

THE CHINESE GOVERNMENT'S CULTURAL DIPLOMACY THROUGH PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN CONFUCIUS INSTITUTE AND MUSLIM UNIVERSITIES IN INDONESIA

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Abstrak

Etnis keturunan Tionghoa di Indonesia tanpa disadari memainkan peran penting dalam hubungan diplomatik Indonesia dengan Tiongkok. Citra warga Indonesia keturunan Tionghoa (selanjutnya disebut etnis Cina) di mata warga mayoritas yang beragama Islam mempengaruhi cara pandang warga Indonesia terhadap Tiongkok. Selama ini, etnis Cina dikenal gemar makan daging babi, menyembah leluhur, kasar, licik, apolitis dan mata duitan, dan semua hal ini dinilai haram (terlarang) oleh mayoritas Muslim di Indonesia. Untuk menyikapi hal ini, pemerintah Tiongkok membuka kerjasama Confucius Institute dengan beberapa universitas negeri dan swasta di Indonesia pada tahun 2007. Essay ini berfokus hanya pada kerjasama Confucius Institute dengan Universitas Al-Azhar Indonesia (UAI) di Jakarta dan Universitas Muhammadiyah Malang (UMM) di Malang, Jawa Timur. Fokus tersebut dimaksudkan untuk melihat upaya-upaya pemerintah Tiongkok dalam merangkul masyarakat mayoritas Islam Indonesia untuk mensukseskan hubungan diplomatik Indonesia dan Tiongkok.

Kata kunci: *budaya, kerjasama, masyarakat mayoritas Muslim Indonesia, Tiongkok*

Abstract

One fact that is very often overlooked is that the ethnic Chinese in Indonesia, often referred to as Chinese Indonesians, play an important part in the diplomatic relations between Indonesia and People's Republic of China (PRC.) The image that the majority Indonesians, especially the Muslim ones, have about the minority ethnic Chinese in Indonesia helps shape perspectives about PRC. Since the Chinese Indonesians have very often been discredited as pork-eating, ancestors-worshipping (which are deemed *haram* (forbidden) in Islam), rude, scheming, apolitical, greedy and only care about money, it is not a wonder that if coupled with the image of PRC as a closed country that is stuck in communism, the collective image of the Chinese in general can very well stand in the way of the two countries' diplomatic relations. To counter this, in 2007 the PRC government through Confucius Institute launched partnerships with several major state and private universities in Indonesia. However, this essay focuses on Confucius Institute's partnerships with Universitas Al-Azhar Indonesia (Al-Azhar University Indonesia (UAI)) in Jakarta and Universitas Muhammadiyah Malang (Muhammadiyah University Malang (UMM)) in Malang, East Java, as PRC government's tool to engage Indonesia's Muslim majority in cultural diplomacy for the success of PRC and Indonesia's relations.

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Keywords: culture, partnership, Indonesian Muslims, Chinese

INTRODUCTION

For centuries Indonesia has enjoyed a hefty amount of Chinese influence, which can be seen in many aspects of life, including architecture, language and entertainment. For example, the Chinese oral legend “Madame White Snake” has been adapted into the silver screen and later big screen in Indonesia since as early as 1934.² “Madame White Snake” also came in the form of a Hong Kong television series “The White Snake Legend” which was aired on local television station Surya Citra Televisi (SCTV) in 1994. “The White Snake Legend”, starring Angie Chiu and Cecilia Yip, was a big hit all over Indonesia. Its soundtracks were re-recorded in Indonesian by child and adult singers such as Jane Allan and Nia Lavenia. Today, many people reminisce about the series on nostalgia websites.

The fact that the year 1998 saw a huge massacre that killed many Chinese Indonesians and pushed the surviving ones out of Indonesia does not stop Chinese influence from gaining more prominence. Only four years after the massacre that also drove the 32-year New Order regime to an end, and two years after the reinstatement of Chinese New Year celebration by President Abdurrahman Wahid in 2000, East Asian entertainment gained the spotlight after many years of being perceived as lower class entertainment. This was started by the huge popularity of Taiwanese television series “Meteor Garden.” The popularity of “Meteor Garden” surpassed that of “White Snake Legend”, in the sense that leading men of the series, four young men in a boy group called F4, were invited to have a concert in Indonesia in 2003. The fashion and hair styles of series’ cast also took the country by storm, being adopted by Indonesian celebrities, and in turn copied by not only Chinese Indonesian youth in Chinatowns but also non-Chinese Indonesian elite technocrats.

