

Cheng Hoo Mosque: Assimilating Chinese Culture, Distancing it from the State

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Abstract

Tight state control over Indonesian ethnic Chinese under the New Order (1966-98) resulted in their political exclusion. It also manipulated local perceptions of them, identifying the ethnic Chinese solely with economic activities. With the collapse of the New Order and the lessening of state control over all social groups, attempts have been made to re-establish long-suppressed ethnic Chinese identities in Indonesia. One of the best examples of this is the foundation of the Cheng Hoo Mosque in Surabaya by the PITI, an organisation of ethnic Chinese Muslim groups in East Java. This study examines the relationship between the Cheng Hoo Mosque and the state. It asks whether the mosque is oriented only towards ethnic Chinese Muslims or whether it is open to all, enabling an acculturation between Chinese and local Javanese cultural identities. It also examines whether the mosque fulfils only the spiritual needs of ethnic Chinese Muslims, or whether it also helps to realise their social capital and economic aims. Finally, the paper asks whether ethnic Chinese Muslims have used the establishment of the Cheng Hoo Mosque as a means of protecting themselves from anti-Chinese sentiment.

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Glossary

Al-Irsyad	a Muslim social group especially for Arab descendants, which follows an Arab-centred stream of Islamic thought propounded by Sheikh Ahmad Syurkati
<i>bahtsul masa'il</i>	a forum of Muslim scholars specialising in Islamic jurisprudence which issues an Islam legal view on certain issues
Baperki	<i>Badan Permusyawaratan Kewarganegaraan Indonesia</i> (Consultative Bureau for Indonesian Citizenship) – created in 1954 to promote citizenship based on equal rights and democratic principles
Bakom-PKB	<i>Badan Komunikasi Penghayatan Kesatuan Bangsa</i> (Communications Bureau for Comprehending National Unity)
<i>bedug</i>	drum used for calling to prayer in the north of the mosque
<i>Chung Hwa Hui</i> (CHH)	an exclusive ethnic Chinese organisation affiliated with the Dutch colonial administration in the East Indies
CSIS	The Centre for Strategic and International Studies
<i>Dispencahil</i>	<i>Dinas Kependudukan dan Catatan Sipil</i> (Local Department of Population and Civil Service Affairs)
<i>fatwa</i>	A decree based on an opinion of Islamic law
Golkar	Partai Golongan Karya (Party of the Functional Groups) – ruling party during Suharto's regime
<i>haram</i>	religiously forbidden
<i>imam</i>	Muslim religious leader
<i>Jajasan Pembinaan Kesatuan Bangsa</i>	National Unity Development Foundation
<i>jama'ah</i>	'community', used specifically to a community or group of Muslim believers
JIAD	<i>Jaringan Islam Anti-Diskriminasi</i> (Anti-Discrimination Islam Network) – Surabaya non-governmental advocacy organisation

<i>Sholat jum'at</i>	Friday prayer
<i>Kasdam</i>	<i>Kepala Staf Daerah Militer</i> (Chief of Staff of the District Army)
<i>khatib</i>	Muslim preacher
KSK	<i>Kartu Susunan Keluarga</i> (identity card for family membership)
KTP	<i>Kartu Tanda Penduduk</i> (identity card for residency)
<i>Kyai</i>	Muslim scholar
<i>Mimbar</i>	a pulpit used by the <i>imam</i> or <i>khatib</i> to deliver a sermon
Muhammadiyah	<i>Persyarikatan Muhammadiyah</i> (Followers of Islam) – Islamic organisation in Indonesia, founded 1912, with some 29 million followers today
New Order	Period of rule in Indonesia under Suharto (1966-98)
NU	<i>Nahdlatul Ulama</i> – large Islamic organisation in Indonesia. <i>Nahdlatul Ulama</i> (NU), a conservative, traditionalist Sunni Islam group was formed in 1926. Its traditionalist nature is evident in the name <i>Ulama</i> , referring to the scholar-preachers of Islam trained in Qur'anic studies
<i>Pengajian</i>	a social gathering to learn religious teachings
Persis	<i>Persatuan Islam</i> (the Islamic Association) – initially began with a small group of Indonesian Muslim activists holding 'radical-revolutionary' Islamic beliefs; initially promoted Islamic modernism, but later favoured a form of Islamic neo-fundamentalism
PIT	<i>Persatuan Islam Tionghoa</i> (the Islamic Ethnic Chinese Association) – established in 1953; merged with PTM to become PITI in 1961
PITI	<i>Pembina Iman Tauhid Islam</i> (The Supervisory Board for Islamic Faith and Theology) – an organisation of ethnic Chinese Muslim groups
Pribumi	term for indigenous Indonesian population
PTM	<i>Persatuan Tionghoa Muslim</i> (Muslim Ethnic Chinese Association) – headed by Gong Tjing; merged with PIT in 1961 to become PITI
PKI	<i>Partai Komunis Indonesia</i> (Indonesian Communist Party)
Ramadan	Islamic month of fasting
<i>Reformasi</i>	The period of reform in Indonesia following the end of Suharto's authoritarian rule in 1998
<i>shari'ah</i>	Islamic law
<i>ustadz (m) / ustadzah (f)</i>	an Indonesian Islamic religious title for a preacher or religious scholar
YHMCHI	<i>Yayasan Haji Muhammad Cheng Hoo Indonesia</i> (The Indonesian Foundation of Haji Muhammad Cheng Hoo) – the mosque's organising committee
<i>Zalim</i>	Despotic

Cheng Hoo Mosque: Assimilating Chinese Culture, Distancing it from the State

By Akh. Muzakki

1. Introduction

During the New Order period (1966-98), the state had tight control over the ethnic Chinese in Indonesia. During this period Suharto manipulated local perceptions of the ethnic Chinese, ensuring they were identified solely with economic activities. Following their effective political exclusion for more than a generation, ethnic Chinese identities are no longer clearly delineated.

After the collapse of the New Order in 1998, state control over the ethnic Chinese lessened, as it did over other social groups. Attempts have been made since then to re-establish long-suppressed ethnic Chinese identities in Indonesia. Consequently, alternative discourses of identity have emerged, ranging from political and religious identifications to those of a more socio-cultural nature. One of the best examples of this re-establishment of ethnic Chinese identities in Indonesia is the foundation of the Cheng Hoo Mosque in Surabaya by the PITI of East Java. This study examines the relationship between the Cheng Hoo Mosque and the state. It investigates how the establishment of the mosque has enabled Chinese Muslims in Indonesia, and particularly in Surabaya, to negotiate their identities as Muslims and as ethnic Chinese, and as well as their relationship to the state's hegemony over Chinese political rights.

The functions performed by the Cheng Hoo Mosque are of particular interest. Firstly, the paper asks whether the mosque is oriented only towards ethnic Chinese Muslims or whether it is open for all, enabling an acculturation between Chinese and local Javanese cultural identities. Secondly, it examines how ethnic Chinese Muslims, the majority within the *jama'ah* (community of followers of Islam), perceive the mosque: whether they see it as a means only of fulfilling their spiritual needs, or whether it also helps to realise their social capital and economic aims. Thirdly, the paper asks whether ethnic Chinese Muslims have used the establishment of the Cheng Hoo Mosque as a means of protecting themselves from anti-Chinese sentiment; this erupted, for example, in the days of anti-Chinese rioting immediately after Suharto was toppled.

This paper is based on both a review of secondary literature and primary field research. The former involved reviewing the data available on the establishment of the mosque, notably the ideas of the mosque's founding fathers, its committees, and its *jama'ah*. The data was drawn from books, magazines and the internet. In-depth interviews were also conducted with leading figures from the various mosque committees and from the PITI of East Java, looking in depth at the role played by the mosque for its *jama'ah*.

The paper is organised as follows. Section 2 discusses the scholarly debate over the role of China in spreading Islam into Indonesia. Section 3 examines the socio-political life of the ethnic Chinese in general, and the ethnic Chinese Muslim minority in particular, in the period after the 1965 Communist coup. Section 4 analyses the establishment of the Cheng Hoo Mosque by ethnic Chinese Muslims in Surabaya; and Sections 5 and 6 look at how these ethnic Chinese Muslims negotiate their own identity as both Muslims and as ethnic Chinese, through the functioning of the Cheng Hoo Mosque in relation to local culture and to the state. Section 7 concludes.

2. China and Islam in Indonesia

The role of China in the arrival of Islam to Indonesia has triggered considerable academic debate. It is commonly believed that the Arab world, and not China, influenced the spread of Islam to Indonesia, where it is now the majority religion. As with other Asian regions, it is argued that Arab and Persian merchants initially introduced Islam into the world's largest Muslim nation, setting up communities of foreign Muslim merchants in the port cities across the archipelago (see Ricklefs, 1979).

