the prayer, the priest gave a signal that the coffin was ready to send to the crematorium. While the family was about to wrap up the food offering, a man came and he looked upset. Apparently, he was sort of a contemporary *lo tjoe* or the caretaker and ritual master of the local temple, which promoted the *Sam Kauw* or *Tri-Dharma* (the Three Teachings). He was upset because the family did not contact him and he missed the ritual. He possibly knew the ceremony after figuring out that we stayed over in his temple's guest house the night before.

A little drama started when, according to the *lo tjoe*, the previous ritual was not valid and could endangered the soul of the dead. The *lo tjoe* instructed the grieving husband to pick up a joss stick and pray in front of the coffin. Then, he should burn enough money paper so that his passing wife could enjoy welfare in afterlife. The husband, looking sad and feeble, followed the instruction obediently. Once again, he kowtowed deeply in front of the coffin and burned some paper money. While the ritual master was about to instruct another act, one of the daughters stepped in. She firmly said that they had done the Confucian ritual and everything was all set to go to the crematorium. They involved in a debate when the ritual master tried to convince her to



Picture 12. The *Lo Tjoe* guided the bereaved husband how to pray and burn the paper money for his passing wife. do the correct way for the sake of her mother's spirit. But, the daughter was not convinced and she decided that the family should proceed to the crematorium. We went to the closest crematorium in Kediri, about 2 hours away. The ritual prior to the cremation went smoothly under the guidance of the Confucian priest even though the cremation is supposedly closer to Buddhist tradition than to Confucian one.

This case shows that even though the MATAKIN have already received the endorsement from the Indonesian government, they did not automatically enjoy authoritative order to lay out the "proper" rituals as it is the case of the Catholic Church. There were challenges against the

MATAKIN's version of death ritual from the other religious communities, such as those of the *Tri-Dharma* and Buddhist. Beyond the competition of these institutions, the two rituals reflect two different belief systems about soul and afterlife. In the Chinese folk religion and *Tri-Dharma*, there is a belief that two souls<sup>87</sup> will leave the body when a person dies. The first soul is *hun* (魂), which resides in a spirit tablet and commemorate by their descendant but eventually returns to "heaven". The second is *po* (魄), which stays in the corpse and resides in the grave. The descendants and living people are obliged to take a good care of the *po* since it might cause danger, disharmony, or disaster if it is angry, disturbed, or maltreated (Berling 1992: 182). The notion of the two souls in afterlife manifests in the ritual in which offerings are central with aims to fulfill the ancestors' need, which can be considered as filial piety. The MATAKIN's version of Confucianism, however, reflects a different belief that there is only one soul who takes the journey directly to Tian in afterlife. The survivors of the dead can only wish a smooth transition by requesting Tian's mercy, but it is only Tian who has the power to make the soul content. Looking at these differences, the Confucian version of Tian is very close to monotheism endorsed by the Indonesian state, while its concepts of soul and afterlife are not too different from Christianity or Islam.

In analyzing religious authority and power, Bourdieu and Foucault discuss mainly on how rituals are used to cultivate a certain type of piety and to maintain the control through the assignment of a small number of religious specialists who provide the religious services. Their focus on the struggles within a religious institution has been a result of the European historical trajectory in which Christianity has been the dominant doctrine embraced by the European

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<sup>87</sup> The "real" number of the souls was a subject of controversy in the Chinese folk religion. Some believe that human being has two souls, while the other convince there are ten, twelve, three, one or three dozen depending on philosophical, medical and/or religious school that they trust in. It is, however, safe to say that these souls are having two characters that symbolize *ying-yang* dualism (Harrell 1979: 521).

communities for centuries. In contrast to the European case, the religious field in Indonesia is closer to the shape of liberal market in which multiple religious institutions and doctrines struggle and compete not only within their religious community but with other religious institutions as well. The case of the death ritual above highlights the facts that the MATAKIN and the PTITD – through their religious specialists – involved in a competition to win the loyalty of the lay people. The final decision, however, is in the hands of the lay people as the religious consumers, who have the agencies to tailor the suitable ritual for their spiritual need.

### **Conclusion**

As the opening quote says, starting from its invention to the process of acquiring authority and implementation, the Confucian ritual has reflected tension, struggle, competition as well as compliance, collaboration and support, through which the Chinese *Peranakan* communities define their religious and ethnic identities and political positions. The invention of the so-called Confucian ritual in the early twentieth century reflects how religious performance is socially constructed with and against the West. Modernity and rationalism has challenged the Chinese to cultivate the progressive self, which reflects in their efforts to eradicate the “superstitious” and “burdensome” rituals. They promoted Confucianism to anchorage their political, religious and ethnic identities, which aimed to compete with Christianity and Dutch colonialism. The choice to apply Confucianism can be seen as an agency to react to the crisis. In contrast to this statement, people may argue that K’ang Yu Wei’s and Indonesian versions of Confucianism are westernized and Christianized.<sup>88</sup> Reflecting on these perspectives in the invention of the Confucian rituals, I repost Talal Asad’s concern on how far the agency of local people can be in

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<sup>88</sup> About the influence of Christianity and Western values in K’ang Yu Wei’s version of Confucianism, see Tay, Wei Leong (2010). Kang Youwei, The Martin Luther of Confucianism and his Vision of Confucian Modernity and Nation. In: Haneda, Masahi. *Secularization, Religion and the State*. Tokyo: University of Tokyo Center for Philosophy.

making their own history (1993: 4). Or, to make it better related to the context of this chapter, the question would be how far the agency of the Chinese *Peranakans* in making their religion and ritual.

The scholarly reflection of social actors and their agencies has been divided into many arguments. Marshal Sahlins and Sherry Ortner, in Asad's point of view, advocate the too optimistic idea that the local people have authority and become active actors in making their own version of history. To the contrary, Asad argues that people may create their own narrative, but it cannot be considered as making history. They might organize rebellions or, even, revolutions with results that "merely attempt (hopelessly) "to resist the future" or "to turn back the clock of history.'" (Asad 1993: 19). In between these two arguments on agency, Homi Bhabha (1994) considers the "third space" or hybridity, in which the amalgamation of the mainstream values and elements of nativity becomes a form of subversion. In the case of Indonesian Confucianism, I find Bhabha's argument is a suitable concept in understanding the agencies of the Confucian believers. The invention of collective praying ritual by the THHK and Khong Kauw Hwe, which is maintained by the MATAKIN in the contemporary time, shows some degrees of conformity to modernity and resemblance to Christianity. The emphasis on Confucian teaching, however, demonstrates that the Chinese *Peranakans* still maintain ties to their ancestors' origin.

Another reflection covers the facts that the religious field in Indonesia is also influenced by the Indonesian government. While in Bourdieu's and Foucault's perspective, the Catholic Church is the dominant institution in shaping religious habitus and applying religious governmentality in Europe, the Indonesian Confucianism case shows that it was the Indonesian state that imposes certain criteria of religion, in which religious institutions should conform. The state's intervention in religious sphere makes the religious field is divided into multiple tiers of religious actors. The Indonesian state is predominantly powerful in defining and disciplining

mystical sects and non-Abrahamic religions, such as Hinduism, Buddhism and Confucianism (Kipp & Rodgers 1987, Bakker 1997). As the dominant social actor, the state may refuse or acknowledge the formal religions in Indonesia. The state's assimilation agenda has shaped the Confucian ritual in a way that they are obliged to minimize, if not abolish, the affinities with the Chinese culture.

In the reformation period (2000 – nowadays) Confucianism enjoyed the Indonesian state's recognition, which provides the MATAKIN political endorsement to establish their version of teaching and ritual. It becomes the second tier in the religious field. Regardless the state's endorsement, the struggles of the MATAKIN to impose their version of ritual is far from settled. Challenges and resistances come from within and outside Confucian communities, which shows that lay people as the third tier in the religious field have much bigger than it has been theorized by Bourdieu and Foucault. In the competition with other religious associations, such as those of the *Tri-Dharma* and Buddhism, the MATAKIN should compete with their symbolic power and develop strategies to convince the Chinese *Peranakans* about their religious authority. The competition reminds us the model of liberal market in religious field, where lay people act as (religious) consumers and exercise their agencies in choosing and/or tailoring the rituals that meet their spiritual need.

## Chapter 6

### The ‘Authentic’ Confucian Temples

#### The Production and Negotiation of Religious Space and Monument

Space was treated as the dead, the fixed, the undialectical, the immobile.  
Time, on the contrary, was richness, fecundity, life, dialectic...  
the use of spatial terms seems to have the air of an anti-history.  
(Michel Foucault 1980: 70)

We are concerned with logico-epistemological space, the space of social practice,  
the space occupied by sensory phenomena, including products of the imagination  
such as projects and projections, symbols and utopias.  
(Henri Lefebvre 1991: 11-12)

“*Boen Bio* is not the oldest temple, but it is the first Confucian temple in Indonesia. It was built in 1907 and received a wooden tablet with Chinese characters on it - 暨南教聲 [Sheng Jiao Nan Ji – May the (Confucian) Teaching Sounds in the South] – as a recognition from Emperor Kwang Su. During the [Dutch] colonial era, they used to call it “*De Kerk van Confucius*” [The Church of Confucius]. This temple takes a form of *li thang* [*li thang* 礼堂, a worshipping hall]. We have a single altar, where you can find the wooden name tablets of Prophet Confucius and twelve disciples. The altar has three steps, which symbolizes the relationship among *Tian* (God) as the highest, *Di* (Earth) in the second, and *Ren* (Human) the lowest. The architecture is a blend of three cultures. The Dutch influence can be seen from its flat ceiling. All characters, crafted symbols, such as the dragons and lions, and pillars are those of Chinese. The Javanese influence manifests in the wooden partition between the main altar and the hall.” I heard this explanation many times from the proud *Boen Bio* staff member in front of various guests and visitors. Indeed, the fact that it is the first Confucian worshipping place has made me feel enthusiastic to conduct my ethnography in this temple and its community. After visiting older and newer temples in

various places in Java and Sumatra, I started to recognize the differences in lay out and iconography between the *Boen Bio* and other Chinese temples.



Picture 43. The blending of three cultures in the interior of the *Boen Bio*. Photo credit: Andri Harianja.

If (religious) space is a type of speech, Henri Lefebvre (1991: 17) asks “to what extent may a space be read or decoded?” Oskar Verkaaik (2013: 8-9) suggests that religious architecture may represent deeper meaning than its materiality. Some may demonstrate the efforts and struggles to recognize certain religious and ethnic identity and/or power. Religious buildings and symbols bring sensational experiences, through which the affective and psychological dimensions of religiosity strengthen the commitment and belief of the believers. Inspired by these intellectual searches on the meanings of material culture and religion, this chapter intend to analyze the complexities behind the architecture, interior design and iconography of the Confucian worshipping halls and other Chinese temples. In the first array, the decoding of various temples highlights the changes and competition between religious

discourses. Foucault (1980: 70) suggests “endeavoring to decipher discourse through the use of spatial, strategic metaphors enables one to grasp precisely the points at which discourse are transformed in, through and on the basis of relations of power.” Focusing on the period of the early twentieth century, when the *Boen Bio* was built, I analyze the changes from *kelenteng* to *li thang*, which demonstrate the efforts to introduce Confucianism among the believers of Chinese folk religion, Daoism and Buddhism. *Kelenteng*, a name derived from the metal bell sound commonly used in the temples, refers to the pantheon-style Chinese temples. *Li thang* or worshipping hall, as it was mentioned by the *Boen Bio* staff, has been introduced by the Confucian believers to hold their rituals and ceremonies. Manifested in the differences of the interior designs and the deities to worship, I show the struggles and frictions within the Chinese groups and the ways they defined the so-called the “real” or “authentic” Chinese religion. I also discuss that the changes of lay out and iconography demonstrate the transformation and the fluidity of the discourse on sacredness and the relationship between the Chinese deities, manifested in sacred statues, with their believers.

Second, during the Indonesia post-colonial period (1945-1998), the Chinese *kelentengs* and *li thangs* have been the sites of struggles to maintain the Chinese ethnic and religious identities between the Chinese communities and the Indonesian government. Even though many Chinese temples are decorated with hybrid cultural symbols, as in the case of the *Boen Bio*, nevertheless many of them are still identifiable as Chinese buildings. The appearance of Chinese symbols and the celebration of Chinese religious and/or cultural events represent (imagined) connections and affiliations to China and Chinese culture. From the Indonesian government’s perspective, Chinese temples are the sites of contestation towards its assimilation policy and the Chinese *Peranakans*’s loyalty to Indonesia, as I discussed in Chapter 3. In this chapter, I discuss

the strategies of the Indonesian government, particularly the Suharto's New Order (1966-1998), to regulate the Chinese temples in order to "Indonesianize" the foreign religion.

Third, after a long restriction during the New Order regime, the inauguration of the *Kong Miao*, a Confucian temple and monument, at the religious quarter of the *Taman Mini Indonesia Indah* (The Beautiful Indonesia in Miniature Park, hereafter the TMII), Jakarta, by President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono on Dec 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2010 provides updates on the relationship between the Indonesian government and the MATAKIN in the reformation period (2000-present). As a monument, the *Kong Miao* functions as an official representation of Confucianism. The layout and symbols of the *Kong Miao* reveal the strategies of the MATAKIN in bridging their Chinese religious and cultural roots within the current Indonesian assimilation politics. The MATAKIN applies hybridity and revises its perspective on what constitute as Confucianism.

The discussion of this chapter will hopefully contribute to the previous works on Chinese temples in Indonesia. While temples and shrines play important roles for many believers of Chinese religion, there are only a few analyses of them in Indonesia. In *Les Chinois de Jakarta: Temples et Vie Collective* (The Chinese of Jakarta: Temples and Communal Life), Denys Lombard and Claudine Salmon (1980) depict the history of the Chinese temples in Jakarta since the seventeenth century until the Indonesian post-colonial period. They provide a rich description of the temples' names, locations, social organizations and religious activities. Their timeline, however, ends in 1965 before the Suharto regime started to regulate Chinese culture, language and religion in a strict way. Tsuda Koji (2012) provides an update and analysis on the changing political situation during and after the New Order and the legal statuses of the Chinese temple across Java. While both works recognize the Chinese temples as the site of political and ethnic struggle, they, however, do not discuss how the layout and iconography of the temples reflect the transformation of religious discourse and the struggle within the Chinese communities

themselves. This chapter intends to fill the gaps. I wish to add a discussion and analysis on the relationship between the Chinese deities and the believers and the production of sacredness in the temple, based on ethnography data during my participation in three group trips to several temples in West Java, Central Java and Madura Island. This chapter also contributes an update about the most recent *Kong Miao* in the TMII. While Judith Schlehe (2011) analyzes the *Kong Miao* within the context of the Indonesian government's political accommodation towards the Chinese culture and identity in the post-reformation period, I discuss it as a representation of rupture and disjuncture from the previous Confucian religious discourse. In the theoretical approach, I expect to contribute some queries and reflections – neither answer nor solution – to the applications of theories mentioned below.

