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Sumanto Al Qurtuby

The Tao of Islam: Cheng Ho and the Legacy of Chinese Muslims in Pre-Modern Java

Abstraksi: Meskipun arus kedatangan orang-orang Cina ke Indonesia sudah berlangsung dari sebelum abad ke-6 sampai dengan paroh pertama abad ke-13, tidak ada satupun keterangan sejarah yang menjelaskan bahwa Islam dijadikan sebagai agama mereka. Baru pada abad ke-15, menurut beberapa informasi yang ada, Indonesia didatangi seorang muslim Cina yang akhirnya diketahui sebagai Laksamana Cheng Ho. Terlahir di desa He Dai, Kunyang, Yunnan sekitar tahun 1370, Cheng Ho yang termasuk kedalam silsilah marga Ma—suku Hui yang mayoritas beragama Islam—sangat terinspirasi oleh perjalanan hidup ayahnya, Ma Haji (1344-1382), seorang muslim yang taat. Seluruh keluarganya, termasuk kakek dan buyutnya, beragama Islam dan kesemuanya pernah menjalankan ibadah haji.

Dilihat dari riwayat pendidikan serta segala laku keseharian yang dijalankan—seperti ziarah ke makam pendahulu Islam, mendirikan masjid Islam, maupun mengajak kaum muslim untuk berlayar besamanya—sulit untuk tidak mengatakan bahwa tokoh yang juga dikenal dengan nama Zheng He, Sam Po Kong, Sam Poo Tay Djin, Sam Poo Tay Kam, Sam Poo Toa Lang ini adalah seorang Muslim. Namun di Indonesia, keislaman Cheng Ho sejauh ini masih kontroversial, baik di kalangan komunitas Tionghoa maupun Islam. Keislaman Cheng Ho seakan menjadi hal yang masih sulit diterima oleh banyak kalangan, terlebih jika dikatakan bahwa ia—lebih luas, komunitas Muslim China—turut berperan penting atas perkembangan Islam di Indonesia.

Sedari dulu teori yang dimunculkan—termasuk yang selalu diajarkan dalam buku-buku sejarah sekolah—adalah bahwa pihak utama penyebar ajaran Islam di Indonesia adalah para sufi dan pedagang asal Arab, India/Gujarat, ataupun Persia. Dengan alasan potensial mengganggu

stabilitas nasional, sejak 1960-an beberapa buku yang mengangkat peran Tionghoa (Muslim Cina) dalam Islamisasi Nusantara dilarang beredar oleh pemerintah Orde Baru. Sejak saat itu muncul upaya untuk selalu mereduksi segala kontribusi besar muslim Cina bagi ragam bentuk budaya Islam Indonesia.

Artikel ini berupaya menegaskan bahwa Muslim Cina faktanya telah turut membentuk apa yang selanjutnya disebut sebagai “Sino-Javanese Muslim Culture”, sebuah proses akulturasi budaya China, Islam dan Jawa. Hadirnya sumber-sumber Cina, literatur lokal (kronik) Jawa, tradisi lisan, serta pelbagai peninggalan purbakala Islam—artefak dan benda-benda arkeologis lain—yang terdapat dalam rentang abad ke-15/16 telah mengisaratkan bahwa pengaruh Cina di Jawa memang kuat. Ukiran padas di masjid kuno Mantingan-Jepara, menara masjid pecinaan Banten, konstruksi pintu makam Sunan Giri di Gresik, arsitektur keraton Cirebon beserta Taman Sunyaragi, konstruksi masjid Demak—khususnya soko tatal penyangga masjid beserta lambang kura-kura—konstruksi masjid Sekayu di Semarang, ataupun masjid Kali Angke dan Masjid Kebun Jeruk di Jakarta, setidaknya dapat memperkuat asumsi tersebut.

Tanpa mengesampingkan peran muslim Cina lain, tokoh yang sangat berperan bagi terjadinya proses tersebut adalah Cheng Ho. Rekam jejak yang telah terdeskripsikan dalam catatan sejarah Indonesia masa kolonial menegaskan bahwa keberadaan tokoh muslim Cina ini turut serta mempengaruhi corak budaya Islam Indonesia, terkhusus Jawa. Selain sebagai penasihat utama Kaisar Yung-Lo—Kaisar ketiga dari Dinasti Ming, Cina yang berkuasa tahun 1403-1424—ia juga dikenal sebagai seorang pelaut muslim yang dengan bermodalkan 62 kapal besar dan 225 kapal kecil yang terdiri dari 27.550 anggota telah berhasil melakukan ekspedisi ke lebih dari 37 negara, termasuk Indonesia yang dalam kurun tahun 1405-1433, telah 7 kali ia kunjungi. Dalam konteks Islam Nusantara, selain terjadinya persebaran komunitas muslim Cina, kunjungan Cheng Ho beserta ribuan armadanya tersebut juga berdampak bagi terbentuknya relasi kultural yang sangat erat.

Penting dicatat, Cheng Ho terlibat mendakwahkan ajaran Islam sesuai dengan prinsip-prinsip Islam yang selanjutnya ia kombinasikan dengan beberapa prinsip ideal yang diadopsi dari ajaran lokal Cina seperti Confusiusme maupun Taoisme. Di sinilah titik singgung terkait relasi antara Islam sebagai agama lokal Indonesia dengan beberapa prinsip Tao sebagai kepercayaan lokal China bisa diidentifikasi. Dan itu sudah terlihat sebagai sebuah fenomena global pada saat Jawa belum bersinggungan dengan unsur-unsur modernitas.

The Tao of Islam: Cheng Ho and the Legacy of Chinese Muslims in Pre-Modern Java

الخلاصة: رغم حضور الصينيين في إندونيسيا قد بدأ قبل القرن السادس حتى النصف الأول من القرن الثالث عشر الميلادي إلا أنه لم توجد أية معلومات تاريخية تفيد وجود المسلمين بينهم. وفي القرن الخامس عشر الميلادي توافرت بعض المعلومات الإندونيسية التي تقول بمجيء مسلم صيني يعرف فيما بعد بالقائد Cheng Ho "تشينج هو" وولد في عام ١٣٧٠ على وجه التقريب في قرية He Dai "هي داي" في كونيانج من منطقة اليونان وهو من نسل العائلة Ma "ما" ومن القبيلة Hui "هوي" ذات أغلب المسلمين. كان "تشينج هو" يستفيد من خبرات أبيه الحياتية "ما حاجي" (١٣٤٤-١٣٨٢) الذي لا شك أنه من المسلمين المتدينين. وجميع أفراد عائلته بما فيهم الأجداد والأحفاد قد أدوا فريضة الحج.

إذا نظرنا إلى الخلفية التعليمية لهؤلاء المشهورين والمعروفين منهم Zheng He, Sam Po Kong, Sam Poo Tay Djin, Sam Poo Tay Kam, Sam Poo Toa Lang وانشطتهم اليومية مثل الزيارة إلى قبور المسلمين الأوائل وبناء المسجد ودعوة المسلمين للسفر، فيصعب أن نقول بأنهم غير المسلمين. لكن كون "تشينج هو" مسلماً يثير الجدل في إندونيسيا سواء كان عند المجتمع الصيني فيها أم عند المسلمين الإندونيسيين. مما قد يؤدي إلى الظن كأن إسلام "تشينج هو" لم يقبله الجميع، لاسيما على ما قيل عن دوره المهم في نشر الإسلام في إندونيسيا. قد انتشرت النظريات المعروفة منذ الزمان والمقررة في الكتب المدرسية بأن القائمين الأساسيين بنشر الإسلام في إندونيسيا هم الصوفيون والتجار العرب والهنود والفرس. قد منعت الحكومة Orde Baru "الطريقة الجديدة" من نشر أي كتاب يفيد دور الصينيين في نشر الإسلام بإندونيسيا على أساس أنه يعرض الأمن القومي للخطر. مما ظهرت جهود لتقليل أي دور صيني بارز في تكوين ثقافة إسلامية إندونيسية حتى تبقى حقيقة بأن الإسلام والصين طرفان متقابلان.

