

Social Political Religious Roles

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SOCIAL, POLITICAL AND RELIGIOUS ROLES OF CHINESE MUSLIMS IN INDONESIA: EXPERIENCES OF WEST SUMATRAN PITI

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Abstract: This study aims to examine strategic roles of West Sumatran PITI (*Persatuan Islam Tionghoa Indonesia* or Indonesian Chinese Islamic Association) in social, political, and religious contexts. This study traced the patterns of social relations within the internal Chinese Muslim community along with their social, political, and religious problems that often colour the life of this minority. The method used in this study is religious research with the approach of research on religion. The data for this research were collected through interview, observation, documentation, and Focus Group Discussion (FGD). The data were analyzed based on the views from several informants validated by triangulation method. The results show that West Sumatran PITI plays a significant role in the social context in the form of managing Chinese *muallaf* (muslim converts), providing temporary shelters for them who are isolated and rejected by their family, providing parenting style guidance and legal advocacy for their marriage with a local citizen, and practising funeral service through the local tradition of *malakok*. In the political context, the strategic roles of West Sumatran PITI can be seen from the national political policies towards Chinese ethnicity, the political interaction of Chinese and Minangkabau ethnicity, and the neutrality of Chinese Muslims in local politics. Finally, in the religious context, the role is shown through the efforts of providing moderate religious understanding for the Chinese Muslim community in West Sumatra, improving their ability to read and write the Koran as well as to practice worship, establishing houses of worship, providing religious teachers or preachers to the broader community, and participating in various religious activities and events in the local community. The implementation of this study can be used as a basis for policy making on how to utilize the role that the Chinese Muslim community (PITI) can play in the social, political and religious contexts in West Sumatra in particular, and Indonesia in general. Existing studies related to Chinese Muslims community in Indonesia, only portraying in fragmented social, political, and religious aspects. Instead this study reveals the overall strategic role of The PITI organization in social, political and religious aspects as well.

Keywords: Chinese Muslim, Social Roles, Political Roles, Religious Roles, West Sumatra, PITI.

1. Introduction

Indonesia is a country with a pluralistic population consisting of a wide variety of cultures, religions, and ethnicities, a nation with a multicultural basis. A wide variety of ethnic groups spreads across Indonesia from the native inhabitants to various nationalities such as Arabian, European, Chinese, and others. Chinese is one of some foreign ethnicities who have come to Indonesia since a long time ago (Liji, Dari & Mitra, 2000). The historical records reveal that in 319-414 AD a Chinese monk named *Fa Hsien* traveled to India and stopped in the Hindu kingdom located in the Citarum River i.e. the Kingdom of Tarumanegara. In the 9th century during the Tang dynasty (618-907 AD), it is also stated that many Chinese came to this country to trade (Poerwanto, 2005; Kongmanus, 2016). Moreover, during the reign of Ming Dynasty (1368-1643 AD), Chinese came to the Indonesian archipelago in a large number.

The crucial footprint of Chinese Muslim was recorded in 1405-1433 AD when Emperor Yong-Le and Emperor Chu Chan-chi of the Ming dynasty (1368-1643) ordered seven voyages to the South China Sea and Indian Ocean (Ying, 1979). The voyage led by Admiral Cheng Ho was intended to secure the trade routes from the pirates and to develop the political influence of the Ming Dynasty (Mahfud, 2014; Al-Qurtuby, 2009). Next, at the end of the 20th century, the development of Chinese Muslims grew much further as it is evident by the formation of Chinese Muslim organizations in Indonesia. The dynamic development of Chinese citizens in Indonesia is characterized by the divide-and-rule politic imposed by colonial government distancing Chinese Muslims from Islam and local Muslims. Based on their physical characteristics, Chinese Muslims realize that they have different personal identities from those of local Muslims. This difference inspires them to establish an organization with the aim to be a forum for gathering Chinese Muslims and at the same time to assert their particular identity among the local Muslim community so that they can be accepted by Chinese community at large (PITI, 1963; Chalfoun & Davidaviciene, 2018)

There have been several Chinese Muslim organizations established in Indonesia, including PITI (*Persatuan Islam Tionghoa* Indonesia), *Yayasan Haji Karim Oei*, and MUSTIKA (Muslim Tionghoa dan Keluarga). Several Chinese, H. Abdul Karim Oey, H. Abdusomad Yap, Kho Goan Tjin, and others, founded PITI on April 14, 1961 in Jakart (Yuanzhi, 2005; Niesing, Merwe, & Potgieter, 2016). It was formed as a merging of Chinese Muslim organizations *Persatuan Islam Tionghoa*

