

# The strategic adaptation of Chinese-Manadonese in the Reform Era

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## ABSTRACT

This article is a further discussion of previous research which is a pilot project to observe patterns of cultural interaction within the Chinese community in Indonesia as a part of a project to understand the phenomenon of the multicultural society during the New Order Era. The specific target of this research is to study the socio-cultural interactions within the Chinese community in Manado during the Reform Era (2000-2014). This research aims to study the strategic adaptation of the Chinese in Manado, by analysing the obstacles and opportunities in their socio-cultural interaction with the locals. Using data from field research and literature studies, this qualitative research applies an ethnographic approach by observing various actions in their socio-cultural interactions.

## KEYWORDS

Strategic adaptation; Chinese-Manado; integration; Reform Era; socio-cultural interactions.

## INTRODUCTION<sup>1</sup>

In a multicultural society like Indonesia, integration is a complex and crucial problem and it has become the key focus in the process of unifying multicultural Indonesia. Since the country's Independence, some problems related to the integration are still yet to be resolved. One problem is that of minority groups, particularly the Chinese community, which in terms of

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religion and culture tend to diverge quite widely from the local majority. This problem has triggered political instability during two presidencies up to the present and has become a rather pressing burden on a government endeavouring to create national unity among the various societies in Indonesia.

This problem has been discussed by R.E. Elson in his book *The idea of Indonesia* (2008). In his book he dissects the putative political integration of Indonesia, an event still waiting to happen. It is said that, from its foundation to the present, the potential historical integration of Indonesia has been riven by deep internal conflicts caused by the differences in ideology, ethnicity, religion and other various interests which have so far not been resolved. Meanwhile, the Chinese problem itself is just one part of a more complicated matter, because it has always been inextricably related to domestic social, economic and political matters as well as to foreign relations (Suryadinata 2002: 18).

The Chinese community has been living in the Indonesian Archipelago, including in the Minahasa area (Manado), for a long time. In the past, it was divided into two groups: the *totok* Chinese, who were still strongly attached to their ancestors in Mainland China, and the Peranakan Chinese, who were born and raised in Indonesia and had already mingled with the local community and assumed certain aspects of their cultures. The majority of them worked as traders. During the Colonial Era, they were assigned a status which was higher than that of the natives or local community. During the period of National Independence and the New Order (1945-1998), their room to manoeuvre was curtailed, but the Reform Era (1998-today) has given the Chinese community back their freedom by revoking regulations which had previously restrained them. These changes are also readily apparent in the daily lives of the Chinese community in the city of Manado. Their adaptation to the socio-political situation in the Reform Era is most obviously apparent in the expansion and dominance of their business activities in various aspects of life in the city of Manado; even extending into the politics and bureaucracy of the government.

This research is different from the previous research focusing on *The failure of Indonesian integration in the Reform Era; A case of Semarang's Chinese community* (Alkatiri et al. 2015) in which the result of the discussion revealed various constraints of their patterns of interaction with the local community and vice-versa. In contrast, the Manado Chinese are not under any significant constraints in their mixing with the local community. This relative freedom can be attributed to the similarities in their skin colour, physical appearance, faith, culinary habits, cultural patterns and the use of family name or *marga* (surname), none of which causes friction with the people of Manado.

Using this lack of antipathy as a point of departure, this article examines the course of their strategic adaptation during the Reform Era, which has provided them with many opportunities to succeed in various aspects of life. What kind of obstacles have they encountered in adapting to the local community? How do the people of Manado judge the attitudes and actions of the Chinese community there? In other words, the purpose of this article

is to study the strategic adaptation of the Chinese-Manado<sup>2</sup> in response to socio-political developments during the Reform Era.

#### LITERATURE REVIEW

The causal nexus of this article is that the problem of integration into and assimilation between the Chinese community and the locals in Indonesia is a topic which has already been widely discussed both in books and journals. The majority of these works discuss various factors which emerge as obstacles of either party's integration. The following sections will present some previous works on the problems of interaction between the majority and the minority, or between the Chinese community and the local people. Throughout the Reform Era (1998-today), books and articles about the Chinese community in Indonesia have multiplied and become increasingly diverse. Some of these books are mentioned below.

The first book is by P. Hariyono *Kultur Cina dan Jawa; Pemahaman menuju asimilasi kultural* (1994). This book discusses the problem of assimilation between the Chinese community and the locals (the Javanese in Yogyakarta). One of the research's findings is that marriage is one way to assimilate and establish kinship ties. In his conclusion, he says that the process of assimilation will take effect if it is undertaken by two parties who need to achieve their purpose in life.

The article "Kebersamaan di ruang publik pada pawai perayaan Gotong Toa Pe Kong berbasis masyarakat majemuk di Slawi pasca Orde Baru 2010" written by Zeffry Alkatiri and Fabianus Koesoemadinata (2012) states that some functions and meanings of the Chinese New Year (Imlek) and Gotong Toa Pe Kong celebrations do have a positive effect because they accommodate and support three different interests, namely: political interests, economic interests, and cultural expressions. The Barongsai performance is an effective medium through which the Chinese community can adapt to the new changes, because it can embrace everyone, especially the local people, allowing them to participate and simultaneously demonstrate Chinese identity in Reform Era.