تحاول هذه المقالة على تأكيد بأن المسلم الصيني له دور في تكوين ما يسمى بـ "ثقافة صينية جاوية إسلامية" وهي عملية اندماجية بين الثقافات الصينية والإسلامية والجاوية. وتشير المصادر الصينية مثل المراجع المحلية الجاوية والحكايات الشفوية والآثار الإسلامية المختلفة التي ترجع إلى القرن الخامس عشر والسادس عشر، إلى تأثير كبير للصينيين في جزيرة جاوة. هناك ما يؤكد على ذلك التأثير مثل الزخاريف في الجامع القديم في Mantingan-Jepara "مانتينجان" بجيارا والمناروب للجامع الصيني في باننين وتصميم الباب لضريح "سونان جيري" في جيرسيك وتصميم القصر في شيريون وفناء سونياراغي وبناء مسجد ديماك خاصة عموده ورموزه وبناء مسجد "سيكايو" في سيمارانج ومسجد كالي أنجكي ومسجد كيون جيروك بجاكرتا العاصمة.

ومن أهم الشخصيات الصينية التي تلعب دورا أساسيا في الأنشطة السابقة هو "تشينج هو" بجانب دور الصينيين الآخرين. وتؤكد التسجيلات التاريخية الإندونيسية الموجودة في عصر الاستعمار الهولندي على دور هذا الرجل في تكوين الثقافة الإسلامية الإندونيسية خاصة في جزيرة جاوة. بجانب كونه مستشارا كبيرا للقصر الصيني Yung-Lo من الأسرة الملكية Ming الثالثة التي كانت تحكم البلاد عام ١٤٠٣ - ١٤٢٤ الميلادي، كان بحارا مسلما يقود ٦٢ سفينة و ٢٢٥ سفينة صغيرة و ٢٧٥٥٠ راكبا يتكون من بحارة وعلماء النجوم والسياسيين والمرشدين والأطباء والكهان والدعاة و الإنثوغرافيين وتم توزيعهم على أربع أساطيل حربية مع أطقامها الخاصة بها. قد نجح في القيام برحلة إلى أكثر من ٣٧ دولة بما فيها إندونيسيا من خلال عام ١٤٠٥ - ١٤٣٣ التي زارها سبع مرات. وعلاقته بالإسلام في إندونيسيا أن زيارته مع أساطيله المذكورة إلى إندونيسيا قد أثرت على نشر الجالية الصينية وعلى اندماج الثقافات المختلفة كما نراها في مختلفة الآثار الثقافية المنتشرة في مناطق إندونيسيا الواسعة خاصة في جزيرة جاوة.

وجدير بالملاحظة أن من أهم أهداف القائد Cheng Ho "تشينج هو" في رحلاته تعزيز العلاقات بين المملكة Ming "مينج" مع الدول التي زارها خاصة مع الدول ذات أغلبية المسلمين، كذلك القيام بجهود الدعوة الإسلامية لكونه مسلما على أساس المبادئ الإسلامية التي تم تنسيقها مع الأفكار المثالية التي أخذها من التعاليم الصينية المحلية مثل كنفوشية وتاووية. من هنا تحاول المقالة على البحث عن همزة الوصل بين الإسلام كدين محلي لإندونيسيا من ناحية وبين بعض التعاليم التاووية كدين محلي للصين من ناحية أخرى. هذا الأمر يبرز ظاهرة عالمية في جزيرة جاوة قبل دخولها في عصر الحديث.

Introduction

The Kantana Group Public Company Limited is currently shooting a colossal film entitled “*Laksamana Cheng Ho*” (Admiral Zheng He). It is a co-production of the Thailand-based movie company, and Indonesia’s Jupiter Company Global Film Limited. Six thousand people, including actors and actresses from six Asian countries: Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, Vietnam, Cambodia, and China, are involved in this enormous motion picture. The film features, among others, former Indonesian State Secretary Yusril Ihza Mahendra (as Admiral Cheng Ho), and the former Indonesian Minister for Marginal Territory Development, Saifullah Yusuf (as the fifteenth century Javanese King of Majapahit, Wikramawardana). According to Yusril, during the fifteenth century, Cheng Ho was the uniting symbol of the Southeast Asian nations (*Jawa Pos*, March 02, 2008).

Before the production of this movie was started, a dance combining Javanese tradition and Chinese culture entitled *Bedhaya Layar Cheng Ho* was performed at the Studio Sono Seni in Solo, Central Java on June 25, 2004. This particular dance was rooted in the Javanese traditional *bedhaya*¹ court dance with a Peking Opera style dance added to it.² As the name of the dance —*Bedhaya Layar Cheng Ho*—indicates, it refers to the famous tale of Admiral Cheng Ho’s voyage to the Indonesian archipelago, including Java, in the early fifteenth century. It is interesting to mention as well that the dance was an amalgamation of various traditional arts: Javanese *gamelan*³ and *sindenan*,⁴ Arabic/Islamic poems, Chinese poetry, *wayang* (the shadow play theatre) of Poo Tay Hie, and Pat Im—Chinese music played by Javanese living in Solo, Central Java. Moreover, the performers’ costumes were also an expression of “Sino-Javanese Muslims culture.”

Indeed, the history of Admiral Cheng Ho’s voyage during the Ming Dynasty not only left a remarkable historical imprint in the places he visited (see e.g. Menzies 2003, *Time*, August 20-27, 2001). It also inspired the creation of hundreds of literary works, both fiction and non-fiction, as well as the discovery of ship-making technologies and things related to the “voyage world” after the cruise of the Admiral. The famous legend of “Sinbad the Sailor” in the Middle East was also inspired by Cheng Ho’s historic journey. In Indonesia, including Java, there are great numbers of historical records and tangible legacies of Cheng Ho’s visit. In addition, there is a number of Indonesian literary works including a book written by

Remy Silado (2004) telling about Cheng Ho (sometime called Sam Po Kong). The folktale of Dampu Awang, which is popular on the north coast of Java, is also influenced by the history of Cheng Ho.

Who was Cheng Ho?

Cheng Ho (Zheng He) was a pseudonym given by Cheng Tzu (or Chu The, or Zhu Di) the Son of Heaven (known as Yung-lo), the third emperor of the Ming Dynasty of China who was in power from 1403 to 1424. Born from a Hui poor family in Kunyang, central Yunnan in 1370, Cheng Ho's surname was Ma Ho (Ma He). The word "Ma" indicates that he was Muslim since it is the Chinese rendering of the name of the Prophet Muhammad. In fact, most Hui people in China are Muslims, including Cheng Ho's parents.⁵ Menzies wrote (2003: 21) that Cheng Ho was a devout Muslim and a powerful figure apart from being a formidable soldier and Yung-lo's closest advisor. Because of his inestimable contribution in toppling the power of former emperor Kien Wen, Emperor Yung-lo honoured Cheng Ho by appointing him commander over thousands of people who served as the Ming Empire's "secret police" (Seagrave 1999). This was truly an important and influential job. As evidence of the Emperor's trust in Cheng Ho, he entrusted him to lead a gigantic naval expedition to extend ties of friendship and trade relations into the Indian Ocean, and appointed him the Commander-in-Chief of the voyage by Imperial Decree. He was accompanied by Heo Shien, Ma Huan, and Fei Shien, all of them Muslims, who served as vice-Commander and secretary, as well as by Ha San, an imam from the mosque of Sin An (Changan) who was fluent in Arabic, as spokesman.

