

STRIVING TO BE THE MAJORITY: TRUE STORIES AND EXPERIENCES OF CHINESE MUSLIMS IN POLEWALI MANDAR

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Abstract

Chinese Muslims in Indonesia are still seen as a "marginal" part of the Muslim community. They have embraced Islam, but sometimes people see them as something other than them. That is, changes in the religious status of the Chinese Muslim community have not affected their social status. They still face social challenges due to their previous ethnic background. In addition, Chinese Muslims also must face strict cultural challenges from the Chinese in general. They must be able to conform to those traditions before they convert. Chinese Muslims in Polewali Mandar encountered the same challenge, but they were able to find a solution to the challenge. For this reason, this article used qualitative research methods with an oral history approach. The data was obtained by conducting interviews with Chinese Muslims in Polewali Mandar. The data is from their stories, processes, and experiences as converts including their stories of converting to Islam while observing Islamic law, their interaction with the people of Polewali Mandar, and interaction between them. This article found that the community had accepted the Muslim Chinese in Polewali Mandar. The social conditions they face can be lived well. However, the Chinese stigma is quite challenging to escape from them. They still sometimes get marginalization, but the level is quite different from other Chinese. They struggle with the Islamic Faith, and they are part of the majority in Polewali Mandar. Culturally, they can adapt well without having to abandon their old traditions.

Keywords: culture, story, experience, social, chinese muslim

INTRODUCTION

Chinese Muslims are increasingly open and adaptive to evolving changes (Rohman et al., 2020). This shows that they can integrate Islamic values into their Chinese culture. History shows Islam has spread among ethnic Chinese in Indonesia since the 14th century (Chandra, 2015). This Chinese Muslim heritage was later passed on by figures such as Abdul Karim, Oei Tjeng Hien, and Abdusomad. Islamic religious education among Chinese Muslims in Indonesia has also been the research focus. The Chinese Indonesian Islamic Union Organization of Semarang City provides Islamic religious education to Chinese Muslims. In addition, a study in South Kalimantan showed that the Chinese Muslim community there had reasonably good spiritual inspiration and Islamic religious learning (Fathullah Munadi, S.Ag et al., 2022). However, the dynamics of the intermingling of Chinese Muslim identity in Palembang also occurred (Pahrozi, 2019). This shows that despite having adopted Islam, Chinese identity remains a part of them. In general, Chinese Muslim Islam in Indonesia has developed and is increasingly open to change while still maintaining their Chinese identity.

Chinese Muslim identity in Indonesia covers several aspects, namely combining Chinese culture with Islam, maintaining Chinese ethnic identity, developing Islam among ethnic Chinese, promoting social integration, and fighting for the rights of ethnic Chinese in Indonesia. Combining Chinese culture with Islam is done by combining Islamic teachings with Chinese traditions, such as in Chinese New Year celebrations filled with religious activities. Chinese ethnic identity is still maintained by the Chinese Muslim community in Indonesia even though they have embraced Islam. Developing Islam among ethnic Chinese is carried out by organizations such as the Indonesian Chinese Islamic Union (PITI), which plays a role in developing Islam among ethnic Chinese in Indonesia (Muhyiddin, 2017).

Promoting social integration is done by building social integration between ethnic Chinese and indigenous ethnicities in Indonesia, as done by PITI in Makassar City. Defending the rights of ethnic Chinese is carried out by PITI organizations that fight for

the rights of ethnic Chinese in Indonesia, such as the rights to education, health, and religious freedom. Overall, the Chinese Muslim identity in Indonesia is the result of centuries of struggle. This identity includes efforts to integrate Chinese culture with Islamic teachings, maintain Chinese ethnic identity, develop Islam among ethnic Chinese, promote social integration, and fight for the rights of ethnic Chinese in Indonesia.

However, some studies show that most Indonesians accept the existence of Chinese Muslims and value religious diversity (Rohman et al., 2020) (Nofra & Auliahadi, 2019) (Noor, 2010). This shows that, increasingly, Indonesians are open to religious and cultural differences. A study in Yogyakarta showed that the exclusive image of Chinese Muslims is still prominent in the public view (Lubab, 2018). This shows that there is still a negative view of Chinese Islam. A study in Surakarta showed that the presence of Chinese Muslims there has been accepted by the local community (Yuliana, 2019). This shows that people's views on Chinese Islam can vary depending on the social and cultural context in the area. Overall, Indonesian people's views on Chinese Muslim Islam are still diverse. Although there are still exclusionary views and stereotypes, more and more Indonesians are open to religious and cultural differences.