With this ever-growing Chinese influence, which was also seen in the rise of Mandarin language news programs such as Metro Xinwen on local news channel Metro TV, the Indonesian government realized that they could no longer deny the power of China or anything that represents it. In 1998, The Ministry of Education and Culture included

² Miscbach Yusa Biran, Sejarah Film 1900-1950: Bikin Film di Jawa (Komunitas Bambu: Depok, 2009) 148

Mandarin in school curriculum, and this was enthusiastically adopted by not only Christian schools with predominantly Chinese Indonesian students but also Muslim schools. In addition to that, Confucius Institute, a center for Chinese culture with offices all over the world, started partnerships in Indonesia in 2007. Thus far, Confucius Institute has partnered with seven universities in six major cities in Indonesia, namely Jakarta, Malang and Surabaya in East Java, Pontianak in West Kalimantan, Makassar in South Sulawesi and Bandung in West Java. This writing will look specifically at the partnership between Confucius Institute with Universitas Al-Azhar Indonesia (Al-Azhar University Indonesia (henceforth UAI)) in Jakarta and Universitas Muhammadiyah Malang (Muhammadiyah University Malang (henceforth UMM.))³

This essay looks at the possibility of the Chinese government's intention to penetrate the Muslim majority of Indonesian citizens through partnerships between Confucius Institute and the afore-mentioned Muslim universities, in an attempt to answer the research question of how Confucius Institute plays a role in improving China's image in Indonesia. It goes without saying that even though many Chinese Indonesians have lived in Indonesia for generations, many of whom have adopted Indonesian last names and no longer speak any Chinese dialect, the image of China that native Indonesians have is linked to their perception of the ethnic Chinese at home. The essay will be employing an in-depth look into the brief history of how Chinese Indonesians came into existence, Chinese influence and how 32 years of ban against it by the New Order regime have resulted in how the Chinese Indonesians have been perceived by the predominantly Muslim native Indonesians. Last but not least, this writing will also probe into the possibility that a famous hadith by the Prophet Muhammad which urged Muslims of his time to "seek knowledge even unto China" is used by the Chinese government to push Confucius Institute partnerships with two of Indonesia's prominent Muslim universities.

BRIEF HISTORY OF ETHNIC CHINESE IN INDONESIA

Before we delve into the brief history of ethnic Chinese in Indonesia, this part's coverage is limited to the provinces of Banten, Jakarta and West Kalimantan. The Chinese Indonesians in these provinces are representative of two faces of the ethnic Chinese, and said

³ About Confucius Institute/Classroom. (2016, June 24). Retrieved from http://english.hanban.org/node_10971.htm

two faces are nothing alike. The majority of native Indonesians are aware of only one of those faces, and this fact has led to many hatred-based crimes against the ethnic Chinese of which the 1998 massacre is just one example. In other words, the native Indonesians perceive their Chinese descended counterparts as rich, only caring about money, scheming and far from patriotic. Couple that already derogatory image with the perception of People's Republic of China (henceforth PRC) which is closed, underdeveloped, mysterious and having a low taste in practically every aspect in life, such as modern architecture and fashion, and you get an idea of why the Chinese Indonesians are in a class of their own that seems impenetrable and inferior to the native Indonesians. The closed and underdeveloped image of PRT especially derived from communism which was constantly put in a negative light by the New Order regime following a 1965 coup that killed seven military generals and overthrew President Soekarno, who was on friendly terms with both Beijing and Pyongyang and was also particularly close to Partai Komunis Indonesia (Indonesian Communist Party (henceforth PKI.))

This afore-mentioned Chinese influence was brought by a number of Chinese immigrants who landed on Indonesia, which was known as Nusantara before the Dutch occupation and The Dutch East Indies under the Dutch. According to Sinologist Leo Suryadinata in his book "Pribumi Indonesians, The Chinese Minority and China" (1978), the earliest recorded wave of Chinese immigrants took place in 1293. This first wave of Chinese immigrants was actually an extension of Kublai Khan's army with the intension of conquering the Java islands which were ruled by the Singasari kingdom. At the time of the arrival of Kublai Khan's soldiers, the Singasari kingdom's reign was coming to an end as it was defeated by the Majapahit kingdom. The Majapahit kingdom did not let the Chinese intervene in politics, and instead it reduced the roles of these immigrants to mere trade partners. As traders, Chinese immigrants introduced to the kingdom many things, including coins.⁴

Historical records also note that the Java islands were not the only destination for the Chinese. Many political marriages took place in other parts of Nusantara between Chinese women and local kings. One such marriage was that of King Jaya Pangus of Bali and Chinese maiden Kang Tjin We, which occurred in the 13th century. This marriage resulted in the

