



## History of Confessional Religion in Indonesia

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### **Abstract**

This research is for scholarly conversation and theory formation to conduct similar research in a broader scope. The study aims to identify why Confucianism has not been accepted as an official religion by the Indonesian government and society. The struggle of Confucian followers so that Confucian teachings are recognized as the official religion by the Indonesian government and people. The research approach uses a processual historical system. Data collection uses the oral history method and Library studies. A data analysis using the descriptive-analytical method. Results show that Confucianism in Indonesia has had its ups and downs. Presidential Decree Number 1 of 1965, enacted through Law Number 5 of 1969, stipulates that Islam, Christianity, Catholicism, Hinduism, Buddhism and Confucianism are the official religions of the Indonesian population. The factors that support the recognition of Confucianism as the official religion in Indonesia are since Indonesia entered the reformation period in 1998, which was marked by an era of openness and freedom, the acceptance of Pancasila ideology as the sole principle in Confucian religious organizations.

**Keywords:** *Confessional; Religion; Indonesia*

### **Introduction**

Forming a 'nation state' like Indonesia is inseparable from the many problems that arise. Relations between ethnic groups, religions, races, and inter-groups (SARA), if not managed properly, then in turn, relations between groups will transform into a potential condition that can pose a threat to Indonesia's national security.

In 1982, various religions and beliefs in God Almighty in Indonesia were compiled: Islam 89.5%, Protestantism 4.4%, Hinduism 1.9%, Confucianism 0.8%, and others 1% (Soewarso, 1982). If calculated in the same year, it was recorded that the population through the 1980 census amounted to 147.5 million people (Source BPS 1982). Then the number of Confucian adherents reached approximately 1,180,000.

All religious groups and belief in God Almighty in Indonesia want their existence to be recognized equally, without discrimination. However, there are still obstacles to making it happen, especially identifying Confucianism from the Chinese ethnic group. Since the reign of the New Order in its development, Confucianism is no longer recognized as the official religion in Indonesia but as an "ethical teaching" or a form of philosophy that teaches particular virtues.

To create harmonious relations between groups, especially the Chinese and native ethnic groups, the recognition of the Chinese ethnic group and especially the Confucian religion will be part of this effort.

The religious life of the Chinese ethnic in Indonesia, especially concerning the existence of the Confucian religion, has not yet received clear recognition, whether it is a philosophy, belief or faith.

Recognition of Confucianism by the Indonesian government and society is interpreted as an effort by the government and society to acknowledge the truth of Confucianism as an official religion, on par with Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, Catholicism and Christianity.

The fundamental values of Confucian teachings originate from the book, which consists of *Su Si*, the Fourth Book and *Ngo King*, the Fifth Book, which is the holy book for his followers (Hutomo, 1983:16-17).

Midst of the controversy surrounding the issue of the recognition of the Confucian religion, whether as a philosophy, belief or faith, this cannot be separated from the interpretation of Confucian teachings by parties related to the matter, namely the Indonesian government and society, as well as adherents of the Confucian religion.

Recognition of Confucian teachings in Indonesia has experienced ups and downs along with changes in government political policies. In Law Number 1/PN.Ps./1965 concerning the prevention of abuse and defamation of religion, in the elucidation of article by article, among other things, it is stated that the beliefs embraced by Indonesians are: Islam, Christianity, Catholicism, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Confucianism. Almost the entire population of Indonesia embraces these six religions, so unless they receive guarantees as provided by Article 29 of the 1945 Constitution, they also receive assistance and protection as provided by this article. Then, after the issue of assimilation became widespread and the Confucian religion was considered an obstacle to the assimilation process, the activities of the Confucian religious institutions began to be restricted. It is said that Confucianism or Confucianism are not religions but merely ethical and moral teachings (MATAKIN, 1995).

Presidential Instruction of the Republic of Indonesia Number 14 of 1967 concerning Chinese religion, beliefs and customs, which basically contains restrictions on Chinese religious festivals and traditions which have aspects of cultural affinity centred on their ancestral country, their implementation must be carried out internally in family relations or individuals, may not be done conspicuously in public.

This Presidential Instruction was followed up by a Joint Decree of the Minister of Religion, Minister of Home Affairs, and the Attorney General of the Republic of Indonesia Number 67 of 1980, Number 224 of 1980, Number Kep-111/JA/10/1980, which regulates the uniformity of acts in the regions. In dealing with issues related to the activities of Chinese rituals, which have aspects of cultural activity originating in their ancestral country. This means that the teachings of Confucianism, which are considered to have a close relationship with Chinese traditional culture, are limited in implementing religious celebrations and customs.

