

Local Wisdom in Tolerance Building between Ethnic Chinese and Other Ethnic in Indonesia

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Abstract—Discussion of ethnic Chinese often is related to differences and stereotype. However, in some areas in Indonesia, the relations between ethnic Chinese and other ethnic seems in harmony. This harmonious relationship is actually supported by the presence of local wisdom values that maintain tolerance between different communities. This paper discusses local wisdom which is containing tolerance between the Chinese community and other ethnic in several places in Indonesia. Some of these examples show that local values have actually contained ethnic tolerance's values. These values have proved to maintain relations between different cultural communities over the years. Strengthening local wisdom values is an essential effort to building awareness of cultural differences in Indonesia and further to maintain the unity of the nation of Indonesia. It can be done by the campaign on local wisdom with tolerance's value and publications about the value of local wisdom to enhance the community's knowledge, especially for the young generation.

Keywords—unity, harmony, ethnic, culture

I. INTRODUCTION

Tionghoa issues are the most complicated Chinese ethnic issues in Southeast Asia. Chinese ethnic in Indonesia (then *Tionghoa*) issues are more related to identity and political issues. The root of the negative perception from non-Chinese to *Tionghoa* is on their identity which came from some differentiation with local ethnic. Charles Coppel explains that there is a stereotype to *Tionghoa*, especially related to their culture and tradition which are different compare with other ethnic [1]. The political issues, like the segregation policy of Dutch colonial by divided people into three levels and placed Chinese as the second level with other Asian foreign, under the first level the European and above the indigenous people at the bottom. In the post-independence, Indonesian government released some discriminative policy toward *Tionghoa* like the ban of language, culture expression, and media.

Indonesia is the archipelago countries, and almost there is *Tionghoa* community on every island. Leo Suryadinata divided *Tionghoa* community into two groups according to the place where they are living. There are *Tionghoa* in Java and out of Java island (usually people call it "*luar pulau*", literally means outer island) [2]. Some of the stories about conflict between *Tionghoa* and local people, include anti-Chinese riots, happen in Java. It could happen since Jawa is the central of government and politics which cause a direct impact of government policy. In the other island, there are also some conflicts but not be exposed too much. This

situation creates questions, is it true that there is always be a problem or conflict between *Tionghoa* and other ethnic? If it true, according to the historical record, why do they live in Indonesia for a long time ago? Is there no other evidence show harmonious relations between them in tolerance relations? According to my observation of some literature about *Tionghoa* who are living in many places in Indonesia, there are harmonious relations among them, even *Tionghoa* included in part of the local community. Then, how does it happen?

This article focuses on local wisdom which contains tolerance value in *Tionghoa* and other ethnic relations from some places in Indonesian. It tries to describe that local wisdom, seems successful to keep harmonious relations between *Tionghoa* and other ethnic for years. It also covers the importance of local wisdom in nation building, not as the negation to the Western tolerance value, but more as the basic knowledge, school of thought which are rooted from Indonesian culture and may combine with modern or Western value like democracy in Indonesia.

Local wisdom contains two important factors, the adjective, and place or noun. Local wisdom defined as local ideas which have wisdom, positive value and followed by member of the certain community [3]. Local wisdom rooted in human life in their interaction to nature and create positive value in the material (ritual, tradition) and non-material (culture, norm). The values appear as a guide followed by people like the member of the community. Morality becomes the highest value in local wisdom. The local wisdom sometimes appears as symbols in people interaction [4]. The symbols become an important element in the people relations and play as the problem solvers. They also manifest in the habits and behavior in culture. Local wisdom sometimes also connected with myth, legend, and tradition, however, it also grows dynamically following human innovation and creativity.

Indonesia is the largest country in Southeast Asia and living place for a large number of ethnic Chinese [5]. In 2006, among 245 million of Indonesian population, only about 3% of them are *Tionghoa*, and most of them work in the economic sector [6]. However, there is a problem to find an exact number of *Tionghoa* population in Indonesia today because some of them do not explain themselves as *Tionghoa* because they feel assimilated or acculturated of other reasons like political matter. In the 2000 Census, Suryadinata, Arifin, and Ananta mention that the estimate population of *Tionghoa* in Indonesia is 1,5% of the total

Indonesian population and mostly living outside of Java. In the 2010 census, the number of *Tionghoa* in Indonesia is around 1% and becomes 15th largest ethnic in Indonesia after five most populated ethnics as Javanese, Sundanese, Malay, Dayaks, and Maduranese [7].

