

## CHINESE MUSLIM AT POLITICAL CROSSROAD: THE CASE STUDY OF THE JAKARTA REGIONAL HEAD ELECTION 2017

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### Abstract

As ethnic minorities who adhere to the majority belief (Islam), ethnic Chinese Muslims in Jakarta are faced with a complex identity crisis, especially in the area of political participation. In the 2017 Jakarta regional elections (Pilkada), ethnic Chinese Muslims were faced with a political situation, whether to choose leaders from ethnic Chinese or leaders from the Muslim community. This situation puts them in a dilemma. However, ethnic Chinese Muslims have survived the complicated politics of ethnicity, even though regional election politics has caused a crisis of identity politics in Jakarta. Based on the research results, Chinese Muslims in Jakarta were able to survive despite the difficulties caused by their identity. This research is important because there are not many studies that specifically discuss the survival strategies of Chinese Muslims in Jakarta. This research is a socio-political research. To collect data, the methodology used is in-depth interviews with several informants. The results of the interviews and data are then processed using a qualitative and analytic approach. This is done in order to show how the Chinese Muslim ethnic group have survived the complicated political situation in Jakarta.

**Keywords:** Chinese Muslim, Jakarta, General Election, Social Movement

### Abstrak

Sebagai etnis minoritas yang menganut keyakinan mayoritas (Islam), etnis Tionghoa Muslim di Jakarta dihadapkan pada krisis identitas yang kompleks, terutama dalam bidang partisipasi politik. Pada Pilkada Jakarta 2017, etnis Tionghoa Muslim dihadapkan pada situasi politik, apakah memilih pemimpin dari etnis Tionghoa atau pemimpin dari komunitas Muslim. Situasi ini menempatkan mereka dalam situasi yang dilematis. Namun, etnis Tionghoa Muslim berhasil bertahan dari politik etnisitas yang rumit, padahal politik pilkada telah menyebabkan krisis politik identitas di Jakarta. Berdasarkan hasil penelitian, Muslim Tionghoa di Jakarta mampu bertahan meski mengalami kesulitan yang disebabkan oleh identitas mereka. Penelitian ini penting karena belum banyak penelitian yang secara khusus membahas tentang strategi bertahan hidup Muslim Tionghoa di Jakarta. Penelitian ini merupakan penelitian sosial politik. Untuk mengumpulkan data, metodologi yang digunakan adalah wawancara mendalam dengan beberapa informan. Hasil wawancara dan data kemudian diolah dengan menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dan analitik. Hal ini dilakukan untuk menunjukkan bagaimana etnis Tionghoa Muslim bertahan dalam situasi politik yang rumit di Jakarta.

**Keywords:** Muslim Tionghoa, Jakarta, Pemilihan Umum, Gerakan Sosial

### Background

The socio-political life of ethnic Chinese people in Indonesia can be traced back the early traders who settled in the coastal areas of the South China Sea and Southeast Asia. At first they only stayed for a short period, but they became

permanent residents in the regions that are now part of Indonesia. The Chinese settled in the area of Batavia (now Jakarta), Banten and other places outside Java<sup>1</sup>. According to Dahana, the arrival of

<sup>1</sup> Dahana, A., 'Kegiatan Awal Masyarakat Tionghoa Di Indonesia', *Wacana, Journal of the Humanities of Indonesia*,

ethnic Chinese to Indonesia in the 19th century was caused by several factors; first, economic reasons, the high rate of poverty; second, population explosion, the emergence of social problems, riots and social unrest; third, natural disasters such as floods, droughts, and epidemics.

The influx of ethnic Chinese coincided with the entry of Islam into the archipelago through trade by Arab and Persian merchants. The trade relations that existed between Arab and Chinese traders, especially from South China, where most of the traders were Muslims, were considered to be the origins of Chinese Muslims in Indonesia. The arrival of Admiral Cheng Ho in the 14th century confirmed the existence of a "Muslim community" among the ethnic Chinese of the region<sup>2</sup>. Genealogically, the Chinese Muslim community in Indonesia has a very long history, which is closely related to the history of Islam in Nusantara, and which some scholars argue began from the process of Islamization in the archipelago. The history of Cheng Ho's expedition throughout Indonesia is important, at least for understanding the relationship between Islam, Indonesia, and China. In this context, Cheng Ho's presence raises new discussions in contemporary Islamic studies in Indonesia, primarily those related to the theory of Islamization. The Islamization of the archipelago is generally associated with two major theories, namely the Arab and Indian theory<sup>3</sup>.

In Indonesia, the role of the Chinese in the economy was strengthened when the Dutch colonial government divided the Indonesian population (Dutch East Indies) into three groups; first, the European community; second, the Far East, Chinese, Arab, Japanese; and third, the

Indonesian indigenous people<sup>45</sup>. The participation of ethnic Chinese in the economy was encouraged by the Dutch because the Dutch were not able to fulfill this role. Thus the ethnic Chinese were given the opportunity to participate in business and finances.

In the political field, overseas Chinese ethnic revolutionaries provided books and magazines to propagate awareness and pride among the Chinese community. This can be seen from the propaganda carried out by Soe Po Sia, one of the overseas Chinese ethnic figures through letters. Hoa Tok Po, a Chinese Newspaper which was distributed in Batavia, Semarang, Surabaya<sup>6</sup>.

In 1932 the Indonesian Chinese Party (PTI) emerged. This party emerged in order to support the relationship between Indonesia and China. This party was founded as a form of Chinese pragmatism to protect the ethnic Chinese by joining the independence movement to oust Dutch colonialism. PTI then disbanded during the Japanese occupation, but one of the representatives of the Chinese nation in Indonesia, Liem Koen Hian, gave a speech at the trial of the Investigation Agency for Preparation for Independence (BPUPKI) in 1945 about Chinese nationalism<sup>7</sup>.