Similar studies of adaptation and assimilation can also be found in several articles included in Ong Hok Ham's book titled *Riwayat Tionghoa Peranakan di Jawa* (2005). In some of the articles, the history of assimilation and how the Chinese adapted in Indonesia are discussed. Historical facts reveal that interactions between the Chinese community and the natives have taken place for many centuries. Various elements of Chinese culture had even been immersed in other elements. Some Chinese men married Javanese or Malay women. Their descendants would be those later known as the Peranakan Chinese. They then developed a form of mixed culture in the area in which they

<sup>2</sup> Although on 12 March 2014 President Soesilo Bambang Yudoyono (2009-2014) issued a Governmental Regulation (Peraturan Pemerintah, PP) which changed the use of the term *Cina* to *Tionghoa* and *Negara Cina* (RRC) to *Tiongkok*, this article we shall use the term *Cina* rather than *Tionghoa*. This decision is based purely on scientific considerations. A farther explanation on the use of the term will be given in the discussion section.

lived. The presence of Chinese temples (*klenteng*) served as a symbol of their presence. However, after Indonesia's Declaration of Independence the Chinese community found themselves questioning its own status and existence, as it had become used to living in its own groups during the Colonial Era.

In the wake of the May 1998 riots, the stringent restrictions experienced by the Chinese community were gradually lifted. As the demands for Reform grew, its members began to experience the fresh breeze of freedom of being elected members of Parliament and appointed heads of regencies and as governors. At the beginning of the millennium, the existence of the Chinese community was given even greater recognition following President Abdurrahman Wahid's issuance of Presidential Decree Number 6 Year 2000, revoking Presidential Instruction Number 14 Year 1967. When Megawati Soekarnoputri become President of Republic of Indonesia, she declared the Chinese New Year (*Imlek*) a designated as a national holiday.

In his other book, entitled *Anti Cina, kapitalisme Cina dan gerakan Cina*, Ong Hok Ham (2008) says that the Chinese are not actually homogenous. Like any other ethnic group, they are composed of various groups. They came to Indonesia individually or in small groups. They had arrived in Nusantara even earlier than the Western Europeans. These newcomers also mingled with the locals in Java, West Kalimantan, Sulawesi, and other areas in Indonesia. Although some Chinese people are poor, a few Chinese businessmen do dominate economic activities in Indonesia by owning and running big business companies.

The book entitled *Harga yang harus dibayar; Sketsa pergulatan etnis Cina di Indonesia* by I. Wibowo (2001) shows how the Chinese people adapted during their search for identity in the Indonesian community, a touchy subject which had been kept behind closed doors for a long time without anyone having the courage to tackle it. In this book, researchers from various disciplines attempt to understand the dilemmas and anxieties experienced by Chinese people in their search for their own identities. Within their own community, the Chinese were not allowed to trace their own history and roots of identity, because it was considered their disgrace. The same theme in relation to their socio-political situation is also discussed by Benny G Setiono in his book *Tionghoa dalam pusaran politik; Mengungkap fakta sejarah tersembunyi orang Tionghoa di Indonesia* (2008).

Moreover, there is an article written by Parsudi Suparlan (2006) entitled "Masyarakat multikultural dan posisi orang Cina" which states the consequence of Indonesia being a plural society is that there are dominant ethnic groups in opposition to minority groups in both urban and rural areas. The groups which dominate are usually the local ethnic groups who have social control of the political and administrative norms and, in the cultural field, apply the symbols and ethics which become the guidelines for everyday behaviour in public places (Jerome Bruner in Suparlan 2006). Those who do not belong to these ethnic groups are considered descendants of outsiders and are treated as foreigners. Those who are categorized as outsiders experience a

violation of their rights, and are forced to obey the norms upheld in the area. Suparlan argues that, as Indonesian Citizens (WNI), Chinese people were once treated as foreigners and were the target of discrimination and extortion by high-ranking officials in the government and military.

Another book is that written by Ahmad Habib, *Konflik antaretnik di pedesaan; Pasang surut hubungan Cina-Jawa* (2009). This book discusses conflicts between the Chinese and the Javanese in a rural area in East Java. Conflict emerged when Chinese entrepreneurs managed to cultivate the land in the area but did so using a closed system which pushed aside local workers. This unfair competition triggered social conflict and stirred anxiety among local farmers. As a result, the farmers and workers tried to take the land from the Chinese using both non-violent and violent means. This book illustrates how conflicts about assets can flare up at any time, especially when they are fuelled by differences in religion and economic conditions and in the history of land ownership.