Chinese in Indonesia or *Tionghoa* is the most complicated Chinese problem in Southeast Asia [8]. The Chinese problem in Indonesia deals with the stereotype of *Tionghoa* for being viewed as a different nation or ethnic than indigenous people, a group with some negative characters. *Tionghoa* in Indonesia viewed in some negative characters like living exclusively in a group and separate residence, having superior thinking, being an opportunist and loyal to their ancestor culture. The last character creates the stereotype that their loyalty to Indonesia has been doubted and only for economic interest. This situation identifies *Tionghoa* as problematic “other” where geographically they originated from another region, culturally different with a Muslim majority, economically they control economy and viewed as PRC’s Communism supporter [9]. The *Masalah Cina* or Chinese problem was being a political discourse in Indonesia when the New Order regime define Chineseness of *Tionghoa* should be Indonesianized [10]. Those stereotypes trigger anti-Chinese sentiment, including the economic competition between indigenous people and Chinese [11] [12] [13].

Indonesia post Reform in 1998 brought opportunity for *Tionghoa* to participate in the politics, social, economy and culture, and freedom to express their identity as Chinese. The situation is like the bloom of many flowers. Each presidential period put changes to the discriminative law and regulation related to *Tionghoa* [14]. It started with B.J.Habibie who stopped the use of the concept of indigenous and non indigenous. Then Abdurrahman Wahid dropped the ban on Chinese culture expression and put Confucianism as part of Indonesian official religion. Megawati Soekarno Putri made the Chinese New Year as a national holiday. She also appointed a *Tionghoa* economist as a minister. Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono amended the Citizenship law and erased the term “*asli*” or origin of Indonesia which distinguish the citizen with non-origin one. He also appointed *Tionghoa* economist to be a minister during two periods of his administration. In 2014, SBY released a decree concerning the replacement of the term *Cina* with *Tionghoa* to refer to *Tionghoa* and the term China with *Tionggok*. However, the legal or official policies related with *Tionghoa* indicate non-discrimination effort but in the practice, from a sociological perspective, there are still some problems on *Tionghoa* and non-*Tionghoa* relations, especially to view *Tionghoa* in Indonesian nationality [14].

II. METHODOLOGY

It is qualitative research where data are collected through documents from books and articles related to *Tionghoa* life in Indonesia. The data were analyzed by content analyses to find how the local wisdom in some places in Indonesia become tolerance driving factor and keep harmonious relations between *Tionghoa* and other ethnics.

III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

A. Local wisdom in the relations between *Tionghoa* and other ethnics

In 2012, Iwan Ong Santosa wrote a book which is titled “*Peranakan Tionghoa di Nusantara*” or Indonesian-Chinese peranakan in Indonesia [15]. The term of *peranakan* here actually refers to *Tionghoa*. This book covers many local stories about the living of *Tionghoa* in some places in Indonesia, including how they adapt and create positive relations with local people. It also covers some local wisdom in some places which develop tolerance relations between *Tionghoa* and the local ethnic.

There are good relations between Balinese and Chinese which are manifest in history and tradition [15]. There is a story about the King Jaya Pangus of Bali and Kang Tjin We, a Chinese women who married at the end of the XIII century. As respect to their relations, there is a couple of *barong landung* which mean long and tall in the Balinese language. One of them reflects King Jaya Pangus with black skin, bog nose with big eyes. While the other *barong* reflect Kang Thin We with white skin, narrow eyes with smile lip. The acculturation between Balinese and Chinese culture is shown in sacred tools like Chinese coin which is used in ritual or ceremony and the *ngelawang* tradition. *Ngelawang* is the ritual by bring the *barong* around the village and comes to every door of the houses which seems similar to *barongsai dance* tradition in Chinese. Balinese and Chinese also working together to keep save the worship place like in Cao Eng Bio temple, although they have a different religion. Chinese around this temple also adopts local tradition where the leader (*biokong*) wear Balinese traditional costume.

