



Tracing the Interests of Indonesian Khonghucu Adherents, Between Business and Academia

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Abstract

This study aims to examine the interests of Indonesian Khonghucu religious adherents, especially related to business and academia. The people of Khonghucu are known to be very good at doing business, so they are generally financially successful. Since obtaining legality since the time of President K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid, Khonghucu has now continued to develop. Among Khonghucu businessmen, are there those who choose to become academics, pursue religion more, and develop Khonghucu? This study used a descriptive qualitative approach with phenomenological methods. The informan was a Khonghucu adherent who had succeeded in becoming a businessman and academic. Data collection techniques are carried out by interviews, observation, and documentation studies. Data validation is done by triangulation, both technique triangulation and source triangulation. The results showed that Khonghucu adherents in Indonesia are very interested in becoming entrepreneurs, although some of them prefer academic careers. Both options are influenced by family culture and values, labor market opportunities and demands, the influence of the educational environment and personal aspirations and abilities of individuals. Those in business contribute to Indonesia's economy, while those who choose academia preserve and pass on Confucian religious traditions to future generations. Both those who choose business and academia recognize that pursuing religion is a valuable devotion for Confucians and Indonesian society as a whole.

Keywords: Interest, Khonghucu Adherent, Business, Academic, Value

Introduction

This study seeks to reveal the interests of Khonghucu adherents whether they prefer business or pursue the academic world. The goal is to understand the factors that influence the interest of Hungarians in business or academia. This can include factors such as cultural background, religious values, beliefs, family experiences, and other factors that may influence their interest in the field. The research was also to explore the role of religion in decision-making about careers. The teachings of Khonghucu, play a role in individual decision-making about choosing

a career in business or academia. The values emphasized in Khonghucu's teachings and how they relate to interest in the field.

The existence of the Khonghucu people became wider after the Reformation when K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid became President. Because during the New Order era, Khonghucu religion was marginalized, as if dead. Then slowly along with the change of president, the Khonghucu people increasingly gained a place and had the same rights as other religions in Indonesia. The denial of Khonghucu religion is contained in Law No. 1 / PNPS / 1965 concerning the Prevention of Abuse and / or Blasphemy, Article 1 which states that the religions embraced by the Indonesian population are Islam, Christianity, Catholicism, Hinduism, Buddhism and Khonghucu. The status of Khonghucu's existence was later restored following the issuance of Presidential Decree No. 6 of 2000 concerning the Revocation of Presidential Instruction No. 14 of 1967 concerning the Prohibition of Religious Beliefs and Customs, as well as matters that smelled of China openly in public (Emma Nurmawati Hadian & Wakhudin, 2022: 2849).

Although Khonghucu in Indonesia is relatively new, but this religion has a long history, Confucianism has made important contributions in various aspects of social and cultural life in Indonesia. The history of Confucianism in Indonesia began in the 7th century AD when Chinese religion and culture began to enter Indonesia. The influence of Khonghucu began to be seen during the Ancient Mataram period in the 8th century AD, when the officials of the Mataram kingdom had a close relationship with the Chinese Khonghucu priests. At that time, Confucianism was still an elite religion that was only practiced by kings and nobles (Putro & Hadian, 2017).

Putro & Hadian. 2017 stated, during the Srivijaya Kingdom, Khonghucu teachings began to spread among traders and nobles. Srivijaya was a maritime kingdom that advanced in the 7th century AD and had close relations with China. The Chinese merchants who arrived in Srivijaya brought the religion of Khonghucu and taught it to the locals. During the Singasari and Majapahit kingdoms, the influence of Khonghucu teachings continued to grow. The kings of the two kingdoms had close ties with China and adopted many policies influenced by the teachings of Chinese Confucian priests.