(PITI and *Persatuan Tionghoa Muslim* (PTM) founded by Yap A. Siong and H. Abdul Karim Oey in Medan 1953 (Paramita, 2010). The establishment of PITI was inspired from the absence of an organization specifically established to spread Islam among Chinese (Karim, 1982; Cuyugan et al., 2017). Meanwhile, *Yayasan Haji Karim Oei* was established on April 19, 1991 while MUSTIKA on February 19, 2007 (Hariyono, 2016). Unlike PITI, *Yayasan Haji Karim Oei* and MUSTIKA are community organizations established to strengthen the unity among Chinese Muslim, local Muslim, and Chinese non-Muslim. According to Soekanto, the growth of social institutions is driven by humans' need of order in their life, so norms are formulated within the society. At first, these norms were accidentally formed, but over time it became well-established.

In this context, West Sumatran PITI - which was established in Padang 1993 – runs its organizational system, membership, and management in an open and democratic way by involving other Muslim communities outside the Chinese. The focus of this paper is the patterns of social relations within the internal Chinese Muslim community along with their social, political, and religious problems that often color the life of this minority.

The theme of Chinese Muslims in Indonesia has been a growing study, especially in the contemporary post-reform context (Hoon, 2008; Weng, 2017; Rahmawati, Mahfud & Alfin, 2018) have examined how Chinese Muslims, as a minority within a minority, did not give up doing various means, strategies and media literacy in the process of becoming a good Muslim. These studies show that from the past to the contemporary period, Chinese ways of becoming Muslims have experienced contestation, sustainability and change. In the past, Chinese ways to become Muslims through family lines, marriage, and friendship. Now, the way Chinese become Muslims uses quite a several approaches, strategies, relationships, networks, and media. These studies also found that the various efforts undertaken had a significant impact on the relations, interactions and communication between the Chinese Muslim community with non-Muslim Chinese and Muslim Chinese communities with non-Chinese Muslims in the country.

Research investigating the practice of state discrimination against ethnic Chinese, especially Muslims, as a minority group in Indonesia was conducted by Muzakki (2010). The study found that the cultural approach undertaken by Chinese Muslims through intensive coordination with faith-based organizations, including Muslim mass organizations and Islamic non-governmental organizations, was critical and effective in protecting against possible anti-Chinese sentiment and discrimination and exploitation, both from the local community or the state bureaucracy. Other research, explicitly capturing the existence of the Chinese Muslim community in

East Java, was carried out by [Mahfud \(2018\)](#). This study explores the experience of the East Java PITI community in developing existences through various means, media and development strategies. Such as empowering the younger generation of Chinese Muslims, synergy with non-Chinese Muslims in fostering converts, involving women in the fashion show hijab competition, and developing Islamic community-based Islamic educational institutions. The main finding of this study is that the PITI organization in East Java has played an essential role in the development of ethnic Chinese communities in contemporary Indonesia, through creative, innovative and dynamic ways.

In the context of the existence of the Chinese Muslim community in West Sumatra, a previous related study was carried out by [Fernandes \(2002\)](#). In this study, he described the general condition of Chinese political dynamics in terms of their position and role in Padang. Another study explored the problem of Chinese citizenship and assimilation in Padang, West Sumatra, and the accommodation to their primordial characteristics by allowing them to use symbols of the Chinese tradition in Minangkabau area. The study of the relationship of Minangkabau and Chinese ethnic in Padang, West Sumatra, was also conducted by [Alfirdaus, Hiariej and Risakotta \(2014\)](#). This study showed that it was insufficient to see Minangkabau and Ethnic Chinese relationship in Padang only from a political and economic perspective, so the focus is also needed to be put cultural factor and political culture of the matrilineal Minangkabau ethnicity. The argument about the relationship of Minangkabau and Ethnic Chinese in Padang can be seen from the cultural and political factors that can not be separated from the formation of Minangkabau culture with its the matrilineal values found in the feminist idea of *Bundo Kanduang*.

In addition, Emiwati investigated Chinese community in West Sumatra by exploring the formation process of the Chinese community for in general and Chinese Muslims in particular, their social systems and adopted kinship, and their political orientation, organization, and association. [Erniwati \(2007\)](#) The next study was conducted by [Nofra \(2016\)](#) entitled *Peranan PITI Dalam Mempercepat Pembauran Etnis Tionghoa Muslim di Kota Padang* (Roles of PITI in Accelerating the Integration Process of Chinese Muslims in Padang). This study examined how PITI organization accommodated the interests of its members in social interactions with other citizens. Another study was also conducted by Adlan Sanur Tarihoran who explored the emergence of Ethnic Chinese in Bukittinggi and their interaction with the local community (read: Kurai) as an implication of the development of Bukittinggi as a trading centre. This interactional relationship needs to be built through a multiculturalism approach in order to prevent conflict ([Tarihoran, 2016](#)).

