

BOOK REVIEW

Chinese Indonesians:

Chinese Muslims and the collapse of the Business Republic
Jakarta: Republika

By Teguh Setiawan

Reviewed By
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This book written by Teguh Setiawan and published by Republika is very interesting to read because from it the reader will get a lot of information about the ethnic Chinese in Indonesia, among them: the greatness of the Chinese Muslim leaders and bad luck of Chinese Muslim community during the Dutch colonial period and the heyday of the Muslim ethnic Chinese in Indonesia, and portrait of the Chinese Muslims from the past. In addition, readers will be interested in doing research on other ethnic Chinese, perhaps even you would like to know the ethnic Chinese in the rural areas recounted in the book.

In this book not only does it tell the fate of Chinese society as a result of the cruel policies of the Dutch which continued into the New Order era, but it is also interesting to learn about the involvement of the Chinese in the spread of Islam in Indonesia, in the fight for independence, as well as their love of Islam and even the role of Chinese in developing literature and culture of Indonesia. This book recounts many young Chinese people's forgotten history, in which they had a role in expelling the Dutch and the Japanese. In addition, it tells about the Chinese leaders that formed youth movements in Indonesia during the occupation, but their fate was simply tragic. Here, there are a martial arts stories which were very popular in the 1960's and contain the values of moral education. This is one of the works of the ethnic Chinese who loved Indonesia.

The title of this book is "Chinese Muslims and the Collapse of the Business Republic." The author of the book depicts the life of Chinese Muslim community in Indonesia from their arrival in Indonesia, their glory until the onset of a massive massacre. There are two groups of the Chinese community

in Indonesia in the 16th century, the Chinese who practiced ancestral belief that lived in exclusive settlements and the Chinese Muslims who blended with the indigenous communities.

The first part of the book is about the Chinese Muslims. This section tells about the Chinese Muslims' Involvement in the spread of Islam in Indonesia who could not let go of their status as a minority within the minority. In this section it is also described by several prominent historians regarding the early phase of the assimilation between the Hui (Muslim) and the native peoples, Muslim Chinese and Non-Muslim Chinese in the 1400s, between the Chinese and the Javanese. This section tells about the Chinese Muslims who dominated a lot of seaports, became collectors of customs duties, regulated vessel traffic on behalf of the government, and invested with the title of knight and married elite women.

If you have heard about the theories saying Islam in Indonesia was brought from mainland China, in the book it is elaborated how it was done and who assigned Chinese Muslim leaders in several areas of major cities in Indonesia. The greatness of the Chinese Muslim leaders who came to Indonesia and the fact that they had reached the pinnacle of success in Indonesia turn out that they had a close relation with the Emperor of China at the time of the Ming dynasty. Interestingly enough in this section too, readers will know who actually or what clan of the Chinese Muslim community considered the earliest to come to Indonesia and from their looks it is very difficult to guess if they are Chinese. This clan claimed that Sunan kalijaga and Abdurrahman Wahid, or Gus Dur were among the descendants.

Here there are also different opinions expressed by historians on Islamic religiosity of the ethnic Chinese. As it is argued that they only know one school of thought which is of the Hanafi and do not know any other. But there is also an opinion that their religious orientation is divided into three tendencies, namely: the *kejawen* or Javanese mysticism, Orthodox Islam, and political Islam. This is found in "*Kawroeh Agama Islam, karya sya'ir Ilmoe Sedjati, Sya'ir Tjioko and Petjoen*", and in the works of Kho Tjeng Bie entitled *Sja'ir Serikat Islam*".

With regard to the collapse of the Chinese Muslims, it began with the conflict in the ethnic Chinese community itself, the influence of the political changes that took place in mainland China, also the colonial Dutch policies that resented the Chinese Muslims' good relations with the Indonesian natives, and the presence of the VOC policy accusing the Muslim Chinese community of pretending to embrace Islam just to avoid taxes. The peak of the collapse of the Chinese society was after the arrival of the Japanese army to Indonesia

that continued ahead of Indonesia's independence. At the time, the ethnic Chinese split into three groups: those who were loyal to their ancestors; those who were loyal to the Dutch; and those who belonged to the nationalist groups that supported the independence of Indonesia. Distinction between the groups and the different alliance with the warring parties that gave rise to the diverse expectations of the various parties was very detrimental to the Chinese community. Prince Diponegoro decided to attack all Chinese whether Muslims or not, because they are regarded as a source of funding for the Dutch Government.

This is the beginning of the Chinese Muslims' return to their ancestors' beliefs. In addition, the survivors of the massive slaughter during the Dutch colonial rule spread into the interior areas of Indonesia. One of them is in the hinterland District of Tangerang, where there are original Chinese communities who still occupy the "house of *kebaya*", ground-floor complete with a sacred desk and a jackfruit wood.

This incident has probably caused the Chinese society to be unwilling to blend in with the native Indonesians. A portrait of the life and movement of the ethnic Chinese is recounted explicitly in this book. We hope you will enjoy reading this book.