China as a nation that is good at trading and the teachings of Khonghucu already exist in Indonesia are described by Hadi (2020: 172) when explaining about Lasem District, Rembang Regency, Central Java. According to him, Lasem society is very plural, the conditions are not just diverse patterns and cultures by their ethnic groups horizontally. They are also vertically tiered in economic, educational, institutional, technological use and sociopolitical organization. From the aspect of belief, the majority of Lasem people follow Islam totaling 47,423 people, Christians 1,045 people, Catholics 762 people, Buddhists 207 people, Hindus there are 22 people and the rest embrace Confucianism and believers totaling 47 people. In the economic field, diversity is also seen among the formal economic sectors which in the context of the modern economy are dominated by many ethnic Chinese. As for the non-formal economic sector, it is generally a source of family income for the indigenous population.

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Hadi (2020: 182-183) explained that the majority of Lasem Chinese descendants adhere to non-Muslim beliefs, namely Catholics, Christians, Buddhists and Confucians. However, now there are many Lasem Chinese people who have converted and left their ancestral beliefs. The residents of Karangturi, which is famous as Chinatown, can be counted on the fingers of the number of descendants who still follow the beliefs and customs of their ancestors. Even so, they still visit the temple, especially the elderly. The Chinese Lasem's bond to the temple is not due to the belief factor of the ancestors who followed, but rather because of cultural ties to the ancestors.

Lasem's economic condition, especially in economic activities and trade among Peranakan Chinese citizens cannot be compared with economic progress before the modern Indonesian era, especially in the 18th and 19th centuries. Hadi (2020: 188) said, where their ancestors had experienced the peak of glory. Lasem's economic collapse began with the collapse of the opium trade at the end of the 19th century along with the lack of economic activity at the port due to Dutch occupation. The economic success of Lasem during the Bre Lasem kingdom until the beginning of the entry of the VOC / Netherlands was supported by inter-island and inter-state trade, thus impacting the economic progress and prosperity of its population. This economic opportunity has been enjoyed by many Chinese peranakan traders who have talents in business and trade. Since Lasem's economy has regressed, many people, especially the younger generation, have left Lasem and sought livelihoods elsewhere that are considered more feasible and promising.

Chinatown area is a combination of commercial and cultural. It is called commercial because it is in a business area where there are many markets, while it is called cultural because people of Chinese descent try to build a distinctively Chinese environment. The Dutch East Indies government in his time tried to organize the population by grouping them based on race, religion, and tribe which then formed several areas, one of which was called Kampung Cina or Chinatown. Chinatown for Chinese people is a social space as well as a physical space where residents interact / move together, where economic business activities are held ranging from production, distribution to consumption (Asriyanti *et al.*, 2020).

Perdana & Ishak (2018) explained, the temple is a place of worship of the Chinese people before until now which also affects social life around the area. The Chinese cultural architecture of Toa Se Bio Temple in Glodok, West Jakarta, for example, affects morphology as an element that influences a livable city. The theory studied from the observation of literature on Chinese cultural architecture shows, the existence of Toa Se Bio Temple is an image of the architectural style of Chinese Culture both in terms of similarities and differences.

Likewise, the Old Tangerang City District Area is a Chinese suburb area which is the root of Tangerang City. This area is a historical site of Chinese culture Citadel. Old Tangerang itself is a cultural destination but part of the area is abandoned and left degraded. "Regeneration of the Chinese Environmental Fortress on Jalan Cilame" aims to regenerate buildings and roads in the Cilame area (Kristi & Setiawan, 2023).

“Using urban acupuncture methods, people of Chinese descent create connections to connect more crowded and less crowded areas to create a symbiosis. Supported by the concept of "man

and nature", the design of the building aims to harmonize with nature, projecting the Yin concept of the Chinese culture of the Citadel in hopes of creating a new role for the building as a Culture Hub," said (Kristi & Setiawan, 2023).