In the economic and political fields, the Chinese have actually contributed a great deal. However, as a minority population, the Chinese during the New Order era received discriminatory treatment, including forced assimilation into ethnic Indonesians, leaving all cultural identities behind. The government also

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2015, 54 <<https://doi.org/10.17510/wjhi.v2i1.271>>

<sup>2</sup> Benny, Setiono G, *Tinghoa Dalam Pusaran Politik*, (Jakarta: Transmedia, 2008) p. 45

<sup>3</sup> Choirul Mahfud, In Chinese Muslim Community Development in Contemporary Indonesia: Experiences of PITI in East Java, *Jurnal Studia Islamika* Vol. 25 no. 3 2018

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<sup>4</sup> W.R.D Yudono, R. M., Situmeang, N., Rukmi, Astuti, 'Peran Serta Etnis Tionghoa Dalam Politik Indonesia Pasca Reformasi', *Seminar Nasional Prodi Ilmu Pemerintahan 2018*, 2018, 142-54.

<sup>5</sup> Raden Maisa Yudono, Nurmasasari Situmeang, Wiwiek Rukmi Dwi Astuti, *Peran Serta Etnis Tionghoa dalam Politik Pasca Reformasi*, (Prosiding Seminar Nasional Prodi Ilmu Pemerintahan 2018). 143-144

<sup>6</sup> Dahana, p. 68

<sup>7</sup><https://www.jawapos.com/opini/22/09/2022/90-tahun-partai-tionghoa-indonesia-nasionalisme-dari-pecinan-surabaya/>

stigmatized ethnic Chinese population, prohibiting them from participation in politics, government, military, and entry into state universities. The government also prohibited various forms of cultural identity in the public sphere<sup>8</sup>.

In the 1970s when the issue of the rise of Chinese Muslims was widely discussed, it is estimated that more than 150,000 Chinese embraced Islam. However, this figure was denied by Junus Jahya who stated that the number of Muslim Chinese was only about 0.5% of the number of Chinese in Indonesia, which amounted to 2.5 million people. Thus, the number is only around 12,500 people.<sup>9</sup>

The collapse of the New Order government gave space for ethnic Chinese (including Muslim Chinese) to participate in political activities. They showed their cultural identity as ethnic Chinese. They also began to fight for rights that had been revoked by the New Order regime. After the New Order there were three ethnic Chinese parties; The Indonesian Reform Party (Purpindo), the Chinese Reform Party (Parti), and the Bhineka Tunggal Ika Party (PBI). In the 2019 election, of the three parties, only PBI passed the Ministry of Law and Human Rights verification test<sup>10</sup>.

However, in the 2004 general election until now, not a single ethnic Chinese-based party has passed the Ministry of Law and Human Rights verification test, as well as the test held by the Elections Committee (KPU). Many of the Chinese leaders preferred to join already established political parties. This is because parties based on Chinese ethnicity are considered

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<sup>8</sup> Yudono, R. M., Situmeang, N., Rukmi, Astuti.

<sup>9</sup> Gugun El Guyani, Political Dynamics of Chinese Muslim: (Case Study of Indonesian Chinese Islamic Association/PITI Yogyakarta), *Jurnal Inright* Vol. 7 no. 2 2018

<sup>10</sup> Andika Pratama, 'Partisipasi Politik Etnis Tionghoa Di Indonesia', *JIPP (Journal Ilmu Politik & Pemerintahan)*, 2.2 (2016), 214–29  
<<http://jurnal.unsil.ac.id/index.php/jipp/article/view/ADHKPRTM>>.

unprofessional because the number of ethnic Chinese is insignificant.

The support of ethnic Chinese individuals in Indonesian politics can be seen in the Presidential Election (Pilpres) and Regional Head Election (Pilkada), which involved all social elements: religion and ethnicity. Of course, the Chinese Muslim ethnicity in Indonesia is no exception, especially in the Special Capital Region of Jakarta (DKI). The 2017 DKI election has catapulted the ethnic Chinese in the political landscape of Indonesia. In this political event, the name of Basuki Tjahaja Purnama (Ahok) emerged as one of the candidates for Governor of DKI. He was ethnically Chinese. His main opponent was Anies Baswedan. This political situation showcased ethnic diversity in Jakarta, but also involved conflict between non-Muslim Chinese against Muslim Chinese and indigenous Muslims.

The regional head election for the DKI region in 2017 impacted the ethnic Chinese political choices. There were three pairs of candidates: Agus-Sylvi, Ahok-Djarot and Anies-Sandiaga. Anies-Sandiaga was 57.04% ahead of the Ahok-Djarot pair which only got 42.04%. These two pairs of candidates were widely considered to have used identity politics in gaining votes. Anies-Sandiaga was able to use SARA (ethnic, religious, racial, and tribal) issues to their favour in order to stoke up the emotions of Muslim voters. Ahok-Djarot was also able to take votes from ethnic Chinese and non-Muslims.

Ubedilah<sup>11</sup> said that ethnic Chinese and non-Muslim voters tended to vote for Ahok, while non-Muslim groups who did not vote for Ahok represented victims of evictions that were been carried out during Ahok's previous reign as Deputy Governor. The results of the Indonesian

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<sup>11</sup><https://www.republika.co.id/berita/oi848x354/anal-is-sentimen-etnisitas-dan-agama-meningkat-di-pilgub-dki-2017>

Survey Circle (LSI)<sup>12</sup> survey showed that non-Muslim voters tended to vote for Ahok-Djarot with 92.90%, while the Indonesian Survey and Polling Institute (SPIN)<sup>13</sup> also mapped voters based on ethnicity and religion, stating that 90% of ethnic Chinese chose Ahok-Djarot.

The DKI Pilkada also marked the emergence of participation and solidarity from the ethnic Chinese, based on exit poll data from a number of survey institution. According to the poll, the level of political participation of ethnic Chinese has increased. This can be seen in areas where the majority are ethnic Chinese, such as Pluit, Jelambar, and Kelapa Gading. So far, there is an rumor that every time there is an election, many ethnic Chinese choose to go on vacation abroad. However, In the 2017 regional elections for DKI, something different happened. There was a high level of participation among the ethnic Chinese. This seems to be because one of the candidate pairs for governor is of Chinese descent, namely Ahok.