Different from the previous studies, this present study examines the strategic roles of Chinese Muslim citizens who are members of the PITI organization West Sumatra in solving their social, political, and religious issues in this province.

2 Methods

1 Approach to the Problem

This research uses religious research with the approach of research on religion. This method provides a means of interpreting the answer to the question of why there are different and similar characteristics and why there are the tendencies from the phenomena studied with reasoning arguments. According to Sunyoto Usman, the interpreting arguments are based on a conceptual framework built on certain theories and approaches (Usman, 2004). In the writing of this article the main focus is research on the strategic roles of West Sumatran PITI (Persatuan Islam Tionghoa Indonesia) in social, political and religious contexts. This study traced the pattern of social relations within the internal Chinese Muslim community along with their social, political and religious problems that often colour the life of this minority.

4

Nature of Research

In terms of its nature, this research is a descriptive study, meaning research that describes certain objects and explains things related to or systematically describes the facts or characteristics of certain populations in certain fields factually and accurately. Raco (2018) Judging from the type, this research includes field research (field research), which is a problem-solving procedure that is investigated by describing or describing the condition of the subject or object of research (an institution and others) at present based on visible facts or so on. The nature of research that the authors use is a descriptive legal study in the form of exposure and aims to obtain about strategic roles PITI in social, political and religious in West Sumatra.

Data Collection Methods

According to Creswell, qualitative research seeks to explore and understand a central phenomenon by interviewing research participants or participants by asking general and rather broad questions. The information conveyed by the participants in the form of words or text is then analyzed. The results of the analysis can be in the form of descriptions or descriptions or can be in the form of themes. From these data the researcher makes interpretations to capture the internal meaning. After that the researcher made a personal reflection (self-reflection) and described it with the

researches of other scientists that were made earlier. The final results of the qualitative research are set forth in the form of a written report (Creswell, 2014). The informants in research involved the management of West Sumatran PITI, academicians, community and *adat* (local traditional) leaders: Head of West Sumatran *Kesbangpol* (National and Political Unity Agency), and the general public who have interacted with West Sumatran PITI. The data for this research were collected through interview, observation, documentation, and Focus Group Discussion (FGD). A Focus Group Discussion (FGD) is a qualitative research method and data collection technique in which a selected group of people discusses a given topic or issue in-depth, facilitated by a professional, external moderator. This method serves to solicit participants' attitudes and perceptions, knowledge and experiences, and practices, shared in the course of interaction with different people (Eeuwijk & Van2017). The data were analyzed based on the views from several informants (etic) validated by triangulation method. The research conclusion will be drawn from the analysis and from the combination of the field data (emic) and the researcher's interpretation (etic) (Creswell, 2014).

Data Analysis

Qualitative methods turn data into findings, and therefore this study is something unique. This really depends on the expertise, insight, training and ability of the researcher. Qualitative methods are inductive, starting from facts, reality, symptoms, problems obtained through special observations. From these specific realities and facts the researcher then constructs general patterns. Inductive means starting from the specific to the general. The author uses this method to understand a symptom as a whole, including describing and interpreting the human social environment or external organizations that influence it (Huda, 2010).

Data analysis here means systematically arranging the material from interviews, observations, FGD about the strategic role of PITI in social, political and religious matters related to the Chinese Muslim community in West Sumatra. From this analysis, a new idea, theory or idea is generated.

3 Results

The Chinese community can be identified into *totok* and *peranakan*. *Totok* is identified as the Chinese who are "original from China" and avoid intermarriage with non-Chinese (Suryadinata, 2005), while *peranakan* refers to the Chinese who are born outside of China and conform to local community contexts, such as language, religion, and nationalism etc (Bastian, 2013; Dobbin, 1992). Despite this difference, both are equal to their model of closeness to their culture. This closeness

cannot be separated from their character as a migrant nation with the strong tradition of respecting their ancestral land. Thus, Chinese ethnic culture in Indonesia is not a single and homogeneous cultural form but a heterogeneous one, a collection of different cultures from their original regions in China, which are then assimilated to Indonesian culture.