However, the Chinese are often considered followers of Confucianism or Buddhism, so there is a negative stereotype that they cannot be Muslims or Christians. This stereotype makes it difficult for Chinese who want to convert. As mentioned, not all Chinese families bless their descendants who wish to convert. This can be an obstacle for those who want to embrace Islam or other religions.

China has a strong culture and traditions, including in religious matters. Some Chinese religious practices, such as Chinese New Year celebrations and death ceremonies, can be challenging for those who want to convert to Islam because they sometimes do not conform to the teachings of the Islamic religion. Chinese Muslims in some parts of Indonesia may find it challenging to find adequate mosques or places of worship, making it difficult for them to perform their prayers. What about Chinese Muslims in the Polewali Mandar Regency? Do they receive

discriminatory treatment in the social environment? or have they gained space in the Polewali Mandar community?

This article will examine the religious experience of the Chinese Muslim Community in Polewali Mandar. The most crucial aspect studied was their experiences while being Muslims. What treatment do they receive during their time as Muslims? Does the treatment of local people see their status as Chinese? Do they belong to the identity of society as Orang Mandar?

Literature Review

Writings related to Chinese Muslim ethnicity are quite widely published in books and journals, including Hew Wai Weng's work with the title *Chinese Islam* (Hew, 2019). This book describes the cultural politics of Chinese Muslims in Indonesia in the struggle for Chinese identity, Islam, and Indonesia.

Next is the work of Muhammad Murtadlo (Murtadlo, 2013). The study found that cultural and identity growth is happening today, especially in the Chinese Muslim community in West Kalimantan. They formed organizations, establishing mosques with specific patterns, such as Cheng Ho Mosque.

Next is the work of Diah Ayuningrum (Ayuningrum, 2019). The work found that relations between China and Islam date back thousands of years. It gave rise to cultural acculturation between the two. One of the pieces of evidence found is in the architecture of the Lasem mosque. The roof of the mosque is the most apparent form of acculturation between China and Islam.

Likewise, Hew Wai Weng's work (Weng, 2014) Looks at the relationship between China and Islam in a transnational manner, reviewing trans-local relations and negotiating the local identity of Chinese Muslims. The negotiations manifested themselves in the architecture of the mosque buildings and the social relationships they formed.

Works by Ahmad Maftuh Sunjana (Sujana & Nirmalasari, 2019) give an overview of the Chinese Lie Beng Ing played a role in the spread of Islam in Java. This was stated in the oral story of the people of Kalibening Village, Randuacir District. Lie Beng Ing is thought to be one of the members of Admiral Cheng Ho's entourage.

His subsequent work is the Article (Anwar, 2019) (Hakim, 2020) (Rusli, 2021) (Rakhmat, 2022). The article is part of a book that describes relations between China and Indonesia in the Dutch East Indies period, revolution, old order, and new order—in the article explains the position of the Chinese in each period, including its relationship with Islam. Presumably, politically, China and Islam are two entities that are very difficult to unite. However, these conditions are generally applicable. Works by Machali and Rosyadi (Rosyadi & Machali, 2020) give the idea that they can accept Islam well and vice versa.

This article differs from previous works because it is based on the experience of Chinese Muslims in Polewali Mandar. Their experiences become primary data revealing their relationships and personal relationships with the local community. See how they relate socially and culturally.

Conceptual Framework

This article uses the concept of oral history in looking at the experiences experienced by Chinese Muslims in Polewali Mandar. Oral history, in its development, brings improvement and opens new horizons in the world of historical research (Erman, 2011). Paul Thomson became one of the experts in Oral History who put forward the experiences of the object of study in certain events. Thompson's work that gave fresh air to historical research was *The Voice of the Past: Oral History* (Thompson, 2015).

This article uses the concept of oral history initiated by Thompson by taking the experiences of Chinese Muslims in Polewali Mandar to see how they can survive and adapt to the social and cultural conditions of the Polewali Mandar community. The experiences they tell are the primary source in this article. That experience brought a grand narrative about their condition as marginalized people in the majority circle. What treatment do they receive from the local community, and how can they finally adjust to the social conditions they face? Did they become the majority after embracing Islam?