This commonly-held belief has been challenged by some scholars, who argue that China played a pivotal role in the spread of Islam to Indonesia through trade and commerce (see, for example, Parlindungan, 1964; Muljana, 1968; and Al Qurtubi, 2003). While Parlindungan and Muljana emphasise the role of Chinese Muslims in the spread of Islam into Indonesia in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries,¹ Al Qurtubi goes further. He identifies Admiral Cheng Hoo as a key figure. Cheng Hoo was leader of the Yongle Emperor's massive expeditions into several parts of Southeast Asia, including Java.² These expeditions should be seen against the background of the rise of the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644). The regime offered Muslims in China greater latitude to establish themselves in society and to strengthen their political and economic position. It also sought to strengthen economic ties between China and other polities; a policy which succeeded in the case of Java.³

Al Qurtubi's position within the scholarly debate is crucial: he is the strongest advocate of the theory that China played an important role in the spread of Islam to Indonesia, and especially to Java.⁴ Al Qurtubi strengthens and develops his argument using four historical sources: statements from foreign adventurers; Chinese historical texts; local Javanese written texts and oral traditions; and an examination of the historical buildings and monuments found in Java. Using the testimonies of adventurers such as Ma Huan from China,⁵ Loedewicks from the Netherlands,⁶ and Ibn Battuta from Maghreb (Morocco),⁷ Al Qurtubi argues that Muslims from Canton, Zangzhou and Quanzhou (the so-called 'Muslim areas of China') followed the expedition of Cheng Hoo to Java, settling in northern Javanese coastal towns such as Gresik, Tuban, and Surabaya in the early fifteenth century, and later spreading into Semarang, Cirebon, Jakarta and Banten.⁸ He uses the work of L. Hsiang Lin on the Muslims in Canton⁹ to support his argument, suggesting that they were early converts to Islam.¹⁰

¹ Parlindungan's work was critiqued by Hamka (1974), a Muslim intellectual from West Sumatra. Because of its centrality to the debate on the coming of Islam to Indonesia, Muljana's work was reprinted in 2005 with an introduction by one of Indonesia's leading historians, A. W. Adam.

² The Yongle Emperor (also known as Chengzu) was the third emperor of the Ming Dynasty, who reigned from 1402 to 1424. A discussion of Cheng Hoo's role in the spread of Islam to the Indonesian-Malay world can be found in Suryadinata (2005).

³ For more details, see Suryadinata (2005).

⁴ On the importance of Al Qurtubi in this debate, see the influential scholar N. Madjid's introductory comments in Al Qurtubi's *Arus Cina-Islam-Jawa* (Madjid, 2003: 17). See also Al Qurtubi (2003: 38-9).

⁵ A detailed discussion on Ma Huan can be found in Duyvendak (1933).

⁶ Stutterheim (1948).

⁷ For more detail of Battuta's testimony, see Ibn Battuta (1987).

⁸ Al Qurtubi (2003: 37-45).

⁹ See Hsiang Lin (1967) cited in Al Qurtubi (2003: 38).

¹⁰ Al Qurtubi (2003: 38). Al Qurtubi argument would seem to be supported by the work of de Graaf and Pigeaud on the activities of Chinese Muslims trading in fifteenth- and

Several classic Javanese historiographies are cited by Al Qurtubi as alluding to the Chinese as a key factor in the Islamisation of Java: the *Babad Tanah Djawi*, *Serat Kandaning Ringgit Purwa*, *Carita (Sadjarah) Lasem*, *Babad Cirebon* and *Hikayat Hasanuddin*. The first Muslim ruler of the Islamic Kingdom of Demak (Raden Patah, who died in 1518) is mentioned by name as a Chinese Muslim who brought Islam to Java.¹¹ Al Qurtubi also finds Chinese influence in Javanese historical buildings and monuments. These include the interior design of the ancient Mantingan mosque in Jepara, Central Java; the architecture of the minaret of the mosque at Banten; the design of the gates of the Sunan Giri sacred site complex in Gresik, East Java; and, most importantly, the construction of the Demak mosque in Central Java. All of these follow the Chinese model to some extent, and are taken as further evidence by Al Qurtubi of the Chinese key role in the spread of Islam more generally to Java.¹²

This is not to deny the role of Arabs, Persians and Gujaratis, but there was undeniably Chinese Muslim influence, notably in the northern coastal areas of Java. And Surabaya was of particular importance, being the port from which Admiral Cheng Hoo and his followers launched their expedition. Indonesia was inexorably drawn into the trade-based system which came to dominate Southeast Asia as a whole in what Reid has termed 'the age of commerce', with the social and religious changes which came in its wake.¹³

The importance of Admiral Cheng Hoo's role in the spread of Islam to Indonesia, and to Surabaya in particular, is important to some ethnic Chinese Muslims themselves. Burnadi, an Indonesian Chinese Muslim and the *imam* of the Cheng Hoo Mosque, suggests that the Admiral contributed greatly both to the Islamisation of Java and to Muslim tolerance of other religions. He maintains that Cheng Hoo, despite having many Chinese Muslims in the expedition, allowed unrestricted worship for his Confucian followers. Burnadi believes that this is why the Admiral is respected not only by ethnic Chinese Muslims but also by Chinese Confucians in Indonesia; and why his name lives on. The name Cheng Hoo is also given to several Confucian temples ('Sampokong'), such as the *kelenteng Sampokong* in Mbah Ratu of Surabaya, Tuban, and Semarang.¹⁴

3. Ethnic Chinese after the 1965 Communist Coup

Despite the Chinese contribution to the Islamicisation of Indonesia, the ethnic Chinese are still not fully socially accepted within local communities, and relations between them and local Javanese have been mixed, occasionally ending in conflict. In the early days after their arrival in Indonesia, the Chinese population interacted well with local populations: their economic dynamism boosted prosperity for all; social co-existence was established; and even inter-ethnic marriages took place. This co-existence only came under threat when the Dutch started to colonise Indonesia in the eighteenth century. Socio-political and economic jealousies arose with the Dutch policy of using the ethnic Chinese to repress local communities, and to exploit the country's economic and natural resources. For many, the Chinese became identified

sixteenth-century Java, and their impact on the spread of Islam there: see de Graaf and Pigeaud (1984).

¹¹ Al Qurtubi (2003: 39-40).

¹² Al Qurtubi (2003: 41).

¹³ Reid (1993).

¹⁴ Interview with Burnadi (28 January 2007). See also Hidayatullah (2005).

with the Dutch, creating negative feelings towards them among local communities.¹⁵ This was exacerbated by the establishment of the *Chung Hwa Hui* (CHH).¹⁶

Despite this, some ethnic Chinese were part of the attempts to achieve Indonesian independence and development. Leading figures such as Liem Koen Hian and Yap Thiam Hien¹⁷ were among the ethnic Chinese actively involved in attempts to wrest Indonesian independence from both Dutch and Japanese colonists and to develop Indonesia as a new country. Under Sukarno, their activism also reached the political arena, with many of their leaders joining the PKI (The Indonesian Communist Party) through Baperki (Consultative Bureau for Indonesian Citizenship).¹⁸

This perceived affiliation of ethnic Chinese with the PKI placed them in a difficult position after 1965,¹⁹ since the PKI were implicated in the coup which toppled Sukarno and replaced him with Suharto that year. As a result, soon after Suharto took power, he adopted a policy which restricted ethnic Chinese social and political activism. Ethnic Chinese were banned from any involvement with political parties; their social role was restricted to economic activity.

In maintaining socio-political animosity towards the perpetrators of the 1965 coup, Suharto seemed to have pointed at the ethnic Chinese, and this fed into the resentment for the group felt more broadly in Indonesian society. Most believed the PKI to have initiated and implemented the coup; while ethnic Chinese were portrayed as dominating the PKI, which was believed to be closely connected to the state communist party of China.²⁰ Thus, the ethnic Chinese found interaction with local Indonesian communities increasingly problematic.

The Suharto regime made use of this situation to consolidate its position, while the ethnic Chinese continued to suffer all kinds of social and political repression. The regime's ongoing campaign against all ethnic Chinese political activities led local people to keep an eye out for such activities, feeding into a cycle of suspicion and socio-political sentiment against the ethnic Chinese.²¹ There was scarcely any means whereby ethnic Chinese could articulate and express their socio-political interests and identity in Indonesia, including their traditional culture.²² Consequently, for more than three decades, Chinese identity become rusty and was almost lost thanks to the state repression of their socio-cultural and political activities.²³

¹⁵ For a comprehensive bibliographical discussion of the Chinese in Indonesia from the Dutch colonisation to the New Order era, see Nagelkerke (1982)

¹⁶ See Pranowo (1998: 89).

¹⁷ Liem Koen Hian (born in 1896) was editor-in-chief of Indonesian newspapers such as the Surabaya-based *Soeara Publiek* (1925-9) and the Jakarta-based *Kong Hoa Po* (1937-8). Yap Thiam Hien (born in 1913) was a critical lawyer as well as a key figure behind the establishment of Baperki. For more detailed profiles of both, see Suryadinata (1984: 102-5).

¹⁸ The fact that many leading Chinese figures within Baperki joined the PKI led *Jajasan Pembinaan Kesatuan Bangsa*, which had some active Chinese members, to regard Baperki as being a danger towards the ethnic Chinese in Indonesia. See *Jajasan Pembinaan Kesatuan Bangsa* (1965).