One of Chinese, Liem Tiong, mentioned that he was born in Padang, and he has lived in this city for more than 50 years. His parents and grandparents also lived here. His parents migrated to Indonesia in their childhood. The original destination was Philippine not Indonesia. Due to the storm attacking their ship, they stranded in Bagan Siapiapi. As time passed, they finally arrived and settled in Padang (Ma'ruf, 2017). Liem Tiong's information above recounted the second wave coming of Chinese community to Padang, West Sumatra. This fact is reinforced by the age of See Hin Kiong Temple built around 1860 in Kampung Tionghoa (Hartono & Handinoto, 2007). Ernawati says that See Hin Kiong Temple was burned in 1861 (Mohammad & Syafiq, 2014).

Another theory about Chinese in Padang asserts that they originated from Pariaman and had lived here since the XII century AD. When Acehnese came to Pariaman, this area became a gathering place for traders in that era. Pariaman then became a coastal trade center. Thus, Christine Dobbin estimates that Chinese settlement has been around in Pariaman for a long period of time (Nurhadiantomo, 2004). However, a tragic event triggered the exodus of Chinese from Pariaman. It is stated that during the Japanese occupation, a Chinese man brought his two daughters to Japanese office. Some local youths who happened to see it alleged that the Chinese committed treason against them. Enraged by their anger, they then took the two Chinese girls to the beach and eviscerated them with *kangso*, a type of tool made from aluminum (Nurhadiantomo, 2004). This incident scared the Chinese and made them leave Pariaman heading to the east around Padang.

The origin of Chinese Muslims in West Sumatra is not exactly known except from the theory of Admiral Cheng Ho's expedition, which influenced the emergence of Chinese Muslim communities in the country (Luntungan, 2013). There are only a few notes about them in Java originating from Haji Ma Huan, a Cheng Ho's secretary and interpreter, who joined at least three of Cheng Ho's expeditions (Eriyanti, 2007). Under the influence of Cheng Ho, Chinese Muslims were rapidly developed in Indonesian archipelago in the 1920 (Amir, 2004).

Another theory is the migration of Chinese Muslim traders to the South Asian region, including Indonesia. Based on the 15th century trade motives, there were many Chinese Muslims living in the coastal cities, especially Pantai Utara (Eriyanti, 2007). Some of the Chinese are already Muslim in their native country.

In their home country, they are known as the "Hui" community or called *Pinyin* in Chinese, *Huízú* Xiaojing and written as "*Huizu*" in Arabic (Amir, 2004).. They form one of 56 minority groups that are legally recognized by the government of People's Republic of China. They live in northwestern China, the region of Ningxia, Gansu, and Xinjiang. Most cultures of the Hui people similar to that of Han except for their religion. As Muslim, they do not eat pork commonly consumed in Chinese culture. They also do not eat dog meat, the wild animal, horse (QS Al-Anfal 60; An-Nahl 8), most birds and animals - the food considered special in Chinese cuisine. In terms of clothing, they also wear different clothes in which adult men wear white *kopiah* (a type of cap) and adult women wear headscarf or *burdah* as commonly found in Islamic culture. These data explain that besides Cheng Ho's arrival to Indonesia (including West Sumatra) which brought Muslims who later settled in this region, there were also Chinese migrations from the "Hui" community, which were already the adherents of Islam.

It is estimated that there are hundreds of Chinese Muslims in West Sumatra. Most of them are in the cities of Padang, Padang Panjang, Bukittinggi, Payakumbuh, Lima Puluh Kota, Solok, Pesisir Selatan, Pasaman, and Dharmasraya. Padang Pariaman is the only city, which is not inhabited by ethnic Chinese. This number only represents a small proportion of the total number of ethnic Chinese in this province. According to Buya Muslim Nur, Chairperson of West Sumatran PITI, the number of Chinese Muslims in the city of Padang is around 200 (Sefriyono, 2015).

It is seemingly possible that this number does not cover the total number of Chinese Muslims in West Sumatra because their existence is not entirely known. Many *muallaf* (the term for people who have just converted to Islam, which is derived from the Arabic the word *maful* meaning people who surrender and submit) change their life direction and belief (Agung, 2014). It is difficult to identify them because they tend to hide their conversion from their family and relatives. It is common for Chinese family not to approve their family members' conversion to Islam, so many Chinese *muallaf* are isolated and rejected by their family. Thus, one effort to avoid this problem is to hide their Islamic status. This is one of the phenomena about the condition of Chinese *muallaf* in the cities of West Sumatra.