Two books discuss inter-ethnic conflicts between the local people and the Chinese community in Kalimantan, especially in the towns of Pontianak and Singkawang. Both books are written by La M.D. Ode, a specialist in Chinese issues, particularly the Chinese communities who reside in these two areas. The titles of the books are *Etnis Cina Indonesia dalam politik; Politik etnis Cina Pontianak dan Singkawang di Era Reformasi 1998-2008* (2012) and *Politik tiga wajah* (2013). Both books discuss the same issues, which are inter-ethnic conflict, competition, and control of natural resources, in both areas in Kalimantan. Although problems are caused economic matters, since entering the Reform Era, they have expanded into practical politics. The writer found that the Chinese community in Indonesia tended to live an an exclusive unit and maintain this exclusivity by social networks, strengthened by social and religious cohesion; the last factor especially has unified them in preserving the culture of their ancestors (Ode 2013: 180). This diverges from Parsudi Suparlan's picture which proposes that, when the Chinese community faces a very complicated situation it tends to consider it a stumbling block. Compounding the problem is the tendency of the Chinese people to believe that the people of other ethnic groups are inferior. This attitude can be seen when they interact and mingle in society at large.

## METHODS

This research applies a qualitative approach. Data are collected from various references such as books, articles, and the Internet, all of which suit its focus. Data collection has also been done in the field through direct observation, interviews and FGD (Focus Group Discussion) with journalists from the *Manado Post*, members of the Indonesian House of Representatives (DPR) and the head of tourism agency of Manado Regency. There were also Hendry Gunawan as an observer of Chinatown, Alex J. Ulaen who is a scholar and lecturer, and Pak Tjun as an entrepreneur. A theoretical approach was

also introduced by reference to historical and ethnographic studies of the interaction of the Chinese community in Manado.

This research also makes use of the concept of socio-cultural and its theoretical framework. Social interaction is a reciprocal relationship between individuals or groups with individuals or other groups. In the dynamics of the process of social interaction – whether or not participation on an equal footing –, the points which stand out are: (1) the existence of a relationship between individuals and certain interests; (2) clashes among individuals; (3) a forum to draw people together; and (4) individual or collective consciousness (Thohir 2007: 2-4).

Violence in inter-ethnic interactions is most clearly observable in the field of political constellations, particularly those to do with leadership, control of areas or territories, control of land for production and the adoption of ethnocentrism and egoism in the presence of each ethnic identity. The formation of a political view on the basis of the native and non-native dichotomy is most readily caused by a discourse about the relationship between the insider and the outsider/newcomer to an area, complicated by many factors, including migration and land control, the economy and livelihood sources. Abdilah (2002) states that, in Indonesia's case, the issue of the economy is a bigger trigger than politics; the economic success of the Chinese community which is continuing to expand widens the gap with the economy of the natives and fosters anxiety as well as anti-Chinese feelings.

There is anxiety in Manadonese society that the Chinese might take over the economy, both the clothing and the food industries, control potential land and property in the city, assume leadership of the educational and religious aspects of life, dominate the means of both land and water transportation and, finally, control the political positions in Manado directly or indirectly. These forms of anxiety are found indirectly in Manadonese society. In the light of this fact, this article seeks to discover whether the actions taken by the Chinese-Manadonese to adapt in the Reform Era are having to face serious obstacles. Although the Manadonese accept the presence of the Chinese-Manadonese, their presence in almost every sector of life in Manado could widen the social gap which might lead to social jealousy. This will be elaborated in the other part of this article.

#### THE ARRIVAL AND THE PRESENCE OF CHINESE IMMIGRANTS IN MANADO

The origins of the Chinese community in Manado can be traced to some provinces in southeastern China - Guangdong, Fujian, and Guangxi. Upheavals caused by population explosion, famines and wars between ethnic groups forced them to leave China (their homeland) and in search of a promised land. In various stages of migration, the ethnic Chinese community has concentrated in certain places in Indonesia such as in Central Java (Semarang), East Java (Surabaya), North Sumatra (Medan), and West Kalimantan (Pontianak) (Purcell 1951: xi).

The first arrival of the Chinese community in Manado is estimated to

have taken place in 1655. They were brought there by the Dutch East India Company (VOC) to assist in the construction of the fortification known as Fort Amsterdam (Gunawan 2013: 30-34, 57-58). The Chinese who helped to build the fort settled down and built houses near the fort. The area in which they lived is now known as Chinatown (Pecinan) and is located near the Central Manado District which is the trading hub of Manado. The Chinese community in Manado consists of several groups: the Hokkien, Cantonese (also known as the Kwongfu), Hakka (also known as Keh), and the Hainanese.