⁴ Leo Suryadinata, Pribumi Indonesians, Chinese Minority and China (Heinemann: London, 1978) 78-97

assimilation of Chinese and Balinese cultures which still can be seen today, examples of which include the male and female barong landung (Balinese puppets.) The male barong landung typically has dark skin and big, round eyes, while the female one has lighter skin of yellow undertone and slanting eyes. Many more marriages happened, albeit not political, between Chinese men and local maidens when in the 15th century a flotilla of ships under the leadership of Admiral Cheng Ho of the early Ming dynasty washed ashore in many parts of Nusantara on a naval expedition. It is very much notable that the descendants of these marriages in Tangerang, Banten province, live by way of farming and preserving many traditions that are now no longer observed even in PRT, such as the *hwa kun* dress worn by brides. It is also notable that because these Chinese descents in Banten have been farmers since their ancestors first set foot in the province, they know no other way to live besides farming. With their closest neighboring province, Jakarta, rapidly and constantly expanding their megapolitan development, fear that their lands will be sabotaged by developers for the construction of malls and apartments is always looming. In fact, many Chinese Indonesians in Banten, who are also known as “Cina Benteng”, have already had their lands sabotaged or were forced to sell their lands to developers and as a result they had to try their hands on other means of living, such as selling food or opening car repair shops, to no avail or at best moderate success.⁵

According to Benny G. Setiono in his book “Tionghoa dalam Pusaran Politik (Ethnic Chinese in Indonesian Politics, 2008), the growth of Batavia, which is now known as Jakarta, as the center of Dutch power in the 17th century cannot only be attributed to the work of Governor Jan Pieterszoen Coen. As assistant merchant of the Vereenigde Oost Indische Compagnie (United East India Company (VOC)), Coen wrote to the VOC board of directors upon returning from his first journey to Nusantara that there was a famous Chinese figure in Batavia that the local merchants trusted in terms of negotiations with foreign merchants. That famous Chinese was Souw Beng Kong, and soon after Coen was named Governor of Batavia, on October 11 1619 Souw Beng Kong was appointed Captain of Kong Koan (Chinese Council.) Captain Souw’s expertise in being the middle man between local merchants and Western ones gained VOC monopoly over the trade of spices, hence VOC’s expanded scope from South Africa and South America to Asia. As an act of gratitude, Governor Coen granted

⁵ Ibid

Captain Souw and his Chinese subjects freedom to build houses and shops anywhere, instead of confining them to certain areas.⁶

The remainder of shops the Chinese of Captain Souw's time can still be seen today in Glodok, West Jakarta, which is known as a center of electronics. Glodok is part of Jakarta's Chinatown or *tang jie ren* (Santosa, 2012.) Chinatown in Jakarta spans mostly from West to North Jakarta and includes Glodok, Pinangsia, Mangga Dua, Pantai Indah Kapuk (PIK), Pecenongan, Pancoran and Bandengan. In Pancoran, one can easily find traditional Chinese pharmacies that have been around for generations. The rise of global economy following the end of World War I allowed not only pharmacies and restaurants to flourish, but also cafes which also moonlighted as night clubs. One such famous cafe-cum-night club was Waroeng Shanghai which was run Shanghai native Chan Mo Sang and his Betawi (indigenous Jakartan) wife Siti Zaenab. Waroeng Shanghai boasted high class patrons as it was also famous for its singers and bar hostesses who were imported directly from China and Japan.⁷

The economic rise of Jakarta in the 1920s and 1930s, which spread to many other major cities in the Dutch East Indies such as Medan in North Sumatera, attracted a number of immigrants from rural China who would later become moguls that contributed significantly to the development of post-independence Indonesia. One such immigrant was Lim Sioe Liong, who hailed from Fuqing in the Fujian province. He first arrived in Medan with his older brother in 1936 to get involved in the peanut oil trade before trying his hands on the clove market. He later also expanded his business to medical equipment procurement and soon he supplied medical equipments and medicine for Indonesian soldiers fighting against the Dutch in the 1948 revolution. It was during this time that he got to know then Mayor General Soeharto and the two became best friends. In 1952, Liem, who later adopted an Indonesian name Sudono Salim, moved to Jakarta and established Bank Central Asia (BCA), which is now the largest private bank in Indonesia. Liem's business empire extended to food company Indofood and private television station Indosiar, and after his death in 2012 said business empire has been run by his youngest son, Anthony Salim. Liem's rise to prominence

⁶ Benny G. Setiono. *Tionghoa dalam Pusaran Politik* (Transmedia Pustaka: Jakarta, 2008) 122

⁷ Iwan Santosa. *Peranakan Tionghoa di Nusantara: Catatan Perjalanan dari Barat ke Timur* (Kompas Media Nusantara: Jakarta, 2012) 106-108

was helped in no small amount by his friendship with Mayor General Soeharto, who in 1966 took office as second President of Indonesia and ruled until 1998.⁸

With Liem Sioe Liong and many of his contemporaries such as Willem Soeryadjaya of conglomerate giant Astra International, post-independence Indonesian economy rose which affected the living standards of people, especially fellow Chinese Indonesians, in major cities in the country. However, apart from the “Cina Benteng” community in Banten, poor Chinese Indonesians can also be easily found in the West Kalimantan province.