RESEARCH METHOD

This article uses qualitative research methods with an Oral History approach. Data was obtained by interviewing Chinese Muslims in Polewali Mandar. The Oral

History approach serves as a tool to dig deeper into their experiences as Chinese Muslims. Their orality becomes primary data (Ong, 2013) and looking at their past conditions and connecting them with the conditions they are currently facing.

The experiences gained through interviews are then critiqued, interpreted, and written using the standard rules of writing Oral History. The experience of Chinese Muslims in Polewali Mandar is the primary data of this article. Furthermore, the data is criticized by looking at the internal conditions of informants, social and cultural, that occur. This means that looking at the internal conditions of the informant, social reality, and cultural reality aims to verify the information conveyed by the informant. Furthermore, interpretation, data findings, and criticism are examined and dialogued using oral history concepts. The last is to write down the results of the interpretation concept dialogue by looking at the development of oral history historiography, especially in Indonesia (Kartodirdjo, 2020).

DISCUSSION

Chinese Muslims in Indonesia

The history of Chinese Indonesians cannot be separated from bitter experiences. During the Dutch colonial period, many Chinese were victims of discrimination and were considered a lower class. They were often employed as manual laborers in Dutch mines and plantations and were paid minimal wages.

Geger Pacinan incident (1740). In 1740, the Geger Pacinan incident occurred in Batavia (now Jakarta). The Chinese were considered the masterminds behind the rebellion, and many were slaughtered. More than 10,000 Chinese died in this incident. In the struggle of Prince Diponegoro (1825-1830), Chinese people were seen as wealthy businessmen during Dutch colonial rule. During the Diponegoro rebellion, the Chinese were considered enemies because they were considered to support the Dutch government. They were attacked, and many were killed—Prohibition of Chinese Language and Chinese Cultural Activities. During the Dutch colonial period, Chinese was banned in schools, and many Chinese cultural activities were banned. This led to a decline in Chinese identity in Indonesia.

In addition, during the New Order period, Chinese people also experienced

discrimination and discriminatory treatment. In 1967, the Indonesian government banned using Chinese in schools and the mass media and Chinese symbols in business. Many Chinese were forced to change their names to Indonesian names, and some were even imprisoned or exiled. During the New Order period in Indonesia, Chinese people were often exiled and given discriminatory treatment. They are not afforded equal rights in many aspects of life and are often victims of blackmail or intimidation.

In 1998, riots and massacre were targeting Chinese in Indonesia. More than 1,000 people were killed, and thousands more were left homeless and business less. Many Chinese were also subjected to physical violence, rape, and abuse. Stereotypes and Prejudices: Chinese people in Indonesia often face negative stereotypes and prejudices that lead to discrimination in daily life. This stereotype can be the assumption that Chinese people are rich and stingy or that they only care about money and have no sense of nationalism. Discrimination in Education and Employment: Although discrimination against Chinese people has decreased, there are still some cases where they face discrimination in education and employment. They may be perceived as incapable or incompetent due to stereotypes and prejudices.

However, as time went by, the situation for Chinese in Indonesia began to improve. After Reformasi in 1998, laws discriminatory against Chinese were repealed, and the human rights situation in Indonesia improved. Today, Chinese people have become an integral part of Indonesian society. After reforms in 1998, the Indonesian government introduced policies aimed at eliminating discrimination and ending restrictions placed on the Chinese. At that time, many Chinese people acquired essential positions in various political, economic, and cultural fields. One of the factors that support the rise of the position of Chinese people is the increasing awareness of human rights and equality in Indonesian society. In addition, with Indonesia becoming more open to globalization, Chinese people are also increasingly involved in business and investment, resulting in more opportunities to obtain important positions in various fields. However, despite significant progress, there

are still challenges and discrimination faced by Chinese people in Indonesia to date.

The situation and condition of Chinese people in Indonesia generally have improved compared to the past. Racial discrimination against Chinese people is less severe than it used to be, and many Chinese have been able to access the same opportunities as the rest of Indonesia, including in business, politics, academia, and society. However, of course, there are still some problems and challenges faced by Chinese people in Indonesia, such as negative stereotypes against Chinese people, discrimination in elections, and cultural pressures that encourage Chinese people to maintain their traditions and religion. However, overall, the situation and condition of Chinese people in Indonesia have improved significantly in recent decades.