The government of President Soeharto emphasized that the recognition of foreign religious minorities was not in line with assimilationist policies. The Suharto government intended to absorb Chinese society into the Indonesian nation. Under these circumstances, political considerations seem to prevail over nation-building (Suryadinata, 1995).

Thus, the government does not recognize Confucianism as a religion by ignoring the aspects of Confucian values and mental and spiritual protection for Confucian followers.

Djiwandono (1995) states that religion does not require official recognition or approval from the state. The state does not have the right, authority or competence to determine whether a form of *worship* or belief is a religion. Suppose the condition is given the right or authority to grant that recognition. In that case, logically, the state also has the right to revoke or withdraw that recognition, whatever the reason. Even though embracing and adhering to religion is one of the manifestations of human rights.

Regarding state interference in religious matters, it is only limited to the duties and obligations of the state to protect or protect freedom in spiritual life and create a healthy climate that allows and supports the implementation of religious freedom in an atmosphere of harmony, mutual understanding, mutual respect, and even cooperation. The state can take firm action against a sect, movement, or religious sect that is "misguided". If necessary, the condition can and perhaps actually has to act not against such religious "heresy". *Sich*, but if any acts violate state law relating to public order, especially criminal law, such as the marriage of minors or mass murder as a ritual demanded by that religious belief.

The acknowledgement of Confucian teachings as a religion according to the views of Confucian followers starts from the *Tiong Yong* I: 1 (Perfect Middle Book), which states that: "The Word of Thian (God Almighty) is called the True Disposition. Living according to the True Disposition is called the Holy Path. Guidance to follow the Holy Path is called religion. (Makin, 1995).

Confucian followers acknowledge Confucian teachings as their religion aligns with Sumartana's view (1995). Recognition of Confucian values means that the government is willing to recognize the rights of every religious community. Whatever measure is to be used, the most valid answer to admit or not to recognize a religion, custom, or just philosophy, will be obtained from the adherents themselves. Any government cannot regulate a person's religion and beliefs. The state can only follow its people. Of course, people can have different opinions. The government may also disapprove of the inauguration of the Confucian religion as part of the spiritual treasury of the Indonesian nation. Still, there must be a deeper understanding of this religion and the possibility of open dialogue with them so that it is also known and appreciated by the Indonesian people.

Confucian followers face many problems related to the unclear status of Confucian teachings. Haksu Tjihie Tjay Ing (1995), a field person who devotes himself to serving the institutions and religious life of Confucian people in Indonesia, expresses his feelings that since about two decades ago and is still ongoing today, Confucian believers have had to experience various bitter realities that are very concerning. Among them was the abolition of Confucian religious subjects in the 1975 Elementary and Advanced School Education curriculum. As a result, Confucian children starting in 1977, were forced to take other religious education subjects to meet the demands of the applicable curriculum. In the Identity Card (KTP), which functions as their identity, they must confess to another recognized religion. The fact that is considered the most concerning is that the Civil Registry Office is not willing to register the marriage of a Confucian bride and groom even though they have performed the marriage according to the legal procedures of their religion or if they are not willing to admit to having another faith and marry according to the recognized religion. Confucians are not allowed to celebrate their holy days in public. Confucian Religious Institutions or Assemblies are not justified and are not permitted to carry out any activities of a formal nature. These are some of the problems faced and burdened the spiritual mentality of the Confucians in connection with their non-recognition of religion.

The status of Confucian teachings needs to be considered because if Confucian teachings are believed by their followers to be a religion, they do not receive proper attention in their religious practices. They can cause problems in the future. Opinion of Father Franz Magnis -Suseno (1995), the existence of a religion that isolates itself will result in the erosion of loyalty by a religious group. Religion demands high commitment from its adherents, so in the end, he feels faced with a choice: loyal to the state or faith, and he will choose religion. Primordial ties, and loyalties to tribes, regions, beliefs, and

local languages, will get stronger, and society will be divided. Such disintegration will undermine national resilience from within.