I open the chapter with the theoretical and analytical approaches in the production of religious place/monument and the construction of sacredness. This chapter borrows its theoretical and methodological approaches from Henri Lefebvre, Mircea Eliade, Alfred Gell, and Bruno Latour. Through Lefebvre's approach, I analyze the social and power relations behind the production of the religious space, while Eliade's approach helps in the construction of sacred place. Those of Latour and Gell provide an insightful discussion on the agency of an *actant* in the form of a religious object. It is followed with the history of the old temples in the Dutch East-Indies (1906-1945), including the development of the *Boen Bio*. The next discussion covers the struggles and negotiations within the Chinese *Peranakans* community themselves and the surveillance of the Indonesian government during the post-colonial period (1966-1998). I, then, dedicate a large portion of the chapter to discussing the production of the *Kong Miao* in the TMII to demonstrate the negotiation of ethnic and religious identities between the Confucian community and the Indonesian government in the reformation period (2000 – 2010). I am

interested in how the architecture of religious spaces represents the ruptures and inconsistencies of religious ideas.

### **On the Production of Religious Place and the Construction of Sacredness**

‘Social space as a social product’ is one of Lefebvre’s (1991) most important arguments. In the suggestion of reading and decoding space, Lefebvre implicitly applies a linguistic approach. However, he does not intend to read it simply as a code or symbol, but each space, he argues, must be decoded into its conceptual level, which includes the political use of knowledge, ideology and the technological utopia behind the construction of space (9, 17). He suggests “a conceptual triad” in explaining how space is socially produced. I would like to apply this in understanding the making of Chinese temples, particularly the *Boen Bio* in Surabaya and the *Kong Miao* in the TMII. First, spatial practice concerns the process of production and/or reproduction of a space and the choice of particular location(s) in producing a space, which plays important roles “to ensure societal cohesion, continuity and a specific spatial competence.” (Lefebvre 1991: 33, Zieleniec 2007: 74). I describe later that, in the cases of the *Boen Bio* and the *Kong Miao*, the spatial practice is important to understand the choices and negotiation of the temple’s location, which relates to the status of Confucianism as a religion.

The second concept deals with the representation of space. It examines the roles of designers, scientists, planners, urbanists, and social engineers in choosing and implementing knowledge, ideologies, theories, and ideas into particular design(s), shapes, and symbols. Zieleniec (2007: 74) puts it as “this is the realm of expert knowledge in which space is conceptualized and discursively constructed by professionals and technocrats. This chapter expands this notion to demonstrate the roles of donators, whose financial power may be influential – if not bigger than that of the technocrats – to the design of the temples. Third, spaces

of representation are concerned with the realm of the user. This refers to the lived experiences that emerge as the result of the dialectical relation between spatial practice and representation of spaces. The users may read, describe and/or create meaning out of the constructed space through its images and symbols. On the contrary, space may dominate the users, in which case it evokes certain imagination, sensations, and feelings (Lefebvre 1991: 39).

Lefebvre's approach provides insights to decode the production of a space as a physical concreteness. The temple development certainly relates to certain social, political and economic aspects, yet as a religious or sacred place, it needs another consideration about the production of sacredness. In religious studies, which are profoundly influenced by the teaching-based study of Christianity in Europe, it is only recently that social scientists take a serious approach to the intimate relationship between persons and the sacred places. Mircea Eliade (1987: 10-11) proposes that sacredness can only exist when people put it in a dichotomy with the profane or, in other words, when there is a recognition of hierophany in opposition to the ordinary. Hierophany means "something sacred shows itself to us" or the occurrence of the sacred. Expanding from Rudolf Otto's work, Eliade defines an object as an instance of hierophany when it shows an overwhelming superiority of power, which evokes the feelings of wonder, numinous, or even terror. While hierophany differentiates an object from other ordinary objects of its kind, it does not necessarily change its nature or characteristics. To the extent that a temple exhibits hierophany, it transforms itself into the sacred, yet it is still a building made from similar materials that people use to build houses, schools or stores.

Sacredness needs believers to exist. Eliade emphasizes that religious believers and non-believers are living in different realities. In explaining sacred space, he explains that for the believers, space is not homogeneous for some areas are sacred, while the other is not. The recognition of the sacred space creates interruptions and breaks, where the believers consider

these places central and behave differently – if more respectfully – than they do at profane places. Rituals, sacrifices, and pilgrimages, for example, are conducted to acknowledge and/or to maintain the sacredness (Shilling & Mellor 2013; Yel 2006). On the contrary, for non-believers, no hierophany exists as for them space is “homogeneous and neutral; no break qualitatively differentiates the various parts of its mass.” (Eliade 1987: 22). He points out that hierophany is more familiar among the old-style societies while de-sacralization tends to be more common among modern societies even though he admits a church in a modern city may be considered sacred by the believers. While considering sacredness a reality, Eliade implicitly suggests that sacredness is not a fixed concept. Rather, it is socially and historically constructed. When the believers’ concept of sacredness changes, the hierophany of certain objects or places end as I will touch this issue again in the context of the changing belief from the Chinese folk religion to Confucianism.

### **On Chinese Deities, Sacred Statues and Agency**

The sacredness in the Chinese temples is associated with the power of gods and goddesses. Most temples are spaces where the visitors can pray and deliver their devotion to these deities, which are symbolized in statues. Even though Eliade’s concept of hierophany is important to understand the sacred phenomena behind these statues, he does not elaborate on the relationship between the believers and these hierophanies. Bruno Latour (1996, 2005) and Alfred Gell (1998) develop approaches to examine the relationships between (sacred) objects and human beings. While Latour inclusively considers non-human, non-individual entities, and Gell focuses on art and religious objects, I found several striking similarities in their analyses despite their use of different terminologies. For example, both recognize the agency of non-human entities, of which Gell calls them “social others” while Latour uses the term “actant.” Both

approaches move beyond Arjun Appadurai's and Igor Kopytoff's (1986) theoretical breakthrough in which Appadurai and Kopytoff suggest that objects have a social life and cultural biography respectively, even though they have no real identities if we compare them with human beings. In recognizing the agency of the non-human entities, Latour and Gell propose to move beyond anthropocentric approaches commonly applied in social sciences. Both are agreeing in the distribution of power and agency between human and non-human actors.

Yet, there are several differences between the two, such as the notion of network. While both use a similar term, their definitions and scope of the network idea are different. For Latour, a network has "*as many dimensions as they have connections.*" (1996: 370) Moving beyond spatial metaphors – "close and far, up and down, local and global, inside and outside" – commonly used in social or technical networks, he proposes the metaphor of weaving, i.e. the network of modern societies or social fabrics is more understandable through observation of netting, lacing, weaving of ties. Many ties are weak by themselves, yet each tie, no matter how strong, is itself woven out of still weaker threads, permeates in the way micro powers do (ibid.: 370). In Latour's perspective, the important aspects in understanding a network are the identifications of various forms of connections and the roles of involved actors and actants. In contrary to Latour's inclusive approach, Gell's network concerns with "the immediate context of social interactions and their "personal" dimensions" in the human and art object relationship (1998: 8). Providing several illustrations of the relationship between religious art objects and believers, he is able to discuss the believers' psychological dimensions in engaging the sacred objects. Gell's approach, in my opinion, resonates better with my observation in the temples. In my discussion about the agency of the Chinese statues and their relationship with the believers, I apply Gell's idea but I supplement it with Latour's whenever needed.

Gell defines agency as ‘any modality through which something affects something else’ (1998: 42, Tythacott 2011: 8). Objects, he further argues, may have agencies as human being.

There are multiple implications of agency in objects, “an inseparable transition” between them and actual human agents. Once appreciated as indexes of agency, iconic objects in particular can occupy positions in the networks of human social agency that are almost equivalent to the position of humans themselves. (Thomas 1998: x)

Even though he recognizes a greater agency in objects, he does not mean to equate the objects’ agency with those of human beings for human beings can demonstrate agency with or without objects, while objects have agency whenever there are human beings who recognize and credit certain influences, actions or contributions to them. He calls this process “agency-attribution” (Gell 1998: 127). In the case of venerated statues, objects and images that represent holy figures, people tend to recognize a greater agency-attribution (ibid.: 96). In his notion of agency-attribution, Gell takes a similar argument to Eliade, who emphasizes that hierophany exists only if the believers recognize it. Yet, Gell differs from Latour, who give credits to the stronger or weaker agency of actants through their alliances (Harman 2009: 14). The concept of agency-attribution explains common phenomena among the Chinese *Peranakans* as many of them attribute their successes to certain deities and motivate them to build a temple for and/or to worship the deity faithfully.

When praying before the statues, the believers unquestionably understand that the statues of idols are merely objects, which are made from wood, ceramics, iron, or other materials. Unless a very rare miracle happens during which statues can cry or perform extraordinary actions, the believers expect them to be immobile. Yet, in their passivity and immobility, Gell suggests two concepts – “passive agency” and “intelligible immobility” – in understanding their influences towards human’s behaviors, attitude, and/or feelings (128-129). The passive agency of the idols allows the worshippers to submit their prayers, to share burdens, to seek blessings, to

offer food, candles and/or incense or to surrender themselves. Even though there is no active responses or gestures in return, the worshippers nonetheless believe in the idols' agency to accept and understand their mind and feelings in the same way as, or even better than, the ability of their human fellows. The belief in acceptance and understanding results in the unity of mind, which becomes the ground of reciprocity and intersubjectivity in the relationship between the idols and the believers. In other words, the passivity of the idols may incite the satisfying experience and relationship with their believers.

The second agency concerns the idols' intelligence immobility. While these idols are motionless, the worshippers expect that their supernatural power and actions manifest in an "off stage" or invisible way (ibid.). These idols are expected to influence natural phenomena and people's lives, ranging from bringing back rain, making a successful harvest, punishing the bad, rewarding the good or keeping a society in order. However, they need human beings who attribute them with "inner structure" or "intentional psychology," that resembles the human cognitive ability to think, judge and decide to help or not, as well as people who recognize their supernatural power. During my group trips to several temples in West, Central and East Java, and Madura Island, I observed the interpretation of sacredness among the temple goers, which were manifested through their behaviors and attitudes in the temples and their treatment to and communication with the statues. In my opinion, the two types of agency are applicable to understand them. Later I demonstrate that the perception and recognition of sacredness attributed to the Chinese deities have been negotiated and eventually altered when Confucianism as a rational religion was introduced in the early twentieth century.

## **The *Kelentengs* and the Deities in Java: A Historical Background and Recent Update**

There is little record about the Chinese temples and religious life in the Dutch East Indies prior to the seventeenth century except on one Buddhist temple in Batavia (Jakarta) which was founded in approximately in 1650 (Lombard and Salmon 1980: xviii). Nine more temples were built in Batavia during the first half of the nineteenth century and additionally fourteen more – small and large – were built during the second half of the century due to a higher influx of Chinese migration in the town. Older temples, which were founded in various cities in the seventeenth and eighteenth century, were dedicated to various deities and more open to worshippers of different ethnic origins or occupations. In Surabaya, the oldest *kelenteng*, *Hok An Kiong* (the Temple of Happiness and Peace, 福安宫) was built in 1832 where Tianhou (天后), also popularly known as Makco (Mazu, 妈祖), the sea goddess and protector of sailors and travelling merchants, was the main goddess to worship (Salmon 2009: 1).

Temples vary in size and affiliation. The large temples bear the suffix “*bio*” (*miao*, 庙), while the suffix “*su*” (*ci*, 祠) refers to the smaller ones and/or the ancestral shrines. The Daoist temples are named with the suffix “*kiong*” (*gong*, 宫, palace), for example the *Hok An Kiong* (Fu An Gong, 福安宫, the Palace of Fortune and Safety) of Surabaya (East Java). Those associated with Buddhism receive either the suffix “*am*” (*an*, 庵) or “*sie*” (*si*, 寺). The suffix “*an*” is to identify the temples which host the Buddhist nuns, while those with the suffix “*sie*” accommodate the male monks (Setiawan & Kwa 1990: 11-14). Besides giving a sense of the size and religious affiliation, the name of a temple also reveals several other issues. It is dedicated to a certain deity when it is named after him or her, such as the *Kwan Sing Bio* of Tuban (East Java), which was name after *Kwan Sing* (Guan Yu, 关羽), a legendary general during the Three Kingdom war (ca. 184/220–280 A.D.). The name can bear the mission, value and/or the

aspiration of the temple community, as in the case of the *Cu An Kiong* (Ci An Gong, 慈安宮, the Palace of Merci and Peace) of Lasem. The temple names may demonstrate the connectivity to a place and/or the mother temple in China. The *Kong Miao*, for example, refers to the Confucius' temple in his original village in Qufu, Shandong province. Lastly, a few temples were named after their local places in Indonesia, such as the *Jia Wei Miao*, which literally means a big temple in the slope of Jia Wei (Kawi), a mountain in East Java.

Temples have been the center of religious and social life among the Chinese. As I mentioned in the Chapter 5, temples host religious ceremonies regularly. Temples also enforced political and economic hierarchy created by the Dutch colonial government, in which the richest and most powerful Chinese in the town was appointed to be a captain or lieutenant, and through whom the government controlled the Chinese society. Not only in the economic and political spheres, the captains and lieutenants were in charge to manage the Chinese heritage, including cemeteries, festivals and religious events (Lombard & Salmon 1980: lxiii). Therefore, according to Tjoa (1887), it was the captain (*babah kapiten*) of Surakarta who led big rituals and ceremonies and not a monk or Chinese priest or the *lo tjoe* (the care taker of the temple). It was only in the beginning of the twentieth century that the leadership in religious sphere shifted to the religious specialists.