Chinese Muslims in West Sumatra are classified into three groups. The first group is those who sincerely convert to Islam out of their own will without coercion or other external causes. This group practice Islamic teaching willingly and full of *istiqomah* (steadfastness). They also help each other voluntarily and work intensively in the organization to hold friendly gathering and various religious and social activities.(33)

The next group is those who convert to Islam to meet social demands such as marrying local Muslims. Usually, this group does not show their religious identity openly and does not practice Islamic teachings fully. Meanwhile, the third group belongs to those who convert to Islam but socially excluded from or rejected by their family. This third group has not fully been identified within West Sumatran PITI organization (Juliastutik, 2010). Such classification of Chinese Muslim was also justified by Amin Sheng. He mentioned that in general they are classified into three group: those who convert to Islam out of their own will, those who convert to Islam because of marriage, and those who convert to Islam for other practical reasons (Afif, 2010). This classification provides an illustration about the existence of some Chinese Muslims who have not been registered as members of this organization. Obviously, it will lead to the incomplete and unintensive communication and fellowship of Chinese Muslims in Padang, West Sumatra.

4 Discussion

Roles of PITI in Social Field

One of the problems, which arise from the change in religious identity for Chinese in West Sumatra, is the accommodation system of their family and their family order. Indeed, the existence of *muallaf* from Chinese community brings its own problematic issue because the customary tradition of Chinese society does not provide flexibility for its people to embrace Islam. According to Elizabeth Sien, one of the West Sumatran PITI management, there is an indication that the Chinese non-Muslim parents forbid their children or other family members to practice a religion other than their ancestral one. If there should be religious conversion, the family recommends them to convert to religions other than Islam. Thus, Chinese *muallaf* are commonly rejected by or excommunicated from their traditional family (Rosmini, 2016). This incidence is led by the fact that Muslims are dominated by local people – categorized as social pariah class or *inlandaer* by the Dutch colonists (Fuller, 2005) while the Chinese were categorized as foreign citizens or *vreemdeling* (Nur, 2018). This problem has not been resolved maximally because there has been no shelter or temporary house for those who are isolated from or rejected by their family until now. This is one of the main tasks of West Sumatran PITI. However, this organization has made efforts to provide sanctuary for the rejected *muallaf* in the homes of PITI management while at the same time making persuasive approaches and understanding to make the family not traditionally excommunicate them and to respect their decision to embrace the new religion. Another social issue that often arises among Chinese Muslims in West Sumatra is marriage problem. Many Chinese convert to Islam because of marriage, for

example, a Chinese man who wants to marry a local woman or a Chinese woman who wants to marry a Minangkabau man. In this context, there are two cases of the marriage between Chinese Muslims and local people. One is the marriage between a Chinese man *muallaf* and his Minangkabau wife while the other is the marriage between a Chinese woman *muallaf* with her local husband. In the first case, their marriage can be well kept and tend to be stable whereas in the latter case it is often unstable (Rosmini, 2016). If a Chinese man marries to a local Minangkabau woman, he has to convert to Islam. In this regard, PITI plays a role in facilitating his conversion process, circumcision, and provision of religious advice as well as lecture on how to build a *sakinah* (peaceful) family and how to practice the teachings of Islam. On the other hand, if a Chinese woman *mualaf* marries to a local man, their marriage will tend to be less stable and sometimes almost ends in divorce. It happens because the local Minangkabau man often shows different behavior and attitude after the marriage such as committing polygamy after obtaining sufficient fortune from his wife's business. Despite its rare occurrence, this phenomenon brings its own problems in the context of the social and community relations experienced Chinese Muslims. In this context, West Sumatran PITI has an active role in providing marriage counseling or sometimes legal advocacy.

Another problem found in this study is how Chinese Muslims organize the funeral of their dead fellow. As said by Sien Elizabeth, Chinese Muslim community has not yet had a specific land for their burial ground (Afif, 2010). To solve this problem, West Sumatran PITI practices the *adat* (local tradition) of 'malakok', to integrate 'migrants' into one of Minangkabau clans through a traditional ceremony and certain conditions (Nur, 2018). Through *malakok*, the migrants or non-Minangkabau ethnic residents can be accepted as *dunsanak* (clan members) and are treated equally as such *seberat-sepilkul sesakit sesenang* by the clan that has accepted them (Huda, 2010). In light with this issue, Taufik Abdullah asserts that the tradition of 'malakok' is a local wisdom to help realize harmony between ethnic immigrants and their local hosts or among local clans in West Sumatra (Afif, 2010). Regarding the funeral problem, the Head of LKAAM, a local institution managing the issue of local tradition and custom in West Sumatra, asserts that Chinese Muslim community can hold funeral service like other Muslim communities in burial lands owned or controlled by a Minangkabau clan they integrate to (Afif, 2010).