In *Ming Shi* ("The History of the Ming Dynasty") records that Cheng Ho's fleet involved 62 large ships and 225 *junks* (boats) on which sailed 27,550 marines, astronomers, politicians, map makers, doctors, traditional healers, preachers, ethnographers, etc. (Zhi 1996, Lan 1952). From 1405 to 1433, Cheng Ho led seven expeditions⁶ and visited more than thirty-seven countries: ranging from Indonesian seaports, notably Palembang, Banten, Cirebon, Semarang, Gresik, and Surabaya to Ceylon, Cochin, Calicut, Ormuz, Jeddah, Mogadishu and Malinda, from Champa to India, from the Persian Gulf to the Red Sea and the coast of Kenya. Seen from the quantity and duration, Cheng Ho's expeditions far surpassed later European expeditions such as those commanded by Christopher

Columbus, Vasco da Gama, Ferdinand Magellan, Francis Drake and so forth (Ma 1979, Lombard 1996, Pires 1944). Due to his remarkable accomplishments, Emperor Yung-lo bestowed Cheng Ho with the epithet Ma San Bao (Ma "The Three Jewel"), an epithet taken from a classic Chinese proverb. Cheng Ho has become a myth in today's Chinese communities, regardless of their religions and beliefs. He is loved and admired as the "Great Admiral" and is worshiped in temples as a god (deity) under the name "Sam Po Kong" by adherents of ancient Chinese religion. In today's Indonesia, particularly in Java, in addition to Sam Po Kong, Cheng Ho is known under the names Sam Poo Tay Djin, Sam Poo Tay Kam, Sam Poo Toa Lang and others (Joe 1933; Willmott 1960).

Since Cheng Ho was a human being as any other and a Muslim at that, this "idolatry" is a historical anachronism. However, it cannot be denied that his contribution in fostering Chinese relationships with Indonesian and Javanese kingdoms and in spreading Chinese culture in Indonesia, especially Java, was significant (Qurtuby 2003, Muljana 1968). The fact that "Sino-Javanese Muslim Cultures" are scattered over Banten, Jakarta, Cirebon, Semarang, Demak, Jepara, Lasem, Gresik, and Surabaya on the northern coast of Java (see also below) is strong evidence of the encounter between Cheng Ho (and other Chinese Muslims) and Javanese societies over the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. These "Sino-Javanese Muslim cultures" are not only found in the form of mosques which show evidence of acculturation processes between China, Islam, and Java, but also in literature, arts, and other artefact. Seen from another perspective, these historical facts illustrate the Chinese major role in spreading Islam in the region. Unfortunately, although the Chinese contribution in shaping Indonesian civilizations and Javanese cultures is apparent, only a few scholars have concerned themselves with the issue. As a result, in the discussions about the origins/roots of Islam in Indonesia, scholars and historians again and again repeat the "classical theories" that in Indonesia, Islam was brought and spread by merchants and Sufis from Gujarat (India), Arabia, the Middle East, and Persia. Only few scholars and historians on Indonesia—including Lombard, Salmon, de Graaf, and Muljana—mention and recognize the Chinese contribution in spreading Islam in the country.

The Imprint of Chinese in Java's Islamization

Most scholars and historians of Indonesia argue that the process of Java's Islamization and the introduction of Islam to the region began since the thirteenth century (Ricklefs 2007, Hefner 1987). Java between the thirteenth and sixteenth century was marked by the empowerment of the bases of Islam. Throughout these centuries, Muslims did not form a sporadic community at all but had grown into a structured society. Fifteenth-century Java was also marked by another significant event: The Hindu-Buddhist kingdom of Majapahit in East Java collapsed following the increasing power of small Islamic kingdoms on the northern coast of Central Java. The Indonesian prominent author, Pramoedya Ananta Toer, very nicely sketched the socio-political conditions in Java during this time in his one thousand pages remarkable book, *Arus Balik: Sebuah Epos Pasca Kerajaan Nusantara di Awal Abad ke-16* ("Countercurrent: An Epoch of Post-monarchy Nusantara in the Early Sixteenth Century).

In other words, especially in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries Java underwent a great transition and incredible transformation from Hindu-Buddhist to Islamic. This transition and this transformation were marked by the collapse of the "*Siwa-Buda*" kingdom of Majapahit that had been in power and had controlled the Indonesian archipelago and beyond for more than three hundred years. It was the Islamic kingdom of Demak, under the leadership of Raden Patah (an Indo-Chinese Muslim by the name of Jin Bun in Chinese literature), that conquered Majapahit and took its king, Kertabumi or Brawijaya V, into detention. Some historians claim that there are two stages in Majapahit's collapse; the first was during the rule of Raden Patah, the founder of the Demak Sultanate in 1478, and the second was during Sultan Trenggana (in Chinese sources called: Tung Ka-lo) in 1527, when he triumphed over Majapahit's last ruler, Girindrawardana or Prabu Natha. After Majapahit's fall, the political hegemony in Java shifted to the Muslim courts on Java's north coast, and the centre of the Javanese kingdom moved from inland Trowulan in East Java to Central Java north-coastal Demak Bintara (Muljana 1968). In the centuries following Majapahit's collapse, Java's Hindu-Buddhist priestly communities and elements of Indic heritage slowly declined, except in some isolated areas in the eastern salient of Java, especially Banyuwangi, and Tengger (Hefner 1989).

Indeed, prior to Demak's revolution, Muslims (mostly foreigners: Chinese, Arabs, South Indians, Persian, etc) as a random religious community had already existed in Java since the thirteenth

century. However, Javanese society began to embrace Islam since the fourteenth century. There are at least two supporting pieces of evidence for this hypothesis: firstly, there are Muslim gravestones, which evidently mark the burial of elite figures from the Hindu-Buddhist court of Majapahit; the second is the Muslim graveyard in Trowulan (dated AD 1368-69) (Ricklefs 2007: 1-2). Demak's revolt was only the "tip of the iceberg" or by-product of the expanding Islamic communities in Java. However, it is significant to acknowledge that Demak's role, which was under the control of Chinese Muslim regimes, was central in spreading Islamic supremacy over Banten, Cirebon, Jepara, Lasem, Tuban, Gresik, and Surabaya, all of which became small Islamic courts. Places in the eastern salient of Java like Pasuruan and Banyuwangi, are the only sites on the northern coast of Java the Demak armies were unable to defeat, Sultan Trenggana even died in warfare against the local population there in 1546 (de Graaf 1986). These historical facts of the conquest indicate that Java's Islamization not only came about through cultural means and peaceful and nonviolent actions as some Muslim apologists have it, but also through violent warfare and political domination. Furthermore, Majapahit's fall had on one hand boosted Muslims to become more powerful, but on the other had caused Hindus to retreat into the highlands of Java, notably Tengger, and the eastern salient of Java to seek refuge in order to maintain their religious traditions, cultures, and beliefs (Hefner 1989, 1987).

Demak's supremacy basically ended after the death of Trenggana in 1546. After that, Sultan Hadiwijaya (or Joko Tingkir) of Pajang ruled Demak's Islamic court while queen Kalinyamat ruled in Jepara. Finally, by the end of the sixteenth century, Java's political centre moved back again to inland Central Java to Mataram after Sutawijaya or Senapati, with the help of Ki Ageng Pemanahan, Ki Juru Martani, and other figures of Majapahit descent, successfully defeated Hadiwijaya. The shift to Central Java's interior greatly affected the Islamic character which shifted from orthodox to some sort of "heterodoxy" by combining both Javanese and Islamic elements. It is important to remember that despite the fact that the Mataram kings were (nominal) Muslims they inherited Hindu-Buddhist traditions from pre-Islamic Majapahit. This is one of the reasons why Indonesian prominent anthropologist Koentjaraningrat (1985) divided the religious characteristics of Javanese society into two categories: first is "Javanism" which resided in the "heartland" regions of south-central Java, and second is Islamic orthodoxy which is very

strong in the western parts of Central Java, the *pesisir* north coast, and Madura.