¹⁹ For an analysis of ethnic Chinese life in Indonesia during the turbulent 1960s, see Coppel (1975).

²⁰ This viewpoint continues to prevail, despite ongoing scholarly investigation into who exactly masterminded the 1965 coup; see for example Abu Nain (2001).

²¹ For comparison of the political position of ethnic Chinese under the New Order and in the *reformasi* era, see Kusuma and Dharma (2006).

²² Liem (2000).

²³ It should be noted, however, that with the waning power of the Suharto regime from the mid-1990s on, an increasing number of ethnic Chinese, particularly the young, started to seek out ways to practise Chinese culture, despite the ongoing repression. Dawis (2005) suggests that popular culture such as Chinese films and television series provided them with

However, Suharto was aware of ethnic Chinese skills in the economic sphere and, despite the antipathy of local Indonesians, his regime used the ethnic Chinese to strengthen its economic base and in establishing political power. In compensation, the ethnic Chinese gained certain privileges from the regime, enabling them to accumulate capital.²⁴ There was consequently a symbiotic mutualism between the Suharto regime and ethnic Chinese in strengthening both their economic bases.

As a result, during the three decades of the Suharto regime, ethnic Chinese became identified with economic success. The emergence of ethnic Chinese tycoons and conglomerates is evidence of this success,²⁵ and other sectors followed to a lesser degree. Although some ethnic Chinese continued to live in poverty, such as in Singkawang, West Kalimantan, in general the economic position of the Chinese is better than that of the Indonesian population as a whole.²⁶

Ethnic Chinese economic achievements were not reflected in the political arena. As a result of the repressive policy of the Suharto regime, no ethnic Chinese political leaders emerged in over three decades to represent Chinese cultural, ethnical, socio-political or even their economic interests, either at national or regional level. The small number of ethnic Chinese who were active in politics had to be affiliated or attached to Suharto's ruling party, Golkar. Liem Bian Kie, better known by his Indonesian name Jusuf Wanandi, was among the Chinese figures who joined Golkar, becoming a member of parliament in the period 1967-1971 and representing the party's interests.²⁷

For those ethnic Chinese interested in political participation, the only way to become involved was to join organisations that were not exclusively Chinese-oriented. Besides Golkar, there were two other organisations in which prominent ethnic Chinese figures were actively involved: the CSIS (Centre for Strategic and International Studies) and Bakom-PKB (Communications Bureau for Comprehending National Unity). Established in 1971 with a focus on the policy-oriented study of domestic and international issues,²⁸ CSIS was closely connected to the Suharto regime. Many of the key figures behind it were linked to individuals close to Suharto after his rise to power in 1966, and had been active in Golkar.²⁹ Like CSIS, Bakom-

the role models they needed as they sought to comprehend their identity as young Chinese individuals. In the *reformasi* period, Chinese identity suppressed by the previous regime, began to re-emerge and to become observable: see Turner (2003).

²⁴ New Order policies encouraged the development of a large private sector, and contributed to the rise of ethnic Chinese conglomerates, which came to dominate this sector. In running this private sector, the ethnic Chinese conglomerates (together with a select number of local businessmen) cooperated with the elite or ruling groups of New Order regime to secure their capital and businesses. See Hill (1997); Robison (1986); Robison (1996); Wibisono (1995); and Lanti (2004).

²⁵ Examples include Eka Tjipta Wijaya; Liem Sioe Liong and Mochtar Riady; Syamsul Nursalim and Prajogo Pangestu. For more detailed discussion of Chinese tycoons and conglomerates, see Suryadinata (1995).

²⁶ It is for this reason that ethnic Chinese converts to Islam tend to be ostracised by their families. They are regarded as endangering the overall societal status of the ethnic Chinese, as conversion to Islam identifies them with local Javanese, who mostly live in poverty. See Jacobsen (2003: 12). Giap (1993) shows this taking place in East Java.

²⁷ Suryadinata (1984: 105-6).

²⁸ For more detail about the focus of CSIS, see its website: www.csis.or.id.

²⁹ Key figures behind the CSIS include Jusuf Wanandi, Harry Tjan Silalahi and J. Panglaykim; the people close to Suharto with whom they were linked include Ali Moertopo, Dawoed Joesoef and L. B. Moerdani. For information on the response of local Indonesian communities to the link between the CSIS and Suharto's New Order regime, see Forum Komunikasi Pemuda Pelajar dan Mahasiswa Indonesia (1998).

PKB, which was established in December 1977, was also not a mass organisation but rather a communication centre led mainly by ethnic Chinese and organised under the auspices of the Ministry of Home Affairs. Junus Jahja, K. Sindhunata and Lo SH Ginting were among the ethnic Chinese who became leading figures within this organisation.³⁰

The repressive policy of the Suharto regime also reached into the realm of education and culture. Soon after Suharto came to power, the regime blocked the operation of a number of Chinese culture-based schools which used Chinese as the formal language of instruction,³¹ as had also occurred previously in the 1950s.³² Traditional Chinese cultural activities, including performances of the Barongsai (Lion Dance), were banned. In this situation, ethnic Chinese lost any space or opportunity to articulate their socio-cultural identity.

Soon after Suharto's ascent to power, the regime introduced the 'legalisation of five religions', a set of laws calling on all citizens to profess one of five state-sanctioned religions (Islam, Catholicism, Protestantism, Hinduism or Buddhism). Confucianism, the religion most ethnic Chinese, was not among them,³³ and ethnic Chinese were obliged by law to convert if they wished to gain state recognition and full civil rights, such as obtaining an identity card or the legalisation of their marital status. In these circumstances, many ex-communists (including some who were nominally Muslim) and ethnic Chinese linked to the Indonesian Communist Party converted to Christianity, Buddhism or Hinduism. Java provides an example of this trend in religious conversion. While fewer ethnic Chinese converted to Buddhism than to Christianity, according to Hefner, the number of converts to Christianity in the late 1960s and early 1970s reached almost two million, and to Hinduism perhaps 400,000.³⁴ In contrast, few ethnic Chinese converted from Confucianism to Islam. As a result, the number of ethnic Chinese Muslims in the first half of Suharto's regime remained stagnant, and the 'legalisation of five religions' had little impact on the number of Chinese Muslims in Indonesia, as there was almost no conversion among ethnic Chinese or ex-communists.

4. PITI and the Cheng Hoo Mosque

Following increasing ethnic Chinese conversion to religions other than Confucianism, the concept of assimilation was developed, notably by Chinese figures such as Junus Jahja and Muh Budyatna. They argued that Chinese conversion to Islam would obviate all political problems and social differentiation based on ethnicity for the Chinese in Indonesia, as they would be assimilated into the local, predominantly Muslim communities.³⁵

Conversion to Islam was regarded by some ethnic Chinese Muslims as 'a last and final act or a finishing touch of assimilation'.³⁶ Even though there are no exact figures for the number converting to Islam, it seems that conversion paved the way for the social assimilation of ethnic Chinese and local communities in Indonesia. In addition, ethnic Chinese Muslims became a subdivision of ethnic Chinese communities in Indonesia.

³⁰ Suryadinata (1984: 211-2).

³¹ Heryanto (1998).

³² Sukarno also restricted the operation of Chinese culture-based schools and their Chinese curriculum. See Suryadinata (1984: 158-62).

³³ For more details, see Suryadinata (1998); Mulkhan *et al.* (2002).

³⁴ Hefner (2003: 4).

³⁵ Suryadinata (1984: 218).

³⁶ Giap (1988: 336).

Social organisations also emerged to accommodate the interests of ethnic Chinese Muslims in Indonesia. PIT, established in 1953, and PTM, headed by Gong Tjing, were two such organisations, and they merged in 1961 to become PITI.³⁷

PITI is basically an ethnic Chinese Muslim organisation. Originally *Persatuan Islam Tionghoa Indonesia* (the Islamic Ethnic Chinese Association), it changed its name in 1972 to become *Pembina Iman Tauhid Islam* (The Supervisory Board for Islamic Faith and Theology).³⁸ This change, involving dropping the word 'Tionghoa (Chinese)' seems to have been carried out by activists in response to rising anti-Chinese sentiment in broader Indonesian society, as well as to the restrictive policy of the New Order regime on the public expression of Chinese culture, including the use of Chinese names, following the communist 1965 coup. According to Rubaidi, there is insufficient data to indicate why the change in name was effected³⁹ but he maintains that the change was carried out as a '*jaminan keamanan* (security guarantee)', a strategy for securing themselves against the anti-Chinese movement on the rise within Indonesian society. He maintains that by accentuating 'Islam' as a symbol and omitting 'Chinese' from the organisation's identity, PITI aimed to protect ethnic Chinese Muslims from any possible riots as a result of increasing anti-Chinese sentiment.⁴⁰

PITI has a similar organisational structure to other Muslim mass organisations, such as Muhammadiyah and NU, with an administration which reaches from national to local level. However, there are two significant features which mark out PITI from the others. Firstly, PITI's structure only goes to *kecamatan* (subdistrict) level, whereas the others go down to *ranting* (village) level. Secondly, PITI's organisation structure resembles an inverted pyramid, with a greater number of organisational committees at national level than at the lower level.⁴¹