There is also local wisdom which is framing tolerance between Chinese and Betawi people, especially “*Cina Benteng*” Chinese [15]. In the birthday (*shejit*) of Tanjung Kait temple, Betawinese and Cina Benteng come in celebration and watch some traditional performance like *lenong* (traditional Betawinese drama), *gambang kromong* (music), *keroncong* (music), *potehi* puppet, *barongsai* dance and *liong* (dragon dance). Chinese and Betawinese also share the stage to perform their traditional art. *Gambang Kromong* is the acculturation between Chinese and Betawinese culture, where the players use some Chinese music instruments like *Su Kong*, *The Hian* and *Kong a Hian*, combined with a *gong*, *kromong*, *gendang* and *kempul* of Betawinese. *Gambang Kromong* performance is influenced by Chinese culture [16]. According to history, this music art came when the Chinese came to Batavia. Chinese from China played songs from their origin place like Zhangzhou, Xiamen, and Quanzhou with Chinese music instrument, then, combined with Javanese or Sundanese traditional music instruments. In 1880, this performance grew as like an orchestra and influencing other places out of Batavia (Jakarta) like in Bogor, Tangerang, Bekasi and Northern Karawang. This music performance also adopted in Semarang as *Gambang Semarang*. Beside the *gambang kromong*, the wedding house, *rumah kawin*, is the house of togetherness between Chinese and Betawinese. *Rumah Kawin* is a wooden house hall, a place to celebrate the Chinese wedding party where Chinese and Betawinese come together to celebrate with Chinese and Indonesian food.

Kampung Pekojan, in Glodok area of Jakarta, is a miniature of harmonious relations between Chinese and Arabian [16]. In this village, Chinese and Arab communities living co-exist with mutual respect and help to each other. They also know each other and respect each culture. Pekojan Chinese communities are shaken when meet and visit neighbors in Ied celebration, meanwhile their Arabian neighbors convey *kiong hia (gong xi)* or congratulate to Chinese friends and neighbors at the time of new year *Sincia*. Pekojan community with different ethnic backgrounds also help each other, especially in the two activities, namely marriage, and death. They get together to help each other. Kampung Pekojan is itself an area that was originally inhabited by the various spices from India in the 17-18 and then diiami by Arab citizens of Hadramaut (Yemen).

Bangka island is a place where Malay and Chinese are living in good relations for hundred years [16]. One of the things that make both of these different ethnicities coexist harmoniously is saying in the Hakkanese, one of the Chinese ethnic, "*Tong Ngin Phan Ngin Jit Jong*" which means Chinese and Malays are the same. Meanwhile, the Malay people in Bangka-Belitung also has the motto "*Serumpun Sebalai*" defined as fraternity and equality. The relationship of brotherhood is also supported by historical facts which the Chinese initially came to Bangka Island mostly married Malay women and create a mixed community. When their descendants were converted to Islam then they entered into the Malays, but if still preserve the identity and traditions of the Chinese, then they become the *peranakan*. This harmonious relationship appears to be at least in the two traditions. First, when the Ied, Chinese society sends a variety of food to relatives or their friends who are Muslim, and vice versa. Second, the existence of a tradition of adopting children from different ethnic backgrounds. Malay families raised children from families of Chinese and vice versa.

According to Abdullah Idi research, the relations between Chinese and Malay in Bangka island comes to *natural and relatively full-assimilation*[17]. This is evidenced by several factors such as cultural assimilation (the use of the Malay language, food, clothing, ceremonial/ritual, and religion), structural assimilation (economic participation and education), marital assimilation, assimilation of nationalism (Assimilation of identification) and assimilation without prejudice (unprejudice attitude assimilation). Those five assimilations are well underway and based on cultural assimilation. Therefore cultural factors to be important in maintaining a harmonious and tolerant relations between ethnic Chinese and Malays, where there is local wisdom inside.

There is a tradition to adopt a child from other ethnic in the eastern part of Indonesia [17]. The Mollucas community recognize a system of adoption or commonly referred to as the "*anak piara*" and awarding their clan. It is possible the existence of adoption of ethnic Chinese by Mollucan family. When adopted to the Moluccas, then Chinese children also have the same rights and obligations with other family members. Meanwhile, there are harmonious relations between Ternates and Chinese. It is influenced by the history where there is a Chinese grave which people believe that he taught Islam to the people at that time. Another

interesting phenomenon is the relations between Chinese and Papuan in Papua Island. There is the term "*Perancis*" or "*Peranakan Cina-Serui*" which is a mix between Papuan and Chinese. The uniqueness of the community is the use of Chinese names are retained as "Yep", "Lim", or "Tan", while physically they faced Melanesia.

In some research on ethnic Chinese who live in several areas in Indonesia obtained information that some of them consider themselves are part of the locality where they live. For example, in Aceh, the Chinese community consider themselves to be part of "the people of Aceh" [18], and it may possible Aceh becomes part of their identity. It also happens to Chinese in Makassar [19]. It can not be separated into two things. First, the history of the Chinese community in those areas, include their relations with local ethnic. Second, how the process of adaption by Chinese to the local community.