The situation after Indonesia's independence greatly affected many aspects, such as political, economic, cultural and social aspects, as well as pressure from the New Order government. Circular of the Minister of Home Affairs No. 477/4054/BA.01.2/4683/95 of November 18, 1978 concerning the Official Religion of the State, mentions that there are only five official religions recognized by the state: Islam, Protestantism, Catholicism, Hinduism, and Buddhism. So, the status of the Khonghucu religion became unclear, even until the adherents of the Khonghucu religion decided to convert to another religion. The New Order also encouraged Chinese people to change Chinese names to Indonesian names and this was stated in Presidium Cabinet Decree Number 127/U/Kep/12/1966 dated December 27, 1966.

Over time, Hungarians began to receive services from the government including population administration services and educational and religious services. To provide religious services for the Khonghucu people, the government through the Ministry of Religious Affairs established the organizational structure of the Khonghucu Guidance and Education Center at the General Secretariat. Today, the Khonghucu community in Indonesia continues to grow. They are active in promoting the teachings of Khonghucu religion and Chinese culture in Indonesia, as well as taking part in various social activities and development in the community. As a cultural heritage from China, Khonghucu people have made significant contributions to Indonesia's religious and cultural diversity centered on moral values, ethics, and harmony in social relations. The Khonghucu people have integrated these teachings with the local culture and developed unique traditions.

In economics, Confucianism is closely related between money and morals. The prophet Kongzi said, "If the population increases, prosper them and then give them education." Mengzi said, "Only a truly educated person (JunZi) even without a fixed income, can maintain the straightness of his heart, and the less educated (Xiao Ren), If he has a fixed income will not be able to maintain the straightness of his heart.

The interest of Khonghucu people in Indonesia may vary depending on individual preferences and environment. Some Hungarians are more interested in business, while others are more interested in academia. All are caused by the cultural heritage of China, which has a strong business tradition. Hungarians interested in business may be involved in various sectors of the economy, ranging from trade to manufacturing to the service industry. They can take advantage of Khonghucu values such as hard work ethic, trust, and helping each other in running their businesses.

On the other hand, some Hungarians also showed significant interest in academia. They pursue higher education and develop careers in a variety of disciplines, including science, technology, engineering, medicine, and humanities. Education is considered a means to develop oneself and achieve perfection in the Khonghucu tradition. Some Hungarians may also be involved in supporting education through Khonghucu foundations or educational institutions. Many Khonghucu devotees in Indonesia can also have interests involving both business and academic

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fields. Others may choose to combine the two by building a knowledge-based business or combining academic education with their business development.

Literature Review

Most Chinese are Buddhists. According to formal statistics in Indonesia, Buddhists are mostly ethnic Chinese. The statistics come about because if Chinese in Indonesia do not embrace Christianity or Islam, they are required to choose one of the five religions officially recognized by the government. Buddhism, then, is the closest choice to their religious beliefs (Gondomono, 2015: 45).

In reality, According to Gondomono (2015: 46), most Chinese people adhere to beliefs that sociologists of religion call "classical religion" (China), "traditional religion" (China) or "folk religion." Because there is no such thing as it, the religious belief is called "Chinese religion". When asked about his religion, people in traditional Chinese society are honestly confused and may answer that they are "bai shen", that is, worship and worship shen (spirits). This attitude prompted anthropologist Elliot (1955) to call the religious beliefs of the Chinese with shenism.

It is said that, whatever you call it, this religious belief plays a huge role and is an integral part of the daily life of traditional Chinese society. Classical Chinese religion or shenism includes what the sociologist of religion C.K. called "blended" religion to distinguish it from other types of religion, namely institutional religions such as Islam, Protestantism, Catholicism, Buddhism, and Taoism.

According to C.K. Yang, institutional religion is clearly its own institution, separate from other secular social institutions, has its own theology, its own form of worship of symbols (such as gods, spirits, and imagery) and its own rituals, as well as its own clerical organization that forms interpretations of theological views and presides over religious ceremonies. Thus, the institutional religion also has buildings for public offerings or worship, prophets, and its own scriptures.