The PITI of East Java is at provincial level within the overall organisational structure, and the Cheng Hoo Mosque was established under its auspices in Gading Street, Surabaya on 10 March 2002; it was formally installed on 13 May 2003. The day-to-day management of the mosque was then handed over to YHMCHI (The Indonesian Foundation of Haji Muhammad Cheng Hoo), founded by PITI of East Java to administer the mosque. The Cheng Hoo Mosque cost Rp 700 million (approximately USD 70,000) to build and is able to accommodate some 200 people. It was built on 231 m² of land at the back of the PITI of East Java's compound building, under the architectural design of Aziz Johan Arifin from Bojonegoro, East Java.⁴²

The establishment of the Cheng Hoo Mosque seems, among other things, to have been intended to demonstrate the '*kemusliman*' (Muslimness) of ethnic Chinese Muslim communities to broader Indonesian society, helping to accelerate the process of social assimilation between ethnic Chinese and local Muslim communities. In the words of Edwin Suryalaksana, the establishment of the Cheng Hoo Mosque was intended, among other things: 'in order for the [Indonesian] people to know that among ethnic Chinese there are Muslims and they also have a mosque, like other Muslim communities in Indonesia.'⁴³

³⁷ Rubaidi (1999: 130); for a historical analysis of the establishment of PITI, see Rubaidi (1999: 68-72).

³⁸ Tjeng Hien (1982: 201-2).

³⁹ Rubaidi (1999: 73).

⁴⁰ Rubaidi (1988: 74).

⁴¹ Rubaidi (1988: 80-3).

⁴² Cheng Hoo Mosque Committees, 'Spesifikasi'.

⁴³ Edwin Suryalaksana is head of the provincial branch of PITI, East Java, as well as a member of the supervisory board of the YHMCHI. The original Indonesian reads: '*supaya*

Suryalaksana's statement suggests a political motive behind the mosque's establishment. The mosque's founders appear to have aimed to achieve social harmony with the local, majority-Muslim Indonesian population. They anticipated the mosque's establishment would lead to a rise in non-discriminatory practices towards ethnic Chinese Muslims by local co-religionists, based on an explicitly shared belief in Islam. And they hoped that the bitterness of recent historical experience would not lead local communities to blindly applying anti-Chinese sentiment towards ethnic Chinese Muslims.

In an Indonesia-wide context, the Cheng Hoo Mosque represents the first ethnic Chinese mosque, promoting Chinese culture in a local context and making use of Chinese architectural design, both internally and externally. Several mosques were built before the Cheng Hoo Mosque, including the Lau Tze Mosque in Jakarta (1997), and several traditional mosques throughout Java. But there is nothing Chinese about the Lau Tza Mosque apart from its name and red-coloured walls. Neither its internal nor external architecture draws on Chinese culture and although it is located in the Chinese district of Pasar Baru, the mosque is in fact a converted commercial building.

5. The Cheng Hoo Mosque and ethnic Chinese Muslim identity: a process of indigenisation and assimilation

On 15 April 1994, during a speech given to a socio-religious event organised by the provincial branch committees of PITI of East Java and held in the Islamic Centre of Surabaya, M. Basofi Sudirman, provincial governor of East Java, called on ethnic Chinese Muslims in East Java not to worry about their social identity within the wider communities of Indonesia. And at a similar event, Sudirman said:⁴⁴

Ethnic Chinese Muslims in Indonesia have no need to be afraid of, or to worry about, revealing their Islamic identity [to others] ... If our colleagues in the ethnic Chinese Muslim community hesitate to reveal their Islamic identity, this is basically a result of the [negative] attitudes held by the wider Muslim community in Indonesia, who are still suspicious [of their belief in Islam].⁴⁵

Sudirman's words highlight the suspicion within which ethnic Chinese Muslims are held, even greater than the distrust with which the wider ethnic Chinese community is regarded. He also notes that this suspicion was not simply a result of the policies and attitudes of the bureaucracy or political elites, but is ingrained in local people (or, as they were referred to in the Suharto era, 'pribumi'), including local Muslim

masyarakat mengetahui bahwa dari kalangan Tionghoa ada yang Muslim dan mereka juga mempunyai Masjid sebagaimana masyarakat Muslim lainnya di Indonesia'. Interview with Edwin Suryalaksana (9 February 2007).

⁴⁴ The first event was the *Halal Bi Halal* (in English, a meeting for mutual forgiving) and *Silaturahmi* (literally 'strengthening the brotherhood lines'). The second was *Memupuk Rasa Persaudaraan, Keakraban dan Kepedulian Sosial* ('Cultivating the Spirit of Brotherhood, Acquaintance and Social Concern').

⁴⁵ The original Indonesian reads: '*Bagi WNI Muslim keturunan Tionghoa tak perlu takut atau khawatir dicurigai dalam menunjukkan identitas keislamannya... Bila ada teman-teman WNI Muslim keturunan Tionghoa yang merasa ragu menunjukkan identitas keislamannya, itu lebih banyak disebabkan karena perilaku umat Islam Indonesia sendiri yang seringkali masih mencurigai*'. See "Wejangan Basofi untuk Warga PITI Jatim: Islam tak Identik dengan Nama," *Semesta*, no. 37 (May 1994), 55

communities.⁴⁶ The considerable contribution to Indonesia's economy of the ethnic Chinese, a role forced on them by the New Order's repression of any political activism, has failed to protect them from social or communal problems.

The issue underlying these social problems was the continued identification of ethnic Chinese with the Communist coup of 1965. This led Indonesians in general to portray ethnic Chinese as exploitative, deceitful and dishonest, and although they had already disengaged from the political arena, the Chinese did not immediately enjoy full social acceptance.

The existence of ethnic Chinese Muslims in Indonesia still arouses suspicion among the country's wider Muslim community. The so-called 'pribumi' have not wholeheartedly accepted the existence of ethnic Chinese Muslims, tending rather to ascribe their belief in or conversion to Islam as an attempt to gain social legitimation and better access to political and economic resources.⁴⁷ Some Muslims groups further suspect ethnic Chinese of being the power behind any socio-political or economic crises that the country experiences.⁴⁸

On top of this, not only were ethnic Chinese the victims of social unrest, they also became the New Order's so-called political and economic cash cow. The regime claimed to protect ethnic Chinese against the anti-Chinese feeling and action which was prevalent even at grassroots level. Yet, the regime also exploited the Chinese economic skills and resources, forcing them to become their personal, private financiers⁴⁹ in return for 'security provision'.

Sudirman was therefore addressing a topical issue in his speech cited above, striking a cord not only with the provincial branch committees of PITI in East Java, but with ethnic Chinese Muslims as a whole. The three ideals guiding the event at which Sudirman's speech was delivered (brotherhood, acquaintance and social concern) played an important role in reducing suspicion and other social problems between ethnic Chinese Muslims and the 'pribumi'. Central to this is active ethnic Chinese Muslim involvement in assisting local Muslim communities, particularly using their economic capacity to help resolve socio-economic problems. The *reformasi* period following Suharto's fall from power in 1998 was a key moment for realising these ideals more fully and since then, socio-political suspicion towards ethnic Chinese Muslims and towards ethnic Chinese more generally has started gradually to reduce.

It should be noted, however, that in the midst of the toppling of Suharto from power in 1998, the ethnic Chinese became a major target of social unrest across Indonesia.⁵⁰ As in other large urban cities, the coastal and business city of Surabaya, East Java, witnessed social riots with ethnic Chinese as the main targets. A number of racist and criminal acts, which led to violence against human rights and humanity, such as shop looting and burning, killing and raping of the ethnic Chinese followed this unrest.

Among the most severe sites of social unrest in Surabaya were Chinese business and residential areas to the north of the city. *CNN Interactive* reported from Surabaya

⁴⁶ A detailed discussion of the rising suspicion and distrust among Indonesian communities towards ethnic Chinese can be found in Lohanda *et al.* (2002).

⁴⁷ See also Su (2006).

⁴⁸ Such suspicions are to be found in reports in the Jakarta-based Muslim magazine *Media Dakwah*. See, for example, 'Ada Konspirasi Mengarah Makar' (1998); 'Kebohongan Liem Bian Koen' (1998); 'Melawan Pengkhianat Bangsa' (1998).

⁴⁹ Nitisaputra (2002: 167) even accuses the Suharto regime of turning the ethnic Chinese and their economic capital into their '*ister-isteri simpanan* [secret wives]'.

⁵⁰ Purdey (2006).

in 1998 as follows: '...some people, believed to be non-students, attacked and looted a shopping area. They also burned down the office of the only showroom of the Timor car, the troubled automobile project run by one of Suharto's sons.'⁵¹ The mass rape and harassment of dozens of ethnic Chinese women and girls were also reported during this riot. In short, the main targets of violence during this social unrest were ethnic Chinese people, their property and belongings.

