

CONFUCIAN'S REVIVAL AND A NEWLY ESTABLISHED CONFUCIAN INSTITUTION IN PURWOKERTO

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ABSTRACT

Two decades after the abolishment of the banning of Chinese cultural expression publicly in Indonesia' Post-Reformasi, studies on the institutionalization of Indonesian Chinese including Confucians in Indonesia seem to have been very few if it compared with that of Indonesian Chinese' freedom expression and state perceived Confucians in general. This paper portrays the revival of Confucians in Indonesia happened in Purwokerto City (Banyumas), Central Java of Indonesia, by looking at the establishment of a new Confucian organization, namely Perkumpulan Rohaniwan Agama Khonghucu Indonesia (Parakhin, or Association for Confucianism clerics in Indonesia). Based on a qualitative research, this paper explores the narration behind the establishment of Parakhin. The paper shows that the democratic society and democratic climate of Indonesia enable any society including Confucian to align with the freedom of expression albeit potentially violating the essential concept, that is loyalty and filial piety that are very salient in Confucianism.

Keywords: *Confucianism and democracy, Mataklin, Parakhin, loyalty and filial piety, internal conflict*

INTRODUCTION

Confucianism is widely discussed in area of Chinese studies in Indonesia. However, studies of the Confucians with special reference to revival of Confucians in the middle town like for example Confucians in Purwokerto, Central Java are rarely carried out. Moreover, it seems that it is hardly found any historical records as well as news publication depicting Confucians in Purwokerto including their commercial linkage or transborder trade among Chinese in Indonesia and the world, and their religion as social movement, if compared them with that of Chinese in other towns such like Sukabumi, Batavia, Solo, Kediri, Semarang and Surabaya (Coppel 1981; Salmon 2009). In fact, Confucians have been living in Purwokerto since the pre-independent era. It can be traced back to the fact that some Chinese schools were established in the city during the 1920-1930s, in which their footpaths can still be seen today.

Even, Chinese temples were built prior to Chinese schools establishment (Nurwanti, Y.H., Harnoko, D., Larasati 2015: 31).

Given the fact that Chinese movement was rarely happened in Purwokerto, it was a weird thing when suddenly a new national organization for Confucians established in Purwokerto, namely *Perkumpulan Rohaniwan Agama Khonghucu Indonesia* (Parakhin, or Association of Confucian religious clerics of Indonesia) in 2016. To address the issue of Confucians movement in Purwokerto, this paper has two main aims. The first is to uncover Confucianists movement in Purwokerto during pre-Independent until Reformasi era. The second is to explore the background of establishment of the newly established Confucian organization. Since it is famously known of concept of filial piety in Confucianism philosophy, questioning the solidity of the concept among Confucians is interesting enough especially in democratic

country like Indonesia.

Unlike happened in other countries, Confucianism in Indonesia underwent with the strong similarities to the monotheist religion. State and society of Indonesia perceive Confucianism not merely as a kind of spirituality, but a religion. Visiting Chinese temple means not only to pay homage to ancestors and gods, but also to listen religious sermon. However, it was not enough for Confucians to merely adapt other major religion rituals. State's surveillance upon Indonesian Chinese in post-1965' political turmoil caused many problems for Confucians in Indonesia. By 1979, Confucianism had been officially derecognized, and Confucians were required to adopt an alternative religious affiliation – usually Buddhism, but sometimes Christianity and Islam. As a result, many of its followers converted to Buddhism, Christian, and Islam. Only after Suharto's resignation in 1998 were these measures gradually reversed. Confucianism's eventual re-recognition in 2006 was, like previous reversals of anti-Chinese legislation, an important event in the lives of Indonesian Chinese (Long 2019; Suryadinata 2005).

After having a bit longer period of its formation during colonial era and gaining its recognition as an official religion in Soekarno era, Confucians and Confucianism turned to be oppressed under New Order regime. However, the organization of Confucians remains solid during the New Order era. Once President Abdurrahman Wahid revoked the regulation, *Majelis Tinggi Agama Khonghucu di Indonesia* (Matakin) had remarkably consolidated internally by fixing for example its local branch and member. Even, during Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono's presidency, Confucians were granted special body (echelon I) within The Ministry of Religious Affairs (MoRA) (interview with Chandra Setiawan, former Head of Matakin, 2018).

Furthermore, observing the possibility to accept the plurality and diversity within Confucianism is very essential here. The author

argues that diversity can be a contentious issue toward the concept of loyalty and respect to elderly people. But how it could happen among Confucians in Indonesia that is supposed to favor paternalism rather liberal democracy? The author here tries not to see the possibility of religious thought' polemicizing within Confucians but rather emphasize the possibility of opposing long-established organization within Confucians in Indonesia from the lens of social and political perspective. The only one official and long-established organization for Confucians in Indonesia is Matakin that was established more than a half century ago. In addition, once the author has ever heard that if other religions have so many mass organizations, then why Confucians in Indonesia remain only having one single mass organization (interview with Ema Nurwawati, former head of Confucian affairs in MoRA, 2017).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Studying Confucianism with a focus on its cultural and political aspects is extensively carried out especially by exploring the impact of Confucianism for the apparent economic successes in East Asian countries such as Japan, Korea, Taiwan, and China mainland (Chan 1996; Huang and Chang 2017; Ju Lan 2017; Liang 2010; Putro and Pamungkas 2017). Some of these articles outline that Confucianism as culture and way of thinking resemble strongly the society and the governmental system of those countries, and show the compatibility of Confucianism with modernity in those countries. Confucianism has underpinned massive industrialism and advance technology as well. In the political realm, Confucianism that has been resurrected by the government in collaboration with post colonialists figures is filling the vacuum of spiritual props to hold the China mainland (Li 2013: 8). Confucianism resembles the lifestyle of people in East Asia. It is believed that although the practical form of Confucianism in each country is different from one another, they still perform the

similar general characteristic of Confucianism.