### **Research Method**

The research approach uses a processual historical method, which describes the ups and downs of Confucianism in Indonesia. The oral history method was used to collect data on the factors inhibiting the recognition of Confucianism by the Indonesian government and people and the struggle of Confucian followers to gain recognition of Confucianism as the official religion. And studies library. A data analysis using the descriptive-analytical method. The descriptive way describes the factors inhibiting the recognition of Confucianism by the government and society and the Confucian followers' struggle to recognise Confucianism as the official religion in Indonesia. The analytical method is used to analyze whether or not the Indonesian government and society recognize Confucianism as the official religion in Indonesia.

### **Result and Discussion**

Factors caused Confucianism not to be accepted as an official religion by the Indonesian government and society. The results of research on the position of Confucian teachings and the factors that have caused Confucian values not to be accepted as the official religion by the Indonesian government and society were obtained from a poll with several religious leaders (as representatives of community opinion) and the Head of the Ministry of Religion (as representatives of government opinion).

The results of a personal interview guide from Amien Rais (Monday, August 18 1997) as General Chairperson of the Muhammadiyah Central Executive representing Muslims gave his views: In-depth introduction to Confucian teachings he answered Yes, knows very little. Understanding Confucian teachings are pretty optimistic because Confucianism provides applicable moral norms for building society. As a Muslim, I have to respect Confucianism.

A factor inhibiting the recognition of Confucianism as the official religion in Indonesia is historical political factors; there are only (5) official religions, and if you want to accept Confucianism as the sixth religion (6), it needs national discussion, and it takes a long time.

The need for recognition of the values of Confucianism as the official religion in Indonesia is considered official religion because, in Islam, all religions must respect each other and provide high tolerance for adherents of other religions.

The results of a personal interview guide from Kariodimedjo (Friday, July 25 2017) as General Chairperson of the Indonesian Communion of Churches (PGI) for the Special Region of Yogyakarta representing Protestant Christians gave his views as follows: As a factor inhibiting the recognition of Confucianism as the official religion in Indonesia during the New Order era where communism was abolished, religion received significant attention. Groups that are less nationalist (exclusivism/primordial groups) reject Confucianism and beliefs removed, lack of awareness of *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika*, a crisis of primordial values, nationalism, fear, trauma faced by the government with the events of the 1965 *PKI September 30 Movement* when the "*Orde Lama*" had links with the People's Republic of China (PRC) so that Confucianism was suspected of being an atheist. The reality of the times has changed.

The need to recognize the values of Confucianism as the official religion in Indonesia shows the meaning of Pancasila Democracy in practice. For example, if the vote is okay, you win. However, you must pay attention to the losers and not lose your values (this is the meaning of kinship/mufakat deliberation). There are no negative Confucian values, which is why their adherents pay great attention to

them, live pragmatic, diligent life, and respect their ancestors. Their success in the economic field is due to their pragmatic attitude. They are very concerned about living in the present. The fundamental question that all adherents of religion must answer is to what extent does religion/belief have meaning in human life? If there is no use for what. Humans now no longer think mystically but are already functional.

The results of a personal interview guide from Father Dick Hartoko (Wednesday, July 23 1997), representing Catholics, gave his views as follows: As a factor inhibiting the recognition of Confucianism as the official religion in Indonesia, is the attitude of the Indonesian government, which is anti-Chinese. Compare this with the situation in the United States. Various races and customs but one nation. *E Pluribus Unum*.

The need for recognition of the values of Confucianism as the official religion in Indonesia is not necessary. Still, in the current situation of Indonesian society, it is essential to be fair. Confucian followers need the freedom to carry out their religious obligations by giving a short answer that is necessary.

The results of a personal interview guide from Kumara (Tuesday, July 29 1997) as Secretary of Parisada Hindu Dharma Indonesia (PHDI) gave his views as follows: As a factor inhibiting the recognition of Confucianism as the official religion in Indonesia is the internal closedness of Confucianism. From the side of the Indonesian government, it is necessary to be open about the fact that there are Confucian followers because it concerns the relationship between humans and the Creator of Nature. Matters of belief cannot be prohibited because they involve matters of faith. Voluntary assimilation, not by coercion, or pressure to embrace them, so they must embrace religion A or B.

Recognize the values of Confucianism as the official religion in Indonesia as long as these teachings can be Indonesian (adapt to Indonesian culture based on Pancasila). The need for freedom for Confucian followers to carry out their religious obligations by explaining that embracing a religion according to one's conscience is the most basic. The most important thing is not what religion "he/a person" is, but how "he" embraces his religion can regulate life physically and mentally by the values of the teachings of all religions, namely love. Why do Confucian followers have to be abandoned by adherents of their tradition just because of pressure from society and the government? We agree with giving Confucian supporters the freedom to carry out their religious obligations.