This was not the first racist and sectarian violence to take place in the northern part of Surabaya, however. In early April 1956, there was a sectarian clash driven by competition in economic activities between ethnic Chinese and ethnic Banjar in Nyamplungan, a business town in north Surabaya. In June 1996, the large-scale destruction and burning of places of worship also took place in Sidotopo, an area which administratively belongs to eastern Surabaya but geographically is also close to northern Surabaya. In short, the northern part of Surabaya was crucial for social and ethnic group relations. This is because many social and ethnic groups live in this area, including Arabs, Madurese, Javanese, Banjarese and Chinese. Along with the multicultural background of this part of Surabaya, significant social inequality appears to exist. Ethnic Chinese generally have a more prosperous lifestyle than other ethnic groups, including the 'local people', with many owning their own shops or retail sites.

Over the three decades Suharto's regime, the ethnic Chinese were second-class citizens. They tended to live with only half an identity: they could not retain their own Chinese identity, as other social and ethnic groups in Indonesia did. In the words of Melani Budianta, addressing the cultural identity of ethnic Chinese in New Order Indonesia, 'Chinese remain an unwanted part of the Indonesian racial/cultural make up'.⁵²

Slowly but surely after the transfer of power from Suharto to more democratically elected leaders during *reformasi* (the reform era), the state's infrastructure and superstructures began to change. Administrative reform became one of the main concerns of the government. The government also came under socio-political pressure to introduce the principles of human rights. Reform continues, and gradual progress has been made in reducing state restriction on socio-political activities. More importantly, discrimination against particular social and ethnic groups has decreased. Ethnic Chinese, Muslims or otherwise, as the ethnic and social group with the greatest experience of state discrimination have started to benefit from an increasingly less restrictive policy.

It is in the *reformasi* period, then, that ethnic Chinese Muslims became less restricted in expressing their identity as Muslims as well as ethnic Chinese. In Surabaya, one of the greatest expressions of this identity has been the establishment of the culturally-Chinese Cheng Hoo Mosque, something which would have been unthinkable under Suharto. The mosque is geographically located in an area which is close to the business sites which were the main target of social unrest in 1998.

⁵¹ 'Death toll rises in riot-torn Jakarta; Suharto to reshuffle cabinet', *CNN* (2006).
⁵² Budianta (2000).



Figure 1: Front view of the Cheng Hoo Mosque, Surabaya

The Cheng Hoo Mosque gives the impression of melding Chinese and local Javanese culture. Its architecture is similar to the *kelenteng*, or Buddhist temple, with the building dominated by three colours: red, green, and yellow. It evokes Old Chinese architecture, particularly its entry gate which resembles a *pagoda* and the lion-like reliefs to the side.⁵³ The dominant use of red, symbolising luck, fortune and prosperity, seems to refer to its Chinese cultural heritage.⁵⁴

Yet a spirit of social assimilation has guided ethnic Chinese Muslims in their dealing with local Muslim communities, alongside respect for their own traditions.⁵⁵ It is not without reason that the main building of the Cheng Hoo Mosque measures 11 metres by 9 metres and has an octagonal roof (*pat kwa*).⁵⁶ According to the unpublished *Data Spesifikasi Masjid* [Mosque Building Specification], the figure eleven mirrors the original measurements of the Kaaba (the central shrine of Islam) and the number nine is the number of revered Muslim saints who brought Islam to Java (*Walisongo*). The design of the eight-sided roof (*pat kwa*) also characterises the philosophy of luck and prosperity shared by ethnic Chinese.⁵⁷ Such numerical symbolism reveals a sensitivity to traditions, whether Muslim, Javanese or Chinese.⁵⁸ The mosque's design also shows sensitivity to the various strands of Islam: the installation in the north of the mosque of a *bedug*, and of a closed-fronted *mimbar*, evoke the traditions of the NU and Muhammadiyah respectively. Such a principle of non-exclusiveness seems to be intended by ethnic Chinese Muslims to articulate their identity as part of the Indonesian people in general, and Indonesian Muslim communities in particular. The *imam* of the Cheng Hoo Mosque, Burnadi, says that the architecture of the Cheng Hoo Mosque was created in such a way as 'to send an important message that we ethnic Chinese Muslims of Indonesia represent parts of Indonesian Muslims in general'.⁵⁹

⁵³ For further details of this description, see Cheng Hoo Mosque Committees, 'Spesifikasi'.

⁵⁴ Cheng Hoo Mosque Committees, 'Spesifikasi'.

⁵⁵ Muzakki (2007).

⁵⁶ Cheng Hoo Mosque Committees, 'Spesifikasi'; 'Masjid Muhammad Cheng Hoo', *Harian Kota* (2006); 'Penghargaan Muri untuk Masjid Cheng Hoo', *Komunitas* (2003: 8).

⁵⁷ Cheng Hoo Mosque Committees, 'Spesifikasi'; 'Masjid Muhammad Cheng Hoo': 36; 'Penghargaan Muri untuk Masjid': 8.

⁵⁸ Muzakki (2007).

⁵⁹ Interview with Burnadi (28 January 2007).

The mosque committees' mission reinforces the principle of non-exclusiveness and social assimilation. It quotes a verse from the Qur'an (21:107) as inspiring their vision for the mosque as '*rahmat bagi alam semesta* (blessing for universe)',⁶⁰ offering a spiritual basis for the Cheng Hoo Mosque's inclusiveness. It also alludes to verse 49:10 of the Qur'an when it states 'the mission of the Muhammad Cheng Hoo Mosque of Indonesia is developing social assimilation among Muslims'.⁶¹

In practice, this principle of social assimilation means that no priority is given to ethnic Chinese Muslims over local Muslim communities, particularly in performing the rituals of prayer, as the following describes:

Every single *jama'ah* has equal rights and responsibilities, which can be symbolised as having an equal position when standing or sitting. There is no discrimination between one person or another; between black and white; between those with narrow eyes and those with round eyes. Those who arrive first at the mosque will be entitled to the foremost *shaff* (line of prayer), which is worthy of very, very important persons (VVIP), while those who come late will accept being seated in the last *shaff*.⁶²

The fundamental principle of non-exclusiveness also extends to social practices among ethnic Chinese Muslims, both among the mosque's committees and its *jama'ah*. Neither seems to aim at being socially exclusive; rather they try and collaborate with other groups. For example, on 11 February 2007 a mass *khitanan* (circumcision) was performed in the compound of the Cheng Hoo Mosque; this was organised in cooperation with Al-Irsyad of Surabaya, and was open to poor Muslims, whether local or not.

Thus, through the Cheng Hoo Mosque and its overt attempts at assimilation, ethnic Chinese Muslims in Surabaya can be seen to be playing a significant role in creating social harmony. Although ethnic Chinese Muslims are a *minority within minority*,⁶³ and perceive themselves as such,⁶⁴ their attempts at social assimilation are having a disproportionate impact. Because of this, the Cheng Hoo Mosque project has attracted a great deal of attention from both the local government in Surabaya and other communities in East Java. In 2004 the local government of Surabaya made the Cheng Hoo Mosque a pilot project for assimilation between ethnic and other social groups.⁶⁵ The project has also increased the socio-political significance of both the mosque and ethnic Chinese Muslims in Surabaya: the political elite at both national

⁶⁰ Cheng Hoo Mosque Committees, 'Kegiatan'.

⁶¹ The original Indonesian reads: *Misi Masjid Muhammad Cheng Hoo Indonesia adalah Pembauran Sesama Muslim*. See Cheng Hoo Mosque Committees, 'Kegiatan'.

⁶² The original Indonesian reads: *Setiap jama'ah mempunyai hak dan kewajiban yang sama, berdiri sama tinggi duduk sama rendah. Tidak ada diskriminasi antara yang satu dengan yang lain, antara yang hitam dengan yang putih, yang bermata sipit dengan yang bermata bulat. Siapa yang duluan dialah yang lebih berhak mendapat shof yang terdepan dengan nilai VVIP, yang datang belakangan cukup duduk di shof paling belakang*. See Cheng Hoo Mosque Committees, 'Kegiatan'.

⁶³ Jacobsen notes that ethnic Chinese Muslims in Indonesia are a tiny minority. Between 1983 to 2003, they formed no more than 0.5 per cent of the ethnic Chinese population, which in 2003 stood at some 3.5 per cent of the overall Indonesian population (then 202,000,000). See Jacobsen (2003: 2).

⁶⁴ See, for example, the interview with Edwin Suryalaksana (head of the provincial branch of the East Java PITI) (9 February 2007), and the statement made by Tony Hartono Bagio (head of the Surabaya branch of PITI): 'Ir. Tony Hartono Bagio MT, MM', *Harian Kota* (2006).