One of the common features that have cultural similarities in East Asian countries that originated from Confucianism mentioned by some scholars is that the concept of filial piety. It enables to manifest in the attitude of respect to the elderly people and obey the ruling power or government. Interestingly, China government promotes Confucianism for a certain purpose. China government recently has established The Confucius Institute in many countries in Asia, Europe, and America and is believed to be the flagship of China's "soft power" which "penetrates" the countries surrounding and far away from China, largely for the advantage of the Chinese themselves (Ju Lan 2017: 151; Theo and Leung 2018).

Undeniably, the emergence of economic welfare and political stability in East Asia is also permeated by Confucianism. Chaibong (2004) states that countries in East Asia are typically influenced by Confucianism and its tenets are well-practiced where loyalty and centered bureaucracy tradition implemented the most. Bureaucracy is shaped by a merit system and state bureaucratic foundations are tested strongly. This kind of system strengthens nation-state building of the countries in this area such as Japan, Taiwan, and Korea where they could make democracy well adopted while economic stability could be sustained at the same time (Hall 2008). However, Confucianism occasionally could be nothing to do with democracy although economic stability has achieved in a country.

Confucianism resembles strongly to state-capitalism in reaching high economic rating though democracy in a certain country is illiberal. While gradually allowing for greater citizen participation in the formulation of policies in more recent times, Singapore's rapid economic growth and political stability for instance, could not have been achieved if the country were to follow the Western liberal democratic path. The regime has built a rationale and an infrastructure that legitimizes and perpetuates itself and makes it

difficult for an opposition to do more than survive (Barr 2014; Mutalib 2000; Ortmann 2011). The main reason is that people in the country cannot get individual freedom, rather they profound loyalty and hierarchical society that underpin economics and political system.

Based on this circumstance, a new concept of Asian Values was launched, then. Typically, the concept of Asian Values lay on Confucianism tenets. One of the proponent figures asserting of this concept is Lee Kwan Yew, so that this concept is argued that it is summoned by some Asian leaders to justify their quasi-democratic rule (Barr 2000; Freeman 1996; Kim 2010: 316; O'Dwyer 2003). What the concept lies upon is Confucian values with emphasizing loyalty to senior supremacy. The younger generation should pay respect to the older generation. Other characteristics are group spirit, mutual assistance, and friendship alike (Alatas 2015: 113).

However, some other scholars doubt the effectiveness of Confucian values as the basis of growth in some developed countries across East Asia. It is just because Confucianism is regarded as something that have no connection with self-government and individual freedom. Another opinion says that there is no individual existence in Confucianism and the central figures of Confucianism do not trust the public to make good decisions (Elstein 2010; Hall 2008) and individual supports only to the family, group and state as well. Even, according to Samuel P. Huntington (1996), cited by Chaibong (ibid), Confucian heritage, with its emphasis on authority, order, hierarchy, and supremacy of the collectivity over the individual, creates obstacles to democratization. However, Chaibong (Hall 2008) disagrees with that statement and in contrast notes that in the history of Chinese, Confucianism resisted despotic rulers. Confucianism was more adjacent to intellectualism, scholars, and bureaucrats rather than kings and warrior general alike. Confucianism respects human dignity abundantly and it suits to be the foundation for government administration. Once someone is appointed to be a state officer or scholar, it doesn't mean to cease

continuous learning and self-improvement.

Indonesian Chinese organization in colonial era has a deep footprint. During the 18th until 19th century, the Chinese in Indonesia gave their loyalty to mainland China due to a political circumstance on the one hand, and subdued them to the Dutch government in Indonesia on the other hand. *Tiong Hwa Hwee Koan* (THHK, or Chinese Association) was established in 1901 enforced by the young generation of Chinese who wanted to upgrade their community in the eye of the Dutch colonial ruler. According to Kwee (1969) cited in Kwartanada (2012: 34), the first THHK school in Batavia was laid on Confucianism. In its early years, the THHK school put a strong emphasis on Confucianism, which was championed by Lie Kim Hok (1853-1912), who sought to realize his desire to form an organization for the propagation of Confucianism. THHK is an organization that has the main objective to develop teaching Confucianism by changing habits among Chinese Indonesian in performing marriage ceremonies and funerals that regarded costly and futile. Another objective of the establishment of THHK is to increase knowledge of reading, writing, and the language of Chinese literature (Johansyah and Purwaningsih 2013; Suryadinata 2014).