Since the Demak revolution in 1478, the regions of the northeastern littoral of Java such as Gresik (Chinese: Ce-cun), Tuban (Tu-fan), Surabaya (Su-lu-mai), Lasem (Lao Sam), Semarang (Toa-lang), and Jepara which previously had been Majapahit's economic centres, came to be controlled by Demak. Among these places, Gresik was probably the most significant seaport during and before Majapahit. Gresik, located in East Java, had been used by King Darmawangsa of Daha for the barracks for the kingdom's navy long before the establishment of Majapahit, and by the eleventh century, King Erlangga used the place as a garrison for military purposes and as seaport for trade with Java, Bali, Nusa Tenggara, Maluku (Moluccas), and Sulawesi. Later, Chinese migrants used these places and redesigned them into international harbours. During the authority of the maritime-based Demak sultanate, places including Cirebon and Banten on the northern coast of West Java had been utilized as primary bases for economic development and were the main military bases to face off the Portuguese (de Graaf & Pigeaud 1976, 1984). It is significant to note that during the struggle against the Portuguese, the regime in Demak had collaborated with Chinese communities that had existed for centuries and were internationally renowned for their ability in building ships and forging weapons. One Chinese figure by the name of Liem Mo Han (known as Babah Liem) was widely celebrated by the Javanese not only as the local Chinese leader during Demak's struggle but also as the architect of several mosques in Java notably the famous Mantingan mosque in Jepara (near Demak). Designed by Liem Mo Han, components of the Mantingan mosque like tiles and ceramics were brought in from Macao (Toer 2001: 474). Babah Liem was a Chinese Muslim, the Chinese ambassador for Demak, and the leader of Nan Lung ("The South Dragon"), a Java-based Chinese overseas union that functioned as a social organization to preserve the Chinese heritage and culture. This overseas Chinese association was established by Java's local Chinese communities in the aftermath of Cheng Ho's expeditions.

Besides Babah Liem, other influential famous Chinese Muslim leaders in early sixteenth century Lasem (Lao Sam) and neighbouring Demak include Coa Mie An and Gouw Eng Cu. In his "*Arus Balik*", Pramoedya also noted that the Javanese famous historic figure Sunan Kalijaga, one of the nine Muslim saints, who, as early

Muslim preachers spread Islam in Java, was the son of Brawijaya V, the King of Majapahit, who was married to a Chinese Muslim woman named Retna Subanci, the daughter of Babah Ba Tong or Tan Go Hwat (Toer 2001: 367). Tales of the Chinese Muslim Babah Ba Tong or Babah Bentong were very famous not only in Central Java's traditions but in Cirebon on the north coast as well. Furthermore, Slamet Muljana also identified Sunan Kalijaga as a Chinese Muslim in his *Runtuuhnya Keradjaan Hindu-Djawa dan Timbulnya Negara-Negara Islam di Nusantara* ("the downfall of Hindu-Java kingdom and the rise of Islamic states in Nusantara"—the former name of Indonesia). In this controversial book (first published in 1968) which was later banned by the New Order, Muljana said that Sunan Kalijaga—also known as Raden Sahid—was the architect of the Demak Mosque by the name of Gan Si Cang. Local historian of Demak, S. Wardi (1950), also mentions that Sunan Kalijaga was a Chinese Muslim by the name of Oei Sam Ik, the son of the Tuban Duke, Oei Tik To. Pangeran Hadiwidjaya from the Surakarta court (as I wrote elsewhere [2003]) not only identified Sunan Kalijaga as a Chinese, but also that other historic figures who played significant roles in the spread of Islam in Java such as Ki Ageng Gribig (Siauw Dji Bik), Ki Ageng Pengging (Heng Pa Hing), Sunan Bonang (Bo Bing Nang), and Sunan Pajang (Na Pao Tjing) were in fact, Chinese.

Interestingly the existence of these Chinese Muslims in Java, especially during pre-colonial times (prior to the 1600s), was not only noted in local accounts and Javanese oral traditions, but also was recognized by early travellers such as Tomé Pires (Portuguese), Ma Huan (Chinese), Edmund Scott (English), de Houtman (Dutch) and Ibn Batutah (Maghrib). Tomé Pires, for instance, said, "The Javanese used to have affinity with the Chinese" and that the religion of Muhammad was widespread among the cosmopolitan population of the coast which was made up of Chinese, Arabs, Gujarati, Bengalese, and other nationalities (Cortese, ed., 1944: 179). From the end of the sixteenth century, the account of the first Dutch fleet under the direction of Cornelis de Houtman (c. 1595-97) it is clear that one must distinguish between "natural Chinese," namely those remaining loyal to their ancestral religion, and those "who have lived here for a long time, and who have adopted the Mohammedan faith" (Rouffaer and Ijzerman 1915; Lombard and Salmon 1993). De Houtman's observation is confirmed by Edmund Scott, who stayed in Java from 1603-05 and has a quite interesting passage on these two kinds of Chinese. Still, the fact that there were Chinese

Muslims, particularly in the early seventieth century of Java,⁷ is also confirmed by other early travellers such as John Jourdain who visited Banten in 1614.

The fact of the existence of these Chinese Muslims in pre-modern Java was the outcome of the long relationships between Java and China which had run for centuries. Such connections became more intensive since the Ming Dynasty as I will show in the next paragraphs. The relation between Java (in Chinese texts: She-po, Zhaowa) and China, either in terms of the diplomatic relationship between the two states/kingdoms or in terms of global trade, had run for centuries long before the advent of Islam in Java (Schrieke 1960; Vlekke 1943). This relationship continued intensively during the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644), when Muslims had played an important role in the empire. The book *Ming Shi* ("History of the Ming Dynasty") as well as the stories and accounts of the Cheng Ho-led historic naval expeditions in the book *Ying-yai Sheng-lan*, authored by Ma Huan⁸ (first published in 1416) clearly show that business activities and cultural relationships between Java and China had increased significantly, and in Java itself the role of the Chinese in trade and maritime matters also thrived (Lombard, II, 1996; Reid 1992). On the diplomatic side, political relations between Java and China during the fifteenth century also ran very satisfactorily.

Among the accounts in Chinese resources, the most interesting are those mentioned in *Ming Shi* and *Ying-yai Sheng-lan* about the Chinese communities from Kanton (Kwangchou), Zhangzhou (Chang-chou), Quanzhou (Chuan-chou) and other places in southern China who had left their country and lived on the north coast of Java, especially in Tuban, Gresik, and Surabaya.⁹ According to these texts, these Chinese communities were economically very prosperous, and—this is the most fascinating part—among them were Muslims. The following quotation of the "legacy" of the Chinese Muslims in Java was taken from the *Ying-yai Sheng-lan*.

"In this country (read, Java) there are three kinds of people: 1) the Mohammedans, who have come from the west and have established themselves here, their dress and food is clean and proper; 2) the Chinese, being all people from Canton, Chang-chou, Ch'uan-chou (the latter two places situated in Fukien, not far from Amoy) who have run away and settled here, what they eat and use is also very fine and many of them have adopted the Mohammedan religion and observe its precepts; 3) the natives, who are very ugly and uncouth, they go about with uncombed heads and naked feet and believe devoutly in devils, theirs being one of the countries called devil-countries in Buddhist books. The food of these

people is very dirty and bad, it's for instance snakes, ants and all kinds of insects and worms, which are held a moment over fire and then eaten; the dog; then have in their houses eat and sleep together with them, without being disgusted at all" (Mills 1970: 93; Groeneveldt 1960: 49).

Even though Ma Huan's comments and views about "the natives" denounce the local societies which he described as a kind of "uncivil communities," his report about the presence of Chinese Muslims in Java deserves to be taken into account in this study. Ma Huan was a Chinese Muslim who accompanied Cheng Ho on his fourth voyage in the South Seas (1413-15) who reported during their passage through East Java that the population was made up of natives, Muslims (*huihui*), and Chinese (*tangren*) many of whom were Muslims. A contemporary text, the *Xiyang fangguo zhi* ("Records of the Foreign Countries in the Western Ocean") even goes as far as to say that all these Chinese were Muslims (Lombard and Salmon 1993: 115).