⁶⁵ See Muzakki (2007).

and local level have visited and worshipped in the Cheng Hoo Mosque,⁶⁶ including the *Kasdam* V. Brawijaya and his staff, who attended the *jum'ah* in the mosque on 9 February 2007.⁶⁷

In addition, Muslims in Pandaan (Pasuruan, some 60 km south of Surabaya) have taken a lead from the Cheng Hoo Mosque. In July 2004 they established a mosque with Chinese-style architecture and interior design, a feature pointed out by the mosque's security officer, Siswaji. Built on an area of 2 hectares, the mosque building is itself 900 square metres and its front gate is to resemble the *shaolin* dragon.⁶⁸



Figure 2: Front view of the Chinese-style mosque in Pandaan, Pasuruan (picture taken during Eid al-Adha in 2006)

The mosque, which has yet to be named at the time of writing, will have a similar role to its model in Surabaya, and the Cheng Hoo Mosque committees have been involved in its creation and its design. According to the secretary of the Pandaan mosque, Hafidlon, it is intended to have two functions: firstly, to develop the spirit of assimilation (*pembaوران*); and secondly, to support tourism in Pasuruan.⁶⁹ In other words, there is a politico-economic motive behind the spirit and practices of social assimilation.

The establishment of Chinese-style mosques such as the Cheng Hoo and the one at Pandaan seems to give ethnic Chinese Muslims the confidence to negotiate their identity through cultural indigenisation and social assimilation. We will discuss below how the Cheng Hoo Mosque is currently empowering ethnic Chinese Muslims to take a stand vis-à-vis the state political hegemony in the wake of over three decades of New Order discrimination and exploitation.

⁶⁶ Interview with Burnadi (9 February 2007).

⁶⁷ This is based on my participatory observation by attending *jum'ah* in the Cheng Hoo Mosque on 9 February 2007.

⁶⁸ Interview with Siswaji (20 March 2007).

⁶⁹ Interview with Hafidlon (20 March 2007).

6. Ethnic Chinese Muslims, the Cheng Hoo Mosque and their position in society: using 'cultural approaches' to distance themselves from state political hegemony

In a speech delivered at the national celebration of Chinese New Year 2007 (*Imlek* 2558), President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono announced that there was no longer any discrimination against ethnic Chinese. At this celebration, which was attended by thousands of ethnic Chinese, the president further stated that the so-called 'pribumi' and 'foreign descendants' (Chinese, Arab or others) have equal rights and responsibilities, going on to say: 'The time has passed for discrimination. The time has passed to be suspicious of one other, treating people differently according to their ethnicity or their beliefs'.⁷⁰

However, ethnic Chinese – whether Muslim or not, and wherever they live – still seem to experience discrimination. A major offender has been the bureaucracy, from early on in the New Order up until the enactment of the New Citizenship Bill No. 12/2006 under President Yudhoyono. This Bill promotes non-discrimination, and it has been long awaited by the ethnic Chinese with the appeal: '*Jangan ada lagi diskriminasi* [No more discrimination, please!]⁷¹. However, long-standing bureaucratic discrimination is difficult to eradicate. One concrete example is the difficulty some ethnic Chinese face in obtaining passports and identity cards, such the KTP (identity card for individuals) and KSK (identity card for family membership).

The following quotation from the East Java-based PITI's magazine, *Komunitas*, outlines the difficulties faced by ethnic Chinese Muslims in particular and ethnic Chinese in general:

There are countless sad stories from ethnic Chinese. For example, if they succeed in obtaining an identity card, such as the KTP or KSK, or a passport, they have to spend a great deal of extra money from their own pocket. Why are they willing to spend such a great deal of extra money? The extra money [they have to spend] is not hundreds of thousand, but millions. [The reason is] Because, they just want to show to everyone that they are part of the Surabaya community, part of the wider Indonesian community. Full stop.⁷²

In Surabaya, the *DispencaPil* (Local Department of Population and Civil Service Affairs) has often discriminated against ethnic Chinese who try to use their services, not only to obtain identity cards but also to marry. There have been reports in the

⁷⁰ The original reads: '*Sudah bukan saatnya lagi ada diskriminasi. Sudah bukan saatnya saling mencurigai, membedakan orang berdasarkan asal etnis dan keyakinan yang dianut.*' See 'SBY: Tak Ada Lagi Diskriminasi' (February 2007).

⁷¹ The slogan 'No more discrimination, please!' arose from Muslim Chinese responses to the the New Citizenship Bill, and can found in the following reports, among others: 'Jangan Ada (Lagi) Diskriminasi Diantara Kita' (2006); 'Kita Satu: Indonesia (Editorial)' (2006); 'UU 12/2006 Bukan Mempersulit untuk Jadi WNI' (2006); Soeharto (2006a); 'Kita Tunggu Realisasinya' (2006); Lim (2006); Soeharto (2006b).

⁷² The original reads: '*Kisah sedih dari suku Tionghoa sudah tidak terhitung banyaknya. Kalau mereka sudah berhasil lolos untuk memperoleh identitas seperti KTP atau KSK atau juga paspor misalnya, mereka bisa ditanya berapa banyak mereka harus keluarkan duit dari kantong mereka. Mengapa mereka berani mengeluarkan duit yang besar? Bukan Cuma ratusan ribu, tetapi jutaan. Karena mereka hanya ingin membuktikan kepada semua saja, bahwa dirinya adalah penduduk Surabaya, warganegara Indonesia. Titik.*': see 'Menunggu Penyelesaian: Akhir Diskriminasi Pelayanan' (2006).

media that the marital status of an ethnic Chinese married couple failed to be legally recognised by the *Dispencahil*, because they had been married through a Confucian ceremony. The *Dispencahil* of Surabaya remains convinced that Confucianism is not a state-sanctioned faith.⁷³ Another example is that of the ethnic Chinese siblings, Tio Hok Tjwan and Tio Hok Seng, resident in Krembangan Baru, Surabaya. They were unable to obtain their own KSK, on the grounds that their parents had divorced during the siblings' childhood; their father was a citizen of the Republic of China, while their mother was an Indonesian citizen.⁷⁴

Despite increasing socio-political pressure on the bureaucracy of Surabaya, as on other local governments, the *Dispencahil* of Surabaya continues to wield discriminatory power over ethnic Chinese. In the eyes of Eko Sugitario, an ethnic Chinese Muslim intellectual and professor at the University of Surabaya (Ubayu) where he teaches constitutional law, the character and attitudes of the bureaucracy remain racist.⁷⁵

We should ask why such discrimination by the state bureaucracy has persisted over this length of time, and whether historical anti-Chinese feeling has been an important factor in this persistence.⁷⁶ This study argues that anti-Chinese sentiment as such is not the major factor behind the wide-ranging discrimination practised by the state bureaucracy against ethnic Chinese. The communist 1965 coup did indeed generate socio-political bitterness towards the ethnic Chinese in Indonesia, making the government wary of ethnic Chinese activities. But this does not appear to be the dominant factor behind bureaucratic discrimination. Rather individual economic motives seem to be the principal driver: instead of delivering equal and fair services to all, the bureaucracy has discriminated against the ethnic Chinese in the hope that they would pay extra to access civic services.

In order to run their business affairs, the ethnic Chinese need identity cards. Without a KTP and KSK, and without being legally recognised as Indonesian residents, the ethnic Chinese are unable to obtain business permits (*izin usaha ekonomi*). As a result, ethnic Chinese have devoted considerable energy and, more importantly, money to this, and individual bureaucrats have taken advantage of this to enrich themselves. Bribery and other kinds of corruption are rife.

The following quotation from the East Java-based PITI's magazine, *Komunitas*, encapsulates such an argument:

This situation annoys many ethnic Chinese. They are annoyed not because they have to spend a lot of extra money to arrange something, but because they encounter great difficulty in accessing the bureaucracy. Because of this increasing annoyance, many ethnic Chinese fail to obtain identity cards, taking the risk that they cannot do anything to meet their daily needs. If they intend to run a business, they have to have a business permit; and to get a permit they must have identity cards. Thus, identity cards (KTP/KSK) become the instruments of running a business. The bureaucracy discerns the importance of having identity cards

⁷³ For more details, see Mansell (2007).

⁷⁴ See Su (2007). For more details about this case, see *Kompas*, 5 March 2007.

⁷⁵ Quoted in Su (2007).

⁷⁶ As noted above, this anti-Chinese sentiment among the bureaucracy was driven by the communist 1965 coup, which ethnic Chinese were believed to support, and by their portrayal as supporters of Beijing during the Indonesian political crisis of the 1960s.

[for ethnic Chinese], and see this as a means of gaining extra income for themselves.⁷⁷

This sets out clearly the dilemma faced by the ethnic Chinese: to be good citizens, they have to abide by state regulations and have identity cards; but to obtain those identity cards, extra payment is demanded by the bureaucracy. Without identity cards, their economic activities must cease, yet this is the only arena in which they can be active. The situation is particularly oppressive for poorer ethnic Chinese, who cannot afford to pay off the individuals within the bureaucracy: they have no option but to remain 'stateless'.