Indeed, Confucianism was introduced into the Netherlands East Indies by the Chinese Peranakan (local-born Chinese) no earlier than the late nineteenth century. The figure of Confucius himself was introduced into Malay for the first time by the publication of *Hikajat Khonghoetjoe* (The life story of Confucius), written by Lie Kim Hok in 1897 (Sutrisno 2017: 184). In another form of scholarly work, Confucianism was not merely to be exploited to introduce various reforms but was to become the body of spiritual knowledge for all the Chinese people of Indonesia. Nio Joe Lan (1940) argues that the primary purpose of THHK was to promote the reform of the customs of the Chinese people as far as possible under the teachings of the Prophet (*Nabi*) Confucius and without impropriety and to extend amongst the Chinese people literacy and a knowledge of languages (Coppel 1981). Unfortunately, Alabahin

(2005) notes that criticism has vehemently occurred within the Chinese community on the suspicion of whether or not THHK was influenced by Christian missionaries (Hefner 2010: 124–25). It raises the question of why Confucians in Indonesia have different worship form one way another compared it with that of Confucians in other countries of Southeast Asia. Unavoidably, Christian elements are still attached to the Confucians' worship in Indonesia.

In the following decades, another Confucian organization was established in Bandung in 1923, namely *Khong Kauw Tjong Hwee* (Federation of Confucian Religion Societies). It was newly the central organization of Confucian religion, whereas the *Khong Kauw Hwee* (Confucian Religion Society) was the branch organization. However, the federal organization of Confucian religion in Indonesia has shown a marked degree of historical discontinuity. The Bandung-based *Khong Kauw Tjong Hwee* was short-lived, apparently fading into obscurity by early 1926. After leaving Bandung, then in late 1938, the Solo *Khong Kauw Hwee* took the initiative in calling an all-Java conference of *Khong Kauw Hwee*, as a result of which a new *Khong Kauw Tjong Hwee* was formed, with its headquarters in Solo, which lasted until the Japanese invasion in 1942 (Coppel 1981: 179).

Not long after its independence, Indonesia practiced liberal democracy in 1950s. Meanwhile, Confucians in Indonesia continued to strengthen their institution. During a decade after Indonesia's independence, Confucians organized some national meetings, including a Solo' congress in December 1954 (Fuad and Ratrie 2007: 124). After independence, however, relations between the Chinese community, including Confucians, and the new nationalist authorities were volatile, shifting from tolerance to persecution (Billioud and Thoraval 2008: 100). Political environment, as well as security issues, were a problem for Chinese Indonesian including Confucians to consolidate and manage their organization freely and independently. Instead of handling a tight control over its member, Matakin kept

struggling to survive with decreasing members during the marginalization policy under the New Order era. *Matakin* itself was established in the early New Order era. In 1967, *Khong Kauw Hwee* changed its name to the *Majelis Tertinggi Agama Khonghucu Indonesia* (The supreme council of the Confucian Religion, abbreviated as *Matakin*) and *Khong Kauw* was transformed into an organized religion called *Agama Khonghucu* (*Khonghucu* is an Indonesian *Hokkien* term for Confucius, and *agama* is an Indonesian word for “religion”) (Suryadinata 2014).

Ironically, New Order regime of Indonesia suspected Confucianism due to political conflicts resulting of marginalization of Confucianism. The New Order regime assessed wrongly suspecting that Confucianism has a close connection with Beijing. As a result, Confucians who state Confucianism on their ID card reduced drastically. Rather, they put another religion in their *Kartu Tanda Penduduk* (KTP or ID card) such as Buddhism, Christianity, and even Islam (Suryadinata, 2006: 81 & 88).

As a matter of fact, Confucianism and its leaders in China migrated to Taiwan. In addition, the prevalence of core Confucian legacies and their impacts on civic and political orientations buttressed six Confucian countries: China, Japan, South Korea, Singapore, Taiwan, and Vietnam. In these countries, Confucian political legacies encourage demand for a non-liberal democratic government that prioritizes the economic welfare of the community over the freedom of individual citizens. However, Confucian social legacies promote interpersonal trust and tolerance, which are critical components of democratic civic life (Shin 2011).

RESEARCH METHOD

This article is stemmed from qualitative research that utilizes some data gathered techniques. It is widely known in the area of qualitative research that the more complete and more interactive a study in presenting a narrative around it, the better of a study. Also, the qualitative

approach covers emotions, motivation, symbol and their meaning, empathy, and other subjective aspects that deal with the daily life of individuals and groups that are examined (Creswell 2013; Wiltfang and Berg 2003).

To collect the data, the author emphasized several data gathering techniques, namely observing of the field, interviewing the following influential informants such as some elite as well as lay Confucians in Purwokerto, the staff of the Banyumas' Ministry of Religious Affairs office, the chairman of *Forum Kerukunan Umat Beragama* (FKUB, or interreligious forum for Harmony), as well as studying some related pieces of literature. Field research itself was conducted in May 2017 in the city of Purwokerto (Banyumas), Central Java Province.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The Current Condition of Confucians in Purwokerto

Statistically, Chinese community in Purwokerto is relatively small in number. No exact number of Chinese communities was provided during field research for this paper. It is a merely an information stating that some wealthy businessmen in Purwokerto were Chinese descendant. Unfortunately, not all of them were Confucian. They have been run their own business such as supermarket, cinema, chemical goods, manufacturing products and other similar things. In addition, it is confirmed that no any Chinese enclaves or Chinatown can be found in this city. From this point of view, one can estimate how many and what strong Indonesian Chinese in this city if comparing them with that of the Chinese in many other big cities in Indonesia.