While blending religion, such as classical Chinese religion, does not exist as a separate social institution, but blends in with other social institutions such as the family. Although structurally obscure let alone prominent as institutional religion, classical Chinese religion plays a broad and profound role in all aspects of social life, even contributing to strengthening family stability. Ancestor worship, for example, has really been integrated into the family. As a major aspect of family religious life, ancestor worship is a form of preservation of the patrilineal kinship system and the reciprocal relationship between ancestors and their descendants (Gondomono, 2015: 46).

According to Aprilia & Murtiningsih (2017), the existence of the Khonghucu religion was never recognized in Indonesia as a religion. The recognition of Khonghucu's religion was interrupted after the New Order era, where Khonghucu's religion was only considered limited to philosophical teachings and ethical teachings. Although the Khonghucu religion has existed in the archipelago (Indonesia) for hundreds of years, the official recognition from the state government of the Khonghucu religion only came during the reign of President KH. Abdurrahman Wahid (Gus Dur) in 2000.

The recognition of Khonghucu religion as a religion by the government turned out to have a considerable impact on the development of human rights in Indonesia. It does not stop only at recognition, but this also has an impact on other sectors such as politics, economy, social and culture that were previously not obtained by ethnic Chinese. Therefore, every religious believer has the same rights in carrying out social, religious, traditional and other activities, including the rights obtained by the Khonghucu religion (Aprilia & Murtiningsih, 2017).

Meanwhile, the teachings and practices of Khonghucu in Indonesia are based on classical Khonghucu teachings, namely Confucian teachings. This teaching emphasizes the importance of ethics, moral development, self-cultivation, and harmonious relationships with fellow humans and nature. Hungarians also carry out various religious practices, such as veneration of ancestors, worship of gods, and celebrating religious celebrations and rituals typical of Khonghucu. The Khonghucu people in Indonesia have a significant contribution in various aspects of social, cultural, and economic life. They are actively involved in social and humanitarian activities, such as donating funds for education, helping disaster victims, and playing a role in social organizations. The Khonghucu community has also contributed in the economic field, especially in business and trade, and played an important role in Indonesia's economic development.

The maintenance and preservation of Khonghucu culture also plays a role in the maintenance and preservation of Chinese culture. They teach Chinese language, traditional arts, and Chinese culture to the younger generation. Khonghucu devotees also participate in celebrating traditional Chinese celebrations, such as Chinese New Year, Qingming Festival, and various other religious festivals and rituals. Khonghucu's interests in Indonesia can encompass two fields, business and academic, depending on each person's interests and aspirations. As a heterogeneous group, Khonghucu Indonesia has different interests and goals in terms of career and education.

According to Michael Justin Lee (2013: 5-6), Chinese people believe that to become a mature and smart businessman, one must start and learn from the bottom, even though there is actually no time limit to start a business. Chinese business philosophy is passed down by word of mouth, whereas trading is useless in expecting excessive profits even in an easy way. Capital in economics is conventionally defined as anything that can increase the ability to do useful work, humans are a form of capital, everyone has at least one form of capital that is their ability to work, this is the capital that the Chinese bring to America and to the rest of the world, and usually without other capital.

The key to business success lies in a built relationship with the outside world, as Peter F. Drucker ("In Memoriam Peter F. Drucker (1909-2005)," 2005) states that the purpose of business is to create customers. While Emsan (2018: 43) explained, Khonghucu's teachings cover many things ranging from morals and ethics, politics, to economics. In economics, Confucius emphasized the importance of hard work, high ethos, patience, not easily discouraged, intelligent, and daring to start.

Confucian teachings hold assumptions about human nature. Confucian managers are determined to influence people through moral obedience in the sense that a manager who

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manages himself well can manage others. Here the manager must guide and educate his subordinates, respect and trust subordinates and treat them humanely (Sunandar, 1970: 71).