Ethnic Chinese Muslims, however, show their political preference for Muslim candidates. This election was based on the ethnicity and capacity of the candidates for governor and deputy governor besides their religion, level of education, and so on, all of which are factors that determining political choices.

Although there have been many similar studies on the issue of the Muslim Chinese population in Indonesia,<sup>14</sup> none specifically discusses the their strategy of survival in the political space in Jakarta. Some relevant research, for example, have been conducted, such as by

Reno Fernandes,<sup>15</sup> who offers a general description of Chinese society in the political landscape of the city of Padang, West Sumatra, entitled "Ethnic Chinese of the City of Padang in Politics". This study discussed the position and role of the Padang Chinese Ethnic community in the political lanscape of the city.

In a study entitled "Chinese Community in West Sumatra," the author Erniwati discusses the formation of Chinese communities in Indonesia, especially in West Sumatra.<sup>16</sup> This study was more focused on the arrival of Chinese people in regions that is not part of Indonesia, especially West Sumatra.

Mohammad Muhyidin also conducted relevant research, entitled "The Role of PITI in Islamization in Indonesia." The study examines political norms and ethnic identities that became dominant.<sup>17</sup> The use of the term "Chinese Muslim" is popular which was familiar in the 1980s. However, in the use of the terms "Chinese" or "Tionghoa" there are still many differences of opinion both among the general public and among the ethnic Chinese themselves.

Noorviana and Asmar Rizqa's research in 2010 is entitled "History of the Indonesian Chinese Islamic Association (PITI) in Malang 1981-2007 and Its Educational Value."<sup>18</sup> The research was motivated by the condition of the city of Malang that is considered to be a fertile area for social movements. As a so-called "City of Education," many social organizations have been formed. One of them is the Indonesian Chinese Islamic Association (PITI).

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<sup>15</sup> Reno Fernandes, *Etnik Tionghoa Kota Padang Dalam Dinamika Politik*, Pascasarjana UNP, 2002

<sup>16</sup> Lihat, Erniwati, *Asap Hio di Ranah Minang*, Yogyakarta: Ombak, 2007; Lihat juga, <http://digilib.unimed.ac.id/view/type/thesis/2017.html>

<sup>17</sup> Penelitian Moh Muhyidin dilakukan di Fakultas Ushuluddin, UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta pada Jurusan Studi Agama-Agama.

<sup>18</sup> Penelitian skripsi pada jurusan Sejarah Fakultas Ilmu Sosial Univer-sitas Negeri Malang. Lihat, <http://karya.ilmiah.um.ac.id/index.php/sejarah/article/view/8311>

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<sup>12</sup><https://www.satuharapan.com/read-detail/read/survei-lsi-ahok-unggul-mutlak-dari-pemilih-etnis-tionghoa>

<sup>13</sup><https://www.suara.com/news/2016/12/19/013100/survei-hampir-100-persen-etnis-cina-pilih-ahok>

<sup>14</sup> Hadiz, V. R. (2018). Imagine all the people? Mobilising Islamic populism for right-wing politics in Indonesia. *Journal of Contemporary Asia*, 48(4), 566-583.

Research was conducted by Dwi Budiyanto Triyadi entitled "Institutional Studies of the Muslim Chinese Islamic Association (PITI)." This research discusses the background of PITI, which has the goal of helping members form an Islamic personality that is obedient, submissive, obedient to God. PITI is expected to be a bridge between the Indonesian Chinese and the majority of the Indonesian people and eliminate stereotypes that exist among the Chinese and Indonesian people so that close cooperation can be established.

Based on the studies above, it appears that no research have looked into Chinese Muslims in Jakarta and their involvement in the political space. Being at a crossroads of identities that influence their political position, Chinese Muslims try to show their footing in Indonesian politics.<sup>19</sup> Their identity can be a double-edged sword. Therefore, a strategy is needed to survive. This article describes the strategies used by Chinese Muslims to survive in the political arena while bearing their identity as an ethnic minority in Indonesian society as a whole, and also as a minority within their own ethnicity, as Muslims.

This study uses a qualitative approach. Qualitative research uses a natural setting by interpreting existing phenomena and involving various methods. The approach used in this study is a case study which seeks empirical knowledge by investigating, conducting research on various phenomena in real life in order to arrive at solutions to existing problems. To collect data, the snowball technique was used which made it possible to get potential informants. To obtain relevant data, in-depth interviews were conducted with these informants. The author uses the interview technique to analyze the depth of the problem raised, namely by interviewing ethnic Chinese Muslims in Jakarta. In addition, the

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<sup>19</sup> Sari, D. K., Mizerski, D., & Liu, F. (2017). Boycotting foreign products: a study of Indonesian Muslim consumers. *Journal of Islamic Marketing*.

author also uses references from various books and journals related to the theme of the study.

The concept of Identity politics originates in the thought of a French poststructuralist-postmodernist philosopher, who criticized the negative consequences of modernism and sided with "oppressed discourses" against "big discourses" that dominate and control society. This is then called identity politics (biopolitics). In line with the process of democratization in Indonesia, negative symptoms often arise, such as excesses that emphasize one's own group and ethnicity (tribalism) and the tendency to prioritize group values. Ethnicity is related to the birth of democracy in the world at the beginning of the 21st century. The rise of the democratic process is in line with the politics of decentralization where the central government gives local governments the right to gain political freedom and recognition in the election of their own regional heads. Theoretically, identity politics according to Lukmantoro<sup>20</sup> is political to prioritize the interests of members of a group because they have the same identity or characteristics, whether based on race, ethnicity, gender, or religion. Identity politics is another formulation of the politics of difference. Based on this situation, the theory of Political Identity<sup>21</sup> is appropriate to analyze this phenomenon.

This research was conducted in the Jakarta area, with research subjects namely ethnic Chinese who are Muslim who live in Jakarta, and experience the phenomenon of identity politics that occurs in national political contemplation.

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<sup>20</sup> Istiningrum, A. D. (2021). Identity Politics Practice Through Dominant Discourse" Sitiarjo Village As A Christian Village" in Local Politics Dynamics. *Jurnal Partisipatoris*, 3(1), 23-34.