Ma Huan's reports is not surprising since these places had become major concentrations of Muslims because of centuries long relationships between China and Arabia (Israeli 1980; Broomhall 1905). In *Islam in Canton in the Sung Period*, Lo Hsiang Lin for instance said that Islam had been present in China since the early years of the seventh century when this religion began to expand. In addition, the *Chinese Annals* from the Tang Dynasty (618-960 AD) mentions Muslim communities in Canton, Chang-chou, and Ch'uan-chou (located in Fukien). Historical evidence of Islam in those areas are two old mosques in Canton and Quanzhou, namely, Kwang Tah Se and Chee Lin Se, which, according to some historians, is the second oldest mosque in the world after the Nabawi Mosque which was founded by the Prophet Muhammad in Medina (Ma 1979; Israeli & Johns (eds.) 1984). Some Chinese Muslim scholars also noted that the famous companion of the Prophet Muhammad, Saad bin Abi Waqqash, was buried in China (Gladney 1991). The famous hadith: "*uthlub al-ilm walau bi-shin*" ("Seek knowledge until China") provides yet other indication of the relationship between Arabia and China. In a remarkable book entitled *Islamic Inscriptions in Quanzhou* (1984), Cheng Dasheng describes the legacy of the Muslim communities in Quanzhou (Ibnu Battuta called it "Zaitun"), and provides exceptionally clear photographs of the tombstones and other remains as well as transcriptions of the inscriptions. Dominated by Muslims, most notably the Pu family, Quanzhou also became China's most important seaport at that time (Kumar 1987: 604).

In fifteenth and sixteenth century Java, Chinese Muslims were not only found in East Java's Surabaya, Tuban, and Gresik but throughout the entire northern coast of Java including West Java. The Dutch traveller, Loedewicks, who visited Banten (the western salient of Java) in the sixteenth century, also witnessed the presence of Chinese Muslims, called "*geschoren Chineezen*" ("the shaved Chinese") in the documents of VOC (the Dutch East India Company). Likewise in his *Rihlah Ibnu Bathutah*, edited by Thalal Harb, the famous explorer from the Maghrib, Ibnu Battuta (see also Dunn 1986), reported on the existence of Chinese Muslims in Java and Southeast Asia. No less significant, early travellers such as, Dampier, de Houtman, Scott, etc. (Lombard and Salmon 1993: 115-31) also noticed that Chinese Muslims lived all over the country in pre-modern Java or Indonesia in general.

Equally important, accounts of early Muslim communities and their activities in cities and towns on the northern shoreline of Java are supported by local Javanese accounts and oral traditions. Local and oral traditions compiled in *babads* (Javanese chronicles) during the era of the Mataram court at the end of the sixteenth and the first decades of the seventeenth century describe the cosmopolitan conditions of Java's Muslim communities on the north coast (e.g. trading instead of farming).

Interestingly there are a number of local Javanese texts, including those originating from Banten and Cirebon in the western part of Java, which explicitly talk about Chinese Muslims in the early stages of the spread of Islam as cited in the *Babad Tanah Jawi*, *Serat Kandha Ringgit Purwa*, *Carita (Sejarah) Lasem*, *Babad Cerbon*, *Hikayat Hasanuddin*¹⁰ and so forth. In these local accounts, Raden Patah or Sultan Patah, the founder of the Demak dynasty which was the first Islamic kingdom in Java as I mentioned above, is also considered to have been a Chinese Muslim. The accounts only differ about his genealogy. While local western Javanese texts trace his ancestors back to the Mongol-Chinese (*Hikayat Hasanuddin* mentions that his ancestor's name was Cek Ko Po and the *Sadjarah Banten* calls him Cu-cu), texts from Central Java such as the *Babad Tanah Jawi*, *Serat Kandha Ringgit Purwa*, and *Tembang Babad Demak*, relate him to Brawijaya, King of Majapahit who was married to a Chinese Muslim woman (some sources like the *Babad Cerbon* explicitly mention the name of this Chinese Muslim woman, Sio Ban Chi, the daughter of the Chinese Muslim Syeikh Bentong or Kiai Bantong). If Sultan Patah were a Chinese Muslim, it would follow that Demak's court was

ruled by a Chinese dynasty. As king, Patah had the ambition to turn Demak into a powerful maritime-based sultanate, in contrast to former Majapahit which relied on agriculture.

Unfortunately his ambition failed because his successor, Sultan Trenggana (*Malay Annals*: Tung Ka-lo), died in a battle against local rebels who conspired with the Portuguese in Panarukan, in the eastern salient of Java, in 1546. At the same time, other sons of Patah were unable to handle the court due to lack of leadership and religious supports from the "*Dewan Wali*"—a group of ulama that functioned to appoint a sultan and take his oath (like *ahl al-hall wa al-aqd* in Islamic tradition). They were even involved in endless violent conflicts ultimately dividing Demak into two smaller courts: Jepara and Pajang, and the power of this court ended completely when Senapati (Sutawijaya) successfully triumphed over Sultan Hadiwijaya of Pajang (also known as Jaka Tingkir) in 1584. Senapati then established the Mataram court in the interior of Central Java which introduced and adopted a kind of amalgamation between Islamic mysticism and pre-Islamic Majapahit Hindu-Buddhist culture in a form of "mystic synthesis". This Mataram court is the genesis of present-day Surakarta's Sunanate and Yogyakarta's Sultanate (de Graaf & Pigeaud 1976; Ricklefs, 1993, 2007).

Besides local *babads* and the travellers' accounts, information about Chinese Muslims is found in Javanese oral traditions and folktales from the northern littoral of Java (Javanese: *pasisir*). They mention, for instance, the contributions of Chinese Muslims in the spread of Islam in Java such as those of Cie Gwie Wan, the "right hand" of Sultan Hadlirin, the husband of the famous Javanese queen Ratu Kalinyamat, as well as the founder of the art-carving industry (esp. woodcarving and sculptural carving) in Jepara (neighbouring Demak). He received the title *Sungging Badar Duwung* (meaning "the expert of high class art-carving") due to his expertise in this industry. The local *pasisir* text *Serat Kandhaning Ringgit Purwa* mentions that Sultan Hadlirin himself was a Chinese Muslim whose original name was Wintang. Local traditions have it that, at the beginning, he was a rich Chinese trader whose ship sank in the Java Sea during a storm while he himself survived and landed at present-day Jepara. The name of Jepara is derived from "Jung Mara" meaning "the arriving (Chinese) ship". Furthermore, the story continued, Wintang was Islamized by Sunan Kudus, one of the famous Javanese Muslim saints, accompanied by Rakim, another Chinese Muslim. From then on his name changed into Hadlirin meaning "the arrival" (Budiman 1979).

Another significant Chinese Muslim figure from pre-colonial times, according to oral traditions, is Kiai Telingsing (Tan Ling Sing or The Ling Sing), Sunan Kudus' partner and Ja'far Shadiq in Kudus, northcoast Central Java (near Demak). The local people of Kudus, not only "sacralised" Kiai Telingsing (called "Mbah Sing") but also sustained his teachings. One of Telingsing's teachings that local society adopted is "*solat sacolo saloho dongo sampurno*" (*salat* as perfect prayer) (Qurtuby 2003). Other local traditions, like those of the people of Salatiga (near Semarang) trace their Islamic traditions back to the Chinese Muslim, Lie Beng Ing, who later lent his name to the village of Kalibening. Oral traditions from Cirebon mention the names of Tan Eng Hoat (Maulana Ifdhil Hanafi), Tan Sam Cai (Muhammad Syafi'i), the financial expert in the Cirebon sultanate, and Kung Sam Pak (Muhammad Murjani), Kung Wu Ping's son, who erected the region's famous lighthouse. The most famous among these Chinese Muslims was Tang Hong Tien Nio, popular known by the name of Putri Ong Tien. She was the wife of Sunan Gunung Djati himself, the first sultan of Cirebon and the main actor in the Islamization of Cirebon and other parts in West Java. Putri Ong Tien has become a "cultural symbol" of the local residents, either Chinese or non-Chinese, and functions as a "uniting figure" between the two different groups in the region. Interestingly, Putri Ong Tien's grave, located next to that of her husband Sunan Gunung Djati, is visited by visitors (including me) from various ethnic and religious backgrounds across Indonesia.