Many of the later temples built in 1850s to 1900s, however, were more Sinicized and associated with distinct ethnic or dialect groups, for example a temple in the Angke area in Batavia was erected by an association of Guangdong carpenters in 1860 and some temples were built by Hakka and Hokkian groups (Lombard & Salmon 1980: xvii –xxii, iv).<sup>89</sup> In Surabaya, the people of Fujian established *Hokkien Kong Tik Soe* (福建功德祠 or Fujian Temple of Merits) in

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<sup>89</sup> *Kelentengs* of various deities – both of Chinese and local origins – are also found in Malaysia. See: Chee-Beng Tan, “Chinese Religion in Malaysia”, *Asian Folklore Studies*, Vol. 42, 1983, 217-252

1864 and excluded the Chinese immigrants of Guangdong (Hakka, Cantonese, Teochiu) or of other areas from their temple and activities (Salmon 2009: 47). As the response of the exclusion, the Hakkas founded their own temple and organization, *Guangdong Gongci* (广东公祠), registered in 1893. Temples became the center for reinvigorating Chinese identities as well as the sites of divisions and competitions (Salmon 2009: 48). These new temples and associations organized activities, ranging from providing services for funerary rites, conducting marriage customs to establishing their own ancestral halls. The promotion of Chinese identities flourished as a reaction to the increasing number of the Chinese in the Dutch East-Indies who converted to Islam and Christianity. It was followed with the development of Chinese associations whose memberships were based on dialect and occupation. This indicates stronger networks among the Chinese of certain ethnic groups and jobs. These associations refused to give membership to the Chinese who embraced Islam or Christianity (Salmon 2009: 1, 26).

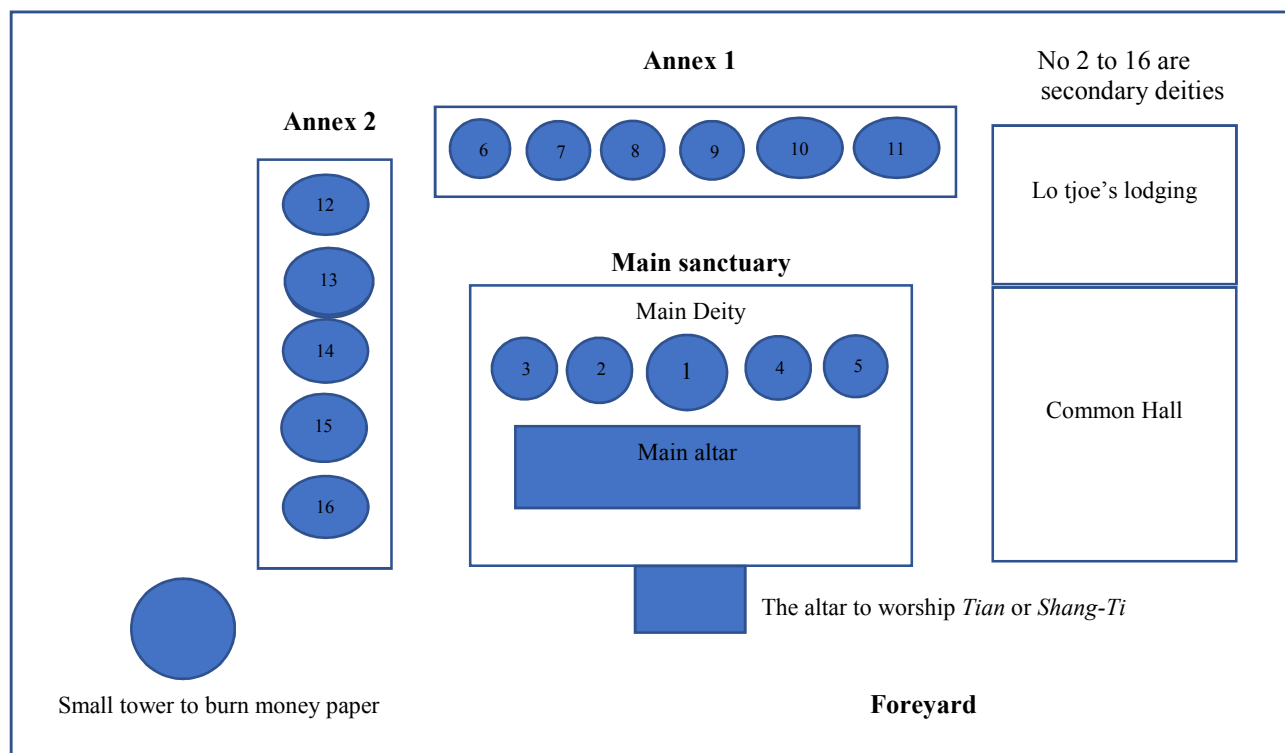
Even though the architecture of temples might vary, Lombard and Salmon (1980: xxxvii – xli) identify the common layout of the older temples in Jakarta, which consists of four parts: the forecourt, the main sanctuary, the annexes and the outbuildings. Temples mostly had forecourts where they held religious festivals and ceremonies. Some had wider forecourts than the other depended on the location of the temple and the availability of the space. My observations in several temples in Java show that temples which are in the central part of a town do not have forecourts anymore due to the rapid development of street and housing complexes. Several temples placed a metal vase or a small tower where people could burn the paper money. Most erected another big vase in the front of main entrance where people prayed to *Tian* or *Shang-Ti* and put their joss sticks on it before they entered the main sanctuary.



Picture 14. The forecourt and a main vase to pray to Tian or Shang-Ti in the *Yi Sheng Ying Ling* temple (义圣英灵), Tangerang, West Java.

Two towers are placed in the right and left sides to burn the paper money and other offerings.

In the old-style temples, when visitors enter the main sanctuary, they see the altar where the statues of the main god or goddess are put in the center surrounded by secondary deities. The altars and surroundings are usually decorated lavishly with crafted wooden panels, paintings, and/or silk clothes since they are considered the most important part of the temple. The gods or goddesses and other deities are commonly represented in statues or wooden name tablets. The material, size and shape of the icons varied considerably. In front of each icon, there are candles, food offerings and a vase to erect joss sticks. Several temples have annexes and outbuildings in the rear courtyard. In the annexes, visitors can find more secondary deities while in the outbuildings, there are a common room, meeting hall, and guardian lodging. In the contemporary era, the older style temples may only have the main altar for *Tian* and the main sanctuary due to the fast development in the urban area, while in villages, the temples maintain the four parts.



Sketch 1. The common layout of the older style temple

The deities enshrined in the *kelentengs* mostly come from the Daoist, Buddhist, and folk religious traditions. Based on their survey of the temples in Jakarta in the mid-1960s, Lombard and Salmon (1980: xlv) found that the Daoist deities were the most worshipped in the Chinese temples, followed with those originated from Buddhist and local traditions. The main deity is chosen for several reasons. First, the deity has proven to be numinous and magical (*sakti*). It has been common among the Chinese migrants to bring wooden/ceramic statues of Chinese deity as amulets during the migration from South China to the Dutch East Indies in the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries. For example, those who travelled across the ocean brought the statue of Makco, the Goddess of Ocean, who protects fishermen, seafarers and ship passengers from accidents on the water. Successful migrants attributed their safe trips to Makco's blessings and built temples to enshrine her on the new land as they are commonly found along the north coastal area of Java. The minor deities were added by the temple owner or other migrants to acquire

more blessings and supernatural helps. Hok Tek Tjeng Sin (Fude Zhengsheng, 福德正神), known also as the God of Earth, was added to ensure good harvest and provide good luck in agricultural related businesses. General Guan Yu, who was famous for his loyalty, honesty and bravery in wars during the Three Kingdoms period, was chosen to witness (oral) contracts, treaties, or business agreements.

Lombard and Salmon (1980: lv-lvi) reported that some temples had local deities to worship, such as *Mbah Djugo* (the Grandpa Djugo), *Dewi Neng* (the goddess Neng) and Ong Tien Nio, also known as the Chinese Princess of Cirebon (West Java). Some even had Hindu-Javanese deities, which had been worshipped together with Chinese deities, such as *Eyang Lawu* (the grandfather Lawu) to bless them with fertile soil, good harvest and avoid the villagers from the danger of volcanic eruption. The occurrence of local deities and the combination of local and Chinese deities provides the evidence of syncretism and assimilation between the Chinese and local cultures, which were well known in *Peranakan* culture. During my visits to various temples in Java in 2010 - 2011, several temples still hosted these local gods and goddesses and provided them equal positions to the Chinese god and goddesses (see pictures 15-17). The *Hok Tek Bio* temple in Pasar Baru, Jakarta, was extraordinarily inclusive. Upon my surprise to find a shrine of Sathya Sai Babha in the temple, the staff shared the temple's value and strategy to attract more visitors

“We are open to many religious holy figures, even though they do not come from the Chinese religious tradition. Other than Sai Babha, we also have Mbah Djugo, Raden Suria Kencana Winata, who are Javanese and Sundanese respectively. A couple of years ago, a man brought photos of nine graveyards of the *Datuks* (respectful men, saints) in Menado. He asked if he can put these photos in the temple. This way he can pay respect to these *Datuks* accordingly. We accepted them even though we don't even know their names. But, according to this man, they are the local saints. We manage this temple like a supermarket (*sic.*). Our concept is “all is available” (*serba ada*). Since each deity has a specialty, people can find and pray to the deities they need in one place. This way, people are more interested to come to this temple.” (Personal interview, Oct 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2010).

It is also common that temples host non-human deities in the forms of Horse God (*Thik Thao Ma*) and Tiger God (*Hauw Ya Kong*), which were not mentioned in Lombard and Salmon's record.



Picture 15. The statue of Eyang Lawu in the Vihara Lawu, Sarangan, Central Java.



Picture 16. An unconventional shrine of *Embah Raden Suria Kencana Winata* (the Honorary Grandpa Suria Kencana Winata), which consists of a bed, pillow, bolster and mosquito net, in the Hok Tek Bio temple, Pasar Baru, Jakarta.



Picture 17. Praying in front of Hau Yauw King, the Tiger God in a *kelenteng*, in Pamekasan

From the historical account and the recent observation, the temple development across Java reflects the socio-cultural, political and religious aspects mentioned by Lefebvre, Eliade, Latour and Gell. In Lefebvre's perspective, as a social product, a temple reinvigorates political, economic and social cohesiveness among the Chinese immigrants. In some cases, they were constructed to strengthen certain ethnicities, such as Hakka or Fujian groups, by excluding other Chinese ethnic groups, as Salmon (2009: 48) correctly observes that temples became the centers of reinvigorating Chinese ethnic identity as well as the sites of division and competition.

Temples, however, are also sacred places for the believers. Borrowing Eliade's analysis of



Picture 18. Two sets of *pak pue* covered with ashes from the joss sticks in a temple of Pamekasan, Madura

theophany and sign, as the sacredness of a place can be indicated by some signs through which the supernatural speaks or manifests. For example, people believe that the location of Kwan Sing Bio temple of Tuban (East Java) was picked up by God

Kwan Sing himself. According to the legend, some two hundred years ago, a Chinese family planned to relocate their small shrine to another location. They brought the statue of Kwan Sing with a ship along the north coastal area of Java. When they reached Tuban, for unknown reasons, the ship halted. Since the ship could not continue its trip, the crew decided to conduct *pak pue* (jiao bei, 筊杯, bamboo pieces), a ritual to communicate with a god or goddess. They prayed before the Kwan Sing statue and asked whether he wished to stay in Tuban. To obtain his answer, they used two pieces of halved cashew-shaped bamboo and threw them on the floor. If both pieces were open, it indicated they should repeat the *pak pue* again. If both were close, it meant “no”, while if one open and one close, it signified “yes.” To obtain the validity of the deity’s answer, a confirmed answer means they had straight three times of a similar position out of three throws or, at least, two out of three throws. The crew testified that they received a “yes” answer from Kwan Sing. The temple, then, was built in the front of the location where the ship halted (TITD Kwan Sing Bio 2010).

Eliade (1987: 27) mentioned that every sacred place expresses hierophany, which means it demonstrates power either symbolically, such as through dreams or divine whispers, or through extraordinary signs. When no sign manifests itself, it can be provoked. The *pak pue* ritual is both provocation and communication with Kwan Sing through his statue. As an actant or social other, they expected him to communicate his intention. Despite his immobility, the crew believed that he was powerful enough to determine the position of the bamboo pieces. Gell (1998: 116-118) acknowledge it as “a two-way affair” between the initiative or request of the worshippers and the agency of the objects. In my observation, the believers attributed the deities to have human cognitive abilities and supernatural power to help them solve problems in the real

world. Other than the *pak pue* ritual, people use fortune sticks or the combination of both to obtain supernatural supports from the sacred.



Picture 19. The *pak pue* ritual in the Vihara Tri Ratna, Jakarta  
Photo credit: Andri Harianja



Picture 20. A visitor is using fortune sticks in the Pamekasan temple, Madura

A temple becomes a hierophany because it houses the statues of the deities. While it is believed that the sacred power of the statues is beyond human control, nevertheless people can manage and/or increase the temple's sacredness as the management of the *Hok Tek Bio* did.

### ***Kelenteng* versus *Li thang*: Architecture and the Change of Sacredness Discourse**

In the later period, Confucianism became an important symbol of the re-sinicization process. In Surabaya in the late 1870s, Tjioe Ping Wie, a Chinese *Peranakan* who managed to attend school in China for several years, founded a Chinese school, *Lam Yang Hoen Boen Kwan* (南洋训蒙馆, Training School of the South Seas). Alongside a modern curriculum, this school introduced the figure of Confucius, applied the *Su shi* as the basis of their moral teaching and celebrated the Chinese holidays. The school also incorporated the cult of Confucius since a

writing in Chinese character mentioned “the holiest teacher Confucius” was hang in one of the school wall and an altar was erected in front of it to honor him (Albrecht 1879: 231-233). In 1898, Tjioe initiated the conversion of the calendar system to the Confucian calendar. With the help of some friends, he printed 10,000 copies of Chinese almanac dated for the year 2438 of Confucius’ birth and for the year *wuzi* (戊子) of Emperor Kwang Hsu’s reign to distribute in China and East Java (Salmon 2005: 131).