4.2. Roles of PITI in Political Field

Ethnic Chinese experiences different policy in national politics in a different period from the Old Order, the New Order and the Reformation. This difference has an impact on their psychological and political behavior and attitude. The Old Order and the New Order seemed to limit Chinese political participation with various policies and rules discrediting them. The changing political atmosphere in the Reformation Era provided the space for the political participation of Ethnic Chinese. According to Weyner, political participation is a voluntary action, successful or failed and organized or not, to influence government policy choices, government administration, and political election at the national, regional or local level (Bastian, 2013). From this political participation, many of Chinese are involved as administrators of political parties, legislative members, and regional political leaders. The change from the New Order political system to Reformation Era gives windows of opportunity for the political participation of ethnic Chinese in Indonesia (Bastian, 2013).

After the Reformation Era, Chinese ethnic groups who are members of PITI organization have the opportunity to realize their political aspirations and participation, so many PITI members join in several political parties. Real and open political participation of PITI members can be seen from the political activities of its political elite. The freedom of expression is positively welcomed because they can now freely state their ethnic identity. The political activity of PITI elite members after the Reformation is increasing in terms of quality and quantity. Their motivation to participate in politics is not just to seize the power to voice their ethnic aspirations that was previously "silenced". The trend of ethnic Chinese political participation in politics is not to seize power as that in the economic field but rather to channel their aspirations, so they are no longer regarded as a "second class citizens" group.

In West Sumatra, as stated by Muslim Nur, the involvement of PITI members in various politics is a type of freedom of expression that was not previously given by the central government. Some PITI members are in doubt to join political parties considering that they have been directed more at entrepreneurial sector as expressed follows: "For a long time, we were in doubt to join the political field considering there was no space for us in politics. Many of the PITI members were more interested in entrepreneurship or become religious teachers, so they rarely joined in political parties. However, after the Reformation, several PITI members join in politics and become the members of the Indonesian Parliament." (Nur, 2018) Elizabeth Sien also gave the same information by stating that the Chinese in West Sumatra including Chinese Muslims do not show prominent activity in politics. However, only two figures are actively involved in politics, but is more personal

involvement rather than representing the organization. Despite the existence of national political established by the Chinese, it turns out that it receives no support from Chinese citizens in some areas including in West Sumatra (Nofra, 2016). The party that is founded by an ethnic Chinese does not receive enough support from the Chinese themselves. In West Sumatra, this party does not get a single vote. Some PITI members tend to join nationalist parties. One of the PITI members who join such party is Alek Indra Lukman with *Partai Demokrasi Indonesia Perjuangan* or the Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle (PDIP), and he is elected as the member of Indonesian Parliament for the 2014-2019 period. Alex Indra Lukman was born in Padang, West Sumatra, December 31, 1970. He is a politician of Chinese descent, once as a Head of the West Sumatran Regional Division of *PDI Perjuangan*. He is elected as a member of the parliament for the 2014-2019 period from through the West Sumatran electoral district I, which covers the Pesisir Selatan, Mentawai, Solok, Solok Selatan, Sijunjung, Tanah Datar, Dharmasraya, Padang Panjang and Sawah Lunto.

Alex Indra Lukman, an alumnus of FISIPOL Eka Sakti University (2004-2008) is a Chinese *muallaf*. His wife, Cynthia Hardi Lukman, is also a *muallaf*. With his Muslim status and Muslim wife, the people of West Sumatra can culturally accept Alex because the religious status is the important aspect for Minangkabau people. In this political context, PITI as an organization that accommodates Chinese Muslims does not have a direct commitment to a certain political figure. Nevertheless, his personal relationship with West Sumatran PITI can at least provide information for Chinese Muslims to encourage their ethnic figure in every political event and celebration (Dobbin, 1992).

In addition, during the political constellation of the 2019 Election, West Sumatran PITI does not provide specific recommendations for its members in terms of political parties or figures to be elected. Therefore, PITI is able to show an open and neutral political attitude. Thus, the role of West Sumatran PITI in politics can be seen from its efforts to build the strength of national solidarity, integrating with the local people, and distancing itself from party and ethnic exclusivity.