According to MD La Ode in his book “Etnis Cina Indonesia Dalam Politik: Politik Etnis Cina Singkawang dan Pontianak di Era Reformasi 1998-2009” (Ethnic Chinese in Indonesian Politics: Ethnic Chinese in Singkawang and Pontianak in Reformation Era 1998-2009, 2012), Singkawang, a small town in West Borneo, was a favourite transit for Chinese merchants bound for Monterado, Italy, in the 17th century. As time went by, many of these merchants settled down as farmers in the city, which was at that time nameless and also rich with gold powder. The name “Singkawang” derived from San Keuw Jong, which was given by the Chinese merchants.⁹

Still according to La Ode, as of 2006, the percentage of Singkawang residents including its ethnic Chinese who attended middle school stood at 50.09% and those who were lucky enough to attend high school stood at an even smaller 42.49%. The number of school drop-outs in Singkawang was very large that young female Chinese Indonesians resorted to becoming mail order brides for middle lower class Taiwanese men. The match-making between Chinese-Indonesian girls from Singkawang and Taiwanese men started in the early 1980s, and these marriages do indeed help rise the economy of the small West Borneo city. Singkawang has seen the rise of internet cafes which enabled families to communicate with their relatives in Taiwan and stores that sell pirated movies on digital versatile disc (DVD), as Singkawang girls married to Taiwanese men commonly send electronic goods such as DVD players to their families.¹⁰

⁸ Eddy Soetriyono. Kisah Sukses Liem Sioe Liong (Indomedia: Jakarta, 1989) 29-34

⁹ MD La Ode. Etnis Cina Indonesia Dalam Politik: Politik Etnis Cina Singkawang dan Pontianak di Era Reformasi 1998-2009 (Yayasan Obor Indonesia: Jakarta, 2012) 83-92

¹⁰ Ibid

However, not all of this kind of marriages had a happy ending. While it is true that the ethnic Chinese in Singkawang speak Hokkien just like their Taiwanese counterparts which should minimize any miscommunication, sometimes it is severe culture shocks that brought the Singkawang girls back to the poverty of their hometown. Among the causes of these culture shocks are the Taiwanese grooms who are much older, and their Singkawang brides did not know about it until their wedding day. Another common cause for the break-up of marriages between Singkawang girls and Taiwanese men is the mistreatment against the girls by their husbands' families.¹¹

While marriage to Taiwanese men is an issue more common in Singkawang than any other part of Indonesia, there is one problem that under-privileged Chinese Indonesians in any part of the country face: lack or total absence of legal documents which stands in the way of government's benefits, such as free education and free-of-charge medical check-ups, to reach them. During the New Order regime, the majority of Chinese Indonesians, due to a lot of sentiments against communist PRT, had to prove their Indonesian citizenship by presenting a Surat Bukti Kewarganegaraan Indonesia (Indonesian Citizenship Proof Document (SKBRI)) before they could enroll in schools. Many rich Chinese Indonesians bribed their way to ownership of SKBRI, but many of their less fortunate brethren were unable to do likewise and passed away seemingly stateless. Although the practice of asking Chinese Indonesians for SKBRI was officially banned by President Megawati Soekarno Putri in 2000 following the gold medal win of Chinese Indonesian badminton players Tony Gunawan and Candra Wijaya at the Sydney Summer Olympics, journalist Iwan Santosa in his 2012 book "Peranakan Tionghoa di Nusantara: Catatan Perjalanan dari Barat ke Timur" (Chinese Descendants in Nusantara: A Journey from West to East) recorded that up until 2007 many poor Chinese Indonesians were denied medical treatments due to the fact that they did not own an SKBRI. Indeed, according to Eddy Prabowo Witanto, a Sinologist at Beijing Foreign Studies University, as quoted in Santosa's book, up to 70% of all the population of Chinese Indonesians are actually poor and marginalized. Therefore, it is ironic that the privileged 30% of Chinese Indonesians are the ones responsible for the much-hated rich, greedy and apolitical image.¹²

¹¹ *ibid*

¹² Iwan Santosa. Peranakan Tionghoa di Nusantara: Catatan Perjalanan dari Barat ke Timur. (Kompas Media Nusantara: Jakarta, 2012) 18-25