Before the second half of the twentieth century, the majority of the Chinese community in Indonesia were traders and craftsmen. Plenty of Chinese migrants succeeded in building a life and were able to settle in the Archipelago, in both Java and Manado. They helped later Chinese newcomers by providing them with the capital. During this period, some of these Chinese descendants decided to marry and have families with the local people. They were forced to seek local wives because in the Ming dynasty the Chinese who had left China were forbidden to return and Chinese women were not permitted to emigrate (Suryadinata 2002: 70). This group used the local language in their area as for its everyday communication, but its members still adhered to Chinese traditions, including worship based on Chinese traditional beliefs (Greif 1991: 1-3) and celebrating Chinese New Year (Imlek). This group is called the Peranakan Chinese and, in time, it gave birth to the Peranakan culture, a mixture of Chinese and local culture. This culture can be observed in culinary traditions, clothing and domestic architecture.

After 1860, the restriction on going abroad was slowly lifted and this opened opportunities for Chinese to leave their home-country. In 1898, the Chinese government lifted the restriction on emigration so even more Chinese were free to come and disperse throughout various areas of Indonesia (Suryadinata 1984: 20). Even today, there are still some Chinese communities which faithfully observe the traditions and lifestyle passed down from their ancestors by maintaining marriage within their own communities (endogamy). However, many have abandoned their ancestral traditions by marrying members of the local community. Marriage paves the way for those of Chinese descent to adapt to the local community. In North Sulawesi the process of "Manadonization" was made even easier because many people of Chinese descent haven't taken Manadonese family names<sup>3</sup> from their mothers' side, for example, Laongan (from the family names Lauw and Ong), Lisangan (the

<sup>3</sup> Alex J. Ulaen (Scholar, 68 years old) says that, during the Netherlands Indies colonial era, the Chinese were allowed by the colonial power to purchase family names from the Minahasa ethnic/tribes, including Sondakh, Waworuntu, etcetera. For the Chinese, the opportunity to purchase a family name and use it alongside their Chinese names facilitated their attempts to become involved in trading and daily interaction with the Minahasa community (with many sub-ethnic groups). During Suharto's term of office, name-changing was allowed, so the Chinese-Manadonese could create their own family names on the basis of the tradition and culture of Minahasa or according to their personal preference. The change from a Chinese name to a Manadonese name (Indonesian) exemplifies how the Chinese-Manadonese aspired to adapt with the local community.

family name Lie), Shiajaya (from *marga* Shia) which strengthens their identity as Manadonese people.

As has been said at the outset, the VOC has developed area quarter of the city as a place in which Chinese manual labourers could find work. Eventually, they joined forces with the Chinese traders and make the place to be the first centre of commerce for the city of Manado later known as Chinatown or Pecinan. It was located across the European quarter, lying on the eastern side of the fort (Graffland 1987). Due to the similarities in physical appearance (fair complexion, eyes with epicanthic fold, round faces with prominent cheekbones and height), Chinese community has managed easily to mingle with the local people in the other parts of Manado city.

#### BACKGROUND TO POLITICAL POLICIES TOWARDS THE CHINESE ETHNIC GROUP FROM COLONIAL PERIOD UP TO THE NEW ORDER ERA

When Dutch entrepreneurs needed manual labourers to work on their plantations and in their mines, they imported the newly arrived Chinese, commonly known as *totoks*. This group did not have any loyalty towards the Dutch colonial power or the local community, because its members regarded Indonesia as only a temporary transit stop (Greif 1991: 3). As time passed, both the *totok* and the Peranakan Chinese insisted on maintaining their Chinese identity, buoyed up by their sense of superiority towards the local community. This stance aroused the suspicions of the local community, during and after the war of Independence and in the subsequent eras.

In the colonial eras, both the *totok* and Peranakan Chinese were classified as "Eastern Orientals" (Greif 1991: xi), who enjoyed a higher legal status than the locals. This categorization was deliberately introduced by the Dutch colonial power in order to maintain the segregation between the Chinese community and the local natives; it was also known as the policy of "Divide and rule" (Suryadinata 2002: 8). The Dutch colonial power was assiduous in trying to discredit the Chinese to the locals and vice-versa. One example of its attempts was to grant the Chinese privileges in education and giving them the opportunity to become a Dutch citizen. Another privilege obtained from being a Chinese was the opportunity to work in the Dutch government service or in the private sector. The result of such disparity in status was a widening social gap and a build-up of resentment between the Chinese and the locals.

During Independence, President Soekarno and Vice-President Hatta were also dubious about the loyalty of the Chinese community to the Republic of Indonesia (Suryadinata 1978: 25-33). Consequently, the government instituted an assimilation policy for people of Chinese descent (Greif 1991: xii-xiii). During the Soekarno era (1945-1967), the government introduced a number of policies, including Presidential Regulation Regulation (PP) Number 10/1959 related to the prohibition of Chinese small business and retailing outside regency capitals and residential areas. The next policy was the Governmental Regulation Number 20/1959 on the Implementation of the Dual Nationality Agreement with The People's Republic of China. It was put into effect on 20



January 1960. Following these regulations, incidents in which groups of ethnic Chinese were driven out of districts and villages erupted, all said to be based on the grounds of implementation of the PP No. 10/1959.