In 1899, there was another effort to convert *Boen Tjhiang Soe* (Wen Chang Ci, 文昌祠), a shrine dedicated to the God of Literature, to *Boen Bio* (Wen Miao), the temple of Confucius. The statue of Wenchang was donated to another neighboring temple and replaced with the wooden name tablets bearing Confucius’ name and his disciples (Salmon 2009: 52). Upon Kang You Wei’s suggestion during his visit to Surabaya in 1904 and the initiative of local Chinese leaders, the temple was relocated from the middle of a slum neighborhood to *Jalan Kapasan*, the main street of the Chinatown. They also renovated and upgraded it from a shrine (*ci*) to a larger temple (*miao*). The relocation and renovation have certainly increased its prestige, or in Lefebvre’s words its “spatial competence”, to the degree of making it an important icon in the Chinese quarter. Siauw Giok Tjhan, a prominent Chinese *Peranakan* leader who was raised in the Kapasan area, shared his memory that in 1920s the *Boen Bio* was the only Confucian temple in East Java. It was designed in the Chinese style and more magnificent (*lebih megah*) than other buildings in the area. The *Boen Bio* also hosted the first *Tiong Hoa Hwee Koan* school in East Java and the school complex was built behind the temple (1981: 3).

Behind its spatial competence, the renovation of the *Boen Bio* also reveals the political and socio-economic dynamics of the Chinese *Peranakans* in Surabaya. While Lefebvre acknowledges the roles of the architects, designers, engineers in applying certain ideology, knowledge or ideas into the design and symbols of a building, I pay attention to the role of the

funding and donators, which, in my opinion, were indispensable to its making. As stated in its inscription, the total cost of the renovation and the establishment of the THHK school was *f* (Dutch guilder) 29.972,51. The main funding of *f*25.000 came from the agreement to end a nearly three years boycott, organized by the Chinese merchants of Surabaya against the *Handelsvereniging van Amsterdam* (HVA, the Commerce Association of Amsterdam) in 1902 – 1905 (Rahayu 2005: 39-4,1 Claver 2014: 218). The Chinese retail traders launched the boycott when the HVA cut off the credit time frame which was disadvantageous for the Chinese business. Despite the supports of the Dutch banking and colonial authority, the HVA lost the case and was obliged to contribute *f*25.000 to the Chinese school. The boycott marked as one of the most phenomenal collective actions among the Chinese which provoked not only stronger Chinese ethno-nationalism, but also inspired Tirto Adhi Soerjo (1904) to suggest his Native fellows to model the Chinese' unity and cooperation to achieve a better condition.

The rest of the funding came from individual donations. The most interesting fact is that the donators were split into, at least, two different political views. Some prominent donators were the supporters of the Kang You Wei's reform movement, while several other were sympathizers of the Sun Yat Sen's revolutionary movement (Salmon 2005). Given to the fact that both movements in China were opposing each other, the collaboration among the Chinese of Surabaya despite their strong antagonistic politics has invited questions and curiosity. Salmon argues that the supporters of the revolutionary movement intentionally hid their political affiliation since the Dutch colonial government strongly repressed the revolutionary movement in the Dutch East Indies. The donation to *Boen Bio* could work as an effective strategy to disguise their actual political standpoint. Other than financial donation, Salmon identifies that a revolutionary supporter donated a wooden panel crafted with a saying, which endorses the

connection of the Confucian shrine in Mountain Nishan<sup>90</sup> and the *Boen Bio*. Another reason might relate to the contribution of the Confucian movement in Surabaya to provide modern education for the younger Chinese generation. Despite the teaching of Confucian values, modern education might work as a common ground for the supporters of revolutionary movement, who believe in progress and modernity (ibid.: 139-140). In 1920s, however, the supporters of the revolutionary movement became more visible and outspoken. The split between the reformers and the revolutionaries took place when the latter denounced Confucianism as the primary cause of China's degradation and criticized the Confucian movement in the Dutch East Indies as I have discussed in Chapter 2 (Coppel 1989: 128-132).

In 1906, the renovation of the *Boen Bio* was completed and around seven hundred people attended its inauguration (Salmon 2009: 52).<sup>91</sup> The walls of the *Boen Bio* were decorated with crafted wooden panels, on which they emphasize the importance of Confucianism (Salmon 2005: 135). As the temple staff explained, the *Boen Bio* is the first temple whose interior takes a shape of a *li thang* (worshipping hall) to accommodate collective praying (see Chapter 5). This design reveals a radical change of the religious discourse among the Chinese *Peranakans*. In the contrary to the various deities worshipped in other *kelentengs*, Confucius and his disciples are the main holy figures to worship. In the Confucian *li thangs*, no statue was allowed, at least in its early establishment. Instead, they prefer the wooden name tablets. A preference for Confucius' wooden name tablet over his statue might be related to a longer history in China. First, since the Ming dynasty (1368-1644), the Chinese emperors endorsed the usage of wooden name tablets in the state authorized temples of Confucius (*Kong Miao*) across China to emphasize the rational approach of the Old Text school or *Zuo zhuan*. The Old Text treats the writings of Confucius

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<sup>90</sup> Mount Nishan is the birthplace of Confucius in Shandong province, China.

<sup>91</sup> In another essay, Salmon (2005: 133) counts four hundred people attended the *Boen Bio* inauguration.

historical documents and philosophy and Confucius a real human being and teacher. Julia Murray (1997: 27) argues that the preference for Confucius' wooden name tablet reflected tensions between Buddhism and Confucianism. By removing the statues of Confucius from the temples, the Chinese rulers intended to emphasize that Confucianism was originated from the Chinese culture and had a different habit from Buddhism, which was considered as a foreign religion and established the veneration of Buddha through statues. Echoing the state's preference to wooden name tablets, the common people also enshrined their ancestors with wooden name tablets. This practice was popular not only in China but also in Korea during the Joseon dynasty (1392-1910), when, following the Confucian tradition, people considered wooden tablets more sacred than portraits or paintings of their ancestors. They believed that the wooden tablets, which displayed the name of a deceased person could serve as the "body" for his/her spirit. In the later period of the Joseon dynasty, the habit to hang the portraits of ancestors in Confucian shrines returned, particularly among the elites. The portraits, however, should be as similar as possible to the faces of the passed away so that they could invite the spirits to reside in them (Cho 2010: 218-222).



Picture 21. The main altar with the wooden tablets of Confucius and his disciples in the *Boen Bio*

In the case of the THHK in Batavia, the board committee had avoided any statue of Confucius in the strictest sense to cease cult and superstitious practices. When Kang You Wei visited Batavia in 1903, several Chinese *Peranakans*, who wished to worship Confucius, had approached Kang and asked for his support to appeal to the THHK board. Upon their wish, Kang initially agreed to establish an altar for Confucius. Yet, the THHK board was firmly refused Kang's request and argued that once the THHK established a Confucian altar, people might be easily entrapped in worshipping Confucius' icon rather than learning his teaching as people did with other deities. The THHK argued that honoring the teaching of Confucius and considering him as a prophet should not automatically lead people to worship him in the way they do to Buddha or other deities. Kang, then, understood and agreed with the THHK's point of view (Kwee 1969: 26-27).

The Wen Miao becomes the model for Confucian *li thang* in other places in Indonesia. In mid 1920s, for example, a hall of worship was built by a Confucian community in Solo (Auw 1953: 21-23). The worshipping place, which was named *Gerbang Kebajikan* (the Gateway of Virtue) in the later period, also has a large hall for worshipping and gathering. In the *li thang* of Solo, however, people find the statue of Confucius on its main altar, instead of his wooden name tablet. In fact, based on my observation to other *li thangs* in Medan, Bangka, Jakarta, the *Boen Bio* is the only temple where people can find the wooden name tablets of Confucius and his disciples to worship. Even now, the *Boen Bio* also has a statue of Confucius. In 2007, the *Boen Bio* received a donation of a 1.80 meters high bronze statue by the Hong Kong Confucian Academy (孔教學院) and the temple management locates it in front of the main altar (personal interview, September 23, 2014).



Picture 22. The main altar at the *Gerbang Kebajikan Li thang* of Solo.



Picture 53. The statue of Confucius at the *Boen Bio*

The historical illustration of switching statue to wooden name tablets and back to statues again or, in the case of Korea, to portraits suggests the fluidity of a belief and/or a shifting reality of sacredness. While Eliade's concept of hierophany indicates sacredness as intrinsic property of certain objects and believers recognize its manifestation, these cases illustrate a different process. The sacredness of an object can be constructed or even regulated by social and political forces, including the competition with other religion(s). The habituation through rituals cultivates different ways of recognition and attribution to the sacred. In the case of Confucianism in Indonesia, the efforts of the early Confucianists to end the veneration of statues were less successful and not without resistances. Within the Confucian communities, the coming back of the statues seems to receive little scrutiny – if awareness – about the previous contestation and struggles. As I show later, the MATAKIN chose to establish the statue of Confucius on the main altar of the *Kong Miao*, the most recent and the official Confucian temple in Jakarta.

Among the larger Chinese communities, the plea to end statue veneration had met with resistance, if ignorance. In 1934, Kwee Tek Hoay, a former supporter of the THHK and Confucianism, founded the *Sam Kaww Hwee*, which promotes the teachings of Daoism, Confucianism and Buddhism altogether as the true religion of the Chinese. In defend to the THHK's efforts to focus on the monotheistic approach and Confucian teaching, the *Sam Kaww Hwee* acknowledges the roles of holy figures (*machloek soetji*) whose tasks and blessings were helping people to solve their problems (Kwee 1941c: 22). Using the analogy of the Dutch colonial governmental system, Kwee explains how the deities work.

People may ask, if the Chinese religion (*Agama Tionghoa*) acknowledges one God or the unlimited power of the Supreme, who regulates and develops everything, why should the Chinese people worship many gods and goddesses, *toapekong*, holy figures and spirits? Would it be better to pay respect just to the One Supreme?

These questions can be answered with another question: Every people knows that the Dutch East Indies is under the reign of the Highness Dutch Queen. However, other than paying respect to the Queen Wilhelmina, why do people also respect to many officials,

starting from the Governor General to the supervisors, officers or village leaders? The reasons are mainly these officials, from the high to the low level, are the ones who work for the state and do the duties *in the name of the Queen* and implement the laws and regulations set or decreed by the Queen.

The Chinese religion does not require people to worship “evil spirits” (*setan-setan*) who order people to do crimes, but only to the holy figures who *supports* the mechanism of the Natural Law or, if these holy figures came originally from human beings, they had shown exemplary characters and deeds that we have to respect and emulate... In the Chinese religion, we acknowledge the positive impacts of the *Toapekong* or deities worships. They are the managing officers who organize the lives of human being in the world and implement the will or law of the Supreme God. They do not have big power, but enough influences in a certain area or group. (Kwee 1941c: 21-25, italics in original).

Other than highlighting resistance or competition with Confucianism, Kwee’s explanation on the roles and networks of deities demonstrates a different cosmological approach than that of Confucianism. His recognition and attribution to the power of the deities resonates to Gell’s concept of social others, while his explanation on how they created a working structure reminds us to Latour’s networks among actants. Even though the metaphor of the colonial structure still emphasizes a top-down model and sounds simplified, nevertheless his network model has been broader and more complicated than the relationship that acknowledges single vertical network – God, Confucius and people. Kwee’s explanation also challenges Latour’s concepts. While Latour considers actors and actants “can literally be anything”, he limits them only as concrete entities (Latour 1996: 373, Harman 2009: 14).<sup>92</sup> When Kwee brought the notion of “evil spirits” (*setan-setan*), who/which do not have any physical representation, at least in the temples, as the case of statue to represent the deities, it stimulates a thought – if challenge – to Latour’s notion of concrete entities. While they are invisible and abstract, many believers still attribute them evil power, crimes, disorders, and diseases take place in their life or society. It seems that these evil spirits operated in a different network than that of the deities whose aims are to help human being and to bring order and law in the world. How do we understand these

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<sup>92</sup> In another work, Latour discuss the manifestation of love through concrete objects, such as gifts, songs, and poems (see Latour 2005: 213).

invisible and abstract entities? How do we incorporate or separate two or multiple (contradictory) networks? Until today, most *kelentengs* maintain the statues of various deities. Salmon's and Lombard's observation that the Daoist and Buddhist deities were the most worshipped in 1960s is still applicable in the contemporary time. It is not my intention, however, to suggest that the Confucian and the Sam Kauw believers are divided neatly into two distinct categories. There is an overlap between the two and other forms of syncretism, in which there are some believers who feel convenient to go to a *li thang* and *kelenteng* interchangeably as well as those who combined their Chinese religious tradition with those of Javanese or Hinduism. In the earlier time, Donald Willmot (1960: 207) observes a similar phenomenon in the case of the Chinese in Semarang and Leo Suryadinata (2005: 83) in the case of Confucian believers who also practice Sam Kauw rituals.

### **The Temples as the Sites of Control and Repression during the Post-Colonial Indonesia**

Starting from the independence of Indonesia in 1945, the Chinese-Indonesians were targeted into the government's assimilation policy. During the Sukarno's era, the Chinese faced questions and doubts about their loyalty towards Indonesia as I discuss in Chapter 3. In 1955, after a long vacuum during the Japanese colonialism period (1942-1945) and early years of post-colonial Indonesia, the Confucian believers held a national assembly to reestablish the *Khong Kauw Tjong Hwee* (the Confucian National Association). The assembly changed its name into *Perserikatan K'ung Chiao Hui Indonesia* (PKCHI – The Association of Kong Jiao Hui in Indonesia), of which in 1967 it was changed again into *Majelis Tinggi Agama Konghucu Indonesia* (MATAKIN). In 1963, the *Sam Kauw Hwee* also changed its Chinese name into a Sanskrit one – *Tri-Dharma* – which bears a similar meaning of the Three Teachings (Brown 1983: 110). The changing of names appeared as an effort to comply with the assimilation policy.

In January 1965, under the Presidential Decree No 1/Pn.Ps./1965 signed by the first president, Sukarno, Confucianism and five other religions gained the state's recognition as formal religions in Indonesia (Matakin 2013: 5-6). The recognition did not last long since in September 1965, there was a political turbulence, during which Suharto seized the power from Sukarno and became the second president of Indonesia (1966-1998). Under the Suharto New Order, the government applied stronger assimilation policy. In 1967, Suharto launched the Presidential Instruction no 14/1967, which notoriously banned the usage of Chinese language and symbols in public spaces and restricted the celebration of Chinese rituals and traditions to domestic sphere only. Despite the repressive policy, the Confucian believers still received supports from the New Order regime in its early establishment (1967-1972) in order to combat Communism, which was considered as atheistic and hostile to religions.