This exploitation has gradually raised a critical consciousness among the ethnic Chinese of the need to forge better links with civil society: of the need to adopt a 'cultural approach' when dealing with the state political hegemony. By 'cultural approach' we mean the use of socio-cultural exchange to strengthen horizontal relationships with various social groups, raising ethnic Chinese socio-political significance and giving them bargaining power vis-à-vis the state. Without such a 'cultural approach', any attempt to end discrimination – as articulated in President Yudhoyono's speech and concretised in the New Citizenship Bill – would fail; so argues Gatut Prasetyo, an ethnic Chinese resident of Surabaya:

Discrimination can only truly be avoided by means of a 'cultural breakthrough' ...In terms of citizenship, one cannot hope that discrimination will disappear, or even lessen swiftly in many areas (see the examples of America and Australia) if there is no a serious 'cultural breakthrough'.⁷⁸

Because they have lacked a political means of dealing with the state, especially during the New Order period, *faut de mieux* ethnic Chinese Muslims and the ethnic Chinese in general adopted a cultural approach, developing strong links with other elements in civil society. Most important among these elements were the mainstream religious-based organisations. Although they have cooperated with non-mainstream Muslim organisations, such as Al-Irsyad⁷⁹ and Persis⁸⁰, for ethnic Chinese Muslims the most important links are with *Nahdlatul Ulama* (NU) and Muhammadiyah, the two largest religious-based organisations in Surabaya. The size and strength of their followings ensure that the state listens to NU and Muhammadiyah and their importance is outlined in an interview with Fulan, an ethnic Chinese Muslim from Surabaya:

⁷⁷ The original reads '*Karena kondisi demikian, kejengkelanpun banyak terjadi dari masyarakat suku ini. Jengkel bukan karena harus mengeluarkan duit banyak untuk mengurus sesuatu, tetapi karena sulitnya menembus birokrasi tersebut. Itu sebabnya, saking jengkelnya banyak yang tak mengurus identitas dengan mengambil resiko yang tinggi tak bisa berbuat apa-apa untuk kebutuhan hidupnya. Mau dagang harus ada izin dan untuk dapat izin harus ada identitas. Jadi identitas (KTP/KSK) sarana untuk berusaha. Itulah sebabnya para birokrat tahu pentingnya identitas tersebut, sehingga dianggap merupakan ladang pemasukan ekstra buat dirinya sendiri*'. See 'Menunggu Penyelesaian: Akhiri Diskriminasi Pelayanan' (2006: 4).

⁷⁸ The original reads: '*Sesungguhnya diskriminasi dapat dihindari dengan sebuah "terobosan budaya" ...Dalam soal kewarganegaraan jangan harap cepat terealisasi hilangnya atau berkurangnya diskriminasi dalam berbagai bidang (lihat contoh Amerika, Australia itu), jika tak ada sebuah "terobosan budaya" yang sungguh-sungguh*'. Prasetyo (2006).

⁷⁹ For an example of ethnic Chinese Muslim cooperation with Al-Irsyad in a mass *khitanan* (circumcision), see p. 15 above. On Al-Irsyad see Badjerei (1996); on their leader in the early twentieth century, Sheikh Ahmad Syurkati, see Affandi (1976).

⁸⁰ The list of *imams* and *khatibs* for *jum'ah* at the Cheng Hoo Mosque in 2007 includes Muammal Hamidy from Persis. On Persis, see Federspiel (2001).

I think their role is very important for minority groups like us. If we experience discrimination from the bureaucracy in obtaining a certain permit, we often go to those large Muslim mass organisations. It is not until they complain that the bureaucratic apparatus pays attention to us. They [large Muslim mass organisations] provide a kind of advocacy for us as a minority group. Without their cooperation, we often achieve very little.⁸¹

While ethnic Chinese Muslims still consider Muhammadiyah an important partner, their principal relationship is with NU. As the largest Muslim mass organisation in East Java, NU is perceived as having considerable socio-political significance, helping to create and maintain a secure society for all, ethnic Chinese Muslims included.⁸² This special relationship with NU has led to increasing interaction and cooperation, and a rise in NU socio-political advocacy on behalf of ethnic Chinese in general and the ethnic Chinese Muslim minority in particular. Young NU intellectuals in Surabaya have recently helped establishment of two important non-governmental organisations to represent minorities and repressed groups, particularly the ethnic Chinese. These are the FLA (*Forum Lintas Agama*/Interfaith Forum) and JIAD (*Jaringan Islam Anti-Diskriminasi*/Anti-Discrimination Islam Network). The key figures behind these two organisations are Ali Maschan Moesa (head of the East Java branch of NU) and Rubaidi (deputy secretary of the East Java branch of NU): Rubaidi's role has been crucial, and he is the executive director of both organisations. JIAD's advocacy program is active on behalf of Chinese victims of local government discrimination in Surabaya, notably those who remain 'stateless' (without identity cards and formal citizenship).

Following the introduction of the New Citizenship Bill in 2006, JIAD launched the 'Chinese Ethnic Group Civil Rights Advocacy to Guarantee of Public Residential Affairs Services in the Surabaya Municipality' programme. One of the programme's funders, the TIFA Foundation of Jakarta, describes its aim as 'to create a public residency service that is both impartial and non-discriminatory for those who profess the Confucian faith and for the ethnic Chinese community in Surabaya'.⁸³ The programme focuses on twelve areas of Surabaya where the potential for ethnic discrimination and exploitation is high,⁸⁴ and the TIFA Foundation expects it to help Chinese victims of socio-political discrimination set up their own measures for combating this exploitation, while putting pressure on the local government to remove discriminatory practices against ethnic Chinese.⁸⁵ To put the programme into practice, JIAD first identified victims of discrimination in the twelve Surabaya areas covered. Using field data collected during this identification process, JIAD then organised a special *bahtsul masa'il*⁸⁶ on 7-8 May 2007, which was attended by 15

⁸¹ The original reads: '*Saya kira, keberadaan mereka bagi kaum minoritas seperti kami ini sangat penting. Kalau kami sangat kesulitan mengurus suatu surat lantaran didiskriminasi oleh birokrasi, kami larinya sering ke ormas-ormas Islam besar itu. Nah, baru ketika mereka bersuara, birokrasi aparat pemerintahan kita mulai memperhatikan kita. Mereka bisa menjadi semacam advokasilah bagi kami yang minoritas ini. Kalau tanpa kerjasama dengan mereka, seringkali hasilnya kecil.*' Interview with Fulan (12 January 2007).

⁸² NU was first established in Surabaya, and still has its strongest base in East Java. For the early history of NU, see Ma'sum (1968). See also Turmudi (2004); Ismail (2003).

⁸³ www.tifafoundation.org.

⁸⁴ Sukolilo, Karanganyar, Rungkut, Genteng, Demak, Wonokromo, Gubeng, Semampir, Sidotopo, Tegalsari, Ngagelrejo and Wiyung.

⁸⁵ See 'Chinese Ethnic Group Civil Rights Advocacy for Guarantee of Public Residential Affairs Services in the Surabaya Municipality' (2007).

⁸⁶ A forum of Muslim scholars specialising in Islamic jurisprudence which issues an Islam legal view on certain issues.

nationally-recognised NU *kyai* (Muslim clerics) from across East Java. This extraordinary meeting focused specifically on the issue of discrimination by the local government of Surabaya against ethnic Chinese, and was not part of the regular *bahtsul masa'il* meetings. As JIAD's umbrella organisation, NU of East Java fully supports the programme. According to Ali Maschan Moesa, 'We will continue to back JIAD in its attempts to separate citizenship status from ethnic and social status'.⁸⁷ The fifteen *kyai* who participated in the special *bahtsul masa'il* issued a *fatwa* (ruling/religious opinion), saying that discrimination is *haram* (forbidden) and those who implement it can be regarded as being *zalim* (cruel/unjust) and power abusers,⁸⁸ a view encapsulated by K. H. Syafrudin, a member of *bahtsul masa'il*: 'a government which discriminates in delivering services to society can be regarded as this [despotic abusers of power abusers who are *haram*]'.⁸⁹

In short, for the ethnic Chinese Muslim minority, religious-based organisations such as NU have been pivotal in securing social harmony, and in strengthening their own socio-political position in relation to the state political hegemony. And their increasing confidence about their place in society has enabled ethnic Chinese to feel secure in expressing their own socio-religious and cultural identity. Several stories reported in *Komunitas*, the journal of the East Java PITI, demonstrate the increasing socio-political security of ethnic Chinese Muslims in Surabaya. Those stories can be categorised into three types: religious conversion; socio-political and economic activities; and cultural exchange. And central to all is the Cheng Hoo Mosque.

The mosque has become one of the preferred places for the religious ceremony of those ethnic Chinese wishing to convert to Islam, including from Confucianism. And not only is it the preferred place of conversion; the Cheng Hoo Mosque seems to have inspired these conversions. In almost every issue of *Komunitas*, the 'Album' or 'Kegiatan Suku Tionghoa' [Activities of Ethnic Chinese] sections report the ceremonies of conversion to Islam by ethnic Chinese, which are held in the mosque every Friday soon after *sholat jum'at* (Friday prayers).⁹⁰ This is a recent development. As noted above (see p. 9), immediately after the 'legalisation of five religions', the ethnic Chinese tended to convert from Confucianism to Christianity or Buddhism, rather than to Islam.