<sup>21</sup> Gustiana Kambo, A. A. Y. (2021). Political Identity and Religious Prejudice in a Post-Conflict Society: A Case Study of Poso, Indonesia. *Journal of Southwest Jiaotong University*, 56(3).

## **Ethnic Chinese Political Participation in Political Parties**

The Chinese were already involved in the national political scene even before Indonesia's independence. It began with the birth of the Indonesian Chinese Party (PTI) in 1935 which was founded by Liem Koen Hian, an ethnic Chinese who had many relations with Indonesian nationalists. This party was founded with the aim of getting ethnic Chinese involved in the independence movement in Indonesia. This party disbanded during the Japanese occupation of Indonesia in 1945<sup>22</sup>.

During the reign of Soekarno, the political orientation of the ethnic Chinese was divided into two parts, namely; groups oriented to return to Mainland China (China); and the second group who chose to settle in Indonesia<sup>23</sup>. However, Soekarno gave the opportunity for the Chinese to settle in Indonesia and become Indonesians by issuing a statement that the Chinese were an Indonesian ethnic group. Because of this policy, during parliamentary democracy there were several ethnic Chinese who entered the cabinet.

During the New Order era, the space for ethnic Chinese was very limited after the attempted coup of the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI) in 1965 (G 30 S PKI). Taomo Zhou (2014)<sup>24</sup> stated in the ABRI (military) newspaper that the G 30 S PKI was a communist coup planned and orchestrated by the Peking regime, as part of the world revolution. The alleged involvement of the PRC and Mao Zedong made people think that the Chinese state was involved

in the movement. This situation raised suspicion against ethnic Chinese Indonesians. This suspicion grew over time. They were regarded as communist agents and a danger to state security.

The anti-Communist campaign pursued by the New Order government became an anti-ethnic Chinese campaign. This anti-ethnic Chinese movement emerged in several areas in Indonesia. In Makassar, there were massacres of Chinese Makassarese; in West Kalimantan, there were killings of thousands of ethnic Chinese known as the Red Bowl Incident. Other massacres occurred in other regions of the country. Restrictions were also imposed by the New Order Regime on all ethnic Chinese activities. Several policies were issued. First, Circular No. 06/1967 on the issue of China, prohibiting the use of Chinese names; second, the decision of the Minister of Trade and Cooperatives No. 286 of 1978 to monitor the movements of ethnic Chinese through a body called the Chinese Problem Coordinating Board (BKMC); third, the Circular of the Director General of Press Development of the Ministry of Information of the Republic of Indonesia no. 02/SE/Dirjen-PPG/K/1988 concerning the prohibition of printing and publishing writings and advertisements that use Chinese characters and language in public; fourth, prohibiting ethnic Chinese from entering the military.<sup>25</sup>

During the New Order era, ethnic Chinese were not allowed to form certain political organizations or parties. This is in line with the government's policy of allowing only three political parties to exist: the United Development Party (PPP), the Indonesian Democratic Party (PDI) and the Golongan Karya (Golkar). This closed the space for ethnic Chinese to establish their own political parties. The strong pressure from the New Order minimized the ethnic Chinese political participation. They were not

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<sup>22</sup> Pratama, Andika, 'Partisipasi Politik Etnis Tionghoa Di Indonesia', *JIPP (Journal Ilmu Politik & Pemerintahan)*, 2.2 (2016), 214–29  
<<http://jurnal.unsil.ac.id/index.php/jipp/article/view/ADHKPRTM>>

<sup>23</sup> Yudono, R. M., Situmeang, N., Rukmi, Astuti, W.R.D, 'Peran Serta Etnis Tionghoa Dalam Politik Indonesia Pasca Refomasi', *Seminar Nasional Prodi Ilmu Pemerintahan 2018*, 2018, 142–54

<sup>24</sup> Zhou, Taomo. 2014. *China and Thirteen of September Movement*, New York: Southeast Asia Program Publications at Cornell University

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<sup>25</sup> <http://bem.fikom.unpad.ac.id/g30s-militer-dan-sejarah-kelam-etnis-tionghoa/>

actively involved in politics and tended to choose to focus on the business and economic domains.

Morris Rosseberg<sup>26</sup> suggests that three things prevent people from participating in politics. First, the fear of the negative consequences of political activity, where politics is considered a threat to life; second, political participation is considered a waste of time, because it is considered not to change anything; third, there is no incentive to participate in politics. This condition was felt by the Chinese during the New Order era. There is a fear of getting involved in politics coupled with discrimination by the Regime.

When Indonesia was hit by the economic crisis in 1997, the ethnic Chinese faced a dark period. Starting from the global economic crisis faced by many countries in the world, Indonesia was eventually affected. The economic crisis was followed by a complicated social crisis. The economic crisis caused the New Order to collapse by a mass movement led by students and the people. The impact of this riot was the suppression of the ethnic Chinese because there was a negative stigma and sentiment towards them. They were viewed as a prosperous minority who controlled the economy. The socio-economic inequalities with indigenous people made the development of anti-Chinese issues spread throughout Indonesia.<sup>27</sup>

Oppression was carried out against ethnic Chinese. Shops and houses were looted and burned by mobs. Many were victims of mass violence. Some were raped, harassed, and murdered. This was a dark period for the Chinese before the collapse of the New Order. The government was considered to have failed in protecting its own citizens, resulting in many casualties.

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<sup>26</sup> Suhirdinata, *WNI Keturunan Tionghoa dalam Stabilitas Ekonomi dan Politik Indonesia*, (Jakarta: PT Gramedia Pustaka Utama) p. 15-20.

<sup>27</sup><https://sejarahlengkap.com/indonesia/kemerdekaan/pasca-kemerdekaan/kerusuhan-mei-1998>

After the May 1998 riots, President B.J. Habibie wanted to lift all forms of restrictions to the ethnic Chinese's freedom of expression by issuing Presidential Instruction No. 26 of 1998. Furthermore, during the leadership of Abdurrahman Wahid (or better known as Gus Dur), who was considered to be a very tolerant president, issued the Presidential Decree No. 6 of 2000 and Presidential Instruction No. 14 of 1967. Since then, freedom of expression in the cultural domain was guaranteed. Furthermore, during the leadership of Megawati Soekarno Putri, the Chinese New Year was made a national holiday. She emphasized that there should be no discrimination against the ethnic Chinese. She also guaranteed that the ethnic Chinese can work in any field, including as a civil servant (PNS) or a member of the armed forces (TNI).