During the New Order, competitions and struggles between Confucianism and the *Sam Kauw Hwee* continues along with the intervention of the Indonesian government. The PTITD was used by the regime as a mean of controlling, educating and disciplining (*pembinaan*) the Chinese society. Many *kelentengs* – if not most of them – should change their status into *Tempat Ibadah Tri-Dharma* (the *Tri-Dharma* worship shrine). This change was likely the regime's strategy to de-Sinicize the religious activities of the Chinese by adding the elements of Buddhism into it. During my visits in several *Tri-Dharma* temples, the three statues of Confucius, Buddha and Lao Tze were added in the last row, which indicate their later arrival. The Buddha statue occupies the position in the middle as if it is to symbolize that Buddhism is the center among the three.



Picture 24. The statues of Confucius, Buddha and Lao Tze in a temple, Pamekasan, Madura

In the late 1970s, when the New Order had a more stable standing, the government implemented its assimilation policy in a stricter sense and started to derecognize Confucianism as a religion. In 1988, the Minister of Home Affairs further imposed the regulation of *kelentengs* (*penataan kelenteng*) – *Instruksi Menteri Dalam Negeri* No. 455.2-360/1988. According to the regulation, the Chinese elements had to be rejected as being unsuitable for “Indonesia’s identity” (*kepribadian Indonesia*). It also applied restrictions to build a new temple, expand the building(s) and renovate it beyond basic maintenance (Koji 2012: 389-390). There was also a pressure that the Chinese temples should change their status into Buddhist worship place (*vihara*). In this stage, the Indonesian government considered Buddhism to have a closer cultural affinity to the Indonesian identity, despite its origin was from India. It supported the Buddhist National Council of Indonesia (*Perwakilan Umat Buddha Indonesia*, hereafter WALUBI) to convert as many Chinese temples as possible (Suryadinata 2005: 84). After conversion to a *vihara*, the temple adopts a Sanskrit or Indonesian name, such as *Kwan Im Kiong* (Guan Yin Gong) into *Vihara Avalokitesvara* and *Hok Tek Tjing Sin* becomes *Vihara Amurva Bhumi*. While some temples agree to change their status into a *vihara*, many other, including those of under the MATAKIN,

resisted the regulation (Haedari 1990: 38). It was also the time when more *viharas* were established in urban settings. Many of them, however, do not have any Chinese symbols, especially in their exteriors.

The *Boen Bio* and the *Gerbang Kebajikan* of Solo were among a few Confucian *li thangs* which refused the policy to change themselves either into a *Tri-Dharma* temple or vihara. Therefore, they received a strict surveillance. In 1984, a Confucian priest and two activists were detained and interrogated for three days in the *Komando Resort Militer* (the military regional office) of Surabaya for conducted a ritual preceded by *barongsay* (Chinese dragon dance) in the *Boen Bio*. According to one activist, the reason of the detention was very weak, if fake (*dibikin-bikin*), whereas the joint decree of the Minister of Religious Affairs, Minister of Domestic Affairs and General Attorney No. 67/1980 still allowed them to conduct the Chinese rituals privately within family or a closed group setting (Abalahin 2005: 129). During the detention one of the activists was slapped on his face several times and three of them received only one meal each day. They considered the detention as a form of intimidation for not complying the policy (Personal interview with Bingky Irawan, April 24, 2011).<sup>93</sup> The repression continued until 1998, during which Confucianism was degraded into a religious sect (*aliran kepercayaan*). The Confucian believers were deprived their civil rights, for example, they were not allowed to learn Confucianism in schools,<sup>94</sup> to register Confucianism as their religion and to acquire an official

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<sup>93</sup> However, the degree of repression against the celebration of Chinese rituals in public might vary from place to place. the oldest *kelenteng* of Java/TITD Hian Thian Siang Tee in Welahan – a small town of 67 kilometers Northeast of Semarang – which has been able to conduct the annual *kirab* (for more than 60 years since the 1940s. Mr. Sugandhi, the chairman of TITD Hian Thian Siang Tee (1972 to present), testifies that they did not experience any banning or restriction from the government and/or military in conducting the *kirab* (procession) even during the period of the strictest repression in the 1980s and 1990s. Many people believe that this could only happen because of the sacred power (*kesaktian*) of the main god – famously known as *Kongco* (the old grandpa) Hian Thian Siang Tee (personal interview, April 3, 2011).

<sup>94</sup> In Indonesia, religious education is compulsory for students. Public schools must conduct religious classes according to the students' religions, for example Islamic education for Moslem students and Christian classes for Christian students. In the case of Confucian students, they were obliged to study another religious teaching.

marriage certificate if the wedding was conducted under the Confucian ritual.<sup>95</sup> During this period, massive conversions from Confucianism to other religions – mainly Christianity, Catholicism and Buddhism – took place to the extent that the population of Confucian believers was shrinking from 1,365,000 or 0.7 percent of Indonesia's population in 1976 to 205,808 or 0.09 percent in 2009.<sup>96</sup> Regarding the religious place, the restriction on building new Chinese temples or *li thang* has made it necessary for the local Confucian Associations renting or buy an office space in a shophouse (*ruko – rumah toko*) complex and changing its interior as a *li thang*.

### **The Kong Miao: Negotiation, Accommodation and Disjunctures**

After the crisis in 1998, when Suharto stepped down, the state re-acknowledged Confucianism through the Presidential Decree No. 06/2000 launched by President Abdurrachman Wahid, the fourth president of Indonesia. The decree allowed the Chinese-Indonesians to celebrate traditions and religious rituals in public space and re-acknowledged Confucianism alongside the five other formal religions. Regarding the religious representation in the national level, the state recognizes the MATAKIN as the Confucian representative,<sup>97</sup> which implies the legitimacy of the MATAKIN to negotiate with the state and other institutions on behalf of the Indonesian Confucian believers and to define the official version of Confucianism.

One of the negotiations manifests in the making of the *Kong Miao* in the national theme park or TMII, which is one of the state monuments. The TMII was initiated by Mrs. Tien Suharto

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<sup>95</sup> Without an official marriage certificate, a child born will be registered as 'a child born without (official) marriage' (*anak di luar nikah*) in his/her birth certificate and considered as an illegitimate child of his/her parents. Some schools might reject illegitimate children as students, not to mention the humiliation against them.

<sup>96</sup> The 1976 data is cited from Abalahin 2005: 131. The 2009 data is derived from the Ministry of Religious Affairs' website, <http://kemenag.go.id/file/dokumen/PeddkAgama09h1.pdf> (downloaded in Aug 08, 2011).

<sup>97</sup> In the case of other religions, the Indonesian government acknowledges *Majelis Ulama Indonesia* (MUI – The Ulama Council of Indonesia) for Islam, *Persatuan Gereja Indonesia* (PGI – The Church Association of Indonesia) for Protestantism, *Konferensi Waligereja Indonesia* (KWI – Bishops' Conference of Indonesia) for Catholicism, *Parisadha Hindu Dharma Indonesia* (PHDI – The Hindu Dharma Association of Indonesia) for Hinduism and *WALUBI* for Buddhism.

– the wife of Suharto and managed by her foundation – the *Yayasan Harapan Kita* (The foundation of Our Hope). In the reformation period, the director is Hj. Siti Hardijanti Indra Rukmana – the oldest daughter of Suharto. The official representation of the Confucian worship place had previously been included by the New Order in its early design in the early 1970s. However, it was halted, when the regime derecognized Confucianism as a religion (Hutomo, December 21, 1977). The TMII itself is a monument and a theme park inspired by the Disney. It exhibits Suharto’s cultural policy, which symbolizes the diversity of Indonesia by representing Indonesia in a miniature version as it is stated in the Indonesian national motto *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* (Unity in Diversity) and aims to evoke nationalism and memories of golden periods in Indonesian history. Built on an area of 150 hectares, the TMII management reconstructed the ‘original’ *rumah adat* (ethnic houses) from all provinces in Indonesia as well as the miniatures of Borobudur and the National Monument. The TMII also has a religious quarter where the five official religions have their representations. Putting a mosque, two churches, a Hindu temple and a Buddhist vihara in one area, the TMII aims to symbolize “religious harmony” (*kerukunan umat beragama*) (TMII 2012).

The TMII is inarguably the way of the New Order regime to define the meaning of unity and diversity in Indonesia. Despite its claim to be a symbol of the diversity of Indonesia, TMII is the New Order’s articulation of power during the regime, which reduces local cultures to a spectacle of *rumah adats* and *adat* costumes and fails to demonstrate ethnic diversity of a region by arranging only one ethnic group to represent each province (Bowen 2005: 154).<sup>98</sup> By establishing an exhibition area (*anjungan*) for each *rumah adat*, the TMII represents an ethnic

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<sup>98</sup> For more discussion on TMII, see also Anderson (1973) Notes on contemporary Indonesian political communication; Pemberton (1994a) *On the Subject of “Java”* and Pemberton (1994b) Recollections from “Beautiful Indonesia.

segregated nation. Rather than fusions, interactions and networks among different ethnic groups, which happen in the real life, it displays solitary and exclusivity of each group. As a symbol of diversity and multiculturalism in Indonesia, however it excludes the representation of Europeans, Arabs, Indians and Chinese immigrant cultures (Schlele 2011: 154-156). Only in 2006, the TMII initiated the *Taman Budaya Tionghoa* (The Chinese Heritage Cultural Park), of which its development was still ongoing when the *Kong Miao* was inaugurated in 2010 (Kitamura 2007).<sup>99</sup> Benedict Anderson (1973) argues that monuments are a type of political speech from which one needs to read the political meaning and reasons of the symbolic representation behind their shapes. Referring to Old Order (1945-1965) and New Order (1966-1998), Anderson identifies the state's authority to communicate their hegemony through monuments although the regime has no control over people's interpretation of its monuments. The *Kong Miao*, however, shows a different case from the previous Old and New Order's monuments since the MATAKIN's engagement and authority in its making was relatively stronger than those of the ethnic groups. Rather than a state-made monument, the *Kong Miao* is the MATAKIN's social and political product, which demonstrates its concept of Confucianism and religious citizenship as I explain below.

The complex of *Kong Miao* has been built at the TMII complex on an area of 2000 m<sup>2</sup>, close to the religious quarter. During the making process, the MATAKIN received full autonomy to plan, build and fund the *Kong Miao* despite the fact that ownership of the park is of the

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<sup>99</sup> As of 2016, the *Taman Budaya Tionghoa* displays Chinese cultural symbols, such as a Qing style main entrance (*gapura*), statues of twelve zodiac animals, and the symbol of yin-yang. Through the installments of the Chinese quarter (*Pecinan*), the monument of the Chinese struggles against the Dutch VOC, the miniature of the ZhengHe's ship, and the Hakka Museum, it represents the Chinese *Peranakan* culture and history in Indonesia. In its original design, however, there was a plan to develop the miniature of the Beijing's Forbidden City, which has not been executed so far (Kitamura 2007, no page). There are some symbols that overlap with the Chinese religious tradition, such as the statues of *Heng'e* (嫦娥, the Goddess of Moon) and *Guan Gong*.

Indonesian government and the YHK is in charge of managing it. The negotiation started with the location of the *Kong Miao*.

“At the beginning we were offered by the TMII a piece of land which is closer to its main entrance. It is actually an eye-catching position, but we refused it for two reasons. Firstly, the land was too narrow. Secondly, it’s not good enough since the skylight carts will fly over it. That means we need to keep the roof low. The land location was negotiated twice before we got the present location. According to the MATAKIN chairman, 30 years ago – when TMII had just started to build – we were offered a piece of land within the religious quarter to build a *Kong Miao* together with other religious buildings (*rumah ibadah*). Unfortunately, the political situation was unfavorable for Confucian believers at that time, so the plan could not be realized. The previous location arranged for a Confucian temple has been used for another purpose so that we can no longer use it. But, we are lucky enough to get a piece of land close to the religious quarter. It’s not big enough but we used some spare land behind the Orchid Park so that we got an extra of 400 m<sup>2</sup>.” (Phone interview with Anugerah Widjojo (pseudonym), the architect of *Kong Miao*, 9 Aug 2011).

As Lefebvre (1991: 34) suggests the social and political process behind the creation of a space is important to analyze a society. In the case of the *Kong Miao*, the process of negotiating and choosing the location indicates that, to some extent, the MATAKIN enjoyed stronger bargaining power with the YHK, which might not have happened thirty years ago when Suharto and his wife exercised full authority to plan and manage the TMII. In its preference to religious quarter, the MATAKIN exercised its agency to ensure the spatial competence and the inclusion of the *Kong Miao* as one of the official religions in Indonesia.

Symbols and icons, in Lefebvre’s point of view, are designated to communicate ideology and discourse. The roles of the designers, architects, and engineers are indispensable to translate the abstract concepts into visual representations. A team, consisted of the MATAKIN’s chairman, two members and an architect, designed the buildings. The inspiration came from the MATAKIN’s visit to the Confucius temples in Qufu and Beijing. Albeit the autonomy they acquired from the government and the TMII foundation, Mr. Widjojo reveals that the design was changed several times to negotiate with the donators’ interventions. The MATAKIN was inviting external financial support to fund the development of *Kong Miao*. The donors were not

necessarily Confucian believers but all of them are were Chinese Indonesians. The significant donors were mainly businessmen or prominent social figures. The MATAKIN needed to accommodate the donors' suggestions although these did not reflect the original idea, such as the placement of the statues of Confucian disciples on the outer fence, the installment of twelve Chinese horoscope animals and the lampions in the veranda. The last two connect the structure closer to the Chinese traditional culture than to the Confucian religious discourse specifically. The negotiations were apparently not always so smooth and agreeable to the point that Mr. Widjojo resigned from the project and refused to attend its inauguration. The case of the *Kong Miao* shows that the design is not a solitary privilege of the designers and technocrats and the (in)coherence of the design may occur as unavoidable parts during the negotiation.

After a year and half long construction process, President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, the sixth Indonesian president, inaugurated the *Kong Miao* on December 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2010. The TMII visitors who arrive in front of the *Kong Miao* complex will unavoidably capture a strong Chinese nuance from the building, symbols and ornaments, such as a pair of dragons at the main entrance, the statues of the twelve disciples of Confucius who wear Chinese robes and each wear a pendulum with twelve different horoscope animals in their necks in the outer fence, a *qilin*<sup>100</sup>, and the dominant Chinese lucky color of red.