Although no provided account of Indonesian Chinese' total number in this city, the local statistic center shows the data of Chinese temple. According to the data published by the local statistical bureau (*Badan Pusat Statistik Kabupaten Banyumas* 2018) to which the Ministry of Religious Affairs (MoRA) of Banyumas

refers to, there are three Chinese temples in Banyumas (another name of Purwokerto) district, namely a Chinese temple in Sokaraja sub-district, a Chinese temple in East Purwokerto sub district, and a Chinese temple in Banyumas sub district. Confucians pay more attention to the Chinese temple at the Hok Tek Bio temple which is located in the East Purwokerto sub district. The temple is located in the downtown area of the city.

Even though this temple is not merely deserved for Confucians, in fact the special room of Confucian place of worship (*litang*) is also built inside the temple, the core board members of this temple are mostly Confucians and they have actively been engaged with the Indonesian Confucian council or *Matakin* branch of Banyumas (Interview with Maryati, a *jiaosheng* (Novice teacher), May 13, 2017). The temple itself is very easy to be found because it is located next to the Wage central market of Purwokerto, the biggest traditional market in Purwokerto. This temple was established in 1831 and being renovated twice into becoming the current building's condition (Krazan 2017). On the other hand, the two other temples, according to an informant, are not managed by Confucian.

Likewise, Harmony building is the big enough building in central Purwokerto which is located at Soeparno Street number 902 Purwokerto. It belongs to Confucians in Purwokerto. Its functions are multiple such as classroom for kindergarten up to elementary schools, indoor sports, meeting hall as well as wedding ceremony. *Litang* is also provided in this building.

As stated earlier, Indonesian Chinese in Purwokerto city resides in no specific area. They live in a common area where they build their house next to the non-Chinese neighbor. Thus, there is no china town (*pecinan*) in this city (Interview with Akhsin Aedi, Banyumas' Office of Ministry of Religious Affair, May 7, 2017). Even, they build their houses in many villages intermingled with local (Javanese) people. Probably, to identify them easily is only by indicating the fact that their houses are located near local markets.

Only the last few years, they have been lived in a costly housing complex like for example Permata Hijau housing Complex. It can be estimated that the percentage of Chinese people in Purwokerto is about 30 percent of the total Banyumas population (Interview with Chumaidy Yusuf, The Head of Gusdurian Community of Banyumas, May 15, 2017).

Very recently, *Sekolah Tinggi Khonghucu Indonesia* (STIKIN, or Indonesia' Confucianism College) is founded in this city. It is the first state' Confucianism academy in Indonesia and is dedicated to facilitate Confucianism development as a religion in Indonesia. The main purpose of this academy is to create Confucianism teachers working for formal schools to support religious education curricula in formal schools. The inauguration of this collage was happened in February 2021 with the support of the Ministry of Religious Affairs (MoRA) of Indonesia (Banyumas 2021).

The Development of Confucianism in Purwokerto Until the End of New Order Era

The *Majelis Agama Khonghucu di Indonesia* (Makin, or Indonesian Confucian Religious Council) of Purwokerto, a local branch of the *Matakin* was established in 1981. Before establishing the Makin of Purwokerto, many Confucians in Purwokerto disregarded about their religious identity and unconcerned of Confucianism as the religion they belong to. They had only come to the temple regularly and paid homage to perform religious rituals. A senior and leader of Confucian in Purwokerto, Mr. A confirms that as he was in his childhood era, he was asked by his mother to come to the temple to which his mother always wanted to come. Later on, he participated in temple events regularly either in Purwokerto or the nearest neighboring city, Tegal of Central Java. Then, Confucian teenagers in Purwokerto were asked to join some events like for example cultural festivals whereby they performed Barongsai dance. He states as

follows,

"Sebelumnya saya hanya kenal sembahyang saja. Waktu saya kecil oleh mamah saya diajak ke klenteng. Waktu itu mamah saya tidak menjelaskan langsung bahwa agama kita itu Khonghucu. Pokoknya setiap mamah ke klenteng, saya diajak. Jadi saya dari kecil sudah dikenalkan mamah saya di klenteng ini"

"Before we knew Confucianism, we only had known Chinese praying. When I was a kid, my mother asked me to go to a Chinese temple (*klen-teng*). At that time, my mother didn't explain clearly that our religion was Confucianism. Whenever my mother went to the temple, I was asked. So that, from kid age, my mother had introduced me to the temple (interview with Mr. A, May 5, 2017).

Mr. A continued that when he and his friends went to a temple in Tegal for the next trip in 1970s, they were encouraged to pioneering the establishment of Makin in Purwokerto. From that point of view, he began to know and to learn more about Confucianism accordingly and thoroughly. Subsequently, he was taught a ritual ceremony of Confucianism on every date of 1 and 15 of Chinese calendars. At the same time, some Confucian clerics came to Purwokerto and taught Confucianism to lay Confucians. They also talked about how to manage Confucians in this city properly.

Needless to say, Confucians in Purwokerto were forced to hide their main religion during New Order era. Besides being disallowed to mention Confucianism (*Khonghucu*) on their ID card, Confucianism's wedding ritual was banned unless they choose any other state acknowledged religions. As a result, this situation decreased number of Confucian in Purwokerto. However, it doesn't mean that believing in Confucianism fade. Indeed, Confucians in Purwokerto were well organized and they were able to buy land and built a big meeting building, the Harmony Building in the downtown area of the city. Then, Circular Letter of The Ministry of Home Affair in 1978 that abolishing Confucianism as a religion in ID card was annulled by President Abdurrahman Wahid through his Minister of Home Affair Soerjadi

decision number 477/805/Sj. Of course, it has made a great effect for Confucians including Confucians in Purwokerto.