It is stated that, the concept of Chinese-style management is strongly influenced by the historical aspects of the Chinese nation, since the 5th century BC. There have been many political and social shifts that have made the Chinese have a tough practical attitude, which can be summarized in the value system of survival in all weather. Chinese companies, both on the mainland and owned by first settlers in East and Southeast Asia, initially brought this attitude to life.

Sunandar (1970: 71) explained that the level of control is very limited and is only entrusted to a small group of insiders who are usually the closest family members. Even there are still companies that have grown into monsters, tend to choose immature organizational patterns, people who have high mutual trust content will be more successful than those with low mutual trust content. Chinese management values are: 1). Holding promises, 2). Tenacious, 3). Diligent, 4). Save money, and 5). Solidarity between groups.

The development and growth of ethnic Chinese businesses cannot be separated from the tug-of-war policy during the New Order era, one of which is the implementation of non-discriminatory policies by issuing the Domestic Investment Law. The New Order government had a desire to mobilize and utilize ethnic Chinese capital as citizens by including them in the category, "domestic foreign capital" and declaring them as national wealth. Through the Domestic Investment Law issued by the New Order government in 1968, ethnic Chinese entrepreneurs (both foreign nationals and Indonesian citizens) received incentives provided by the government. With this PMDN Law, the New Order government provides opportunities and hopes for the participation of ethnic Chinese in supporting economic development programs (Wibowo, 2017).

He explained that ethnic Chinese entrepreneurs are deliberately placed in a vulnerable position where they are used as "cash cows" in the sense of being allowed to grow up and then at every opportunity they are used as one of the most potential financial resources to avoid policy difficulties and for security. Many ethnic Chinese businessmen collaborate with the Indonesian elite, especially with the military. From this, the early period of the New Order to the mid-70s was a profitable period for modern Chinese sector companies in Indonesia, including in Surakarta.

Research Method

This research uses a descriptive qualitative approach with a case study method. The subjects of the study are individuals or groups of Khonghucu people who have a strong interest in business or academia. By conducting case studies, authors can gain a deep understanding of the experiences, motivations, and factors that influence an individual or group's interest in the field. Data was obtained by conducting in-depth interviews with Indonesian Khonghucu adherents to understand their perceptions, motivations, cultural values, and other factors influencing their interest in business and academia.

Researchers observed by being actively involved in Khonghucu community activities in Indonesia related to business or academia. Researchers also observed these activities, gaining an understanding of how Hungarians engaged and expressed their interest in the field. The results of interviews and observations are combined with documentation studies such as Hungarian religious literature, historical writings, papers, or other documents related to the interest of Hungarians in business or academia. Data validation is obtained by triangulating, both engineering triangulation and source triangulation.

Result/Findings

Doing business is an original instinct of Chinese people, even from a young age. Ongky (57 years old), a Khonghucu believer from Sidoarjo, East Java, for example, has been interested in doing business since the age of 17. Economic improvement is the main motivation in doing business. He also felt motivated to do business because of the influence of Khonghucu religion. There is a Khonghucu principle that says, "If someone else can do it once, we should be able to do it 10 times. If others can do 100 times, we should be able to do 1000 times."

For Ongky, Khonghucu's values must indeed be integrated into business strategy. The trick, simply by making love to establish a good relationship with anyone. Material gain must also be connected to spirituality. The technique, every material must be obtained in the right and good way.

In addition to doing business, Ongky also became an academic, scientist, and clergyman. He became a lecturer of the Postgraduate Program of Comparative Religion Study Program (Khonghucu Religion Concentration) at UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta. For him, the academic world is very important for human life. Knowledge is essential for life and association. For him, Khonghucu's teachings and values greatly influenced his approach to learning and a career in this academic field.

"Khonghucu taught us to always learn, where learning will never stop until the end of life. Academic knowledge always goes hand in hand with spiritual values harmoniously," said Ongky.