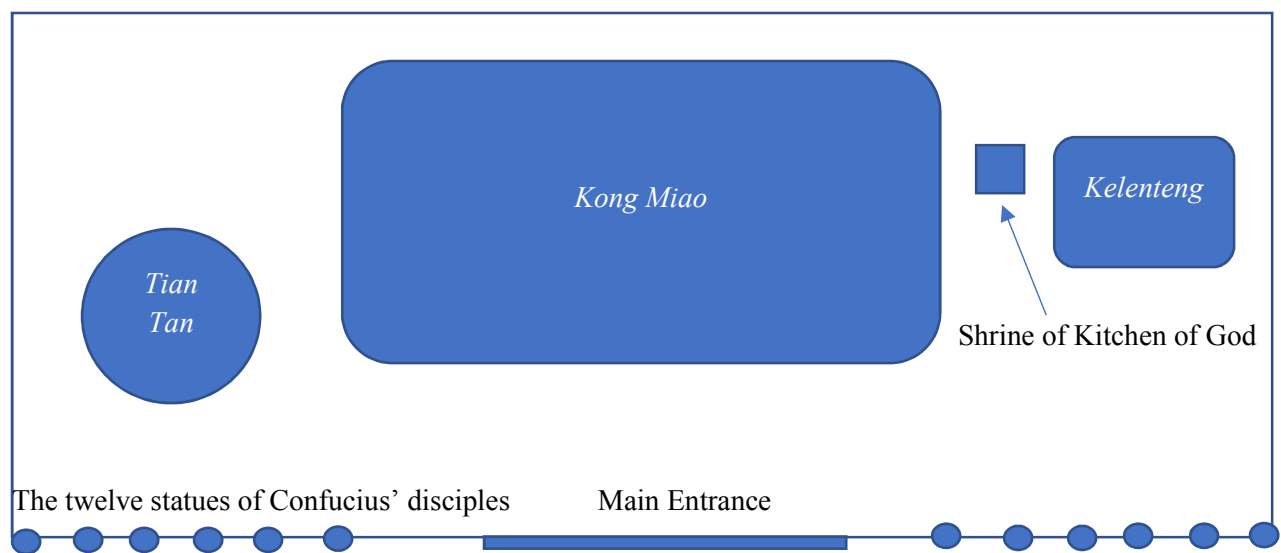
The *Kong Miao* complex has three buildings – *Tian Tan*, *Kong Miao* and a *kelenteng*. All face north and in red. The three buildings represent the three basic substances of the universe in Confucian cosmology, which are *Tian* (heaven) – *Di* (earth) – *Ren* (human-kind).<sup>101</sup> The designs of the *Tian Tan* and *Kong Miao* have been borrowed from their prototypes in Beijing and Qufu

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<sup>100</sup> Qilin is a mythological animal of East Asian culture. It was said to appear before the birth and the death of Confucius.

<sup>101</sup> Interview with Wawan Wiratma, the MATAKIN's board member and activist.

respectively. Given the fact that they are built as a part of the Indonesian national monument, it demonstrates a radical switch in the policies of the Indonesian government dealing with Chinese identity and culture; from the restrictive and abolitionist approaches during the Sukarno and Suharto's regime to accommodative in the reformation period. However, these symbols should not be equated to the re-sinification efforts among the Chinese *Peranakans*, which took place in the mid-nineteenth century. A closer look to the buildings, symbols and icons suggests that instead of making an exact duplication, the MATAKIN applies hybridity, which accommodates both Chinese and Indonesian values. Yet, several symbols may demonstrate inconsistencies and contradictions with their original in China and/or previous Confucian religious discourse in Indonesia.



Sketch 2. The layout of the *Kong Miao* complex in the TMII, Jakarta

## *Tian Tan*

Located on the left side, the first building has a round shape with a diameter of 9 meters



Picture 25. The Tian Tan in the TMII

and triple circular roofs. It borrows its model from the famous *Tian Tan* (Temple of Heaven) complex in Beijing, which was built in 1420 by Emperor Yong Le of Ming dynasty. Covering an area of 273 hectares, the Beijing complex has a circular mound altar where the emperors of the Ming and Qing dynasties (1369-1644 and 1644-1912 respectively) worshipped *Tian* on Winter Solstice and expressed gratitude for the recent harvest. A triple roofed circular building which was built in the middle of a three-tier open altar symbolizes the relationship between earth and heaven, which was central to the Chinese cosmology. Inside the hall, there

is a throne and a tablet of *Tian* (Unesco World's Heritage 1998). As an imperial site, it is decorated lavishly with elaborate carving and golden engraving. While the *Tian Tan* building becomes the center of attention in the contemporary time, during the Ming and Qing dynasties the altars occupied a more important role as the sites of imperial sacrifice. More importantly, there are more than one altars in the *Tian Tan* complex, which suggests the emperors conducted sacrifices and worships to several gods (Gao and Woudstra 2011: 234).

The *Tian Tan* in the TMII is a much simpler miniature of the one in Beijing. It represents *Tian* as the first element in Confucian cosmology. Inside the building, there is a big metal vase where people place their joss sticks after praying to *Tian*. On its wall, people can find several Chinese inscriptions of contributors' names. In a personal conversation, Budi Tanuwibowo, the

former chair of the MATAKIN, explained that by having the *Tian Tan*, the MATAKIN would ensure that believing and worshipping *Tian* are the real characteristics of Confucianism. He claimed that the regular sacrificing rituals conducted by the Chinese emperors for hundreds of years had its roots in Confucianism. While many people have asked whether Confucianism has a figure of God, the existence of the *Tian Tan* removes the doubts and confirm the perfect compatibility of Confucianism with the first principle of *Pancasila* – Believing in One Almighty God (*Ketuhanan yang Maha Esa*) (Personal interview, December 26, 2010).

In referring the Ming ritual of worshipping *Tian*, the MATAKIN assumes similar – if universal – monotheism. By claiming *Tian* as God, no reference has been taken to the historical records that the Chinese emperors of different dynasties, including Ming, worshipped *Tian* together with various gods, such as God of Earth, God of Agriculture and other figures who were believed to influence nature. In the *Tian Tan* complex of Beijing, they provided different altars for each (Gao and Woudstra 2011: 233). Another important note is that the rituals of worshipping *Tian* during the imperial China applied the concept of non-interference God, as I discuss in Chapter 2. The emperor's central role in the worshipping and sacrificing rituals was imperative to justify his role as the Son of Heaven who received the divine mandate from *Tian* to be an intermediary between heaven and earth and to govern people. Conducting grand ceremonies implied not only the emperor's respect to Heaven but also to improve his image as a pious and virtuous ruler, to glorify his regime and to increase his legitimacy as a good Son of Heaven. (Zhu 2004: 197-221). In the *Tian Tan* of the TMII, on the contrary, it facilitates visitors to pray to and engage with *Tian* directly, which refers to the personal relationship with God. While in Beijing, the worshipping of *Tian* was the most elaborate and lavish ritual, in Indonesia it becomes the simplest compared to the ceremonies of honoring Confucius and ancestors.

### ***Kong Miao***

The second building in the complex represents *Di* (earth). Taking the *Kong Miao* in Qufu as its model, this rectangular building is the largest and highest among the three.<sup>102</sup> It is located in the center and intended as *li thang* for worshipping and gathering as well as formal meetings. There is a single altar with the statue of Confucius inside the building. Despite its dominant Chinese style, this main hall contains symbols through which the Confucian society shows their appreciation and loyalty to their current country, Indonesia. At the entrance of the *li thang*, people can find a pair of staircases; each has 17 steps. The *li thang* is supported by eight main pillars – carved with a pattern of dragon – and forty-five decorative ornaments on its inner fence. The numbers altogether are to symbolize the Indonesian Independence Day. According to the architect, this building represents the mixture of Chinese and Indonesian cultures since the crafted pillars are ordered from China while its crafted wooden panels are from Jepara, Central Java.

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<sup>102</sup> The second building has actually two levels. The first level is used as an office, a library and staff rooms. The second is the *li thang*.



Picture 26. The *Kong Miao* in the TMII

The main difference between the Qufu *Kong Miao* and the TMII one is the establishment of Confucius' name tablet in the earlier and the statue of Confucius in the latter. The adoption of the statue by the MATAKIN marks less scrutiny – if forgetting – about the THHK's previous efforts to end irrational and superstitious rituals among the Chinese *Peranakans*. The MATAKIN's preference to a statue, however, is not unique. My trips to Nanjing, Beijing, and Nagasaki shows more relaxed attitudes to these differences than in the times of imperial China, when for more than fourteen centuries various dynasties forbid the statue of Confucius in the official *Kong Miaos* (Murray 1996: 273). In the *Kong Miaos* of Beijing and Nanjing, people can find the statues of Confucius in front of the temple, while in the main altar the Beijing one establishes his name tablet, the Nanjing hangs his picture and the Nagasaki his statue.



Picture 27. The statue of Confucius in the Kong Miao of the TMII

### *Kelenteng*

The third building and the smallest among the three is to represent the Chinese *kelentengs* commonly found in Indonesia. It is located on the right side and a little behind the Kong Miao. In between the *Kong Miao* and the *kelenteng*, there is a small shrine of the Zao Jun (God of Kitchen). Inside the *kelenteng*, the statues of Chinese deities are in display, such as Kwan Im, Kwan Kong, Hian Thian Siang Tee, Hok Tek Tjing Sing, Tu Di Gong and Makco.<sup>103</sup> Unlike the tradition in the *kelentengs*, however, there is no main god/goddess in the TMII *kelenteng*. All deities are put in a parallel row.

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<sup>103</sup> The deities are called *shen ming*, which are similar to saints in Catholicism.



Picture 28. The kelenteng in the TMII and the shrine of the Kitchen God

Based on the previous struggles and contestations, the inclusion of the *kelenteng* as a part of the *Kong Miao* evokes several concerns. First, it shows that the definition of Confucianism is a fluid idea because the MATAKIN's definition is more inclusive than that of the THHK. This change highlights transformation and rupture from the previous stricter approach. Second, while it demonstrates the accommodation of the MATAKIN towards the *Tri-Dharma* and the Chinese folk traditions, its size and position imply the least important element compared to the *Tian Tan* and the *Kong Miao*. In the reality, the position is reversed, in which several Chinese *kelentengs* accommodate Confucianism by providing an extra annex to build a *li thang* and not the way around. Third, the inclusion of the *kelenteng* in the monument may suggest an idea that the *Tri-Dharma* is a part of Confucianism. Some *Tri-Dharma* activists reject this idea since they believe that the real Chinese religion is honoring the combination of the three teachings, without favoring one above the other (personal interview with a *Tri-Dharma* activist, May 11<sup>th</sup>, 2011).

During my observation, I found the ongoing patterns of inclusion and exclusion. While some *kelentengs* build new *li thangs* to accommodate Confucian worships, fighting over the temple's status occurred in few temples, such as Pekalongan, and Samarinda (Facebook private chatgroup, March 5-11, 2011).

In the realm of the users, Lefebvre suggests an analysis from the users' perspectives, which are based on their dialectical relationship with the space. Considering the functions of the *Kong Miao*, as both a religious place and a monument, it has at least two categories of users – the Confucian believers and visitors. As a temple, it hosts regular Sunday services and the praying rituals of the 1<sup>st</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> days of the month according to the Chinese lunar calendar, the birthday and death anniversaries of Confucius. As a worshipping place, the *Kong Miao*, however, differs from older temples since it does not – or has not – show any hierophany. While people believe that the statues in the older temples work as the manifestation of the deities' power, the statues in the *Kong Miao* work as a display whose passive agency and intelligent immobility are not yet recognized.



Picture 29. The Statues of Deities in the Kong Miao's *Kelenteng*

The second category of users is the visitors. Since its opening, thousands of people visit the temple, especially during the Chinese New Year. After estranged from the Indonesian public space for more than three decades, many visitors wanted to learn and know more about Confucianism and Chinese culture. Some of them called their visit as a “religious tour” (*berwisata sambil beribadah*) (*Pos Kota*, January 23, 2013). As a part of the TMII’s project, the *Kong Miao* functions as a monument and an official representation of Confucianism since it hosts official meetings, such as the interfaith dialogues initiated by the Ministry of Religious Affairs, and Chinese cultural festivals. In my opinion, the *Kong Miao* has more legitimate and significant functions as a source of official knowledge about Confucianism rather than as a religious place. With higher levels of curiosity, people tend to acquire more knowledge about Confucianism through its symbols and icons as many tour groups did in the *Boen Bio*.

### **Conclusion: From Exclusion to Inclusion**

Rethinking Foucault’s quote in the beginning of this chapter, space is far from dead, fixed, undialectical or immobile. Since its early establishment in the Dutch East Indies, the Chinese temples have been sites of political and socio-economic struggles. Lefebvre correctly suggests that deciphering the building, symbols, and icons is a way to understand the underlying hegemony or discourse in a society. In reading the *kelentengs* and *li thangs* in Indonesia, I have shown that the interiors, symbols and icons symbolize the transformation, ruptures and (dis)continuity of religious discourse, frictions and competitions among the Chinese *Peranakan* communities, social inclusion and exclusion, restriction, abolition and accommodation.

Transformation and changes also take place in the realms of sacredness. In the *kelentengs*, the believers develop a network with the Chinese deities, which are represented in the statues. Taking a metaphor of the colonial governance system, believers attributed specific

power to each deity to oversee and solve particular problems, with a possibility of disruptions from the undesirable agency of the evil spirits (Kwee 1941c: 21-25). Among the *kelenteng* goers, they develop what Gell (1998: 116-118) calls as a “two-way affairs”, in which by sending praying and wishes, the worshippers engage in dual communication with the deities who will response with their intelligence and supernatural power. In contrary to the Daoist, Buddhist and Chinese folk religious traditions, Confucianism tends to derecognize this type of sacredness. While many contemporary Confucian believers also use the statue of Confucius in the *li thangs*, they develop a different relationship with it.

“The statue [of Confucius] helps us to concentrate better. When people are praying and they are curious (*pengen tahu*) how Confucius looked like, this statue helps; also this picture [of him]. So, that is the main aim and nothing else. This is not an idolatry. If this is a type of idolatry, other religions actually also practice it. (He then continued giving examples from other religious traditions, of which he considers worse.)” (Personal interview with a *Boen Bio* activist, July 26<sup>th</sup>, 2010)

In Confucianism, even if they recognize the agency of the statue, it stays in the realm of rationality and cognition as helping the believers to focus is certainly a type of agency and communication, too. Yet, it is different than the beliefs among the Three-Teaching or folk Chinese religion, in which they attribute the deities with abilities of solving problems, regulating nature, or keeping people’s life in order and prosperity. It is likely that greater attributions towards the Chinese deities create closer affinities between the believers and *kelentengs* and the statues. My observation during the Chinese New Year Eve shows that most *kelentengs* in Surabaya were full of visitors who were praying for happiness, prosperity and longevity while there were only few people visited the *Boen Bio*. This phenomenon confirms Zielenic’s argument that the users’ interpretations and (dis)connections of the spaces can be constructed through ritual, symbol, tradition, myth, desire and dreams (2007: 75).