It was only during the Reformation period that there was room for the ethnic Chinese to comply with Law No. 2/1999, which allowed political parties to be established upon principles other than the so called Five Principles of the State (Pancasila). This resulted in the emergence of political parties characterized by nationalism, religion and ethnicity. This law is also one of the bases for the ethnic Chinese to establish political parties. There were at least three political parties founded by the ethnic Chinese, namely the Chinese Reform Party (PARTI), the Bhineka Tunggal Ika Party (PBI) and the Indonesian Reform Party. However, of the three parties, only PBI passed the verification test from the Ministry of Justice and Human Rights and was able to participate in the general election. The failure of the ethnic Chinese to establish their own parties forced them to shift their political activities to established political parties, such as PDIP, Gerindra, and Democrats.

In the context of the involvement of ethnic Chinese in politics, after this reformation,<sup>28</sup> the

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<sup>28</sup> Harjatanaya, T. Y., & Hoon, C. Y. (2018). Politics of multicultural education in Post-Suharto Indonesia: A

factors that encourage people to participate in politics were the following: stimulus, personal characteristics; social Character; and political situation or environment. As a result, they were able to get involved in politics, although at first there were doubts.

Buya Muslim Nur, one of the Chinese Muslim leaders in West Sumatra, revealed that the involvement of PITI members in politics allowed the ethnic Chinese to express themselves in a manner that was not possible previously. PITI members have doubts about joining a political party. So far they were only involved in entrepreneurship. He says:

*"So far, our members have had doubts about getting involved in politics, bearing in mind that there is no room for politics. Many PITI members are entrepreneurs and have become religious teachers (ustadz), rarely joining political parties. However, after the reform, there were several PITI members who entered politics and became members of DPR RI (the Legislative Assembly)."*<sup>29</sup>

The same sentiment was conveyed by Elizabeth Shien,<sup>30</sup> who said that the Chinese community in West Sumatra, including Muslim Chinese, was not active in politics. However, there are only one or two figures who are actively involved in politics. This shows a personal involvement and is reflective of a broader trend related to Chinese organizations.

### **The 212 Islamic Defense Action Social Movement and Its Impact on the Muslim Chinese Ethnic**

The Islamic mass action which took place on December 2, 2016 in Jakarta is considered one of the largest political actions in Indonesia. It expressed dissatisfaction with the alleged act of

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study of the Chinese minority. *Compare: a journal of comparative and international education*.

<sup>29</sup> Muslim Noor, *Interview*, {Saturday, 14 October 2018}

<sup>30</sup> Elizabeth Shien, *Interview*, {Monday, 24 September 2018}

blasphemy committed by the Governor of Jakarta, Basuki Tjahaja Purnama, better known as Ahok. The wave of actions carried out was recorded at least three times, including: Defending Islam I on October 14 2016, Defending Islam II on November 4, 2016, and Defending Islam III on December 2, 2016. The last movement was named the 212 movement (Aksi 212), which continued to become the 212 Alumni Brotherhood (PA 212)<sup>31 32</sup>.

The incident began with Ahok's visit in 2016 to Pramuka Island in the Thousand Islands. At that the time served as Governor of Jakarta. At the same time, Ahok was running as a candidate for Governor of DKI Jakarta for the 2017-2021 period. In a speech, Ahok alluded to the use of a verse from Chapter al-Maidah in the Quran. He said:

*So don't believe people, you can't really vote for me in your heart, can you? They were lied to using Al Maidah 51, all kinds of things. That's the right of parents, so you feel that you can't choose because I'm afraid of going to hell, I'm being fooled like that.*<sup>33</sup>

The speech was spread by a social media activist, Buni Yani. Many considered the statement as insulting the Qur'an. The Indonesian Ulama Council (MUI) then responded and issued a stance against Ahok's speech by issuing a fatwa (religious opinion) that Ahok's statement was insulting the Quran and insulting the religious scholars (ulama) and may have legal consequences. The issuance of the MUI fatwa made Islamic figures led by Rizieq Syihab, Bactiar

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<sup>31</sup> Ali Thaufan DS and Dedi Sutiadi, 'Partisipasi Politik Umat Islam Dalam Aksi Massa 212 Dan Implikasinya Terhadap Wajah Islam Indonesia', *Ilmu Ushuluddin*, 7.2 (2020), 127-50 <<https://doi.org/10.15408/iu.v7i2.15424>>.

<sup>32</sup> Ali Taufan dkk, Partisipasi Politik Umat Islam dalam Aksi Masa 212 dan Implikasi Terhadap Wajah Islam Indonesia, *Jurnal Ilmu Ushuluddin*, Volume 7, Nomor 2, Juli 2020. 127-148

<sup>33</sup> <https://www.merdeka.com/peristiwa/mui-nilai-kutipan-ahok-tentang-surah-al-maidah-hina-alquran-ulama.html>

Natsir, Zaitun Rasmin and other figures to form a movement namely the National Movement to Guard the MUI Fatwa which was later known as (GNPF) MUI. This movement then grew and consisted of various Islamic figures across organizations. Islamic leaders who were members of the movement called for all Muslims to defend the Ulama, the Quran and the Islamic religion<sup>34</sup>. After that, there was a massive demonstration that asked the government and law enforcement to immediately prosecute Ahok and imprison him. He was eventually sentenced to two years in prison and ordered to be detained by a judge at the North Jakarta District Court for violating Article 156a of the Criminal Code on blasphemy.