According to him, the value of Khonghucu can provide new insights in exploring research topics. A modern-minded person can apply the old to the new. He saw no particular challenges in facing as a Khonghucu adherent in academics. Quite the contrary, he sees the value of Khonghucu as always relevant to modern life.

Meanwhile, Dra. Tan Minggayani, M.Ag. (58), a Chinese citizen living in the Beacukai Complex, Sukapura, North Jakarta, revealed that he became a teacher and plunged as an academic because he saw the need for Khonghucu religious teachers in schools in Indonesia was very large. Moreover, the Indonesian Khonghucu Religious Council (Matakin) assigned him to become a Khonghucu religious teacher since 2007.

"Khonghucu's teachings and values greatly influenced my approach to learning and career. Moreover, my profession as a teacher of Khonghucu religion, of course all my life problems are solved with the perspective of Khonghucu," said Tan Minggayani.

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He explained that there is a very close relationship between academic knowledge and spiritual values in everyday life. That is why, the people of Khonghucu must be obedient to God, Prophet Kongzi and committed to their daily duties. Khonghucu's values can also provide new insights in exploring knowledge.

Tan Minggayani saw that formal schools generally have not been transparent in providing data on the number of students, making it difficult to determine the need for Khonghucu teachers in these schools. In addition, the recommendation of Matakini and other assemblies that Khonghucu religious teachers complete their studies at Khonghucu religious colleges has not been implemented.

While Purba Sutarto (72 years old), a businessman of Palembang Chinese descent explained, he was interested in doing business since the age of 12. At that time he saw, business is a quick way to get money. For him, doing business is something fun and can meet many people. By doing business, Sutarto got to know the big bosses who were great and had nice houses, good cars and everything.

"The principles of Khonghucu greatly influenced the way I conduct business. The business principle or core of business is honesty, trust and good name, and friendliness. With honesty and trust capital, we can already do business. If you already have a business, you must maintain a good name and speak politely to anyone. Thus, Tian will provide sustenance without a break in time," said Purba Sutarto.

For Sutarto, integrating Khonghucu's values into business strategy is not difficult. The most important thing is precisely the need for high consistency. What is said becomes the staple of the handle, never in the morning it is still in the form of afternoon soybeans have become tempeh. He saw the importance of the relationship between material gain and spiritual value. Material benefits of business are the results obtained from hard work based on honesty, trustworthiness, maintaining a good name and always being polite. Thus, the material results obtained are the blessings and blessings of Tian.

In a separate place, Sonny Hermawan Suryadiputra (42 years old), a Chinese descendant who lives in Parakan, Temanggung, Central Java, revealed that he was interested in the business world since junior high school age. The reason was simple, because he at that time wanted to get extra pocket money. In the course of his life, Khonghucu's principles influenced the way he conducted business, including about humanity and glorifying others.

Suryadiputra seeks to integrate Khonghucu's values in business strategy. He believed that the four corners of the ocean were all brothers. Happy the near, then the far will approach. "I consider everyone involved in my business like a brother, be it my business partners, suppliers, employees and business rivals. So, I have to treat them well and politely," he said.

The benefits for Suryadiputra are very important. But more importantly, material gains and spiritual values are also very close. That is why, he always wants the benefits obtained in accordance with what is desired by spiritual teachings (halal), so that he avoids cheating, harming others and cheating in running a business.

Despite being a successful businessman, Suryadiputra loved to take his time to become a Khonghucu religious teacher. He said he wanted to learn more about the value of life and the teachings of ancestral heritage. Suryadiputra considers it something that should be learned and passed on to future generations.

Khonghucu's teachings and values greatly influenced Suryadiputra's approach to learning and career. For him, learning is endless and humans need to learn for life. Meanwhile, teaching is half of learning. "Isn't learning and always being trained always fun? Learning is valid for life, so as long as humans live, it is necessary to always learn and develop.