THE USE OF MANDARIN IN INDONESIAN SCHOOL CURRICULUM AND THE ENTRANCE OF CONFUCIUS INSTITUTE

According to Hermina Sutami, Professor of Mandarin in The University of Indonesia's Faculty of Humanities, in her 2007 article "Kekhasan Pengajaran Bahasa Mandarin di Indonesia" (Trademarks of Mandarin Teaching in Indonesia), Mandarin teaching was resurrected in Indonesia in 1998, soon after the great massacre of ethnic Chinese in May 1998. Still according to Professor Sutami, this resurrection of Mandarin teaching after Mandarin-teaching Chinese schools were completely abolished by 1975 following a November 1957 decree that forbade any Indonesian citizen to go to Chinese schools, was a form of acknowledgement of China's rising economic power. This may as well be interpreted as Indonesia's attempt to show China and the world that Indonesia was a safe place for all the ethnics and tribes that live within it.¹³

Languages keep evolving and Mandarin is not an exception. In her article Professor Sutami notes that there have been demands in the teaching of Mandarin as a foreign language in Indonesia to be able to keep up with modern Mandarin that is widely used in businesses. This runs in contrast with the classic Mandarin that was taught in Chinese schools and departments of Chinese letters at universities. Emphasis on Mandarin teaching is not only on the ability to keep up with the language's latest development, but also on how to use it in a Mandarin-speaking society as to minimize any possibility of miscommunication. As we already know, Mandarin is spoken in big economy countries such as Singapore and Taiwan, apart from PRC itself.¹⁴

Still in her writing, Prof. Sutami, who started her Mandarin-teaching career in 1983, says that the ban against Mandarin use at schools and everyday life has caused a great lack of good quality textbooks for Mandarin as a foreign language. This lack of good Mandarin textbooks has in turn resulted in Mandarin teachers post the ban against Chinese schools who do not have any idea how best to effectively teach the language. Other than the need for good Mandarin textbooks, there is also a constant need to develop curriculum, train teachers, renew

¹³ Sutami, H (2007). Kekhasan Pengajaran Bahasa Mandarin di Indonesia. *Wacana*, vol. 9, no. 2, 222-237

¹⁴ Ibid

facilities and add new facilities. All these needs are necessary to fulfill whether Mandarin is taught as a compulsory part of a curriculum or an extra-curricular activity.

Another problem in Mandarin teaching is old generation teachers who are themselves products of Chinese schools. These teachers do not master how to write Mandarin in pinyin (Roman characters), and this mastery is necessary to teach Indonesian youngsters, whose mother tongue is Indonesian language, at an early stage. The teachers also speak Mandarin with a Javanese intonation, and most of them are now above 50 years old. The latter fact also means that these old teachers most likely grew up speaking one of the common Chinese dialects that are still spoken to date usually outside the Java islands: Hokkian, Hakka and Teochew. This makes it sensible that they are not able to speak standard Indonesian, let alone keep up with the latest development of the language which is triggered in more ways than one by the advance of technology.¹⁵

It turns out that the obstacles in teaching Mandarin at schools do not stop at old generation teachers. There are the young teachers who fled Indonesia for PRT upon the May 1998 riots. According to Professor Sutami, most of them learned Mandarin in classes that were designed for foreigners, then went on to study other subjects at university level. The weakness with this second kind of Mandarin teachers is that, while their command of Indonesian is good because they grew up speaking the language, they were not educated to become Mandarin teachers. The best kind of Mandarin teachers are those who studied in the department of Chinese letters at local universities such as The University of Indonesia, Dharma Persada University and Maranatha University, and then went on to train to become Mandarin teachers in China. These teachers have good command of standardized Indonesian and Mandarin, but they do not come in large numbers.¹⁶

At the Seminar Rumusan Politik Bahasa 1999 (The 1999 Seminar on Formulation of Language Politicization), it was decided that Mandarin would be best given starting in high school or vocational school. The aim of teaching high schoolers Mandarin is so they can communicate verbally and in writing with native Mandarin speakers about simple topics. However, the department of Mandarin letters at university level should aim to train students to be able to use Mandarin for research purposes. That is why students of Mandarin letters at

¹⁵ Ibid

¹⁶ Ibid

universities are not taught only Mandarin language but also Chinese history, culture, literature, politics and linguistics. It is interesting to learn that up to 1998, only Christian universities such as Maranatha University in Bandung, West Java, and Petra University in Surabaya, East Java, as well as secular ones such as The University of Indonesia and Dharma Persada University, both in Jakarta, have a department of Chinese letters at undergraduate level. In 2002, another secular private university in Jakarta, Bina Nusantara University, opened a department of Chinese letters, and five years later Ma Chung University in Malang, East Java, followed suit.¹⁷