Mr. H, the former chairman of Makin Purwokerto said that as an organization, Makin of Purwokerto was very dynamic and solid enough during the New Order regime, even when Confucianism was being erased from ID card. Quietly, they could communicate with one another and strengthen one another to keep faith in Confucianism. They also frequently went to another city to meet their fellow Confucian, like for example Confucians in Tasikmalaya and Ciamis of West Java province. When they met their fellow from other cities, they could share their experience, sorrow, and idea. They could also deepen their understanding of Confucianism (interview with Mr. H, May 15, 2017)

By visiting other fellow Confucians, Mr. H continued, the Confucians in Banyumas were very solid. Undeniably, then they could build a group of *arisan* (lottery) among Confucians in Purwokerto as well as other non-Confucians Chinese groups. The rest of the money resulted from the lottery was used to buy land and even built a building. Harmony building is the name of the building which provides a hall for the wedding ceremony, school, sport venues, and other similar things. It has a one-hectare area and is located in the downtown of Purwokerto. Estimated total asset of Confucians in Purwokerto is up to IDR 6 billion. It is reasonable to say that the Confucian community in Purwokerto is the richest Confucian community in Central Java Province (interview with Mr. D, a novice teacher of Confucianism, May 7, 2017).

In Mr. H interpretation, developing this building was meant to accommodate Confucians throughout Java. Luckily, Purwokerto is located in the middle area of Java island. The Harmony building, then, can be used by a Confucians from West Java to East Java, and even all Confucian delegations across the country. Interestingly, it shows that this community could develop the building independently by using internal funding

including the fund from the rest of lottery money. There was no record of a donation from an outside group like for example state support' fund.

Confucianism and Makin of Purwokerto in Post Reformasi

Having oppressed during the New Order era, Indonesian Chinese in Purwokerto were mostly affiliated with Christianity, both Catholic, and Protestant. The huge number of Chinese Indonesian in Purwokerto who follow Christianity can be seen by looking at the three big churches that belong to *Gereja Kristen Indonesia* (GKI, or Indonesian Christian church). GKI is a Protestant synod where many Indonesian Chinese join. Besides, a few other Chinese Indonesians in Purwokerto have converted to Islam. Chinese Indonesian who converted to Islam is managed by an organization, namely *Persatuan Iman Tauhid Indonesia* (PITI, or Union of Islamic Belief of Indonesia). In Purwokerto, PITI has been shown remarkable activities for the last several years.

Post Refromasi for Confucians in Purwokerto denotes uneasy to find any Confucians whose having X generation and baby boomers' generation, or who were born post-1965 up to the 1990s. They have mostly already converted to other state acknowledged religions. Although the central government has issued a regulation to acknowledge Confucianism mentioned in ID cards, in fact, reconverting to the ancestor's religion is uneasy (interview with Yusuf, *ibid*). Right now, Confucian marital administration, birth certificate, and ID card are no longer restricted. However, the Ministry of Religious Affairs of Banyumas office data shows that the Confucians who change into Confucianism (Agama Khonghucu) on their ID cards reaches out 82 people only (interview with a staff of the office of Ministry of Religious Affair of Banyumas, May 7, 2017).

Education is also thought very important and much emphasized by Confucians in Purwokerto as their ancestors were did in early 20th century. In 2009, they established Mulia Bhakti kindergarten

and elementary school. The classroom of the school is at the Harmony building. Now, the schools are managed by the Makin foundation of Purwokerto. When the author had questioned the status of the school, they rejected to admit that the school was a Confucian school. They said that the school was a public school and hence, it affiliated with national standard of education. The schools are supervised by the Banyumas office of the Ministry of Education and Culture. Also, the schools have received *Bantuan Operasional Sekolah* (BOS, or School Operational Subsidy) from the central government.

Although they rejected the school that they manage to be a Confucian typed school, the foundation (Makin foundation of Purwokerto) that had established the school is closely linked with the Confucians. Likewise, although the supervision of the school goes to the Ministry of Education and culture, the characteristic of Confucianism is attached to the school. Like for example, when the author visited the school, the author saw students respecting the teachers by doing *pai* (Confucian greeting) and saying *we tek tong Tien*. Probably, the national and secular character of the school was because the teachers there mostly not Confucian. Even, some women teachers wore *hijab*.

Confucians in Purwokerto are less dependent on government subsidies. It is not uncommon in Purwokerto because some Confucian elites have a good business so that they relatively richer than any other fellow local Chinese descendant. One figure that should be noted here is the late Mr. B. He is known to have been a persistent businessman in Purwokerto and is energetic to involve Confucians matter in Purwokerto. His business, among others, is cinema (Rajawali cinema), eye feather and wig factory for the international market, cosmetic factory, brown sugar factory, and shoe factory alike. Besides, he is appointed as the advisor for the Mulia Bhakti foundation. As the advisor, some informants say that he has contributed to buttress the financial budget of the schools because the school releases tuition fees for students from unprivileged

society. He has also established a vocational school, SMK Mulia Bhakti which is located at Sunan Bonang Street, Dukuwaluh, on the outskirts of Purwokerto. An informant told the author that the SMK Mulia Bhakti building cost was IDR 16 billion. The idea of this vocational school comes from the Maikel vocational school (*SMK Maikel*) of Surakarta (Solo) of Central Java which is very famous school in Central Java.