4.3 Roles of PITI in Religious Field

Muslim communities, including ethnic Chinese, are required to develop moderate religious understanding and attitudes. According to Afthonul Afif, the traditional and religious attitude of the Chinese community including those who become *muallaf* are two inseparable aspects in their life. Chinese community who have become converts (Afif, 2014). Thus, the Chinese who convert to Islam are categorized Chinese Muslim (Dobbin, 1992). Based on the categorization of

"Chinese Muslims", West Sumatran PITI seeks to provide understanding to its member by displaying the image of a moderate Muslim. According to Graham E. Fuller, moderate Muslims are those who believe in democracy as well as tolerance and take an anti-violence approach to politics and equal treatment of women at the legal and social level (Afif, 2014). As for Khaled Abu al-Fadl, the term "moderate" itself actually emerges as a response to provide a middle course between the extreme one and the liberal one as done the Prophet Muhammad SAW (Afif, 2014). In this regard, the process of religious moderation for Chinese Muslim community in West Sumatra is realized through their attitude behavior accordance with rationality, humanity, democracy and tolerance toward differences as well as by respecting the prevailing tradition of *Adat Basandi Syara Syara 'Basandi Kitabullah* (tradition founded upon religion and religion founded upon Quran), the platform of the Minangkabau community. PITI and Muslim Chinese community in West Sumatra always voices this moderation.

In establishing religious moderation, West Sumatran PITI conducts various routine religious activities such as *pengajian* (religious gathering) and monthly religious services. This activity is held every Saturday in the fourth week of each month in Pasar Baru mosque, Padang. This mosque belongs to general public, not specifically built by the PITI community. The permission to use this mosque as a gathering religious place for Chinese Muslim community is obtained because of close relationship between Chinese Muslim community and local residents. Previously, West Sumatran PITI also holds *pengajian* in several mosques around the area of Pondok, Padang.

Muslim Noor, who also acts as the ustadz (preacher), leads the monthly religious gathering held by West Sumatran PITI. The theme of the religious preaching is more directed at understanding the field of *aqidah* in accordance with *Ahlussunnah wal Jamaah* concept, and the practice of worship in accordance with Shafi'i maddhab (jurisprudence). The emphasis is put on this matter since many Chinese Muslims generally still lack of understanding in the practice of worship. Although this gathering is initiated by PITI, many local Muslims around the mosque also attend it. It obviously indicates the good interaction of Chinese Muslims with the surrounding community (Raco, 2018)

In addition to reinforcing the religious understanding, this *pengajian* activity also serves as a medium of interaction among Chinese Muslims around Padang. Sometimes, some Chinese Muslims from outside the city of Padang such as Padang Panjang and Payakumbuh also join it. This activity is very useful for them considering that they have not received much information about religious teachings in other places.

Furthermore, in carrying out religious activities and worship for Chinese Muslims in Padang City, PITI management seek to the use of the mosques around them. In their daily worship activities, Chinese Muslims go to the closest mosque around their residence. At first, they felt uncomfortable going to the mosques because it was indicated that the surrounding still "questioned" their Islam. Many of them were often asked the questions, "*Manga ang Ka musajik?*" "*Ang lah Basunaik?*" (What are you doing at the mosques? Have you been circumcised?). It has been a desire among Chinese Muslims to build their own mosque or religious center for a very long time.

The establishment of a mosque or religious center for Chinese Muslims Padang has long been planned. PITI management and Chinese Muslim businessmen in Padang often make negotitaion with the Municipal Government. As a result, the Regional Government allocates a 600 m2 plot of land in Pondok to be used as the area to build the mosque or religious center for Chinese Muslims in Padang. Furthermore, PITI wants to establish the permanent mosque or religious as well as an Islamic tourism icon (Afif, 2014). This desire is inspired by the fact many Muslims in Padang such as female congregation with heejab take pictures or selfie in front of a lion statue in Pondok Temple, Padang. Despite no prohibition for Muslim communities to take pictures in front of other religions' houses of worship or symbols, it will look more Islamic if such pictures are taken in the mosque with the combining design of Islamic and Chinese culture. It is one of the programs of West Sumaran PITI in developing religious center in West Sumatra. In spite of the support from the program, this program is not actualized due to the issue of land ownership and permit.