This is where Confucius Institute came, nine years after the 1998 massacre and seven years after President Abdurrahman Wahid issued the Presidential Decree no. 6 year 2000 that allowed Indonesians of Chinese descent not only to celebrate Chinese New Year but also to learn Mandarin and other aspects of their ancestral land. The signing of Confucius Institute in Indonesia was held on September 28 2007 under then Ambassador of China to Indonesia Lan Lijun. Confucius Institute was brought to Indonesia by the partnership of The Office of Chinese Language Council International (Hanban) and The Jakarta Chinese Language Teaching Center. In 2011 that Confucius Institute partnered with UAI and opened an office on the UAI campus. Three years later, in 2014, Confucius Institute partnered with another Muslim university in Indonesia, this time it was UMM in Malang, East Java. UMM is the second partner university in Malang for Confucius Institute, since earlier that same year the institute opened a partnership with Universitas Negeri Malang (Malang State University.) Other than these three universities, Confucius Institute partners with Maranatha University in Bandung, Tanjungpura University in Pontianak, Hasanuddin University in Makassar and Universitas Negeri Surabaya (Surabaya State University (UNESA)) in Surabaya.¹⁸ As already mentioned in the introduction part, this essay will only observe Confucius Institute's partnership with UAI and UMM as the PRT government's attempt to penetrate the Muslim majority in Indonesia.

As of October 2015, Confucius Institute at UMM has actively conducted two batches of exchange programs for students and lecturers. For example, as of October 2015 there were several lecturers from Guangzhou Normal University, Guangzhou, China, who taught

¹⁷ Ibid

¹⁸ About Confucius Institute/Classroom. (2016, June 24). Retrieved from http://english.hanban.org/node_10971.htm

Mandarin as part of UMM and Confucius Institute's Chinese Corner program. There were also five students from Tongren University, Guizhou, China, who studied Indonesian language and culture at UMM for a semester. Other programs held by UMM and Confucius Institute include guidance to scholarships in China for students and lecturers, a summer camp that is held every June at which participants are taught Chinese songs and dances and celebration of the anniversary of Confucius Institute that is held annually as well.¹⁹

Meanwhile, Confucius Institute at UAI since its start in 2011 has held a number of programs including a Chinese proficiency competition that was held in November 2015. This competition, which was divided into several sections such as Mandarin-Indonesian translation, Mandarin calligraphy and recitation, attracted many contestants not only from UAI but also from other universities in Jakarta. Winners of each section were awarded free-of-charge participation in the 2016 Confucius Institute Summer Camp at The Sun Yat Sen University, Guangdong, China, which is still going on at the time of writing from June 15-30 2016.²⁰

Seen from the many education and cultural programs run by Confucius Institute at both UMM and UAI, it is sufficient to say that Confucius Institute has fulfilled the purpose of familiarizing potential Mandarin teachers with Chinese culture by enabling them to interact with qualified native Mandarin speaker teachers from China without leaving Indonesia and helping them secure scholarships for further studies in China. It also fulfills the institute's missions set by the government of China to promote Chinese language and culture and facilitate global cultural exchanges. From here, we will move on to discuss how the government of PRT has been using Confucius Institute's partnership with UAI and UMM to improve PRT's image in the eyes of native Indonesians, who are mostly of the Muslim faith.

CONFUCIUS INSTITUTE, MUSLIM UNIVERSITIES AND A FAMOUS HADITH ON CHINA

¹⁹ UMM-Confucius Institute China Strengthen Strategic Partnership. (2016, June 24.) Retrieved from <http://www.umm.ac.id/en/umm-news-4927-umm-confucius-institute-cina-perkuat-kemitraan-strategis.html>

²⁰ Pusat Bahasa Mandarin at University of Al-Azhar Indonesia Hosts Competitions of Association for Promotion of Chinese Language Teaching in Indonesia. (2016, June 24). Retrieved from http://english.hanban.org/article/2015-11/18/content_624716.htm.