The Ministry of Religious Affairs is essential in promoting religious freedom and guaranteeing human rights, especially in the religious field in Indonesia. The Ministry of Religious Affairs is tasked with developing, regulating, and protecting the religion and beliefs of the Indonesian people. One of the crucial roles of the Ministry of Religious Affairs is to ensure that the religious rights of all Indonesian citizens are guaranteed and protected. The Ministry of Religious Affairs is also responsible for supervising and regulating religious activities in Indonesia, as well as providing guidance and direction regarding state-recognized religious teachings. In addition, the Ministry of Religious Affairs is also responsible for fostering cooperative relations between religious communities and overcoming conflicts that occur in communities with religious backgrounds.

In facilitating religious activities, the Ministry of Religious Affairs also issued policies related to religious education, religious dissemination, and protection of religious rights. In addition, the Ministry of Religious Affairs also provides training to religious leaders and people to overcome inter-religious conflicts and build inter-religious harmony. Provision of financial and technical support for constructing mosques and Islamic worship facilities for Chinese Muslims. Islamic religious training and coaching for Chinese Muslims through various programs, such as Hajj and Umrah Guidance programs, Islamic education training programs, and other religious activity programs. Encourage and

facilitate inter-religious dialogue between Chinese and other Muslims to strengthen tolerance and harmony. Strengthen cooperation with Chinese Muslim organizations in Indonesia, such as the Chinese Indonesian Ulema Council (MUIT) and the Indonesian-Chinese Islamic Union (PITI), to strengthen the teaching and practice of Islam among Chinese Muslims.

Truth Found: Chinese Muslim Life Experience in Polewali Mandar

H. Nahar (Jo shi ngo) was born in 1946 in Polewali Mandar. He converted to Islam at the age of 23 in 1969. According to him, his inner impulse, as if seeking truth and peace, made him embrace Islam. In the process of exploring his new religion, he met a Muslim girl from Enrekang Regency, which made him even more eager to live life. H. Nahar (Jo Shi Ngo, et al.) has 12 children, and he no longer displays his Chinese name on his children. In 2001, he and his family went to the Holy Land to perform Hajj together with the Hajj group of Polewali Mandar Regency.

H. Nahar (Jo Shi Ngo) has experienced several events in his neighborhood that tested his patience and even caused him to say something frightfully shocking, "If I had not been strong, my imam, maybe I would have quit Islam." This shows how firm his belief in Islam is.

The incident occurred when he served as the caretaker of the Mubarak Mosque and acted as the mosque's treasurer. He repaired the mosque until it was completed. Before it became a mosque, the building used to be Musallah on the waqf land of residents. After the mosque was completed, some residents in the next village requested that the mosque be closed and used as a school.

We, as mosque administrators and waqf landowners and residents, protested the proposal. Security officers and the government from the sub-district intervened to reconcile so that there would be no commotion. The reason for the village next door is that there is already a mosque there that is enough to accommodate worshippers, but according to H. Nahar, this reason is just made up, and they want to increase donations for their mosque. This made H. Nahar so disappointed that he said these words. Finally, the mosque turned into a kindergarten.

H. Nahar is a Polewali Bicycle sales agent entrepreneur who also actively plays a role in the Polewali Mandar community as the administrator of the Mubarak Mosque and a donor for several mosques in Polewali Mandar Regency. He considered himself a Mandar, no longer a Chinese.

The majority of Chinese who embrace Islam are those who have recently converted to Islam or are referred to as converts. Although there are many dilemmas experienced by Chinese citizens who embrace Islam, there are many of them. The following is an experience conveyed by one of the Chinese Muslims living in Mandar.

Mr. H. Muhammad Dg Kulle, also known as Ngo Seng Hoa, was born in Majene in 1965 and converted to Islam at the age of 35, precisely in 1991. He had three sons and daughters, all of whom were also Muslims. He married a Chinese woman named Elisabet, who had also converted to Islam, but for some reason suddenly changed, according to his words.

H. Dg Kulli's parents were Muslims, and he had 12 siblings, four of whom also converted to Islam. H. Dg Kulle embraced Islam because he felt that there was turmoil in his heart, which made him want to seek God and more and more his inner torment.

He finally decided to embrace the religion of truth, namely Islam. That day, He asked his employees to go to the market to buy skullcaps and prayer mats and then go to the office of the Polewali Religious Department (Ministry of Religious Affairs) to declare my Islam, which Depang employees witnessed at that time.