Suryadiputra felt that Khonghucu's values could provide new insights in exploring various scientific topics. For him, as long as man lives, then he will always find new things and worth learning. For example, technology that exists today did not exist 50 years ago. Learning always brings progress to society. Khonghucu religion teaches humans to always cultivate themselves, so as to foster the environment and the wider community. In the end, a just, prosperous and respectful country was created. It all starts with yourself first. If everyone builds themselves well, then a good society is created.

"The biggest challenge of the Khonghucu people is to nurture themselves to be better than they are today. Man's greatest enemy is oneself. This often prevents humans from progressing and developing, for example laziness, laziness arises from within and it takes a strong determination to defeat laziness, "said Suryadiputra.

Not all Chinese people go into the business world of their own accord. Hans (58 years old), of Chinese descent who lives in Makassar, for example, entered the business world because of the encouragement of his parents. However, Khonghucu's values always color its business patterns. That is why he chooses to be honest in trading. Thus, the material obtained from the business goes hand in hand with the spiritual value he professes.

Siet Nie (45 years old) from Jakarta has also been in business since he was a teenager. By doing business, he got a better life and helped many fellow humans in need. Khonghucu's values greatly influence his life behavior in business. For example, Khonghucu taught thrifty, perseverance, discipline, tenacity, perseverance and never give up. Thus, by believing in Khonghucu's teachings, Siet Nie tried to be fair, honest and trustworthy.

Discussion

After the fall of the Chinese imperial system in 1911, the establishment of the Republic of China (1911) and the PRC (1949), Confucianism was rejected and did not gain public trust. However, because Confucianism is at four levels, namely personal, patriarchal, bureaucrat, and national as mentioned above, there is still room for Confucianism, namely on a personal or personal level. At that level, Confucianism still exists and survives because the basis of the Great Teachings is self-processing, while self-processing plays on a personal level (Hartati, 2016: 179).

It is said that, Confucianism that emphasizes self-processing on a personal level that can last a long time and be respected and spread to all levels and remains present in modern Chinese society. Confucianism contributes to modern society in terms of moral feelings, Confucian

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ethics that emphasize the person or self as the center of all relationships (*wulun*), not emphasizing individual personal rights, but rather on individual responsibilities in society. The Confucian tradition can make a meaningful contribution to the unity and harmony of the world (*tianxia yi jia*).

The instinct of most citizens of Chinese descent is to do business. They generally have been trading from a young age. However, some of them have the moral burden of preserving their culture and religion, so they go into academia, becoming teachers and teachers of Khonghucu religion. In fact, they try to study at the Khonghucu Religious Studies Program so that they can linearly teach Khonghucu religious students at various levels, both in elementary and secondary schools.

The choice to become a businessman or academic for citizens of Chinese descent is inseparable from the history they have experienced, namely the dilemma of Chinese citizens. Shanti & Rusyanti (2021: 280) explained that this ethnic Chinese dilemma is one example of a case of social challenges (disasters) that occur in Indonesia. Dilemmas occur due to the relationship or interaction between individuals and groups with rulers who experience ups and downs and tensions that have lasted for quite a long time involving the dynamics of cultural processes that include ideological, existential, and operational aspects. These three aspects give each other a response and tug-of-war so as to produce a strategy as a middle man which is considered the best choice in addressing the social challenges faced.

It was revealed that the dynamics and dilemmas experienced by ethnic Chinese in Indonesia are the result of doubts about Indonesian perceptions about ethnic Chinese which have developed over a long period of time so that various efforts are needed so that the impact does not get worse for their sustainability in Indonesia. One of them is by doing the Ali Baba system. Ali Baba's system can be called a modification of the concept of an intermediary trader, retail sword, or middle man that previously existed. Middle man is more flexible to use in contexts as a concrete or operational response in responding to conditions that are all restricted.