While the production of temples and *li thang* highlights social conflicts, ruptures of ideas, and inconsistencies, the last theme concerns with the inclusion and accommodation of Chinese ethnic and religious identity in the Indonesian national museum and monument (Kitamura 2007; Schlehe 2011: 162). After a long repression of Chinese culture and religion(s) in public spaces, the *Kong Miao* is a much-celebrated achievement among the Indonesian Confucians who are now having a representation of their religion and ethnicity within the New Order version of Indonesian diversity. The MATAKIN, however, needs to ensure that the Chinese identity and Confucian values represented in the *Kong Miao* is still oriented to Indonesian nationalism. In his speech on the *Kong Miao* opening ceremony, the chairman of the MATAKIN – Budi Santoso Tanuwibowo – expressed his deep gratitude for the state’s support and facilities so that the Confucian believers can enjoy their civil rights back. Upon this achievement, Mr. Tanuwibowo strongly recommends all Confucian believers in Indonesia to show their total loyalty to the nation and state of Indonesia.

“We need to build Confucian believers who are *Pancasilais*<sup>104</sup>, pious, and possessing high conducts (*budi luhur*), which mean they believe in God Almighty (*Tuhan yang Maha Esa*), live in sympathy with others and ready to defend the country. We want to have Confucian believers who are 100% Confucian and at the same time 100% *Pancasilais*. Do not show half-hearted attitude to our nation and state.”

The commitment of becoming ‘100% Confucian and at the same time 100% *Pancasilais*’ can also be found in the built version as the team entails the date of Indonesian Independence Day within the parts of *Kong Miao*, which symbolizes a total blend, or in Bhabha’s word, hybridity, of Chinese-oriented religiosity and Indonesian nationalism.

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<sup>104</sup> The word *Pancasilais* is derived from Dutch and English style – just like communist or capitalist – which means people who believe or defend Pancasila values.

## **Conclusion**

### **From National to Global: The Possible Future of the Confucian Religion**

In the previous chapters I have discussed the struggles and negotiations of the Confucian believers in inventing, promoting and institutionalizing their religion in Indonesia. Their agencies are crucial in every step of its making as an idiosyncratic religion, starting from selecting the sources and religious concepts to translating them in politically and culturally suitable terms; from justifying it against the Christian missionaries and other Chinese *Peranakans* groups to defending it against Suharto's oppression; from building the *li thang* to developing the Confucian rituals. Thanks to the fourth Indonesian president, Abdurrahman Wahid, the Confucian believers currently enjoy the state's formal acknowledgment, which allows them to receive benefits and endorsement from the state, such as the official celebration of *Imlek* (Chinese New Year), the printing of the *Si Shu* and *Wu Jing*, the Confucian religious teachers' training and the publication of the Confucian textbooks for religious education from elementary to high school education. The Indonesian government also supports MATAKIN's plan to establish the National Confucian Academy (*Sekolah Tinggi Agama Khonghucu Indonesia*), even though it has not been realized due to the MATAKIN's internal issues.

Despite the state's endorsement and facilitation, the struggles of the Confucian believers continue. I dedicate the last chapter to address several issues that the Confucian believers have to deal with as a minority religious group in Indonesia in the post reformation period. These problems concern the small number of the Confucian believers, the rising religious intolerance in Indonesia, efforts to be a part of the Confucian global movement and reconnection with China. They are by no means the only pressing issues that the Confucians must deal with in the contemporary time.

## How to Cultivate More Confucian Believers?

During the post-reformation period, the Confucian believers must deal with the problems of shrinking community. They experienced a sharp decline during the New Order era, from 0.8% of total population or 941,646 people in 1970 to 0.05% or 117,091 in 2010 (Ananta et al. 2015: 257; BPS 2011: 10). The loss is due to conversion to another religion during Suharto's regime. In my conversations with several Chinese Indonesians, who were converted to Christianity and Catholicism during the Soeharto's regime, they showed no interests to re-convert to the Confucian religion. Several of them discontinued the rituals they observed in the younger age, such as providing offerings on the death anniversary of their parents, cleaning the graves and going to a temple. One informant told me that she found the "true teaching" in Christianity while her previous observance of the Chinese rituals came from family traditions. Even if she does these rituals again, she considers them as respect and commemoration to her parents or ancestors, but not as a belief or a religion.

The MATAKIN and the Confucian activists seem aware about the small probability of reconversion and they put greater efforts to educate the younger generation, instead. Other than the Confucian classroom in schools, several activists organize Confucian youth camps and children gatherings. In East Java, during my observation, several *li thangs* take turn to host a bi-monthly praying and performance for Confucian children or *Kebaktian Anak Antar-Li thang*. They provide children-friendly sermons and talent shows, during which around sixty to a hundred Confucian children and early teenagers have fun time and opportunities to know their Confucian fellows of other towns. While these activities are excellent attempts to invigorate the interests among the children and youth, their outreach is still limited within the Confucian families.

Another obstacle of conversion comes from the common presumption that the Confucian religion is only suitable for the Chinese descents. Unlike other religions, which proselytize people regardless their background to be their adherents, in the case of the Confucian religion in Indonesia, there are cultural and political barriers to promote it beyond the Chinese Indonesian communities. Among the Confucian priests and activists there is disagreement whether the MATAKIN should reach out wider communities beyond the Chinese Indonesians. A *haksu* or a Confucian priest of the highest rank prefers the Chinese to other ethnic groups. He concerns, however, with practical obstacles rather than theological ones.

“The [Confucian] believers should understand the Chinese history, culture, and religion. These topics have been isolated for a long period in Indonesia, even a lot of Chinese have forgotten [about them]. We have been already overwhelmed (*kewalahan*) even though we are working only with the Chinese, who know, at least, a little about the tradition (*tahu sedikit-sedikit*) – not to mention with wider communities.” (personal interview, October 28<sup>th</sup>, 2010).

Several younger Confucian activists, however, welcome everyone who is interested to be a Confucian regardless his/her ethnicity. An activist in the national level proudly mentions that they have several high and middle rank priests from various ethnic groups, such as Javanese, Javanese-Arabic, Sundanese, Balinese and Papuan. Although their number altogether is fewer than 15 people, they become the evidence of inclusiveness within the Confucian communities (personal email, July 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2016). Another high-rank Confucian priest tries to stretch the concept of Confucian adherents even further by defining the conventional and non-conventional believers. The conventional believers are people who declare the Confucian religion as their religion. The non-conventional category includes everyone who is practicing and applying the Confucian principles in daily life, such as appreciating the values of filial piety or cultivating their characters to be courteous and benevolent people or *junzi* (君子, the superior person), even

though they do not consider themselves as Confucians. The late Gus Dur, according to this perspective, is a non-conventional Confucian believer (personal interview, November 8<sup>th</sup>, 2017).

Regardless the inclusive vision among the Confucian activists, most leaders of the minority religious groups in Indonesia are aware and cautious about the risks of and resentments against proselytization, especially from Islam to another religion. The reformation period has witnessed far more cases of religious conflicts because of the shifting attitude among the Muslim groups from moderate to intolerant (Hasani 2009, Menchik 2014, Takwin et al. 2017). Using the persecution of the Ahmadiyah adherents as the case, Jeremy Menchik (2014: 595) defines the current situation in Indonesia as “productive intolerance,” in which the regulations and political endorsement launched by the Indonesian government take sides with the majority group(s) and leave the minority unprotected under the accusation of heresy, blasphemy, and making troubles with the dominant religious group(s). Open proselytization is almost impossible and can be very dangerous as there are increasing violence and discrimination against the minority religious groups. Due to the rising religious tensions and the long history of the Indonesian state’s unneutrality and favoring to the majority religious groups, it is predictable that the Confucian religion will remain the smallest religious group in Indonesia.

### **Engaging the State and the Muslim Groups**

In October 2017, I attended a three-days World Confucian Religion Congress, hosted by the MATAKIN in Jakarta, which topic was “Building Harmony and the Golden Mean to Create the Welfare and Peace of the World.” On the first day, the MATAKIN facilitated a dialogue on this topic by applying the comparative perspective between Islam and Confucianism. None other than Lukman Hakim Saifuddin, the Minister of Religious Affairs himself, delivered his opening speech, in which he supported the dialogue and appreciated the importance to find similar values

among different religions to promote peace and harmony. There were eleven prominent national Islamic organization leaders and eleven Confucian representatives to provide speeches and thoughts. Among the Islamic leaders, they invited the chairs of the Muhammadiyah and the Nahdlatul Ulama as the two largest Muslim organizations, the chair of the Islamic Ulama Council, the rector of the State Islamic University and the moderate Islamic leaders, such as Din Syamsuddin, the special envoy appointed by the current president, Joko Widodo, for interreligious dialogue and harmony, and Yenny Zannuba Wahid, the second daughter of the late president Abdurrachman Wahid. The Islamic leaders' speeches expressed their welcome and acceptance to the existence of Confucianism in Indonesia. Few leaders mentioned how their institution have already accommodated Confucianism. The State Islamic University of Jakarta, for example, has provided the magistrate program in Confucian Studies while the MATAKIN is struggling to establish the Indonesian Confucian College (*Sekolah Tinggi Agama Khonghucu Indonesia*). The speeches from the Confucian representatives emphasized their loyalty and commitment to the Indonesian government and nation. By applying the Confucian teaching and values, they promised to take active roles in building peace and harmony in the nation.

Applying Geertz's (1980) symbology of power behind spectacle and ceremonies and contextualizing the conference within the recent Indonesian politics, I investigate the dialogue as a political performance in national and international level. The theater state, Geertz suggests, is a spectacle of meaning and power relation, which manifests in the ceremonial construction. Symbolism behind theatre and performance shed light on the structure of the *negara* or the royal court in Bali and the ways power entangle between the state as the center and the groups and people in the periphery (1980: 13, 19). Following Geertz, Death (2011: 2) considers the importance of the symbolic, performative and theatrical roles of the summits, which are not only

successful in raising awareness on climate change issues, but also able to sustain the topics through "the performance of seriousness" and symbolic politics.

Historically, as I mentioned in Chapter 3, starting from 1967 the MATAKIN has already negotiated the Indonesian government through the summit theatre strategies, in which they used the speeches of the high officials, including that of Suharto's, as promises and guarantees of their status in Indonesia. The MATAKIN maintains a similar approach during the post-reformation period, regardless the facts that the state officials might bail out and reverse their public statements. A bitter incident, for example, happened in June 2012 when the first World Confucian Religious Leaders Conference in Medan (North Sumatra) was cancelled due to violent threats of the local Islamic alliance. The government did the least – if nothing – to protect the rights of the Confucians. While previously the MATAKIN congresses invited the state officials only, as a new strategy, it adds the Islamic groups as the re-emerging political power after Suharto's regime ended in the later congresses. After a year of delay, in 2013 the MATAKIN hosted the first world Confucian congress in Jakarta, during which they invited the representatives of the Indonesian government and Muslim scholars to discuss the concept of good governance. The 2017 dialogue was the second one, which followed the same format with a different topic.

The structure of the first day dialogue suggests that exchanging speeches among the Minister of Religious Affairs, the prominent Islamic figures and the Confucian representatives were a display to ensure the commitment of the Indonesian state and the majority Islamic power to anticipate and protect the Confucian groups from religious and ethnic conflicts. As I mention earlier, there is an alarming religious intolerance in Indonesia. In 2016, two viharas and eight Tri-Dharma temples were burned down during the conflicts between the Chinese, Buddhist and/or the Tri-Dharma believers with local people in 2016. None of the violent actors was

punished. A couple of months before the Islamic and Confucian dialogue took place, the Chinese-Indonesians and non-Muslims experienced a drastically heightened political situation. Starting from December 2016, there were massive rallies organized by several Islamic conservative groups against the Christian Chinese-Indonesian Jakarta Governor, Basuki Tjahaja Purnama – known as Ahok. Using the 1969 Anti-Blasphemy Law, the Islamic groups sued Ahok as a blasphemer of Islam for his frankly statement how a Quranic verse - Al Maidah 5:51<sup>105</sup> - was politically manipulated to fool and prevent many Muslim voters from electing him as a non-Muslim leader in the Jakarta governor election, during which he was campaigning for the second term. After a two-months long trial, Ahok was sentenced to two years in jail in March 2017 and lost his position as a governor. The massive rallies became the biggest Islamic action in the post-reformation period, even though the real number of the protesters was disputed from 0.5 million to 7.5 million, in which the highest number was claimed by the organizer (Franciska 2016).

Another attack relates to the 34-meters-high Kwan Kong's (Guan Yu) statue in the Kwan Sing Bio temple of Tuban (East Java), which was inaugurated in July 2017. Kwan Kong is known as a legendary general during the Three Kingdoms War (ca. 184 – 280 A.D.) who became a Chinese deity worshipped by the followers of Confucianism and Chinese folk religion. Several fundamentalist Islamic and native groups consider the establishment of the huge statue of a Chinese deity inappropriate since Tuban is a strong Muslim-based town. They demanded the statue to be demolished, regardless the fact that the statue is located in the backyard of the temple and is not visible from the main street. The tension was rapidly and widely spread out, thanks to

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<sup>105</sup> The English translation of the Al Maidah 5:51 is “O you who believe, take not the Jews and the Christians as *Auliyâ*’ (friends, protectors, helpers, etc.), they are but *Auliyâ*’ to one another. And if any amongst you takes them as *Auliyâ*’, then surely, he is one of them. Verify, Allah guides not the people who are the *Zâlimûn* (polytheists, wrongdoers, unjusts).” (Al-Hilali & Khan, n.d., n.p.)

the usage of social media. Putting these incidents and the trauma of the May 1998 riots together, many Chinese-Indonesians experienced vulnerable feeling. In his opening speech, Budi Santoso Tanuwibowo, who was the ex-chair of the MATAKIN (2002-2010) and the head of the conference organizers, explained the aim of the dialogue.