The problem of assimilation intensified with the dawning of the New Order period (1968-1998). During this period, some regulations were issued to support this stance, among them were (1) the Presidium Cabinet Decision No. 127/U/Kep/12/1966; this regulation covered the matter of changing the Chinese names of Indonesian citizens into Indonesian ones; (2) Presidential Instruction No. 14 1967 on the prohibition of Chinese beliefs and traditions, Chinese celebrations and the use of Chinese languages in the public domain; (3) Circulatory Letter 02/SE Ditjen/PPG/K/1968, which prohibited the publication of writings or advertisements using Chinese characters in public areas; (4) the Regulation of the Minister of Housing No. 455.2-360/1988, which prohibited land to be used to build, expand or renew Chinese temples (*klenteng*) (Suryadinata 1978: 4).

Besides these, there were other regulations militating against the goal of assimilation such as the requirement to possess an Identity Card/KTP (Kartu Tanda Penduduk). The KTP for Chinese descendants had different code number from the identification number for non-Chinese. This was taken to be proof that the New Order government was attempting to identify and control the presence of the Chinese and separate them from other communities (Suryadinata 2002: 98).

From a historical point of view, in various different periods there had been a division and stratification for the Chinese people which separated them from the local community. Although Suharto's presidential era (1968-1998) did control the public lives of the Chinese community, the constraints caused by this regulation gave them the opportunity to maintain their culture and traditions in private (Alkatiri et al. 2015). In the meantime, most of them had adopted a strategy of adapting by a change of name, faith and the expansion of their business networks into various sectors of the Indonesian community's lives.<sup>4</sup>

#### CONTROVERSY ABOUT THE TERMS *CINA* AND *TIONGHOA/TIONGKOK*

During the second period of Soesilo Bambang Yudhoyono's presidency (2009-2014), Presidential Decree No. 12 March 2014 was issued, ordering that the word *Cina* be replaced by the word *Tionghoa* and the word *negara Cina* by

<sup>4</sup> However, according to another source, Tjoen (entrepreneur, 78 years old), the problems of mixing in Java and Manado are not the same. In Java, the terms native and non-native are used, whereas in Manado these terms do not exist. He also believes that Manado is a "Garden of Eden" for the Chinese community in Indonesia, because everyone is considered family and Manado is open to tribes/lineages from Chinese mainland. During the 1998 riots, it could even be said that all was well in Manado. Even today, a person of Chinese descent can be appointed to the position of mayor and regent, like the Mayor of Bitung, and many also sit in the Regional Indonesian House of Representatives (DPR). Some public figures of Chinese descent are also well known to the people of Manado, such as Peter Sondakh, Hengky Wijaya, and Benny Tungka. They are all entrepreneurs.

*Tionggok*.<sup>5</sup> Presidential Decree No. 12 Year 2014 was embraced by the Chinese community in Indonesia, including those in Manado. With the passing of the Presidential Decree, they hoped that all parties would be able to adapt to the new reality in which term *Cina* is no longer used. This was brought up in the meeting of the FGD which took place in Manado on 23 September 2014.<sup>6</sup>

Apart from the Presidential Decree which regulates the process of replacing the term *Cina* with *Tionghoa* or *Tionggok*, the Chinese ethnic community groups in Manado feel that they are no different from other ethnic groups, and the truth of this has been shown in their daily experiences over the decades. In the meantime, the Minahasa community has also been able to accept the Chinese ethnic community groups into its daily life. As mentioned previously, various inter-ethnic communication forums have become a means for the Chinese ethnic group to mix with the local community. Many inter-ethnic marriages have taken place in Manado, proving that it can adapt and aspire to mix with the local community. Despite these government regulations and suchlike socio-cultural mixes, bureaucratic practice has proved an obstacle when the Chinese community needs to deal with administrative procedures. In other words, dealing with administrative matters is more difficult for the Manado Chinese than it is for the local people such as those from Manado, Gorontalo, Bugis, Ternate, and Makassar.

On the basis of what was said by one of the informants in the FGD, the regulations relating to the Chinese community in Indonesia are much better than those in Malaysia. Unlike Indonesia the Malaysian Government has implemented a differential policy in fees for health services and education. Nevertheless, the Chinese in Manado still feel that they bear a negative stigma in the eyes of the non-Chinese people, particularly the people from outside the Minahasa area (Gorontalo, Bugis, Ternate, and Makassar) they are a group

<sup>5</sup> The terms *Tionghoa* and *Tionggok* are derived from Cantonese, one of the southern Chinese languages/dialects, and mean respectively Chinese people and the country China. These terms had always been used by the Chinese community since the early twentieth century up to 1965 (Suryadinata 1978: 42).