B. Discussion

According to the observation toward harmonious and tolerance relations between ethnic Chinese and another ethnic in some places in Indonesia show that there is cultural capital to create harmonious ethnic relations in Indonesia. Indonesian have to know the intra ethnic tolerance which involved in their local wisdom. This local wisdom, at least, proving that at the basic, Indonesian are tolerant. According to some example of local wisdom in the relations between Chinese and local ethnic rooted in history, tradition, and culture. Historical aspect influence the relations between Chinese and Balinese, Malay in Bangka, Arabian in Kampung Pekojan, Betawinese in Tangerang/ Jakarta and also in Ternate, Mollucas and Papua. Another tradition like child adoption shows worship ritual and celebration also include the togetherness feeling between Chinese and other ethnics.

From some example in some places in Indonesia, it seems the roles of local wisdom to keep and maintain positive relations between Chinese and other ethnic. Local wisdom here means there are culture or tradition which describe how the construction of social relations among different ethnics which develop brotherhood or togetherness feeling and even as a common identity as a local community. The knowledge of this culture and tradition is very important to keep harmonious, tolerance and positive relations.

However, we realize that in the last three years, there is intolerance event in Indonesia which shows less harmonic or conflictual relations to the community which is peaceful before. Why does on some community, people easily comes to tension while in another hand they have cultural capital as well as local wisdom? It may because of the degrading the understanding of the local wisdom as cultural capital. This degradation gives impact to practically when the positive values in the local wisdom do not implement and create intolerant action. It is correct when local wisdom does not guarantee for no conflict in the society, but it can be used as "conflict management" to manage the differentiation in the society not becomes wider and creates tension. The degradation toward local wisdom can be viewed in two points. First, is globalization. It related with the globalization phenomena that may cause the degradation toward local wisdom understanding, particularly to a young

generation where they are placed the local wisdom, as well as culture and tradition in the opposition and lower than modernity in globalization. They don't want to learn or preserve their local wisdom because it seems traditional and not globalized. Second, there are political factors that sometimes difficult to fit with the local wisdom. Since Dutch colonialism, they used differentiation among ethnics in Indonesia as a tool to conquer, and politics sometime also used to get power through ethnicity, identity, religion etc. issues where actually for years, they are managed in local wisdom. The third is the problem outside politics and culture, is the economy. The economic disparity and gap, in the worse situation, can create a serious problem in people relations in the economy that it may construct negative perceptions among society members.

The other questions are how to revitalize the local wisdom to develop a tolerant society in Indonesia? First, it should be understood that local wisdom is a cultural capital. By placing local wisdom as cultural capital, it will develop the consciousness that basically, according to history and experience, the local wisdom in some places in Indonesia can create positive relations among different ethnics in Indonesia. *Bhineka Tunggal Ika* is one of the best examples. The specific local wisdom in a certain area may not be used as a solution in other areas with different character, but at least it can be used in the other areas with some similarities. As the cultural capital, the local wisdom does not only contain the abstract and philosophically, but more to concrete example through many activities, as tradition or other activities.

Second, the local wisdom should be placed as a "school of thought" from the Indonesian perspective. It means that local wisdom contains the philosophy and learning process that should be researched, preserved and developed with some adjustment according to the current situation. It does not aim to create premodialism but to construct and develop the local wisdom from many areas in Indonesia, which then create a good model. As the school of thought, Indonesian local wisdom is placed as discourse. There is a big discourse but rooted from domestic values of the Indonesian nation. We can adopt a Western perspective to create good relations with each other, however, it may be limited to explain. So as an example, as a school of thought, the local wisdom should be discovered, discussed and socialized to all of the people.

IV. CONCLUSION

Indonesia has already had cultural capital. It should be preserved, keep and socialized to people. Local wisdom should be preserved, especially to the younger generation, aims to encourage them to learn and implementat in their daily life. The preservation toward local wisdom in some places in Indonesia is not only about positive perspective, but also about the history of harmonious relations and communication pattern among ethnics and culture which keep close relations of many ethnics in Indonesia.

Therefore, the research and development of local wisdom possessed by Indonesia in various areas of society are becoming increasingly important to do. This can be done with two things, namely the development of intellectually-academic and policy. Development of intellectually-academic related to the implementation of the values of tolerance in local wisdom possessed by the nations of Indonesia, of course also its development tailored to the present context. A range of experts and scientists in the field of social and humanities need to be supported in this regard and socialization which will also need to continue to be encouraged so that the younger generations have an understanding of the value of local wisdom. The last two things need to get support from the government's existing policy.

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