“As faithful and religious people, we push forward the dialogue during which we can communicate closely from heart to heart (*dari hati ke hati*) to solve any problems, no matter how complicated they are. We feel so lucky. Even though we are small in number, we have close Muslim friends. There are eleven distinguished figures who attend [this dialogue], whose names are thrilling (*menggetarkan*), particularly in Indonesia... Chu Hsi once cited Confucius that for a faithful person, he will never be alone since within four seas all men are brothers. We feel it in our relationship as Confucian congregation (*umat Khonghucu*) in Indonesia with the Muslims, our older brother who are very friendly and fraternal (*sangat bersahabat dan bersaudara*) to us.”

While these conflicts were initiated by the conservative Islamic groups, the speech aims to acknowledge the heterogeneity within the Islamic communities in Indonesia by providing a stage to the moderate Muslim leaders. Implied in the politics of hierarchy, there were expectations that these distinguished and thrilling leaders should be able to persuade and organize their mass followers to obey their words as they expressed in the speeches during the dialogue. Under the coverage of national media and few Chinese-medium media, the speeches of these national Islamic figures serve as guarantee, promise, and/or commitment of building harmony and peace with the Confucian communities and the Chinese-Indonesians in general.

### **Channeling Indonesian Confucianism to the Global World**

On the second and third day, the MATAKIN facilitated a symposium during which 46 scholars and activists in Confucian Studies presented their researches and thoughts. Nineteen speakers came from Indonesia and twenty-seven speakers came from 18 countries, such as China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Korea, Japan, Singapore, Malaysia, Egypt, the U.S., Mexico, the U.K. and Australia. I was one of the speakers. The politics of identity and representation took

place when I considered myself an Indonesian speaker, but an organizer categorized me as a “foreign” speaker based on my residency in the Netherlands. He was aware that I am writing my dissertation on the Indonesian Confucianism at the University of Washington, Seattle, yet he preferred the Netherlands because there had been already a speaker from the U.S. This way, he explained, they could add the Netherlands as another country involved in the symposium. A similar reason applied to another speaker who was counted as a researcher in Confucian Philosophy of the U.K. where he resides, even though at the time of the conference, he was a Ph.D. candidate in the department of Political Science at the National University of Singapore. The organizer’s practice shows the awareness and benefits of growing cosmopolitanism and flexible citizenship, in which more people can claim or be identified according to their associations with multiple places and/or nationalities.

Nearly half of the speakers shared their works on the Golden Mean (*Zhongyong*), peace building, harmony and cooperation, while the other speakers presented far wider topics, such as Confucian philosophy of life, the translation of the Analects in Arabic, the Confucian perspective of good governance, and varieties of Confucian beliefs and practices in Japan, South Korea and Taiwan. Instead of assigning the speakers in several parallel thematic panels, the symposium had a centralized meeting in which each speaker had 10-15 minutes to present their ideas in front of the whole audience. The presentations were either in Chinese, English or Indonesian language. Even though the organizer provided translation services, the Indonesian audience, who consisted of around 200 Confucian activists from the grassroot level of various areas of Indonesia, benefitted the least. The translators were having difficulties to interpret the Confucian concepts and terminologies to the Indonesian language. In many presentations, the translators were only able to explain the titles and abstracts. The organizer did not set up a forum during which the Indonesian audience could get an opportunity to clarify and discuss after the presentations.

Regardless the little dialogue and shallow understanding to the content of the presentations, the summit spectacle went beyond the conference room when several Chinese-medium newspapers, such as *Inhua Daily* (印华日报) and *Indonesia Shangbao* (印度尼西亚商報), described the speakers and their topics in details, while the Indonesian newspapers paid more attention to the Islam-Confucian dialogue.

Compared to the first symposium in 2013, during which they invited seven main speakers from Hong Kong, Taiwan, Malaysia, Singapore, Vietnam and Mexico, the second symposium reflected the eagerness of the MATAKIN to build and to be included in a wider international network and scholarship of Confucian Studies. The accommodation of such wide topics was an effort to show the comprehensiveness that Confucianism can offer to modern life and humanity. The efforts to channel itself to the global movement in religion and peace and Confucian Studies beyond China and Asian world has started as early as 1974 when the MATAKIN sent its chair to be an Indonesian Confucian representative in the second World Congress on Religion and Peace (WCRP) in Leuven, Belgium. It was followed with participations in other world congresses, such as World Conference on Religion, Philosophy and Culture in Madras (1978), the third and fourth WCRP in New Jersey (1979) and Nairobi (1984) respectively. When the New Order regime rejected the status of Confucianism as a religion, the participations in the international conferences became more crucial and strategic to increase recognition, solidarity and support to lift the discrimination against the Confucians believers in Indonesia. For example, when a Korean Confucian delegation led by Choi Gun Duk, the president of Sung Kyun-Kwan or the Korean Confucian Academy,<sup>106</sup> visited Indonesia in December 1996, they met Abdurrachman

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<sup>106</sup> Sung Kyun-Kwan was founded by the first ruler of the Choson dynasty in 1398. It becomes the representative of Confucianism in Korea, due to its long-standing history. Since 1895, it has transformed into a “modern” university where natural science and engineering programs are hosted together with humanities and social sciences (Callahan 1999: 348)

Wahid or Gus Dur, who was the chair of the Nahdlatul Ulama. During the meeting, according to the MATAKIN, Choi described the inter-faith dialogue in Korea, which were regularly conducted in harmonious and non-discriminative atmosphere. He expected that the Confucians in Indonesia were treated with respect by the Indonesian government and the Muslims as they do to the minority Muslims in Korea (Tjhie and Tanuwibowo 2013: 10-11).

Another indirect audience of the summit theater is the Confucian believers, whom received updates from the media, the MATAKIN publication and/or the story of the participant(s). To the Indonesian Confucian communities, the MATAKIN represented its participation in the international conferences in the way that strengthens the imagination about the acknowledgement of Confucianism as a religion in other parts of the world. For example, in 1994, Tjhie Tjay Ing and several Confucian activists of Indonesia attended the inaugural International Confucian Association (ICA) Symposium in Beijing on the Confucius' 2545<sup>th</sup> birthday anniversary in September 1994. The symposium was attended by prominent leaders, 300 scholars and 1000 participants from various countries, which made it one of the largest Confucian meetings ever (Li 1999: 44). In his report of the symposium, Tjhie translated the ICA as "*Assosiasi International Umat Konfucian*" (Tjhie 1995: vi). Deliberately or not, the use of "*umat*", which literally means "the religious congregation" or "laypeople", represents the ICA as a religious association. In fact, the symposium keynote speeches, delivered by several prominent figures, such as Lee Kuan Yew as the Prime Minister of Singapore and Li Ruihuan as one of the Chinese Communist Party's top leaders, concerned with the applications of the Confucian tradition and values in global economic development and politics (Little 1995: 62).

A more recent example served how the summit theater stimulates the imagination of the important – if central – position of the Indonesian Confucianism in the world. When I attended the weekly praying in the *Boen Bio* nine days after the conference, it was coincidentally that Js.

Wongsoadi, whose sermon I quoted in the introduction of this dissertation, was in charge to deliver another sermon. He attended and was one of the presenters in the World Confucian Religion Congress in Jakarta. While his main preaching topic was about the birthday anniversary of Confucius, he briefly explained that during the Jakarta Congress the speakers of 18 countries shared their expertise about the rational and philosophical dimensions of Confucianism. Yet, they were very impressed (*sangat kagum*) with the facts that in Indonesia Confucianism is a religion. They, then, realized that Indonesia is the best place to do the research [on Confucianism]. The Confucian believers in Indonesia should be proud of this acknowledgement. He mentioned that the religious dimensions of Confucianism begin to flourish in China so that the Chinese people built several *li thang* in several places with a similar design to that of the *Boen Bio*.

These types of imagination, in my opinion, are strategies to boost up the Indonesian Confucians' self-confidence as the smallest religious community in Indonesia. In the global situation, the Indonesian Confucianism occupies even a unique – if not peculiar – status, as several presenters instantly asked me its historical trajectory once they knew about my research topic. However, several evidences about the local revival of Confucianism in China show that the hope and imagination of the Indonesian Confucian believers have bigger chances to happen in the future. During my trip to *Sihai Shuyuan* (四海书院, the Four Seas Confucian Academy) located in the suburb of Beijing in 2015, I found a *li thang* with a single altar devoted to Confucius in the school complex. According to a teacher, the school organized a ceremony on the first and fifteenth day of the month according to the lunar calendar and on the birthday and death anniversary of Confucius, during which about a hundred students bow deeply to the altar. The school, however does not use the *li thang* exclusively for praying, but it can be used for

other activities, such as a dining hall and other group activities. Besides the revival of more individualized and filial piety-based Confucian rituals, Sun (2012: 317-327) depicts “a weekly formal Confucian service,” hosted by a Confucius Hall in Shenzhen, which consists of “the singing of “sacred songs,” a sermon, and the “reading of sacred texts.” Payette (2016: 4) observes four local Confucian revival movements in Shandong province, in which they reinvent and educate the Chinese younger generation the Confucian rituals. Even though their ways of reviving Confucianism are “fragmented and disjointed,” three out of four organizations show serious interests on ritual teachings. Payette considers these attempts “the existence of a renewal religiosity, or at least of a Confucian spirituality...” (ibid.: 13).

### **Re-Imagining China Religiously**

In the post-Mao period, the diplomatic relationship between China and Indonesia was resumed in 1990. Even though the MATAKIN demonstrated a careful approach to China and the New Order had not revised its exclusion towards Confucianism and Chinese identity, a group of fifty Confucian priests and believers visited Confucius’ hometown and cemetery in Qufu, Shandong, in 1994. They called the trip a pilgrimage (*ziarah*), which gives the same meaning of a religious tour, during which they attempted to develop a connection with the Confucius’ family. The political situation in China, however, was not conducive to Confucianism in favor to Communism.

W.P. Zhong (1995: 57-58), one of the tour participants, wrote a travel memoir, in which he described that they received a warm welcome from Mrs. Kong Qingzi, the 73<sup>rd</sup> descendant of Confucius. She was willing to accept the networking plan and promised that Mr. Kong Xianglin, the 76<sup>th</sup> descendant and the caretaker of the Kong Miao in Qufu, would visit Indonesia in 1995.<sup>107</sup> The

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<sup>107</sup> However, there is no record found whether Mr. Kong Xianglin visited Indonesia.

group disappointed very much when they learned that the Confucius' birthday anniversary festival was cancelled because at the same time China celebrated its national day on Oct 1<sup>st</sup>, 1994. They managed to negotiate with the Kong family, who facilitated them to conduct a praying ritual in front of the great statue of Confucius in the Dacheng Hall, built during the Song dynasty and rebuilt by the Ming. During the praying, they were kowtowing three times and bowed nine times in front of Confucius' statue while burning special incense made from natural ingredients and spices from the Mount Kawi, East Java. Mr. Kong observed them quietly, but he did not join the praying. On the next day, when they prayed at the tomb of Confucius, a tour guide rushed them. Zhong regretted that, "the local guide apparently forgot the meaning of praying, so [we were] in hurry (*terburu-buru*) to enjoy the very rare occasion for the Confucian believers of Indonesia" (ibid: 59). One of the tour guides in Beijing frankly mentioned, "Confucius is great, but (he is) still under Chairman Mao" (*Kong Zi hebat, tetapi masih dibawah (sic.) Ketua Mao...*) (ibid.: 61).

The political situations in Indonesia and China changed drastically in early 2000. While entering the reformation period, Indonesia faced serious implications of the Asian economic crisis in 1997. Gus Dur was determined to reinvigorate the economic bilateral cooperation with China and made several agreements, through which he promised the acknowledgment of the Chinese culture and religion among the Chinese-Indonesians (*Tempo*, December 12<sup>th</sup>, 1999). Under the leadership of President Hu Jintao (2002-2012) and continued by President Xi Jinping (2012 – present), China re-appraises and revives Confucianism. Starting from 2002, the MATAKIN organized yearly pilgrimage to Qufu and other cities in China. The visit to Qufu and Beijing in 2002 resulted in an inspiration to build the Kong Miao in the TMII as I discuss in Chapter 6. The MATAKIN also initiates collaborations with several Chinese institutions with the facilitation from the Ministry of Religious Affairs. One of the most recent agreements was signed in December 6<sup>th</sup>, 2017, in which the representatives of the Ministry of Religious Affairs, the *Sihai Shuyuan*, and the Bell School of

Surabaya commit to develop the curriculum for the Confucian school in Indonesia and student exchanges between the two schools. Even though the Bell School is a private institution, its director, Lany Guito, is the MATAKIN's deputy in religious education issues and a Confucian activist who sued the Civil Registry Office of Surabaya in 1996 when the office denied legalizing her marriage with Budi Wijaya, which was conducted under the Confucian ritual.

More researchers and journalists nowadays consider Confucianism as China's soft power which travels globally through the establishment of the Confucius Institutes worldwide. The analyses are divided as of how far and fast it may influence the world. Regarding to the performance of the Confucius Institutes and China's soft power, Marissa Benavides (2012) and Anja Lahtinen (2015), for example, represent the pessimistic views, due to weak cultural strategies and lack of management skills. On the contrary, many acknowledge the rising of China's soft power, even though not without anxiety and suspicion against the possible China's domination in the world. James Paradise (2009) and Diego Torres (2015) are on the positive perspectives as they envision the global acceptance of Confucianism and Chinese culture through various networking with educational institutions, personal and academic interests in China studies, and interpretations of Confucianism. Even though they admit that the world's appreciation to Confucianism and the Chinese culture is by no mean closer to those of English and Western culture, they are optimistic to the possibility of their contribution in the world politics. At this point, however, many scholars can mainly offer speculations and predictions as of questions of how far, fast and important its influences on the world.

While the globalized Confucianism enables its ideas to travel wider and faster, there are opportunities to various interpretations. John Berthrong (2003, 2012) argues for the possibility of the third wave of global Confucianism and includes the Boston Confucianism, as a part of it. Whereas the Chinese government and civil groups reinvigorate their own version(s) of Confucian

teachings, rituals and values, contacts with and influences of the local culture(s) and values unavoidably contribute to the unique interpretations in each place, such as the cases of the Indonesian and Boston Confucianism. How will these different interpretations inform and enrich each other? Whether the Chinese government, through its Confucius Institutes around the world, will play the role of an institutional power to discipline, and standardize the various versions of Confucianism in the future, as Vatican does in the case of Catholicism? How far and influential the global acknowledgment of the religious and spiritual dimensions of Confucianism in the future? These questions will stimulate future inquiries.

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