It is interesting to note that folktales of Chinese Muslims have been found not only in Java but also in other parts of Indonesia. In the local traditions of the Balinese Muslim community, for instance, there is the name of The Kwan Pao Lie, known as Syekh Abdul Qadir Muhammad, one of the early Muslim preachers on the island, who is buried in the Temukus village, sub-district of Banjar, Buleleng, Singajara, Bali (Zen 1998: 46). Furthermore, another Chinese Muslim historical figure is Nyai Gede Pinatih whose original name was Shih Ta Niang Pi Na Ti, a rich woman who became the foster mother of Sunan Giri, another important figure among the Javanese *walison-go*—Java's nine Muslim saints who played an important role in the spread of Islam on the island—as well as the founder of Giri court (*Giri Kedaton*) in East Java's Gresik, still a small Chinese town in the fifteenth century. According to some dynastic documents from the small state of Ryu Kyu, it appears that Nyai Pinatih, a local rendering of the Chinese name Pi Na Ti, was no other than the daughter of

Shi Jinqing (Shih Chin-ching, a Chinese native of Guangdong province, who, from 1405 to 1421, ran the port of Sumatra's Palembang (Seong 1963: 399-408). In Surabaya, the *Pecat Tanda* ("the head of the market") of Terung was also a Chinese who was used as an official by the administration of Majapahit, who installed and protected the young Muslim of Champa (later known as Raden Rahmat or Bong Swi-ho, one of the figures among the "*Walisongo*").

The Dutch historian and scholar of Javanese history, de Graaf, also mentions that Sunan Giri (Raden Paku) employed Chinese in his court as "civil servants" and military forces. In addition, in his *Soerabaja in de XVII eeuw : van Koninkrijk tot Regentschap* ("Surabaya in the seventeenth century : from kingdom to regency"), he mentions that about forty Chinese Muslims had been employed by Sunan Dalem (Prabu Satmata), the second sultan of Giri. Still, the *Babad Tanah Jawi* notes that Chinese Muslims were among the Giri soldiers who resisted Pangeran Pekik of Surabaya (the son-in-law of Sultan Agung from the Mataram court). The story goes further by saying that Giri's commander-in-chief during the fight against Mataram was a Chinese Muslim by the name of Endrasena, the adopted son of Panembahan Kawistuwana or Mas Wetan, the successor of Sunan Prapen. Today, Javanese society still remembers him (Budiman 1979: 23).

Sino-Javanese Muslim Cultures

It is central to recognize that the fact that Chinese Muslims were present in the early steps of Java's Islamization is not only revealed by the accounts and reports of foreign explorers, Chinese resources, local Java's chronicles, histories, and oral traditions. A number of Islamic artefacts, archaeological remains, and cultural treats which indicate the strong influence of the Chinese also attests to it. We may therefore assume the presence of a kind of "Sino-Javanese Muslim culture," the outcome of an amalgamation of Chinese-Islamic-Javanese cultures. The carvings on the old Mantingan mosque in Jepara, the mosque minaret in a Chinese town in Banten, the construction of the doors in the graveyard complex of Sunan Giri in Gresik, the architecture of the Cirebon court along with its Sunyaragi garden which is reminiscent of that of the "Forbidden City", the cantilever (buffer) of the Demak mosque along with its ornaments and epitomes, the edifice of the Sekayu mosque in Semarang, and many others are indicative of the profound influence of Chinese culture, especially in the aftermath of Cheng Ho's visits.¹¹

Other important remains of the Muslim Chinese are two old mosques in Jakarta, the Kali Angke Mosque (founded by Gouw Tjay) and the Kebun Jeruk Mosque built by Tamien Dosol Seeng and Nyonya Cai (Lombard, II, 1996). In the Sekayu Mosque in Semarang, one of the oldest mosques in Java (Aboebakar Atjeh [1955] in his *Sedjarah Mesdjid*—"The History of Mosques"—calls it Pekayuan Mosque) there is a Chinese painting in the roof. Another proof of Sino-Javanese Muslim Culture includes the old and controversial temples (*kelenteng*) which were previously considered as Chinese mosques before the Dutch colonial era. These temples include the Nyai Ronggeng in Jakarta, the Talang in Cirebon, the Gedung Batu in Semarang, the Sampokong in Tuban, and the Mbah Ratu in Surabaya.

The foundation of *Nyai Ronggeng* temple in Ancol, North Jakarta near Tanjung Priok harbour, also known as *Kelenteng Bahtera Bhakti* and sometimes called *Anxu Dabogong Miao*, is associated with a Chinese Muslim who served as one of the cooks during Cheng Ho's expedition. Local tradition has it that when Cheng Ho landed in Sunda Kelapa (the old name of Jakarta) the cook fell in love with Sitiwati, a local traditional dancer (called "*ronggeng*"—which became the name of the temple). The couple married, and lived and died in the temple complex, together with her father, Said Areli. For this reason, there are three Islamic tombs in the temple: two under Cheng Ho's main altar for Sam Po Swie Soe (Cheng Ho's cook) and Sitiwati, and another for Sitiwati's father called Embah Said Dato Kembang or Said Areli (Choy 1977; Widodo 2003). A stone inscription dating from 1923 mentions: "It was founded at the end of the Ming Dynasty." French historians on Indonesia who conducted research on Chinese temples in Jakarta assume that the Nyai Ronggeng temple was rebuilt and modified in the eighteenth century, not by Chinese Muslims but by Confucians, and renamed the Bahtera Bhakti Temple. Now the temple is a place of worship for both non-Muslim and Muslim Chinese. Pork may not be eaten within the premises of the temple.

In the Mbah Ratu temple in Surabaya, East Java (near Tanjung Perak harbour) there is a graveyard adorned with flowers, the Qur'an, and a *tasbih* (a tool used to bear in mind God's names in Sufi/Muslim traditions), while incense is burned over it. No less significant, in the complex of the Gedung Batu Temple in Semarang there is a number of sacred tombs of Chinese Muslims including that of Ong King Hong or Wang Ching-hung, who is considered to

have been a historical figure who features in the famous legend told on the eastern coast of Java: Kiai Dampoawang (Budiman 1979). There are also cemeteries of the couple of Kiai and Nyai Tumpeng and Kiai Cundrik Bumi, Cheng Ho's guard. Interestingly, in this nowadays non-Chinese Muslim temple, there is a *bedug*, a large drum suspended horizontally at the side of the mosque to summon people to prayer, along with the Chinese phrase: *mo'len lan ing* meaning, "tacitly acknowledge the Qur'an with voices" (Ambarly 2001: 283). History notes that the building of this Chinese shrine was totally renovated by Oei Tjie Sien, the father of Oei Tiong Ham, a rich businessman renowned as the "Sugar King" in 1879.