H. Muhammad Dg Kulle, also known as Ngo Seng Hoa, is an entrepreneur engaged in motorcycle repair shop services. Apart from being a businessman, he is also active in social community activities, one of which is as the administrator of the fund section at the Jami' Al Muttakin Mosque in Polewali.

H. Muhammad Dg Kulle, also known as Ngo Seng Hoa, talked about his daughter's marriage, which was held Islamically following the Bugis Mandar tradition. The couple is the son of one of the Mandar figures in Polewali, namely Mr. Andi Amin Manggabarani, who is also a Manfar person. H. Muhammad Dg Kulle himself married his daughter, witnessed by families from both

parties, at the Trapung Mosque of Losari Beach Makassar.

H. Muhammad Dg Kulle also said that as a Chinese Muslim, he views religious and cultural diversity as a wealth that must be maintained and preserved. Maintaining inter-religious harmony and harmony is also the responsibility of all parties. Therefore, he always strives to appreciate differences and establish good relationships with everyone regardless of religion, ethnicity, or race.

This shows that despite the change in beliefs, togetherness and brotherhood in ancestral cultures and traditions are still maintained and valued. In addition, continuing to communicate and gather with families and relatives of different faiths also shows an attitude of tolerance and respect for differences, which is very important in maintaining inter-religious harmony.

Islam Unites Us

Ahmad Umair (surname we) was born in Sorong in 1993 and married in 2015 to a Mandar girl in Polewali and had a daughter. Ahmad Umair's brother's 3 people are all Muslims. Ahmad Umair became the permanent Imam at the An-Nur Mosque in Polewali.

It is said that Ahmad Umair (clan We) knew Islam through marriage. His parents are a mix of Chinese (his father) and Manadonese (his mother). After getting married in Makassar, they migrated to Sorong and lived there for several years. However, later, his parents divorced, and Ahmad Umair and his two brothers returned to Sulawesi with their father. The fragment of his story is as follows.

After a few years, his father remarried a woman in Gowa who was Muslim. His future stepmother was willing to marry his father as long as he converted to Islam. His father agreed and decided to embrace Islam, so we three brothers joined our father's new religion, Islam. At that time, we were young and did not fully understand the religion that was new to us. After some time, we felt uncomfortable with the family life we were living because of the cruel attitude of our stepmother. Moreover, our father was so busy with his work that we had to rely on our stepmother for care and upbringing. In Jakarta's language, people say, "The cruelty of the capital city is more than the cruelty of the stepmother."

We decided to look for our biological mother in Selayar Islands Regency. After a long journey, we were finally reunited with our biological mother. Our biological mother was thrilled and moved to see the three of us. We also feel happy and happy to be reunited with our birth mother after being separated for so long.

His sister and he are relieved and happy to be reunited with our biological mother in Selayar. We started a new life there, went to school, and looked for work to help our mother, a laundry worker. Although we live a simple life, we feel happy because we can be with our biological mother and live a more calm and peaceful life.

After attending the lecture, he became more interested in studying Islam. He also began studying the Quran and attending recitations at the local mosque. Alhamdulillah, with determination and a strong spirit, He began to understand the teachings of Islam better and began to carry out religious obligations better as well.

He is grateful for the new life God has given them. Despite hardships and separations, we were finally able to reunite and live in the light of Islam, which brought peace and happiness to our hearts.

One of the congregation members discussed with him and offered to join the Tanfizh Al-Quran Islamic Boarding School in Jami Di Kerung-Kerung, Makassar. After discussing with his family, he finally decided to join and explore various Islamic knowledge, including memorizing the Quran in the hut.

He entered the pesantren in 2006 and successfully memorized the Quran in 2011. After that, he served for 4 years. In 2015, he married a girl from Mandar Polewali who happened to be the sister of his best friend at the pesantren. After marriage, we settled in Polewali. Some residents knew that he was a graduate of a pesantren and a memorizer of the Quran, so some mosque administrators offered to become imams at local mosques. Now, every Friday, he is the Imam of the mosque. Alhamdulillah, now he has become a permanent imam at the An-Nur Mosque located near his home. In addition to being the Imam of the mosque, he also works in a private company engaged in shipping goods. We are grateful for the blessings God has received.