Another one Mr. B's vision is to build a faculty of Eastern Medication in Purwokerto. It is planned that the campus will be developed and provided eastern or Chinese traditional medicine (CTM) stemming from the herbal element which is combined with the Chinese ill-treatment technique, *chi-kung*. Through this planned campus, he wants to show the close network between Chinese and Javanese as like as he has already shown from his business journey so far (interview with Mr. B, May 10 and 11, 2017).

Another Chinese Indonesian in Purwokerto, Mr. C has also served and worked enormously to promulgate Confucianism. Many local people know that Mr. C is the owner of Rita supermarket whose branches reach out Banyumas neighboring cities. Although his ID card is still not put Confucian (probably Catholic), but he has actively participated in some Confucian religious events. His generosity has also enabled the Gusdurian community (the followers of Abdurrahman Wahid group) of Banyumas to have a comfortable office in the prestigious downtown area (near Purwokerto town square garden) (interview with Chumaidy Yusuf, *ibid*).

Being independent from the state subsidy but with the huge support from strong businessmen figures such as Mr. B, Mr. C, and some others, one may want to know to what extent the government has facilitated the Confucians in Purwokerto. Indeed, the Ministry of Religious Affairs has helped the Confucians in Purwokerto but never consolidated with Matakina.

"Sebagai orang Matakina, saya akui Kementerian Agama RI telah banyak membantu dan memfasilitasi Agama Khonghucu. Namun PKUB (Pusat Kerukunan Umat Beragama), satker yang mewa-

dahi Khonghucu, tidak pernah bertanya kepada Matakina. Contohnya, anggaran Rp. 6,6 miliar dana yang dikucurkan kepada Khonghucu tidak pernah lewat dialog. PKUB langsung turun tanpa menghubungi Matakina".

"As a management board of Matakina, I admit that the Ministry of Religious Affairs (MoRA) office has much helped us and Confucian religion. However, a special unit that provides service for Confucians has never asked Matakina about what should do and what we need. For example, the budget of IDR 6,6 given to Confucian religion yearly is executed without prior dialogue with Matakina. MoRA office of Confucian religion (*Pusat Kerukunan Umat Beragama*, PKUB or Centre for Religious Harmony) has executed the program by themselves" (interview with Mr. D, May 7, 2017).

However, the MoRA section of Confucianism has always offered programs for the Confucian following the information taken from *Badan Perencanaan Nasional* (Bappenas, or National Planning Body). According to Bappenas, financial disbursement for a religious body must rely on the number of followers. It is a bit shocking to know that Confucians in Purwokerto are only 82 people as stated on their ID card (interview with a staff of Center of Confucianism of MoRA office, Mei 1, 2018). The following confusion comes to the question of whether government service is only designated to 82 people as mentioned in the ID card or targeted hundreds of the rest of Chinese who have not yet changed their religion on their ID card. In fact, in every time of Confucian event such as the Chinese lunar new year, *Ceng Beng*, *Peh Cun*, and other similar things, hundreds of *Peranakan* (local-born) Chinese people join the event at the Hok Tek Bio Chinese temple.

The Emergence of a New Confucian Group; Parakhin

Separation within the Chinese organization THHK happened in the early 1920s, is now reoccurred within Matakina's organization. From 2015 to 2017 Matakina was hit by internal conflict. Some elite Confucians of Purwokerto were also involved in the conflict. Speaking to the author, they mentioned that they want to remind the

central Matakin board to be more serious in serving grass-root Confucians. Frustration toward the central Matakin board service program was among the main problems along with the other problems such as personal intrigue between Confucian elites as well as complaint of elder generation for not being well respected by the current Matakin executive boards.

In Purwokerto, disharmony between elite Confucians affects the administration of Makin Purwokerto as well as the management of the Harmony Building. The name to be stated at the land certificate for Harmony building becomes one of the disputable issues among elite Confucians of Purwokerto. Some others want to change the name mentioned in the certified letter replacing it with the name of the institution. They worry about the status of the asset that would be possibly claimed and sued by the person's name in the certificate's descendant. To anticipate undesirable matter, then it was established Makin Foundation of Purwokerto. However, some other elite Confucian of Purwokerto disagreed with the idea and proposed *Mulia Bhakti* Foundation instead of Makin Foundation due to the prior establishment of *Mulia Bhakti* school that belongs to *Mulia Bhakti* Foundation (Mr. D, *ibid*). Hence, debates among group of Confucians were happened at that time.

Conflict is now still unresolved because the person whose name mentioned on the certificate undesired to send the certificate to the Makin foundation. Beyond the conflict, there is a personal problem between the person who being thought to send the certificate with the newly elected chairperson of the foundation. It is said that the foundation had even reported the case to police and being informed that police carefully investigated the case because of delicate matter of a religious cause. The police encouraged that the case should be internally resolved.

Elite Confucian whose name was put on the building certificate (Mr. A's group) suddenly forms an association, namely *Perkumpulan Makin Purwokerto* (Association of Makin of

Purwokerto). Latterly, it was protested by the foundation. Then, in trying to solve the problem, the central Matakin board had already resolved the conflict by calling upon both two sides. However, the infiltration of central Matakin board unsuccessfully halted the conflict. Drastically, the local conflict meets coincidentally with the elite national Confucians conflict. To be sure, when a famous Confucian cleric of the Late Abdurrahman Wahid' friend, Bingky Irawan from Surabaya, who disappointed with the central Matakin board coming to Purwokerto and joining the new Confucian organization establishment, *Perkumpulan Rohaniwan Agama Khonghucu Indonesia* (Parakhin, or Association of Confucian religious clerics of Indonesia) (Mr. D, *ibid*).