<sup>6</sup> Another opinion is suggested by Suparlan, *Tionghoa* is a term coined by those of Chinese descent in Indonesia, which derives from the word *zhonghua* in Mandarin. In 1900, they established a school in the Netherlands Indies under the auspices of an institution called the Tjung Hwa Hwei Kwan. Pronounced in Malay it became the Tjong Hoa Hwe Kwan (THHK). Throughout the course of its history, the THHK engendered a sense of unity, of being part and parcel of the Chinese in the Indies, particularly among the elites who were reluctant to use the term *Cina*. Suparlan argues that in anthropology a term based on a tribe's nation or ethnicity is assertive and is not borrowed from something institutional. *Cina* is a label for an ethnicity or tribal nation, whereas *Tionghoa* was a name for the Chinese community in the Netherlands Indies and is not a fixed term in the social sciences (Suparlan 2006: 38-53).

A similar opinion is voiced by Cin Hapsari Tomoidjojo, quoted a Circular Letter signed on 28 June 1967 by Brigjen Sudharmono, S.H. as the Secretary of Presidium Cabinet Ampera, which reads as follows. 1) On the basis of history, the term *Cina* is what has actually been used historically and therefore this is the term desired by the Indonesian people. Therefore, to achieve uniformity and effectiveness, and to avoid dualism in terms among government officials, both civil and military, at the central and regional levels, we hope that the term *Cina* will continue to be used, while the term *Tionghoa* will be abandoned (2012: 284). For many elites, the word *Tionghoa* does not have the edge of the term *Cina* (2012: 14-15).

apart. This suggests that, although the people of Manado can be considered to have cosmopolitan traits, the potential of inter-ethnic conflicts is still a factor in Manado, in particular because of economic competition. This potential conflict is compounded by the dominant role of the Chinese community in business activities.

## THE CHINESE COMMUNITY IN THE MAKING OF IDENTITY

### 1. GROUP FORMATION

The Chinese community in North Sulawesi existed long before Indonesia proclaimed its Independence. Among the dominant sub-ethnic groups who came and settled in the area before it became as developed as it is today, Cantonese and Hokkien speakers are in the majority. Other sub-ethnic groups such as Tio Ciu are fewer in number compared to these two prominent groups. These sub-ethnic groups can be characterized on the basis of their expertise or their occupation when they first came to Manado. Generally speaking, the sub-ethnic Cantonese group are expert carpenters, while the majority of the Hokkien people are traders.<sup>7</sup>

As newcomers, the Chinese community did not immediately blend in with the people of Manado. They maintained communications and familial ties on the basis of their ethnicity. The forums that they formed among themselves include regular social gatherings in which the members could contribute and take turns to win a sum of money (*arisan*), community gatherings, funeral associations or school-based foundations. By and large, the people within a group or foundation were from the same sub-ethnic group. Besides maintaining communications and familial ties with their new homeland, the groups and the foundations were also established to strengthen their identity by observing the traditions of their ancestors. The foundation of Chinese temples (*klenteng*) as a place in which to venerate the souls of their ancestors is tangible evidence that the Chinese community in Manado and in other areas of Indonesia continued and still continues to maintain their traditions and identity by building communications with one another or with their deceased ancestors.

<sup>7</sup> The result of the interview with Tjoen (78 years old). The Chinese-Manadonese ethnicity can be traced to the regions of Fujian, Canton and Hainan and the surrounding areas. They emigrated for the sole purpose of finding a livelihood. The Hokkien ancestors were skilled cooks and their descendants in Manado tended to open restaurants. The Cantonese ancestors were skilled carpenters; hence, their descendants tended to work as entrepreneurs in the furniture or construction material shops. The Hainan ancestors were adept in planting and brewing coffee; therefore, their descendants would open coffee shops. The Kek people from Haulan worked as photographers. Every sub-ethnic group had its own gatherings. Although the Hokkien group was not formally co-ordinated, the Han and Hakka groups had their own unions. In a nutshell, the majority of the Chinese-Manadonese came from Fujian and when they settled in Manado City, they married within the Hokkien group too. However, some Chinese men also married local Manadonese women. They still used their Chinese names, preferring not to change them, because the name had been given by their parents and was related to the Creator and the universe. For this reason, the Chinese like all people in Tjoen's generation had to honour their Chinese name by retaining it. The following generation had other ideas.

Importantly, there are groups or foundations which establish and run schools. The intention of these groups is to preserve their tradition and at the same time start a business. Many parents send their children to private religious schools, both the long-established and the new religious schools. In Manado, the private schools which are preferred by the parents are Roman Catholic and Protestant-based schools. There are rarely any Chinese children enrolled in the public schools in Manado. This is because: 1) the Chinese people mistrust and tend to look askance at the public schools, which they believe limit their children's expression. 2) There are concerns about their children socializing with non-Chinese children in public schools.<sup>8</sup>

Another type of group formed by the Chinese community in Manado is the Union of Chinese Family Names (Paguyuban Marga Tionghoa), a new communications forum which does not base its membership solely on a certain sub-ethnic group or religion. Moreover, the Union is inter-ethnic and accommodates the need for general funerals which are no longer based on the ethnic community. Furthermore, in 2012 the Tionghoa Cultural Union was established. As its name suggests, at its heart this union puts more emphasis on the reinforcement of the cultural aspect. The principal purpose of the formation of the Tionghoa Cultural Union, according to the founder, is to embrace the Chinese people who are inter-ethnic, to create a positive impression, to avoid the image of an elite group wallowing in luxury and, eventually, to be more oriented towards socio-cultural activities.<sup>9</sup>