The Cheng Hoo Mosque has also given confidence to middle-class ethnic Chinese Muslims in Surabaya to express their socio-political and economic identities, as well as religious. It should be noted, however, that here political identity refers more to social and class identity, rather than to practical politics. A number of middle-class ethnic Chinese Muslims have opted to conduct their marriage ceremonies at the mosque, rather than at a local hotel or in their homes.⁹¹ The most notable recent example of such an ethnic Chinese Muslim marriage was that of Herman Halim and Fatimah Linna (or Péng Línna): many prominent East Javanese figures attended,

⁸⁷ The original Indonesian reads: "Kami akan selalu berada di belakang JIAD untuk menuntaskan masalah status kewarganegaraan tanpa pandang etnis dan kedudukan." See "Keluh Kesah Warga Stateless."

⁸⁸ See 'PW NU Jatim Fatwakan Haram Diskriminasi' (2007); 'Diskriminasi Itu Haram' (2007).

⁸⁹ Syafrudin is the *Katib Syuriah* (secretary of the advisory board) of the provincial branch of East Java NU. The original reads: "Pemerintah yang bersikap *membeda-bedakan dalam memberikan layanan kepada masyarakat juga termasuk dalam hal itu.*" See 'PW NU Jatim Fatwakan Haram' (2007).

⁹⁰ For examples, see 'Album' (August 2006: 16); 'Kegiatan Suku Tionghoa' (October 2006).

⁹¹ Two reports of such middle-class marriages at the mosque can be found in 'Album' (August 2006: 15); 'Album' (December 2006: 20).

including representatives of the local immigration department and a former police chief from East Java district, Koesparmono Ihsan.⁹²

In addition to its increasingly important role as a venue for conversion and marriage, the Cheng Hoo Mosque is also a significant site for cultural exchange between social and ethnic groups at local, national and international level. Local people, including the group of 'young Indonesian tourism envoys of 2005', people from Lampung, Sumatra, and a 50-strong group of Surabaya-based Airlangga University students,⁹³ came to observe the building of the mosque and to investigate the social and cultural importance of its development. International cultural-exchange visitors include members of parliament and government officials from Xianmen in China, a group of government officials from Thailand, and a 10-strong group of tourists from Singapore.⁹⁴

The Cheng Hoo Mosque is therefore no longer simply a place of prayer: it has catalysed and strengthened the local ethnic Chinese Muslim minority, promoting their sense of security and place in society, as well as their cooperation with fellow Muslims. Indeed, the local Muslim community in Surabaya believes that, through the work of the Cheng Hoo Mosque, ethnic Chinese Muslims have helped to promote ideas of a multicultural Islam. Hasan, a Javanese Muslim living near the mosque, suggests that these activities should make Surabaya Muslims proud of a tolerant, multicultural Islam, and show the rest of Indonesia how the Muslim communities in Surabaya, irrespective of their backgrounds, can work together and support each other.⁹⁵

However, there is a divergence between the interests and activities of the PITI and the Mosque's organising committee, the YHMCHI, despite both being ethnic Chinese Muslim community-based social organisations. According to a member of them both, Edwin Suryalaksana, the PITI has a more religious focus (see Section 4 above), while the YHMCHI appears to be more open: they not only organise religious activities in the mosque, such as daily prayers and study of the Qur'an, but also deal with business, economic and social issues.⁹⁶ The latter activities range from hiring out tennis and badminton courts⁹⁷ and setting up a national basketball tournament⁹⁸ to performing the mass *khitanan* mentioned above (see p. 15). In the words of Bambang Sujanto, the head of the YHMCHI:

The mosque represents a first step in realising the foundation's dreams, as we hope in future to develop and educational programmes, and even a hospital to the benefit our local community and to contribute to Indonesian society in general.⁹⁹

⁹² Halim is the President of PT Bank Maspion, a banking enterprise which is part of the Maspion Group owned by Alim Markus, a leading Chinese ethnic businessman of Surabaya: 'Upacara Pernikahan Herman Halim dan Fatimah Linna di Masjid Cheng Hoo' (2006).

⁹³ 'Album' (December 2006: 20); 'Album' (August 2006: 15).

⁹⁴ 'Album', (August 2006: 15); 'Album' (December 2006: 20, 21).

⁹⁵ Interview with Hasan (11 February 2007). For a comparison with the Yogyakarta community's perception of ethnic Chinese Muslims, see Legowo (1996).

⁹⁶ Interview with Edwin Suryalaksana (head of the PITI, East Java and member of the YHMCHI supervisory board) (9 February 2007). See also 'Yayasan Haji Muhammad Cheng Hoo Indonesia' (2006).

⁹⁷ 'Yayasan Haji Muhammad Cheng Hoo Indonesia' (2006).

⁹⁸ 'Turnamen Basket Rayakan HUT ke 4 Masjid Muhammad Cheng Hoo Diikuti oleh Para Pemain Nasional' (2006).

⁹⁹ The original reads: '*Masjid ini merupakan awal mewujudkan cita-cita yayasan untuk ke depan, karena kalau memang memungkinkan, kita juga akan mengembangkan di bidang pendidikan atau juga rumah sakit yang semuanya baik untuk pelayanan masyarakat. Dengan*

The Cheng Hoo Mosque's increasingly significant role in strengthening the ethnic Chinese Muslim minority has recently led to the emergence of some popular ethnic Chinese Muslim religious leaders in East Java. They include *Ustadz* Syaukanie Ong, *Ustadz* Muizzuddin, and *Ustadzah* Tan Mei Hwa, and the PITI has frequently arranged for these Chinese religious leaders to lead prayer groups throughout East Java.¹⁰⁰ More importantly, during Ramadan in 2006 the East Java-based television channel JTV broadcast a special *pengajian* (prayer recital) programme in which *Ustadzah* Tan Mei Hwa was invited to deliver sermons and to answer audience questions. Such 'Islamic televangelism' from an ethnic Chinese female *khatib* was unprecedented: broadcast live, it reached almost all East Javanese communities, and is indicative of the increasing social acceptability of ethnic Chinese Muslims communities following the strengthening of their own identity.

7. Conclusion

In *shari'ah* law, the mosque has two interconnected roles: religious and social. It should aim not only to be the place where God is worshipped five times a day in congregational prayer, but should also lead the Muslims within a community, strengthening social relationships, promoting social unity and helping to avoid conflict.¹⁰¹ The Cheng Hoo Mosque performs both of these functions. It is a place of daily prayer, but more importantly it has promoted a process of assimilation and social harmony. A central element of the latter function has been to strengthen the 'bonding' and 'bridging' of ethnic Chinese Muslims' social capital, respectively building cohesion within the group and building mutual understanding between groups.¹⁰²

The Cheng Hoo Mosque has also given ethnic Chinese Muslims the confidence to express their socio-political, economic and religious identities in response to, and in negotiation with, the state political hegemony. In the past, these identities were weakly defined; this was true of the ethnic Chinese in general, and was overwhelmingly due to the repression they suffered under the New Order. The only exception was in economic activity, where the ethnic Chinese focused their energies. The Cheng Hoo Mosque is now paving the way for ethnic Chinese Muslims, and particularly those from the middle class, to express their religious and ethnic identities.

The mosque has also enabled ethnic Chinese Muslims to build strong links with Islamic mass movements such as NU and Muhammadiyah, helping guarantee their socio-political security. This security is vital, as it protects them both from anti-Chinese feeling among the local community, and from discrimination and exploitation by the state bureaucracy. In all of this the Cheng Hoo Mosque has acted as a catalyst, strengthening the place of ethnic Chinese Muslims in Indonesian society.

It would seem important to develop further the work of the Cheng Hoo Mosque. Examples of the conflicts which can arise from 'unfinished social assimilation' between ethnic and social groups are to be found worldwide and there are lessons to be learned for Indonesia. The serious problems experienced by Muslim communities in some European countries, for example, continue to challenge the social structure

demikian sebagai warga dan masyarakat Indonesia, kita bisa memberikan sumbangani'. His statement is quoted in 'Yayasan Haji Muhammad Cheng Hoo Indonesia' (2006).

¹⁰⁰ Interview with Edwin Suryalaksana (9 February 2007).

¹⁰¹ Mortada (2003: 87).

¹⁰² For Putnam's definition of 'bonding' and 'bridging' social capital, see Putnam (200: 22-4).

and harmony of those countries. And this is in part because their Muslim minority groups have failed to negotiate their Islamic cultural identity with the wider European cultures in which they exist.¹⁰³ A similar problem of identity-negotiation can also be seen in Australia between the minority Muslim group and the wider Australian nation.¹⁰⁴

In Indonesia, and particularly in Surabaya, economic and social inequality – and the political rivalry which follows – offers fertile ground for social conflict between ethnic Chinese and local communities. A contributing factor is the weakness of ethnic Chinese cultural identity, and especially that of their Muslim minority, amidst wider Indonesian cultural identities. While *reformasi* allowed all groups to express their socio-cultural and political identity, the establishment of the Cheng Hoo Mosque has afforded a significant chance for the ethnic Chinese Muslim minority to strengthen their own identity, as both Muslims as well as ethnic Chinese.

¹⁰³ Asad (2000).

¹⁰⁴ Saeed (2003: 212).

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