Both Matakin and Parakhin claimed the legalization of their organization. Even, conflict was widely published and circulated through some local newspapers. However, the chairperson of Purwokerto's *Forum Kerukunan Umat Beragama* (FKUB, or Interreligious Forum for Harmony) felt surprising to see although some elite Confucians had stood by each own opinion, both parties showed harmonious relations. He saw this situation when attending a wedding ceremony hosted by one of the Chinese figures. The main actors of conflict he had been heard getting along as a wedding committee. According to him, this means that the conflict never really happened (interview the author with Moh Roqib, the Chairperson of FKUB Banyumas, May 10, 2017).

The current tension and conflict among elite Confucians in Indonesia happened shortly after the passing of Tjhie Tjay Ing (Xu Zaiying), a charismatic figure of Confucians who had lived in Solo (Central Java). A figure that has similar charisma to Tjhie Tjay Ing was still not found. Unfortunately, during his life, he did not appoint his successor as the leader of the *dewan rohani* (spiritual council) of Matakin. After his death, soon it emerged a hard feeling for some Confucian clerics who felt not properly treated by the executive board of Matakin. Driven by Binky Irawan who also supported Budi and Lani

of Surabaya' the first Confucian marriage ritual in the early Reformasi era, some of these clergies agreed to establish Parakhin. Their protest to the central Matakini was then grasped by one of Purwokerto elite Confucian who was having the same idea. The latter was dissatisfied with management board of Matakini Purwokerto and also Matakini. Then Parakhin was declared on 4 August 2016, which was attended by the top leader of district army (*Dandim*), Banyumas Regent, and representatives of Ministry of Religious Affairs from Jakarta.

It should also be noted here that according to an informant, Binky Irawan and some other senior group of Confucians disappointed with the results of the National general assembly (*Muyawarah Kerja Nasional*) of *dewan rohani* (*deroh* or spiritual council) of Matakini in 2013. One thing that made them upset was the decision to shorten *deroh* members to only 5 clergymen. They thought that it will harm the *deroh* work that was previously working collectively collegial. "This is like a headless dragon and could be a bullet to attack central Matakini board by the elderly Confucian" (Mr. D, *ibid*).

Parakhin's objections to Matakini were not only because Matakini disrespected the Confucian clergy, but also their disappointment with the actions of Matakini officials in Jakarta. According to them, the central Matakini board only pursues personal interests without paying attention to the formation of the Confucians at the grass-root level. The central board of Matakini is accused to be interacted more often with the state government and business (owner of capital) than paying attention to the needs of lay Confucian people. For this reason, the initiator of Parakhin is also working on the establishment of the *Perkumpulan Umat Khonghucu Indonesia* (Perukhin, or Indonesian Confucians Association) (interview with Mr. B, Mr. E, and another middle spiritual leader-*wensi* who joins Parakhin, May 9, 2017).

Parakhin was formed in simple structure with Bingky Irawan as chairman and Oesman Arif, a professor of Sebelas Maret University

of Surakarta (UNS) as general secretary. For Confucians in Indonesia, there were 13 *haksu* (highest spiritual teachers) in total, and 5 of them have joined Parakhin. Incidentally, Mr. B and his followers including Mr. E and Mr. F supported and facilitated the establishment of Parakhin. They also kept continuing their work by lobbying the Ministry of Religious Affairs. To communicate with the ministry, they use personal networks that have been built for the last few years. To show the existence of Parakhin, there would be a Confucian International Conference that was held in Purwokerto from 19 to 20 May 2017. It was expected that the Minister of Religious Affairs Lukman Hakim Saefuddin would come to the opening ceremony of the event. However, finally Minister Lukman Hakim didn't come to the event.

Now, Parakhin has a legal entity status as *perkumpulan* (association) and is registered under the supervision of the Ministry of Law and Human Rights of the Republic of Indonesia. It means that this organization has a legal status being legalized to conduct community service. However, it is hoped by Mr. D that the central government remains to pay attention to Matakini.

"Keinginan kita pemerintah jangan terpecah, bahwa pembinaan umat Khonghucu seyogjanya tetap dilakukan Matakini. Jangan sampai Parakhin muncul sebagai tandingan Matakini karena Matakini itu organisasinya sudah puluhan tahun. Parakhin memang tidak bertentangan dengan nilai-nilai Khonghucu. Menyebut Tuhan tetap Tien dan nabinya Nabi Kongzi. Hanya dalam pembinaan umat, mereka berbeda mantra (keng)-nya. Mereka membentuk mantra baru meski tetap bersumber dari Kitab Xue Xi"

"We want that the government is not to be confused. The management of Confucians should always be carried out by Matakini. Don't let Parakhin emerge as Matakini's rival because Matakini has existed already for the last several decades. Honestly, Parakhin does not conflict with Confucian values. They call God remains *Tien* and his prophet is still Prophet Kongzi. Only in the religious mass service for the follower, they use different spells (*keng*). They formed a new spell even though it still came from the Book of *Xue Xi* (Mr. D, 7 May 2017).