## 2. PARTICIPATION IN PRACTICAL POLITICS

Entry into the Reform Era has meant that the climate for democracy on a national level is allowing space for citizens of Chinese descent to participate in the political sphere. This change is inseparable from the policy pursued by the post-Reform government, which allows more room for the Chinese ethnic groups to enjoy their basic rights as Indonesian citizens once again. However, in fact, initially the Chinese people did not jump at the opportunity to dive into the world of practical politics. On the basis of the research conducted by Thung Ju Lan (1998, cited in Juliastutik 2012), there are at least five models

<sup>8</sup> Tjoen (78 years old) said that the Konghucu religion (Confucianism), which was not structurally a religious organization and did not have scriptures, was not taught in formal schools; therefore, many Chinese-Manadonese converted to Christianity or Roman Catholicism. This inspired the parents to choose Roman Catholic or Protestant schools. See Hendri Gunawan Gunawan (2013), *Yok Tjæe dan Chung Hwa; Menelusuri jejak-jejak komunitas Tionghoa di Manado* (Jakarta: Kanisius).

<sup>9</sup> Meanwhile, Alex J. Ulaen (68 years old) said that there are also social relations among the Chinese community which have been formed on the basis of: 1) economic/trade relations among the Chinese themselves and with the local community; 2) social relations between school teachers (in the education sector, from Kindergarten to High School); 3) social relations among the Chinese community in conducting *Tri Dharma* prayers at the oldest Chinese Temple Ban Hing Kiong, Manado, and prayers in Protestant and Roman Catholic denominations; 4) social relations formed to share activities when holding a ritual or the celebration of Cap Go Meh and the national flag ceremony as well as the Republic of Indonesia's Independence celebration with the people of the Regional Government, particularly the Chinese who work there.

of Chinese perspectives in relation to their participation in practical politics, namely: (1) those who feel they need to accentuate their ethnicity or religion; (2) those who do not want ethnicity or religion to become the grounds for movements, but rather the platform for equal rights, for example, by founding the Diversity in Unity (Bhinneka Tunggal Ika) party; (3) those who prefer a forum which can serve as a pressure group; (4) those who form a union for those who feel they are in the same boat, for example, by establishing the social Tionghoa Indonesia group; and (5) those who join an existing political party, such as PDI-P (Partai Demokrasi Indonesia-Perjuangan, Indonesian Democratic Party-Struggle) and PAN (Partai Amanat Nasional, National Mandate Party).<sup>10</sup>

The Chinese ethnic community's involvement on the stage of Indonesian politics is very limited, leading to their rather negative attitude to the word "politics". However, since the Reform era, especially when Abdurrahman Wahid was president of Indonesia, this negative attitude has become slightly positive. Abdurrahman Wahid did see the importance of a National Reconciliation Committee. His stance has drastically changed the way the Chinese ethnic group feel about the word "politics". They are beginning to become involved in political activities, for instance, by joining a political party and becoming "Right-wing" activist.

The participation of the elite Chinese community in politics is shown by their activities and attitude during the General Elections. However, the situation on the ground shows that most Chinese ethnic groups are still allergic to any forms of political participation.<sup>11</sup> After 1999, the political climate encouraging the Chinese ethnic groups to participate and act in politics has

<sup>10</sup> The Chinese ethnicity is in fact very heterogeneous. The Chinese ethnicity group is categorized not only into *totok* and *Peranakan*, but also according to their origins in Mainland China (Hokkien, Hakka, Kongfu, etcetera), with their own characteristics and stigmas. In the realm of religious beliefs, some of them have embraced Khonghucu, Taoism, Buddhism, Christianity, Roman Catholicism, and even Islam. The same can be said of the Medan Chinese, Padang Chinese, Bangka Chinese, Pontianak Chinese, Javanese Chinese, Makassar Chinese, Manadonese Chinese, etcetera, with all their predicates and stigmas. Some of them are still oriented towards Mainland China, others towards Taiwan. There are also those who are pro-integration and those who are pro-assimilation (mixing). There are those who are pro-New Order and the military; on the other hand, there are those who are pro-Reform, usually those in the lower middle class. Fractures can also be observed in the formation of organizations, such as the Paguyuban Sosial Marga Tionghoa Indonesia (PSMTI) under the leadership of Brigjen (Pur) Teddy Jusuf (Xiong Deyi), the Perhimpunan Indonesia Tionghoa (INTI) under the leadership of Drs Eddie Lembong (Wang Youshan). Now there are three Hakka organizations, under the leadership of Nurdin Purnomo, Yang Kheling, and Oei Tek Sin (Teddy Sugianto) respectively.