Intermediary merchants served as a link between large and small merchants and/or merchants in cities and interiors. They are traders who have needed a role since hundreds of years ago which is sometimes referred to as "second hand". Raffles stated that Chinese people were the life and spirit of trade in the Dutch East Indies with the percentage of local born traders as much as 45.51% and 32.17% foreign-born according to statistical data in 1930 (Suryadinata 1984 in (Shanti & Rusyanti, 2021: 280).

The characteristic that is used as a strategy from the ruling side in regulating the movement of the "middle man" from the past until now is by sharing restrictions in the form of regulations and legislation (*de jure*), such as the selection of citizenship, the enforcement of trade rules, and restrictions on the use of symbols (characters, monasteries, pigtails, changing shop names, and individual names and prohibiting architectural characteristics), banning Chinese New Year, banning local languages, restrictions on the type of economic business, and so on. As long as the stigma of the past remains traumatic history and cannot be mediated through positive and constructive means of communication, the cycle of ups and downs of magical – substantial – operational relationships full of negative twists and turns will always repeat.

While Chinese citizens experienced restrictions, they chose to become business people. But when they get leeway to develop culturally, socially, and ideologically, Chinese citizens seize the opportunity to develop themselves. Some of them became Khonghucu salt teachers, became clergy, and became scientists who specifically studied Eastern sciences, both regarding religion, culture, economics, and even various kinds of Eastern medicine.

Indonesian citizens themselves generally accept Eastern culture spread by citizens of Chinese descent. Even the natives are happy to help them and spread it as an alternative culture. If there is an Eastern counterculture, it generally occurs at the elite level. Muslims and Islam, who seem to be extreme and reject Chinese culture, are more lenient and adaptive towards them. Muslims just don't want them to be atheists, but don't reject Chinese culture.

Ahmad (2021: 4) describes the struggle of Chinese descent in an effort to engage in the academic world well. He said, in the 2017-2018 academic year, Maliki State Islamic University Malang accepted Chinese students who were recorded as S1 students in the third semester when this research was conducted. The four Chinese students live on campus, Ma'had Al-Aly. The student from China in entering his new environment is faced with a culture that is completely different from the culture of his home country. They are required to be able to adapt to the local student culture, interact with their new environment.

In the first year of college, Chinese students experience a lot of discomfort and anxiety. As felt by MJ, namely about the differences in physical characteristics and language of communication. Chinese students have white skin color and narrow eyes, so it is not surprising that Chinese students often feel uncomfortable with the strange gazes of Indonesian students they meet. Nevertheless, MJ made this as his own motivation in the process of adapting to his new environment in order to survive to complete his studies as expected. Although MJ initially felt discomfort over the stigma, gradually MJ took the strange gazes of new students who saw it as normal (Ahmad, 2021: 4).

As time went by, MJ and other Chinese students found comfort, no longer feeling unfamiliar with the strange views of Indonesian students, said Ahmad (2021: 4). On the contrary, Indonesian students no longer consider them as foreigners. On the other hand, in interacting Chinese students are faced with the fact that Indonesian and Javanese are languages that are quite dominant in communicating daily life of Indonesian students. That's why Chinese students are very passive in interacting with local students, they prefer to be quiet, observe and wait to be invited to communicate or just get acquainted.

Conclusion

From the description above, it can be concluded that, in general, citizens of Chinese descent instinctively like to do business. They learn and practice trading from a young age. Especially when they are experiencing difficulties due to various restrictions by the Indonesian government, at such times doing business is the best choice.

However, people of Chinese descent also have a moral responsibility by developing an academic culture, by becoming teachers, including being teachers of the Hungarian religion,

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becoming clergy, and developing ideology. Thus, they are not only doing business, but also cultural developers.

Declaration of conflicting interest

The author hereby declares that this research is carried out objectively, with the intention of seeking scientific truth, without any intention of conflicting interest.

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