Furthermore, in Cirebon, in West Java, there is an old and controversial temple called the Talang Temple. According to a folktale and to local history, this Chinese temple was built originally by Tan Sam Cai (recognized as Muhammad Syafii or Tumenggung Arya Dupu Wiracula—"finance minister" of Sunan Gunung Jati at the Cirebon Sultanate in the sixteenth century). Tan Tjie Tek, the temple gatekeeper and one of my informants during my fieldwork in 2002, said that the temple was a former mosque because of several reasons: the temple faces Mecca, there is Arabic calligraphy, a well and a *padasan* (a place for ablution prior to *salat*), a pulpit for delivering a *khutbah* (Friday prayer sermon), and a special place for the imam of the *salat*. As in the other temples I described above, the mosque obtained a new function and was turned into a shrine for Confucians by Mayor Tan Tjie Kie (1853-1920) who served as the chairman of the Association for Kong Ju Kwan based on a decree of the governor of the Dutch East Indies dated 22/7/1898 No. 3. In the 1960s, Kho Sin Soan constructed an altar for Confucian worship.¹²

Al these controversial temples are possibly ex-mosques that built by Chinese Muslim immigrants who settled in Java. These Chinese Muslims preferred to live in Java rather than return to their home country for various reasons: trade, business, political security, or preaching (missionary work). It is reasonable to say that the early Chinese Muslims that inhabited the north coast of Java were free traders or even immigrants/refugees who abandoned their home country due to the political chaos and uncertainty prevalent in China at the time. There were a number of rebellions and situations of political chaos that caused many Chinese, including the Muslims, to flee and seek shelter in Southeast Asia in the coastal areas of Malacca, Sumatra, and Java. These places, indeed, have been known for centuries as melting pots of various societies and civilizations

(Lombard 1996, Reid 1992, Hefner 2005). The Muslim uprising in Canton and other "home bases" of Muslims in China in the eight century particularly affected the escalation of Chinese migration. (Lin 1967). Other political causes for the great flow of Chinese migration to Java—or Southeast Asia in general—were a number of violent actions and extortions perpetrated against the middle classes, businessmen, and successful merchants, who refused to pay taxes to the Ming dynasty, under the first Ming emperor, Hung Wu, at the end of the fourteenth century. This political chaos caused the flight of financial capital and the exodus of local Chinese, including Muslims, to overseas Southeast Asia (Seagrave 1999).

Another possibility for the presence of Chinese Muslims in Java prior to the colonial era was the political expansion of the Chinese-Mongol Yuan Dynasty to Singasari, one of the great Javanese kingdoms, in 1289. This expedition, which numbered 20,000 soldiers (Chinese-Mongolian) was intended first and foremost intended as a reprisal against King Kertanegara, who had insulted and mutilated the special envoys sent by Yuan Emperor, Kublai Khan (r. 1260-94). The expedition failed because (1) Kertanegara died in the internal chaos and political transition in Singasari before the arrival of the Chinese-Mongol army. The kingdom collapsed and changed into Gelang Gelang ruled by Kertanegara's son-in-law cum rebellion leader Jaya Katwang; (2) the Chinese-Mongols had been asked (not to say utilized) by Raden Wijaya—the later founder of Majapahit—, another son-in-law of Kertanegara's, to collaborate in order to topple Jaya Katwang. The Yuan Empire was to be rewarded by the gift of half of his authority if it succeeded in getting rid of Jaya Katwang. The effort was successful and Jaya Katwang was killed during the war. However, rather than thanking the Chinese-Mongols, Wijaya and his followers turned against them and many Chinese-Mongols fled across the northern seaports of Java, to Madura, and West Borneo.

Partly linking Chinese Muslims in Java to Yuan's military forces is understandable because, as Jitsuo Kuwabara mentions in his "On P'u Shou-keng¹³ with a General Sketch of the Arabs and China," Muslim elites had played a significant role during the Yuan dynasty. They influenced Yuan to expand its authority to Japan, Korea, Champa, and Java (Kuwabara 1928). It is also worth mentioning that the vice commander-in-chief of Yuan's military power was a Muslim by the name of Alaudin Musafari¹⁴ (Ma 1979; Khan 1967), and in fact after the Mongol conqueror Hulagu Khan (d. 1265), the

grandson of Genghis Khan (d. 1227), had sacked Baghdad, the capital of the Abbasid caliphate (750-1258), many Muslims had been taken to China and were employed by the Mongol Regime (personal conversation with Prof. Thomas Barfield). Kumar said (1987: 604) that it was common practice during the Yuan Empire (founded in 1271 by Kublai Khan), to appoint Muslims to governmental positions, including positions in the financial administration, and Kublai's edicts and regulations were often translated into Persian and Arabic, indicating that Muslims played an essential role in the Dynasty. Muslims promoted trade with the rest of Asia and served as tax collectors and financial administrators. As a minority, they were considered more easily controllable and more loyal to (because more dependent on) the ruler than the majority Chinese populations. Kublai Khan was also eager to use Muslim advances in astronomy, medicine, architecture, and military technology (Dasheng 1984; Kumar 1987). From this point of view, it is understandable that Chinese Muslims were among the Yuan's soldiers sent to Java. This hypothesis is reinforced by local traditions (e.g. *Hikayat Hasanuddin* and *Sajarah Banten*¹⁵) and folktales which referred to the ancestors of various great Chinese Muslim heroes over the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, such as Raden Patah, as "*Munggul*" (read, Mongol).

The most monumental historical fact of the spread of Chinese Muslims to Java was during the Cheng Ho-led naval expedition (see footnote no. 7) during the reign of Yung-lo, the third Ming Emperor. It involved thousands of people, many of whom were from various professions. Some of the elite figures that took part in the voyages were, in fact, Chinese Muslims including, among others, Cheng Ho, Ma Huan, Ha-san, Wang Ching-hung, Kung Wu Ping, and Fei Hsin (Zhi 1996; Budiman 1979). In every kingdom or sultanate Cheng Ho visited, he installed some sort of ambassador or consul (e.g. Chinese Muslim, Bong Swie Ho, in Majapahit) to establish political, economic, and cultural relationships between mainland China and the local ruling monarchies (Muljana 1968; Parlindungan 1969)

It is central to note that at the time all Chinese immigrants were male because prior to late nineteenth century, the Empire prohibited Chinese women to leave the country (Hoadley 1988: 505). The Chinese therefore married local women, and their progeny came to be known as "*Cina Peranakan*" (a term used in recent sources to denote persons born of Javanese mothers and Chinese-origin fathers who were also Muslim) in contrast to "*Cina Totok*" which is 100% Chinese

from both parents. The Indonesian term “*nyonya*” (Hokkian: *nio’a* or *niowa* meaning simply: “female”) which now widely refers to a “middle class” woman, originally referred to local women married to Chinese men (Joe 1933). The tradition of inter-marriage between Chinese and Javanese made “pre-modern” Javanese society proud to link up their identity with China. The tradition of inter marriage between Chinese and Javanese continued into the early period of the presence of the VOC (the Dutch East India Company) in Java with the result that there are many *peranakan* Chinese Muslims, particularly in the northern coast of Java (Hoadley 1988). The affirmation of a Chinese identity for many Javanese was witnessed by early explorers such as Diogo de Couto, Edmund Scott, William Methold, Wouter Schouten, and Abbé de Raynal (Lombard, II, 1996). The Portuguese explorer Tomé Pires was also witness of the harmonious relationship that existed between Chinese and Javanese in the pre-colonial era (Cortesão, I, 1944: 179).

The smooth and harmonious relationship between Javanese and Chinese entered a dark stage because of the Dutch-led bloody tragedy of the so-called *Chine* (“the murder of the Chinese”) in Batavia (now Jakarta) in 1740 in which more than 10.000 people were killed. The Dutch considered the Chinese as “business rivals” and political opponents who might jeopardise their intention to control the economy and politics on Java. After this tragic incident, the Dutch issued two discriminatory decrees: the *passenstelsel* (the obligation for Chinese to show a kind of “passport” if they wanted to leave their quarters) and the *wijkenstelsel* (the compulsion for Chinese to live separate from Javanese society in “exclusive quarters” (read, ghettos), which became known as *pecinan*—Chinese towns. The aim was to prevent a “cultural mixture” between the Chinese and the Javanese (which amounted to racial politics), and to discourage socio-economic-political interaction between the Chinese and local communities. It was the first anti-Chinese government policy in Javanese/Indonesian history and later it stimulated the creation of the notion of “in-group” (called “*pribumi*”—indigenous) and “out-group” (known as *nonpri*—outsiders) and precipitated anti-Chinese sentiments, conflicts, and enmities within Javanese societies.