The political impact of this case are the following. First, Ahok became a common enemy in the Jakarta election in 2017. Ahok had excelled in the first round but was finally defeated in the second round by Anies Baswedan. Even though Ahok has actually apologized, many Muslims were already hurt so the hatred towards Ahok became worse. This led to Ahok's defeat in the Jakarta's election, Second, hatred towards Ahok also triggered hatred towards the ethnic Chinese. Third, Ahok was later sentenced to two years in prison on May 9, 2017. Ahok was released on January 24, 2017 after serving a prison term. Fourth, the emergence of PA 121, the emergence of the idea of establishing a Sharia Party. PA 121 was also committed to supporting one particular party, namely the National Mandate Party (PAN)<sup>35</sup>.

After the 212 movement the lives of religious people in Jakarta faced challenges, especially in the Jakarta gubernatorial election. A survey released by the Indonesian Survey Institute (LSI), observed that intolerance towards non-Muslims has increased compared to before

the 212 movement<sup>36</sup>. The Executive Director of the Wahid Institute, Yeni Wahid, said the same thing. Political intolerance has increased in Indonesia. However, it firmly rejects the assumption that Indonesia is an intolerant and radical country. As expressed by Yeni Wahid in VOA Indonesia;

*“As intolerant as Indonesia is, we don't have a political party that bases its political platform on an attempt to expel a certain religious group from the country, as in one country in Europe. We don't have a political party whose political platform is to tear the scriptures of other religions like the one in one of the countries in Europe,”*<sup>37</sup>

The movement turned out to have an impact on ethnic identity, especially the Chinese ethnic identity. The polarization of identities has become stronger. There are concerns that anti-Chinese sentiment<sup>38</sup> is increasing, that immigrants and indigenous peoples are facing economic and political injustice. Boycotting foreign products is also a discussion. However, this sentiment is not widespread, because the ethnic Chinese community knows exactly that this condition will have a long-lasting impact on their relationship with the majority population. The path taken is to support the third Islamic Defense Movement, as stated by one of the Chinese activists, Zeng Wei Jian (Ken Ken). The ethnic Chinese are ready to support the movement in their effort to prosecute the suspect of blasphemy, Ahok.<sup>39</sup>

<sup>36</sup> <https://www.voaindonesia.com/a/survei-lsi-gerakan-212-picu-naiknya-intoleransi-di-indonesia/4585895.html>

<sup>37</sup> <https://www.voaindonesia.com/a/survei-lsi-gerakan-212-picu-naiknya-intoleransi-di-indonesia/4585895.html>

<sup>38</sup> Himawan, E. M., Louis, W., & Pohlman, A. (2022). Indonesian Civilians' attributions for anti-Chinese violence during the May 1998 riots in Indonesia. *Journal of Social and Political Psychology*, 10(2), 536-553.

<sup>39</sup> <https://hidayatullah.com/berita/nasional/read/2016/11/29/106518/massa-tionghoa-non-muslim-siap-dukung-aksi-bela-islam-iii.html>

<sup>34</sup> DS and Sutiadi.

<sup>35</sup> DS and Sutiadi.

In line with this, Deni Sanusi,<sup>40</sup> one of the Chinese Muslim leaders said that at the beginning he feared that his relationship with non-Muslim Chinese friends will deteriorate when the 212 movement emerged. However, along the way, several Chinese figures were also involved in the action because they were considered to have entered in a criminal offense. Especially for ethnic Chinese Muslims, attending the Defending Islam movement is an individual decision in terms of defending religion. There are no specific instructions from any organizations to participate in the movement. This is because for Deni, the most important thing is to remain supportive of diversity and not to be divided into tribes, religions, and ethnicities.

Political participation shown by Muslims (including ethnic Chinese Muslims and non-Muslims) in the context of political modernization is considered by Huntington as a necessity in a democratic country. The community is the main prerequisite in controlling and determining policies. The 212 movement is a form of public political participation to influence government policies as well as maintaining the interests of the people and democracy.

### **Changes in the Political Map of Chinese Muslims in Regional Head Elections**

The direct election of Regional Heads (Pilkada) is a mandate from the 1945 Constitution Article 18 paragraph (4), whereby Governors, Regents, and Mayors, who are respectively the heads of regional, provincial, district, and city governments are democratically elected<sup>41</sup>. The implementation of the election is regulated in Law Number 32 of 2004 concerning Regional Government and is regulated in a Government Regulation. The direct election of regional heads

is based on several arguments. First, the president as head of the state was directly elected for the first time in 2004; thus, there is no reason not to accept that governors, mayors and regents should also be elected directly by the people. Second, direct election gives sovereignty to the hands of the people; Third, that regional heads elected by the regional legislative assemblies are no longer relevant because they were legal products prior to the amendment to the 1945 Constitution.

According to Praktino<sup>42</sup>, direct elections actualize democratic principles normatively. It guarantees the principle of individual freedom, especially in terms of political rights. While for Smith, Dahl and Mawhood, local accountability, political equity, and local responsiveness are prerequisites that must be achieved by local governments by (1) having clear territorial powers; (2) their own regional income; (3) maintain a people's representative institution that functions to control regional executives; (4) be led by regional heads who are directly elected by the people through an election.

With these reforms and direct elections, the ethnic Chinese who were discriminated against during the New Order era now have a chance to participate in a meaningful way in politics.<sup>43</sup> The previous policy of assimilation meant that they were not allowed to use their real names, to work in politics, the military, security and even to attend state universities. This problem was expressed by Deni Sanusi, one of the PITI DKI Jakarta, who said that the discrimination he received from elementary to high school was full of discrimination. However, with reforms and direct local elections as of now, these restrictions do not exist and ethnic Chinese Muslims and non-Muslims can nominate themselves in both

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<sup>40</sup> Deni Sanusi, *Interview*, {Thursday 4 March 2022}

<sup>41</sup> Ismail, *Pemilihan Kepala Daerah Secara Langsung Sebagai Momentum Strategis dalam Pengembangan Otonomi Daerah dan Demokrasi Lokal*, *Jurnal Vald*, Vol 11 No 2, April 2014, 60-61

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<sup>42</sup> Praktino, "Demokrasi dalam Pilkada Langsung, Makalah Sarasehan Menyongsong Pilkada Langsung, IRCOS-FNST, Hotel Saphir, Yogyakarta, 25-26 Januari 2005