In another context, some of Chinese Muslims are adept at reciting Quran with good voice and memorization. Based on information obtained during the FGD at the Rangkayo Basa Hotel, the researcher was informed that some PITI members usually participant in *Musabaqah Tilawatil Quran* (MTQ) competition, both at regional and at national level. Fajri, one of the Chinese Muslims in Padang, has been participating in this activity and practiced reading Quran with *qira'at* (method of recitation) since his childhood. When reading the Quran with the *qira'at*, many people around doubted his ability at the firts place but after long time of practice and study he show his good ability to recite the Quran with fluently and melodiously. He has been participating in various MTQ competitions at Municipal and Provincial level in West Sumatra. He has also won the MTQ competition for several times, and his last achievement is as the runner up in Provincial MTQ competition held in Payakumbuh, West Sumatra.(50) In addition to the ability in the art of Quranic recitation, Fajri and some of his friends also show abilities in

memorizing the Quran. With this capability, they have also participated in several Tahfidz al-Quran (Quranic Memorization) competitions. From this, West Sumatran PITI maximizes its member potentials by providing special programs to develop religious *syiar* (propaganda) and *dakwa* (preaching).

Moreover, some Chinese Muslims in Padang have profession as a teacher. It is evident from the career pursued by H. Muslim Noor, who was once a Principal in one of the Private Schools in Pariaman, H. Amin Sheng, a teacher at Tazkia Padang School, Elizabeth Sien as a high school teacher in Padang, and others, who also have a profession as a teacher or a preacher. The teaching profession (especially the religious one) and preacher of PITI management illustrates that the surrounding community accepts the presence of the Muslim Chinese community and provides a space for them to preach. In light of this issue, H. Muslim Noor, who manages *hajj* (pilgrimage to Mecca) travel agency, provides plenty of his time to fulfill preaching invitation from the community around Padang. For him, this invitation is a huge honor and appreciation. H. Amin Sheng who has taught for years in a religion-based school in the city of Padang also mentioned the similar thing. In fact, he expressed that he had devoted himself to preaching and the development of religious progress.

5 Conclusion

From the explanation above, it can be concluded that the strategic roles of West Sumatran PITI in social and community are in managing Chinese *muallaf* (muslim converts) rejected by their families through economic reinforcement, shelter provision, temporary assistance, legal advocacy, and marriage counseling for those who marry to local people. Next, in the case of the funeral service of Chinese Muslims, PITI practiced the local tradition of *malakok* by cooperating with the relevant parties.

In the political context, West Sumatran PITI put its organization in a neutral position among the clash, conflict, and persuasin of political parties in this country. PITI also plays an active role in encouraging its member to gain political recognition both in parliament and in government through nationalist parties rather than the sectarian ones. It also shows an inclusive performance pattern in establishing national togetherness and collaboration to develop the nation.

The togetherness of West Sumatran PITI and non-Muslim Chinese and Chinese need to be fostered for its dynamic movement. The number of charismatic Chinese Muslim figures in West Sumatra should be maximally exploited to develop PITI. West Sumatran PITI can make the West Sumatra Regional Government and *Lembaga Kerapatan Adat Alam Minang-kabau* (LKAAM), a local institution

managing the issue of local tradition and custom, as the second home for Chinese Muslim minority in West Sumatra who are isolated from and rejected by their family. Economic rights and religious reinforcement are important tasks for PITI to do in elevating the dignity of this minority.

Finally, in the religious field, West Sumatran PITI seeks to provide religious understanding for its members by displaying the image and character of moderate Muslims. The process of religious moderation for Chinese Muslim community can be realized through behavior and attitude in accordance with the rationality, the humanity, and the order of local customs. In the context of religious service and worship, PITI seeks to educate *muallaf*, so they will be able to read the Quran properly. In addition, their insights on religious understanding are also improved.

6. Recommendations

1. The implementation of this study can be used as a basis for policy making on how to utilize the role that the Chinese Muslim community (PITI) can play in the social, political and religious contexts in West Sumatra in particular, and Indonesia in general. Existing studies related to Chinese Muslims community in Indonesia, only portraying in fragmented social, political, and religious aspects. Instead this study reveals the overall strategic role of The PITI organization in social, political and religious aspects as well.

2. This research is limited in the province of West Sumatra. Therefore, there needs to be a continuation of this research to photograph the movement of PITI in eastern Indonesia, such as East Java, East Kalimantan, South Sulawesi, West Nusa Tenggara, and others.

4

Ethical Issue

Authors are aware of, and comply with, best practice in publication ethics specifically with regard to authorship (avoidance of guest authorship), dual submission, manipulation of figures, competing interests and compliance with policies on research ethics. Authors adhere to publication requirements that submitted work is original and has not been published elsewhere in any language.

Competing Interests

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest that would prejudice the impartiality of this scientific work.

Authors' Contribution

4

All authors of this study have a complete contribution for data collection, data analyses and manuscript writing.

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