It is not a secret that many aspects of the Chinese culture do not sit well with Islam. For instance, many Chinese dishes contain pork and pork is considered *haram* (forbidden) in Islam. The act of worshipping ancestors also does not sit well with the Muslims, as in Islam Allah is the only almighty one and a believer should not under any circumstance worship any other deity besides Allah. Politically, another put-off for Muslims anywhere to see PRT favorably is the way the PRT government has treated the minority Uighur Muslims, which is laden with discrimination under the guise of anti separatism and anti terrorism law.²¹

To understand the principles that base the partnership between Confucius Institute and UMM as well as UAI, we need to take a look at Confucius Institute's vision and mission. As already mentioned in an earlier part of this essay, it is easily found on any Confucius Institute page hosted on the website of each of their partner universities all around the world that it aims to promote the international teaching of Chinese language and culture as well as facilitate global cultural exchanges. Then, let us look at the teaching of Confucius, the famous Chinese philosopher that is the namesake of the institute. Confucius' teachings are put in a book believed to have been written or at least edited by Confucius himself called "The Five Classics."²²

Basically there are two parts of the Confucian teachings: Social Teachings which deal with one's conduct in the society and Political Teachings which deal with the art of governance and the proper relationship between a ruler and his subjects. Confucian teachings emphasize on the importance of education to reach proper conduct in both the society and governance. The first principle of the Social Teachings is that humans should treat other human beings the way one wishes to be treated. In treating others the way he wants to be treated, a human being must avoid self aggrandizement and instead practice altruism and self restraint. In both Social Teachings and Political Teachings, Confucian teachings teach that humans must be true to their social designations in life, for example a father has to do all he can to maintain his power as a father by fulfilling his responsibilities to his wife and children, a king must show all his kingly might by providing for and protecting his subjects, so on and so forth. As for children, one of the ways that a child must do to fulfill his responsibilities to his parents is by applying filial piety or paying back the kind deeds that parents did in raising

²¹ Crane, B. (August 22, 2014). A Tale of Two Chinese Muslim Minorities. Retrieved from <http://thediplomat.com/2014/08/a-tale-of-two-chinese-muslim-minorities/>

²² iTeachings of Confucius. (2016, June 24.) Retrieved from <http://confucius-1.com/teachings/>

the child. Filial piety does not stop when parents pass away, as acts of worshipping ancestors such as giving food offerings at Chinese New Year also count as filial piety. Other than fulfilling responsibilities, this maintenance of power is shown as well by rituals such as capping (coming of age celebration), wedding, sacrifices, mourning rites, feasts and interviews.²³

One thing that has made the Chinese culture a great one for centuries is that in Confucian teachings anyone who wishes to master an art must learn it thoroughly and classically from an expert of that art. Education system is also based on merits, and one practice for recruiting civil servants in China was by asking applicants to take examinations held by the government. This practice is still applied in the modern-day PRT and has also been adopted by many countries including Indonesia. One proof of the greatness of Chinese culture from the past is noodles that were adopted by Italian seafarer Marco Polo from 17 years of living in China from 1275 to 1292. Another proof would have to be the ceramic wares that are called “china” in the English language in homage to its country of origin, whose trademark blue patterns have been heavily copied by the Dutch of The Netherlands in Europe.

These two proof and many more were the reason why Islam’s main prophet, Muhammad (570 AD-632 AD), suggested the Muslims of his time to seek knowledge even unto China. Although there have been debates on whether or not Prophet Muhammad actually said that hadith (the prophet’s saying) and those who believe that he did interpret the hadith as urging Muslims to go outside their comfort zone to seek knowledge but not necessarily to China, the fact remains that even by the Prophet’s lifetime the greatness of the Han dynasty which spanned from 206 BC to 220 AD had been very much widespread that modern historians consider the Han era the golden age of ancient China. The Han dynasty saw the development and eventual use of paper, water clocks, sundials, astronomical instruments and the seismograph, and its ruled areas covered the present-day Vietnam and Korea (both North and South.) This dynasty also recorded no less than 55 envoys from Central Asia, a direct contact with Emperor Marcus Aurelius Antonius from Rome and trade volumes that included wine, spices, woolen fabrics and ivory. Not coincidentally, it was the

²³ Ibid

Han dynasty that instated Confucianism as a state religion, and as a result the strong governance of the dynasty relied on the educated class.²⁴

It is also interesting and important to note that Confucian teachings and Muslim ones share some things in common. Among those commonalities is a child's responsibility to his parents which, as already mentioned, is known in Confucian teachings as filial piety. Islam has its own version of filial piety which is recorded in several verses, namely the 23rd and 24th verses of Al-Isra, as well as the 151st verse of Al-An'am. The facts that the greatness of China had been internationally widespread by the lifetime of Prophet Muhammad, apart from the possibility that he might not have issued the hadith which urged his followers to seek knowledge in China, and that Confucian teachings and Islam have some things in common should be a good groundwork for Confucius Institute's partnership with UAI and UMM in Indonesia. It also lays the groundwork for why Indonesians, particularly the Muslim majority, should look away from the bad stereotype of the Chinese Indonesians and learn the makings behind the "rich" part of the stereotype.