<sup>43</sup> Research on ethnic Chinese discrimination can be seen in several studies, including; Andika Primary; Dahana; Raden Maisa; Diana

the executive and legislative branches. Returning to the context of Muslim Chinese who are distinguished from non-Muslim Chinese, the existence of Chinese Muslims cannot be ignored as residents who carry out missionary and religious movements for the ethnic Chinese community in Indonesia. He writes:

*"For Indonesian Muslims outside the Chinese ethnicity, the existence of Muslim Chinese citizens is necessary to drive religious propagation among residents of this ethnicity. So it was on this basis that PITI re-attached its abbreviation by using the word "Chinese", and of course returned to the previous abbreviation, namely the Indonesian Chinese Islamic Association"*

The political map of the ethnic Chinese, shifts from those who do not have a political role, to becoming involved in the political arena, especially Jakarta. One of the ethnic Chinese Muslims who sits in the Jakarta DPRD is Ahmad Lukman Jupiter who is from the Democratic Party. According to Ahmad the development of the Chinese Muslim ethnic group is developing quite well in Jakarta and has greatly contributed to the organization of Islamic activities<sup>44</sup>. The shift in the political map of ethnic Chinese Muslims in the context of political behavior is based on knowledge, opportunities and motivations. This influences a person in choosing or supporting certain candidates and entering political parties.

### **Difficult Political Choices for Ethnic Chinese Muslims in the 2017 DKI Regional Head Election**

DKI Jakarta is a barometer of politics in Indonesia. This language is widely conveyed by observers and political experts in Indonesia<sup>45</sup>. The

<sup>44</sup><https://www.gosumut.com/artikel/teknologi/2019/12/18/bersyahadat-2-tahun-lalu-anggota-dprd-dki-ahmad-lukman-jupiter-agama-ini-rahmatan-lil-alamini>

<sup>45</sup><https://nasional.kompas.com/read/2016/09/25/16001621/sebagai.barometer.politik.nasional.pilkada.dki.harus.jadi.contoh.baik>;

DKI Regional Head Election is a measuring tool to assess the capacity of candidates and political parties that will compete in Indonesia. President Joko Widodo is one of the contestants who fought in the 2012 DKI Jakarta Pilkada<sup>46</sup>. The 2012 DKI Jakarta Pilkada was held in two rounds, where in the second round, Jokowi-Ahok faced Fauzi Bowo-Nachrowi. The recapitulation results of the DKI Jakarta General Elections Commission (KPU) confirmed that Jokowi-Ahok won with 2,472.13 votes (53.82%), while Fauzi-Nachrowi received 2,120,815 votes (46.18%)<sup>47</sup>.

Jokowi's popularity as Governor of DKI Jakarta finally led to his victory in two presidential elections, namely in the 2014 and 2019 presidential elections. In the 2014 presidential election, the Jokowi-Jusuf Kalla pair won 70,997,850 votes (53.15%) while the pair Prabowo-Hatta Rajasa received 62.576444 votes (46.85%)<sup>48</sup>. Meanwhile, in the 2019 presidential election, the Jokowi-Makruf Amin pair won again with 55.50% over the Prabowo-Sandiaga Uno pair with 44.50%<sup>49</sup>. Jokowi as a product of the DKI Jakarta Pilkada has proven that popularity and electability gained during his tenure as governor was able to place him as one of the important figures in Indonesia and this also proves that DKI Jakarta is a political barometer in Indonesia.

<https://rmol.id/read/2012/07/11/70459/pilkada-jakarta-barometer-politik-indonesia-di-masa-yang-akan-datang>;  
<https://www.beritasatu.com/photo/92117/jakarta-barometer-politik-nasional>

<sup>46</sup> Ada enam pasangan calon yang bertarung dalam Pilkada DKI Jakarta 2012, yaitu; (1) Fauzi Bowo-Nachrowi Ramli; (2) Hendarji Supandji- A Riza Patria; (3) Joko Widodo-Basuki Tjahaja Purnama; (4) Hidayat Nurwaid-Didik J Rachbini; (5) Faisal Basri Batubara-Biem Benjamin; (6) Alek Noerdin-Nono Sampono.

<sup>47</sup><https://nasional.kompas.com/read/2012/09/28/1724329/jokowi-basuki.menangi.pilkada.dki.putaran.ii>

<sup>48</sup><https://nasional.kompas.com/read/2014/07/22/20574751/Ini.Hasil.Resmi.Rekapitulasi.Suara.Pilpres.2014>

<sup>49</sup><https://nasional.kompas.com/read/2019/05/21/02440251/hasil-pilpres-2019-jokowi-maruf-5550-persen-prabowo-sandi-4450-persen>

After Jokowi was sworn in as president on October 20, 2014, Deputy Governor of DKI Jakarta Basuki Tjahaja Purnama automatically replaced him. Basuki was sworn in on 19 September 2014. The controversy over Basuki's inauguration occurred after several factions in the DKI Jakarta DPRD who were members of the Red and White Coalition (KMP) strongly rejected the inauguration. Although there were many controversies against Ahok, his popularity and electability ahead of the 2017 DKI Jakarta Pilkada is very high. This can be seen from the survey release of the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS).<sup>50</sup> For popularity, Ahok got 94% ahead of other figures such as Tantowi Yahya 81%, Ridwan Kamil 71.25%, Abraham Lunggana 69.25%. Meanwhile, for electability, Ahok occupies the highest position with 45%, following Ridwan Kamil with 15.75% and Tri Rismaharani with 7.75%<sup>51</sup>. Trust in Jokowi-Ahok in the 2012 Pilkada is still very high and this condition is still attached to Ahok.