Truthfully, some lay Confucians in Purwokerto opposed the establishment of Parakhin. The most basic reason is that they were only small communities, then why should they be divided again (interview with Mrs. G, May 13, 2017). Another reason is that elite Confucians who join Parakhin were essentially a group of Confucians who failed in the election of the Makin Purwokerto. Precisely, they were dissatisfied with the results of the last election of the Chairman in 2014. Finally, only hope was going to the central Matakina that it should act clearly because there are some efforts to control the land and assets of the Harmoni building which belongs to the Confucians of Purwokerto. "These people only want to win themselves, disobey the organization rule, and just because they have much money" (interview with Mr. H, May 15, 2017).

Parakhin is deemed to make a breakthrough in increasing the number of truly Confucians who want to replace their religion on their ID cards with Confucianism (*Khonghucu*). Even, Parakhin offered to cover health insurance for those who are willing to replace their religious column with Confucianism (interview with one of Parakhin leaders, May 14, 2017). However, this was opposed by Makin Purwokerto, with the reason that Confucians should not worship with seeking lured. It is feared also by some criticisms because Parakhin's strength has been in management of the business empire led by one of the founding figures of Parakhin. It was worried if the figure had died, how would the continuation of the insurance fee be like (interview with Mrs. G, May 13, 2017).

The establishment of STIKIN is meant that state favors Parakhin rather than Matakina. STIKIN campus is now located at the place belong to the main figure of Parakhin. Matakina plan to establish Confucian college was not in Purwokerto (interview with Matakina leader, July 2019). However, Matakina plan was not enough to convince MoRA that the later eager to accommodate Confucianism teachers who have

fulfilled qualification and competency as teacher.

Voices of Freedom and Confucians Revival in Purwokerto

Observing thoroughly the recent Confucians conflict in Purwokerto, it might be jeopardized Confucians themselves. Confucians will not be able to reconcile to one another to halt internal conflict. But this statement could be not true if it refers to the Indonesian historical account that Confucian or Chinese people in general, had frequently experienced internal conflict. Financially, they run independently including to buy land and to build a big building which has multiple functions. Though conflict remains unresolved, both parties can contribute to serve Confucians in general.

To take historical account, however, it seems that the THHK division in the early twentieth century is merely re-emerged recently, starting from Purwokerto and gaining the attention of the central Matakina organization. By looking at this dispute between Matakina and Parakhin, one can always see any room for Confucians to voice their interest within the democratic system, although Confucianism on its original and conservative doctrine has emphasized unity and harmony within society. The establishment of Parakhin is one example of how the doctrine of Confucianism about loyalty and filial piety is challenged. To solve the problem is uneasy because the Parakhin is relatively powerful in terms of funding, access to the central government, and stand on some clergyman of Confucians in Indonesia as well.

Chaibong's statement above seems useful to help understanding the recent conflict of Confucians between Matakina and Parakhin to which the later itself has its conflicting problem among Confucians in this city previously. According to Chaibong, Confucianism has been very supportive of democratic stability, which has happened in Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan (Hall 2008). However, different things also happen when Confucians are considered to

be a barrier to the passage of democracy, which happens in some countries such as China and Singapore. But two countries have successfully proved that Confucianism is very compatible with modernity and advanced industrial technology. It could be different for Confucians who are living in a liberal democracy where individual freedom is desired the most. Within the frame of liberal democracy, Confucianism could be a place for its follower to debate and fight against one another. However, it must be taken to finally seek harmony and unity among society.

In frame of democracy as well, it should be noted that any movement related with Confucians in Purwokerto is the sort of revival of Confucians and Confucianism in current Indonesia outside their common place in Indonesian history. Parakhin and STIKIN are not emerged at the city that previously well recognized as a fertile ground for Indonesian' Chinese as well as Confucianism (*Khonghucu*) movement. Only very recently, Purwokerto is the center of Confucians activities to serve better future of Confucians and Confucianism (*Khonghucu*) in Indonesia.

CONCLUSION

Confucianism as religion for Chinese Indonesian was initiated during the late nineteenth century. *Tiong Hoa Hwee Koan* (THKK) was the first Chinese Indonesian organization that tried to protect the teaching of Confucianism from Western influence. From New Order era until two decades after *Reformasi*, Matakín is a single organization for Confucians in Indonesia and it remains unchallenged. However, disappointment and internal conflict among Confucians outside Matakín are happened and cannot be avoided. Parakhin, a new Confucian organization that was established in Purwokerto and its STIKIN establishment shows the dynamic of Confucians as well as a Confucian revival in the recent era. the dynamic of Confucians in Purwokerto is clearly new one. Hence, Purwokerto can be regarded as the new area of the revival of Confucianism in

Indonesia.

Although the precise number of Confucians in Purwokerto, as it is confirmed by checking ID cards is only 82 people, there have been always hundreds of people joining Confucian religious activities in Chinese temples such as Hok Tek Bio temple of Purwokerto. In this regard, Confucianism is not only deemed as official religion as like as some other religions that asking the member to be fully committed with. Here, Confucianism is possibly regarded as something that beyond religion that is a spiritual realm. In addition, although they are small in number in the case of Purwokerto, they succeed to empower themselves like for example by installing a large meeting building namely the Harmony building, and also established some schools.

In Indonesia, it is a turning point of Confucianism that Confucianism has become very supportive of democratic stability. It seems that Confucians in Indonesia are following the trait of compatibility between Confucianism and democracy. Some elite Confucians in Indonesia keep trying to challenge the domination of the old-fashioned and solely religious organization for Confucian, namely *Matakín*, by establishing the new one, *Parakhin*.

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