Meanwhile, another story of a Thionghoa Muslim in Polewali Mandar, namely, three brothers and one brother who is also the owner of Fr. Surya named Latimah (Nio Shi Lany), Jerry (Nio Shi Mei), NeliyWaty (Nio Shi Le), the story is as follows:

We were Muslims since childhood because their grandfather was Chinese and had embraced Islam, and their father was automatically Islamic. Their father was also a civil servant at the Polewali education office then, but after we grew up and determined our destiny, we brothers had different principles. In other words, there were changes, but only temporarily. One of them is Latimah Nio Shi Lany because her husband is a Chinese Christian, but actually, she did not convert, just following her husband. After several years Together in the household, they finally divorced. At that time, she wanted to Return to Islam, so in 1990, she went to Mamuju to shahada and declared converted to Islam. When we were young, we were already Muslims, but our religious education at that time was minimal or could be said to be not touched at all about Islam. Her three children were all Christians, with their father in a sad tone.

Sister NeliyWaty (Nio Shi Le) stated that on June 20, 2014, at the KUA Polewali Mandar office, she decided to convert to Islam. According to his brother, they have been Muslims since infancy. However, because as a child, NeliyWaty's sister was taken by her Christian aunt, she was forced to follow her aunt's religion. However, now, as an adult, he wants to return to Islam and plans to perform Umrah with his brother.

However, when our non-Muslim family celebrates Chinese New Year, we do not celebrate it with them. If they invite us, we will not attend. However, if they come to our house to visit after the Chinese New Year celebration, we receive them well and entertain them. Unlike the combing ritual held every April, in which we did not participate.

Cumbeng activities have been a tradition of the Chinese community since a long time ago, which includes prayer ceremonies at graves. In this activity, preparations such as equipment and

dishes will be prepared. After the prayer ceremony, it will be followed by a meal together at the venue. As descendants of the Chinese, we were there to make the grave pilgrimage of our parents and family. We do this before and after the holy month of Ramadan. Although we did not participate in the ceremonies and meals, our non-Muslim brothers of Chinese descent valued and understood our faith and religion, Islam, so there was no discussion about this.

Mrs. Heni Lianto was born in 1960 and first set foot on the land of Mandar in 1994 after marriage. As the owner of Hotel Lilianto, she has three sons who are all Muslims. Heni's mother said that she knew Islam when her husband, Johan Magitug, proposed to her. Johan Magitug, a cousin of Ibu Heni, had converted to Islam before marrying Ibu Heni. She previously worked as an agricultural employee in Polewali. The story is as follows.

After we got married in 1994, she was taken to Polewali. At that time, her father wanted to make a marriage book because the time we married was recorded in the civil registry. Because she was still a non-Muslim, the marriage book had yet to be published. However, before the marriage book was published, she decided to embrace Islam because of her husband and her consciousness. She took her shahada before the priest in our home in Makassar. During her stay in Polewali Mandar, she worked hard and tried continuously. Ultimately, we managed to build a hotel in Polewali called Hotel Lilianto. Her husband, Johan Magitug, passed away 6 years ago in 2015. Her husband left the business, and she manage herself because our three sons also have their businesses and jobs.

Ibu Heni Lianto is also a donor in several mosques in Polewali. Although she did not want to mention the names of the mosques that were assisted, if there were religious celebrations held by the Polewali community, such as Mawlid Nabi, Ibu Heni was also involved by making trinkets such as *songkolo* and eggs that were put together in a place (bucket), then brought to the mosque like other communities. "I am happy to be able to help religious and community celebrations here," he said with a smile.

On the other hand, one of the Chinese Muslim families who lived a simple life in the

Polewali community was the family of Mr. Syharil, who was commonly called Pak Benging. A few weeks ago, Mr. Benging passed away due to his illness, his wife said in a sad tone. Farida's mother (Jeng) said that their family was all Muslim because before marriage, Jeng's husband had embraced Islam. The story is as follows.

Her husband is already Muslim. So, she automatically converted to Islam, which her husband believed. For this reason, she has embraced Islam until now. We have 2 sons and daughters. When her husband died, we performed according to Islamic requirements in its implementation, assisted by the community or residents around us, and carried out takziah for 3 consecutive nights while staring sadly. We ended our conversation accompanied by his daughter Risnawaty.