The survey released by Saiful Mujani Research and Consulting (SMRC) also showed Ahok's superiority over his competitors in the DKI Jakarta Pilkada; 53.4% voted for Ahok, Yusril 10.4%, Tri Rismaharani 5.7%, Sandiaga Uno 5.1%. The voters considered that Ahok during his time in charge of DKI Jakarta had proven the results of his work, had experience in the field of government and was considered honest and free from corruption, collusion and nepotism (KKN) practices<sup>52</sup>. This condition then makes people no longer use ethnic and religious sentiments in viewing candidates who will advance in the DKI Jakarta Election. A similar sentiment was also expressed by one of the ethnic

Chinese Muslims, Deni Sanusi, that in choosing a leader it does not look at religion and ethnicity, but someone who has good performance is able to maintain diversity in Indonesia. Thus, political choices of the Muslim Chinese are not influenced by certain ethnicities and religions as long as they have integrity and create peace between ethnicities<sup>53</sup>, tribes and religions in Indonesia. He said:

*"In making political choices, PITI figures always clash between elites who have political interests and elites who want to maintain organizational independence from practical political vortexes. The tug of war of interests that emerge is a consequence of PITI elites joining political parties. The existence of these elites in political parties was not easily accepted by non-partisan elites who wanted PITI to always be committed to its struggle strategy, namely as a non-partisan socio-religious organization."*

However, Ahok's high electability suddenly dropped after the blasphemy case blew up.<sup>54</sup> The resulting antagonism against Ahok eroded the elite agenda. The 212 campaign succeeded in thwarting Ahok from becoming the governor of Jakarta. The figure of Anies Baswedan, who was seen as a representation of Muslims, appeared to defeat Ahok, who was considered an infidel and a blasphemer of religion. Anies won in a tough duet two rounds of the DKI Jakarta Pilkada with Ahok. Anies-Sandiaga got 57.04% ahead of the Ahok-Djarot pair which only got 42.04%. Immediately, Anies' popularity and popularity became high and he was predicted to run in the 2024 presidential election.

Did the ethnic Chinese Muslim voters regard the head to head between Ahok and Anies to

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<sup>50</sup> Guridno, E. (2022). Worldview In Conflict Politics In Local Government Policy On Jakarta. *Journal of Positive School Psychology*, 6(8), 10327-10340.

<sup>51</sup>

<https://www.antaraneews.com/berita/541835/survei-csis-simpulkan-popularitas-ahok-paling-tinggi>

<sup>52</sup> <https://nasional.tempo.co/read/789403/survei-pilgub-dki-popularitas-ahok-jauh-ungguli-calon-lain>

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<sup>53</sup> Al Qurtuby, S. (2020). The rise of Islamism and the future of Indonesian Islam. *Journal of International Studies*, 16, 105-128.

<sup>54</sup> Herdiansah, A. G., Putri, D. A., Ashari, L., & Maduratmi, R. (2017). The Islam defence action: A challenge of Islamic movement to democratic transition in the post 2014 Indonesia. *Wacana Journal of Social and Humanity Studies*, 20(2).

represent the Chinese ethnicity on one side and Muslims on the other? Based on the findings in the field, the emergence of the 212 action and the 2017 DKI Pilkada have had a influence on the political choices of ethnic Chinese Muslims.<sup>55</sup> Their commitment to seeing leaders with integrity and performance clashed with accusations of blasphemy committed against their religion. Thus, the ethnic Chinese Muslims chose not to be directly involved in action 212, but gave moral support to the participants of the action. On the other hand, the non-Muslim Chinese ethnicity supported the candidate who comes from their ethnicity, namely Ahok. Thus, the political participation of the non-Muslim ethnic Chinese in his favour tended to be high.

Ubedilah<sup>56</sup> said that ethnic Chinese and non-Muslim voters tended to vote for Ahok, while non-Muslim groups who did not vote for Ahok were groups who were victims of eviction or groups who defended those evicted during Ahok's reign. The results of the Indonesian Survey Circle (LSI)<sup>57</sup> survey showed that non-Muslim voters tended to vote for Ahok-Djarot with 92.90%. The Indonesian Survey and Polling Institute (SPIN)<sup>58</sup> also mapped voters based on ethnicity and religion, and found that 90% of ethnic Chinese chose Ahok-Djarot. Djarot; the rest chose Anies-Sandi and Agus-Silvi.

The DKI Regional Head Election also marked the rise of participation and solidarity from the ethnic Chinese. Based on exit poll data from a number of survey institutions, the level of political participation among the ethnic Chinese is

increasing, this can be seen in areas that are dominantly ethnic Chinese such as Pluit, Jelambar, Kelapa Gading. On the other hand, ethnic Chinese Muslims also show their political preference for Muslim candidates. This choice was based on the capacity of the candidates to hold the positions of Governor and Deputy Governor in addition their influence and policies on religion, education, ethnicity.

## Conclusion

The ethnic Chinese Muslims in Jakarta are a minority within a minority. As an ethnic minority who adheres to the majority belief (Islam), the ethnic Chinese Muslims in Jakarta are faced with a complicated identity crisis, especially in the field of political participation. In the 2017 Jakarta regional head election, ethnic Chinese Muslims were faced with two political choices, whether to choose a leader from the ethnic Chinese or a leader from the Muslim community. However, ethnic Chinese Muslims managed to wade through the complicated politics of national identity. Forced to choose which side to stand on, ethnic Chinese Muslims are slowly making choices in terms of political participation, both in terms of voting and the right to vote. It is undeniable that social movements in the Jakarta regional head election created a crisis in identity politics. The wide chasm between Muslims and non-Muslims began to harden. In this position, ethnic Chinese Muslims must define politics as a representation of their identity in the political sphere. Various maneuvers were carried out by ethnic Chinese Muslims in order to survive and carry out their rights and obligations in national politics. To this day they survive. Challenges and attacks will always be there, but they have persevered.

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<sup>55</sup> Djuyandi, Y., & Ramadhani, R. (2019). The Effectiveness of Political Identity in Post 212 Movement. *Central European Journal of International & Security Studies*, 13(4).

<sup>56</sup><https://www.republika.co.id/berita/oi848x354/anal-is-sentimen-etnisitas-dan-agama-meningkat-di-pilgub-dki-2017>

<sup>57</sup><https://www.satuharapan.com/read-detail/read/survei-lsi-ahok-unggul-mutlak-dari-pemilih-etnis-tionghoa>

<sup>58</sup><https://www.suara.com/news/2016/12/19/013100/survei-hampir-100-persen-etnis-cina-pilih-ahok>

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