The peak of anti-Chinese sentiments in the history of Indonesia happened during the “neo-colonialist” era of the Suharto-led New Order when the dictatorial regime “kicked” Chinese communities out of the Indonesian political cultural domains accusing them of being communists or of having connections with the communist

political party in Beijing. As a result, many Chinese were murdered during the anti-communist killings that broke out in 1965-66 which were directed by General Suharto supported by the CIA (Cribb 1990; Crouch 1978). Like the Dutch, the New Order also issued a number of discriminatory regulations to limit Chinese social, economic, cultural, and political activities. During the New Order, most cultural phenomena related to the Chinese was destroyed, and any publication that revealed the contribution of the Chinese in Indonesian nation-building and in the process of the creation of Indonesian culture was banned, including Muljana's *Runtuhnja Keradjaan Hindu-Djawa dan Timbulnja Negara-Negara Islam di Nusantara* ("The downfall of Hindu-Javanese kingdom and the rise of Islamic states in Indonesia") which mentions the contribution of Chinese Muslims in Java's Islamization process (Muljana 1968).

Closing Remarks

The explanation above clearly shows the legacy of Cheng Ho and Chinese Muslims in the history of Java. Unfortunately, their contribution in the creation of Javanese culture/civilization has long been hidden and was "mummified" by, to borrow Adam Smith's term, the "invisible hands" of political regimes. After the collapse of the New Order Regime in 1998, the reformation movement "opened the door" for Indonesia to re-acknowledge the enormous contribution of the Chinese following the abrogation of the anti-Chinese discriminatory regulations by new regimes and through the permission to freely celebrate Chinese cultures and traditions. As a result, the Indonesian Chinese Muslims Association (PITI—*Perhimpunan Islam Tionghoa Indonesia*), which has regional branches in most major cities of the country, re-awakened and the mosque Haji Muhammad Cheng Ho had been built in East Java's Surabaya was reopened. Recently, attended by Cheng Ho's 18th generation grandchild Ma Guangbi, an international symposium entitled "Cheng Ho, *Walisongo* (read, "the nine saints"), and Chinese Muslims in Indonesia's past" was held in Surabaya which was attended by thousands of participants, both Chinese and non-Chinese Muslims (*Jawa Pos*, 26/4), a great acknowledgment after having lived in the corner of history for such a long time.

Endnotes

- * I am deeply thankful to Prof. Thomas Barfield of the Department of Anthropology at Boston University, who introduced me to French *Annale* traditions in the field of history and shared his knowledge on the approaches of “historical anthropology” and “anthropological history.”
1. The *bedhaya* (also written *bedaya* or *bedoyo*) is a sacred ritualized Central Javanese dance associated with the royal palaces of Yogyakarta and Surakarta (Solo). The *bedhaya* epitomizes the elegant (Javanese: *alus*) character of these Javanese courts and the dance is an important symbol of the ruler's power.
 2. This dance was created by several experts from different backgrounds from Indonesia, Taiwan, and Singapore. They included Peter Sau Jia Liang from Singapore (playwright, dramaturgy, and dance assistant), Themis Lin Pei Ann from Taiwan (researcher), Thio Tiong Gie (puppeteer of a “Chinese-Javanese” shadow play called *Poo Tay Hie*) and Bambang Besur Suryono (Indonesian dance artist).
 3. A *gamelan* is a kind of Indonesian musical ensemble typically featuring a variety of instruments such as metallophones, xylophones, drums, and gongs, bamboo flutes, and plucked strings while vocalists may also be included. The term refers more to the set of instruments than to their players. The word “*gamelan*” is composed of the Javanese word “*gamel*”, meaning to strike or hammer, and the suffix “*an*”, which makes the root a collective noun.
 4. *Sindenan* refers to a form of songs accompanying a *gamelan*.
 5. For a discourse of Hui ethnic groups or Muslims in China, see among others, Gladney 1991, 1998; Ben-Dor Benite 2005; Israeli 1978.
 6. The first expedition (1405-07) was from Nanjing to Calicut, Champa, Java, Srivijaya, Sumatra, and Ceylon; The second expedition (1407-09) was a voyage to India to install the new king of Calicut; The third expedition (1409-11) was to Champa, Temasek, Malaka, Sumatra (Samudra and Tamiang), and Ceylon; The fourth (1413-15) was a voyage to Champa, Java, Sumatra, Malaya, Maldives, Ceylon, India, and Hormuz; The fifth trip's (1417-19) destination was Champa, Java, Palembang, Aden, Mogadishu, Brawa, and Malindi on the west coast of Africa; The sixth voyage (1421-22) was to Africa and all over the world including America (Menzies 2003); and the seventh expedition (1431-33) was to southern Vietnam, Surabaya, Palembang, Malaka, Samudra, Ceylon, Calicut, Africa, and Jeddah (Zhi 2000; Widodo 2003).
 7. A short but fine article on the facts of Chinese Muslims throughout Java, Sumatra, Sulawesi, and other parts of present Indonesia, particularly during the Dutch colonial era can be read at Denys Lombard and Claudine Salmon, “Islam and Chineseness,” *Indonesia*, vol. 57 (April 1993), pp. 115-31
 8. Ma Huan, *Ying-yai Sheng-lan: The Overall Survey of the Ocean's Shores*, translated and edited by J.V.G. Mills (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, Hakluyt Society, 1970)
 9. Much of the scholarly literature that deals with the Chinese in Indonesia singles out South China, especially the Cantonese and Hakka regions, as

- predominating among the immigrants' places of origin (Carey 1984; Blussé 1986).
10. For an edition of the *Hikayat Hasanuddin*, see Edel, 1938.
 11. Actually there are many artifacts and places all over Southeast Asia, not only in Java, that commemorate Cheng Ho's visits. A small temple with a freshwater well nearby called Sempalung dedicated to Cheng Ho may be found in the small village of Sei Raya near Singkawang in West Borneo (Kalimantan). On the hilltop behind the temple there is a stone bearing the footprints of the Admiral. A Chinese bell *Cakra Donya* ("the wheel of the world") may be found in Aceh. Local tradition says that the Ming Emperor (Yung-lo?) presented it to the Sultan of Aceh through Cheng Ho in the early fifteenth century. The Dutch scholar, Veltman, suggested that the bell was made in 1409 based on the blurred Arabic text on the right side of the bell. Some resources point out that the bell was brought home by the victorious Acehnese Sultan Mughayah Syah from Samudra Pasai in 1524 (Widodo 2003).
 12. Places related and dedicated to Cheng Ho are scattered all over Southeast Asia such as Palembang (Sumatra), Sei Raya (West Kalimantan), Kuala Trengganu (Malaysia), Penang (Bandar Batu Maung), Kuching (Serawak), Zulu (Southern Philippines), Brunei (a stone inscription outside the Brunei palace), Sampo harbour (at the estuary of the Menam River, Gulf of Thailand), and many others (Widodo 2003).
 13. Pu Shougeng or P'u Shou-keng was an important Muslim merchant from Quanzhou who eased the way for the Mongol success. J. Kuwabara, "On P'u Shou-keng with General Sketch of the Arab and China," *Memoirs of the Research Department of the Toyo Bunko* [Tokyo] 2, 1, and 7, 1 (1928 and 1935).
 14. This case is interesting because generally throughout the Chinese empire Muslims were not allowed to command military expeditions because of some Muslims-led rebellion cases including those in Canton in the eight century and, much later, the notorious Persian garrison rebellion of 1357-66, which completely devastated the economy in southern Fujian and Quanzhou. This city was replaced as the commercial center by Yueh-kang under the Ming and then by Xiamen (Amoy) in the seventeenth century.
 15. See Husein Djajadiningrat, 1983.

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