CONCLUSION

Confucius Institute was opened by the government of PRT in 2004, while the bilateral relations between the country and Indonesia has run since 1950. In the 12 years since its establishment, Confucius Institute has partnered with about hundreds of universities in the world including the seven in Indonesia. Among these partners are countries with Muslim majority other than Indonesia such as Malaysia and Jordan. These other Muslim majority countries are also important to PRT, but Indonesia is unique because looking back at history, according to American historian Merle Ricklefs in his book "Islamization and Its Opponents in Java" (2012), contrary to popular belief that Islam was brought to Indonesia by Gujarati merchants, Islam was also brought to Indonesia by Chinese merchants under Admiral Cheng Ho in the 15th century. Ricklefs argues that these merchants went through the silk and ceramic routes on their way to Nusantara and had a transit in Mecca, Saudi Arabia, where

²⁴ Han Dynasty (206 BC-220 AD). (2016, June 25). Retrieved from http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/hand/hd_hand.htm

they extended their stay up to a few years and converted to Islam before resuming their journey.²⁵

This argument is not baseless, as amongst evidence of Chinese Muslims' existence in Indonesia dating back to the 15th century are the graves of Admiral Cheng Ho's right hand man Sam Po Soei Soe and his wife, a local Sundanese woman named Siti Wati. Both Sam Po Soei Soe and Siti Wati were Muslims, but their graves were located inside a temple in Ancol, North Jakarta. Restaurants and hawkers surrounding the temple do not sell food containing pork because other than the Chinese Indonesians who come to the temple to pray, there are also many Muslims who regularly come to pay homage to Sam Po Soei Soe and Siti Wati.²⁶

All this historical evidence of Islam being brought to Indonesia by not only Gujarati merchants but also Chinese ones, the similarities between Confucian teachings and Muslim teachings, as well as the strong possibility that the Prophet Muhammad did indeed suggest the Muslims during his lifetime to seek knowledge even unto China are enough reasons for the government of PRT to try to penetrate the Muslim majority of Indonesia to improve its image. The current timing is deemed the best one as Indonesian Muslims, especially the ones in the capital city of Jakarta, are facing a phenomenon never before seen in Indonesian politics: having a Chinese Indonesian and Christian governor, Basuki Tjahaya Purnama, who is also currently running for a second term of 2017-2022. Purnama, who is better known amongst his subjects by his Chinese nick name Ahok, is perhaps the most controversial political figure to ever grace Jakarta if not the whole Indonesia. There is no middle ground for Purnama, who previously served as Mayor of South Sumatera's Bangka Belitung: people either love him or hate him, and those who hate him justify their hatred on all the bad stereotypes of a Chinese that they deem Purnama to possess: rich even before his post as a Bangka Belitung mayor, scheming, greedy and rude.

Thus far, Confucius Institute's attempts to engage Indonesian Muslims in getting to know China and Chinese culture through partnership with UMM and UAI are gradually gaining fruit. The national scale "Chinese Bridge" competition that was held by Confucius Institute and UAI on May 17 2015 attracted many student contestants from 15 provinces in

²⁵ Merle Ricklefs. *Islamisation and Its Opponents in Java: A Political, Cultural and Religious History, c. 1930 to the Present.* (NUS Press: Singapore, 2012) 64-70

²⁶ Iwan Santosa. *Peranakan Tionghoa di Nusantara: Catatan Perjalanan dari Barat ke Timur.* (Kompas Media Nusantara: Jakarta, 2012) 165-169

Indonesia. The competition included calligraphy writing and story-telling in Mandarin and amongst the winners was Muhammad Nawwar Syarif from Ar-Risalah High School in Kediri, East Java. Other competitions held by UAI and Confucius Institute, such as “Micro Teaching Competition” that was held on February 28 2015, also successfully attracted many teacher contestants including those from Muslim schools.²⁷ At this stage, it is too early to judge whether the PRT government’s efforts to penetrate the Indonesian Muslim majority through partnerships between Confucius Institute with Muslim universities has been successful or not. However, there is a confidence that with the growing number of educated Indonesian Muslims, they will at least at one point be exposed to Chinese culture beyond interaction with Chinese Indonesians, and with this exposure they will consciously or subconsciously realize one more thing that Islamic teachings and Confucian teachings have in common: the urge to seek knowledge relentlessly, as also stated in many verses of The Koran such as the 11th verse of Al-Mujadalah and the 122nd verse of At-Taubah.

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²⁷ Micro Teaching Competition for Local Teaching Teachers Jointly Held by Pusat Bahasa Mandarin at University of Al-Azhar Indonesia and Centre for Development and Empowerment of Language Teachers and Education Personnel of the Ministry of Education and Culture of Indonesia. (2016, June 25). Retrieved from http://english.hanban.org/article/2015-03/25/content_583503.htm

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