<sup>11</sup> In the 1999 General Elections, most of Chinese ethnic group entrusted their political aspirations to the Partai Demokrasi Indonesia (PDI-Perjuangan), even though a Chinese-based party, the Diversity in Unity Party (Partai Bhinneka Tunggal Ika, PBI) led by Nurdin Purnomo, was already participating in the election. This offers some proof that the PBI is not or has not been internalized by the Chinese ethnic group because it only managed to gain 1 seat in the Regional Indonesian House of Parliament (DPRD) for West Kalimantan Province. The decision to choose the PDI-P was prompted by the feeling that they (the Chinese ethnic groups and PDI-P) had been wronged during the New Order era (Juliatutik 2012).

become more conducive. During the 2004 General Election, a change in attitude and stance of the Chinese community towards politics was visible. They were considered to be rather sceptical towards the trend towards multi-parties and tended to abstain from adopting a political stance. Using the data revealed by Christin Susanna Tjhin (a researcher at Centre for Strategic and International Studies, in Juliastutik 2012), during the 2004 General Elections, the dynamics of the Chinese community intensified and grew more assertive, although a part of the community 2-70 percent (especially the political elites) were still comfortable with their stigma (read 2 percent voters, who control 70 percent of the domestic economy).

The profession of trader is very much associated with the Chinese ethnic community and the majority of its members are more interested in activities in the economic sector. Proof of this is how many of them control the sectors of property, land and sea transportation, fisheries, retail trade and entertainment; they are even expanding into the education sector.

The upshot is that, generally speaking, the Chinese community does not show much interest in diving into political activities. Nevertheless, some of its members do get involved in one or other political party, in self-nomination as a member of the legislative at a central, provincial or regency/city level or in forming and managing mass organization. Most of the Chinese ethnic community consider the world of politics as something of a no-go area because it is associated with power struggles, a tendency which undermines its neutrality in the political agenda.

In the FGD which was attended by ten participants, one was a member for the PDI-P Party of the Regional Indonesian House of Representatives (DPRD) of Manado City. He is a young politician with inspiring ideas and the courage to become involved in the practical politics of the city in which he was born. His important role in political activities has given him the necessary clout to represent and speak on behalf of the interests of his ethnic group. This is an indication that Chinese ethnic group in Manado is beginning to accrue the confidence to enter an arena about which they had previously been sceptical. Now they are showing that they dare to tackle social affairs and practical politics.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>12</sup> Political relations or interactions are triggered by the presence of political positions occupied by the Chinese (such as Regent, members of the Regional House of Representatives (DPRD), pastors, high-ranking officials in the Regional Government (Pemda). Socio-political relations among the Chinese are formed through their participation in the political parties in Indonesia and their support of candidates for the DPRD and in the Presidential Election on 9 July 2014 who have shown an interest in supporting the Chinese-Manado community (the results of an interview with Alex J. Ulaen).

Moreover, changes in political behaviour have also encouraged the Chinese ethnic group to dive straight into politics, especially as a means to strengthen their businesses and live harmoniously with other communities. In general, the Chinese political elites who are involved in politics are those who have an established economic standing; therefore, their motive is not to expand their economic resources. Their motivations are (a) existence, devotion and service, and (b) no longer to be perceived as second class citizens (Juliastutik 2012).

## CONCLUSION

This paper has discussed how the Chinese community has been trying to preserve its culture and establish its own identity. Their efforts can be considered its strategic adaptation to living in Indonesia at different periods of time. The result of the FGD and field observations indicate an interesting finding. On the one hand, the Chinese community is strengthening its own bonds by forming groups within its community. On the other hand, it is also trying to interact more with indigenous Indonesians. Above all, the similarity of the physical appearance and lifestyles of the two groups helps lessen the various tight constraints and serves as a bridge for them to mingle and adapt with the local community. Interestingly, during the Reform era, they have been more eager to strengthen their own internal bonds rather than mingling with the locals, because this period has offered people more freedom to make their own choices.

Unfortunately, the economic dominance of the Chinese community in Manado and other places in Indonesia has been a seat of economic envy among local ethnic groups, leading to the emergence of serious problems which bring with them new, tough challenges to deal with in terms of the strategic adaptation of the Chinese community in Manado. The significant achievement in the economic sector of Chinese community in Manado has been followed by attempts to revive a Chinese cultural identity, reflected in the building of some new Chinese temples (*klenteng*) and, to some extent, in the emergence of Chinese language teaching and cultural promotion.

This research also shows that the Chinese community in Manado continues to expand its economic and business activities there through the implementation of its strategic adaptation. This strategic adaptation can be seen in its identity consolidation by the forming of groups. Once a strong bond within the Chinese community groups has been established, they enter other aspects of life such as commerce by expanding their business interests. They are now entering the political realm by joining some political parties. This reveals that their strategic adaptation is used to improve they way they do business with the local people. In other words, the strategic adaptation adopted by the Chinese community in Manado is considered an effective instrument to assist in maintaining their livelihood, expand their business activities and engage in socio-political life.

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