Hearing the terms Chinese and Chinese Muslim for some Indonesians, especially in West Sulawesi and Polewali, still feels foreign. This minority group is known as a sub-ethnicity that adheres to non-Islamic beliefs. Although in Polewali, there is already a Chinese Muslim community, both full-blood, full-blood, and half-blood Chinese. This was conveyed by the Vice Regent of Polewali Mandar, Mr. H.M. Nasir, MM.

From the results of this study, it can be seen that the existence of Chinese Muslims in Polewali Mandar is still poorly known by the general public, and coordination and guidance by several institutions in the area are still lacking, including the Regional Government, the Ministry of Religious Affairs, and the Ulema Council. Nevertheless, the acceptance and presence of Chinese Muslims during the Polewali Mandar community was well received and showed an excellent level of religious harmony. However, there are still internal challenges from families from the native religion of Chinese citizens, namely Confucianism or Buddhism, who have not given their blessing to their descendants to convert.

As additional information, inter-religious harmony in West Sulawesi is well-known and nationally recognized. The Harmony Award from the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia in 2020 proves this harmony. Polewali Mandar Mr. H.M. Nasir, MM, knows that the number of Chinese Muslims in the Polewali area is

quite large. The local government will continue to encourage and assist the development of the Polewali community, including Chinese Muslims, and cooperate with the Ministry of Religious Affairs in religious activities. The deputy regent also emphasized that inter-religious harmony in Polewali Mandar was maintained thanks to public awareness. The government has an expression or term called "*Mua.. mandundumo'o... uwwainna... Mandar.. menjari.. tomandar mo'o..*", which means that if someone has drunk water in Mandar, even though the bottle is Aqua brand, then that person has become a Mandar person.

He also hopes that Chinese Muslims can form a forum so that we can communicate with them more easily. He also has relatives or relatives who are married to Chinese people living in Makassar. With that story, our discussion ended.

From the results of this study, it appears that the existence of Chinese Muslims, who are a minority in the region, is less known. There needs to be more coordination and guidance by several institutions in the area, such as the Regional Government, the Ministry of Religious Affairs, and the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI), even though it is well known that there are Chinese who convert to Islam.

There are about 44 Chinese Muslims and their descendants in Polewali. In 1930, the amount of Chinese in Mandar reached 605 people based on the Dutch East Indies Government Population Census Report. However, according to data from the central BPS in 2010, the number of Chinese living in West Sulawesi was 660 people.

The reception and presence of Chinese Muslims during the Polewali Mandar community is excellent. This is due to reduced racial or racial issues and good social conditions. This situation and condition show that religious harmony is perfect. In 2020, the Ministry of Religious Affairs of West Sulawesi Region received the HARMONI AWARD from the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia as one of the provinces with the best level of harmony.

The challenges faced by Chinese Muslims come from within their families. There are still Chinese families who still need to give their blessing to their descendants to convert to Islam or other religions. This

happened because most Chinese citizens initially embraced Confucianism or Buddhism. However, most of them still uphold the teachings of Dewi Kwam In by continuing to do good to fellow humans (Yü, 2001) (Kieschnick et al., 2002).

CLOSING

The experience of Chinese Muslims in Polewali Mandar as a Muslim community, in general, has the same pattern. They were initially still considered not part of Islam socially. They had a long spiritual experience and then chose the path of Islam by converting to Islam. Some of them converted to Islam because they married local Muslims. The urge to marry is also based on the belief that they are ready to convert.

They face challenges socially, but they adapt well. In addition, they also encounter cultural challenges, so they have to adapt to the local culture. The cultural adaptation of the Chinese Muslim community in Polewali Mandar occurred due to several factors. Marriage, interaction, and hybridization in the surrounding environment make that adaptation work quickly.

The cultural adaptation of Chinese Muslims includes language, food, clothing, and traditional customs. Even among Chinese Muslims, they became administrators and donors in several mosques and became members of the Taklim Council. Cultural adaptation of Chinese Muslims is carried out by interacting with the community and adjusting to the traditions of the indigenous Mandar community, which is predominantly Muslim. The adaptation process formed a Chinese Muslim community with various stories that enveloped their life journey.

There are some different experiences compared to others. One was when one of the informants received bad treatment from his stepmother. They then looked for his biological mother and converted to Islam. Then faced with the challenges of life and finally converted to Islam. In other words, it is their personal experiences that lead to the path of Islam. Efforts made by Chinese Muslims to maintain their identity are to maintain relations with their relatives (Chinese) who are still religious ancestors, such as Chinese New Year celebrations.

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