The results of a personal interview guide from Bhiku Dharmasurya Bhumi (Monday, July 14 1997), representing Buddhists, gave his views as follows: As a factor inhibiting the recognition of Confucianism from becoming the official religion in Indonesia is the existence of a traditional relationship and mental ties with the ancestral country, its followers find it difficult to adapt to the surrounding community (permanently isolating themselves), experience in history they have never participated in fighting against the invaders, and even often helped them, their actions have always made the country's security and security fragile, Confucianism teachings only specifically for the Chinese.

Confucian values as the official religion in Indonesia, where Confucian values are only socio-cultural. It is challenging to be recognized as a religion. Even in their home country, Confucianism remains a philosophy, not a religion.

The results of a personal interview guide from Djami'an (Wednesday, July 16 1997) as the Head of the Office of the Department of Religion of the Municipality of Yogyakarta II Municipality representing the government gave his views as follows: As a factor inhibiting the recognition of Confucianism as the official religion in Indonesia is that Chinese worship procedures have an affinity aspect culture that originates from the ancestral country and is a manifestation of Chinese nature and pattern that is not under the culture of the Indonesian nation.

No need to recognize the values of Confucianism as the official religion in Indonesia because Confucianism is Chinese and does not fit with the culture of the Indonesian people.

The view of religious leaders and the government regarding several factors that can hinder the recognition of Confucian teachings as the official religion by the people and the Indonesian government include (1) the lack of introduction (closure) of Confucian teachings during society so that people are less able to contribute ideas regarding the need for recognition of Confucianism as an official religion, (2) Confucianism still has traditional ties with the ancestral culture of the Chinese people which are not per Indonesian culture, (3) there is a strong perception/belief from the government towards the revival of Chinese communism, (4) the exclusive attitude of Chinese society, and (5) anti-Chinese government and society.

B. Confucian Followers ' Efforts to Struggle for Confucianism to Become the Official Religion in Indonesia.

Confucian followers and their institutions began around 1975 and continued until 1999, facing various constraints and obstacles from the Indonesian government. As a consequence of the non-recognition of Confucianism as the official religion, Confucian religious education is not included in the school education curriculum, the activities of formal religious organizations cannot be carried out due to licensing constraints, the identity on the Identity Card must choose to be vacated or follow one of the official religions in Indonesia, and finally, the government does not recognize partner marriages according to the Confucian religion by the government through the Civil Registry Office.

Confucian followers have initiated efforts to gain a position as one of the official religions recognized by the Indonesian government, such as the letter of protest issued by Chandra Setiawan (Chairman of the MATAKIN Daily Central Leadership Council) based in Jakarta. On June 10, 1991, Post Box 5000 sent a letter to the Vice President of the Republic of Indonesia, Mr Soedharmono. The entire contents of the letter read:

Jakarta, June 10 1991  
Dear  
Mr Soedharmono, SH  
Vice President of the Republic of Indonesia  
dropbox 5000  
Jakarta  
Sincerely,  
Subject: Reports and Ask for Feedback

Please allow me to try to interfere with your busy life for the first time. For that, I apologize in advance.

I would like to address the human rights of your “children” who choose Confucianism as their religion.

\*) On May 17, 1991, the largest daily in Central Java, Suara Merdeka, Semarang, published an article entitled, "Allegedly heretical sect, Salatiga authorities disband "PAKIN" activities. The core of the report contains, among other things, that the activities of the youth members of PAKIN (Indonesian Confucian Youth Religion) at the Ambarawa Tri Dharma Temple are suspected of being deviant. Then the article also quoted the official in charge, "What is in this organization is not religion. Is there a Confucian religion, so they will only mislead adherents? (A copy of the full text on Suara Merdeka is attached).

These writings have caused unrest among Confucian people in Central Java and other areas because their religion is categorized as a deviant sect.

You need to know "de facto" that no less than 100 Confucian places of worship in the Pancasila motherland are regularly visited by their followers to carry out their worship. I am confident that Indonesian Confucian clergy always try to guide their followers at every service, mainly so that they become human beings who are physically and mentally healthy. They become fully Indonesian human beings because the statement above is very concerning.

Mr Soedharmono, SH, regarding the incident above, which in my opinion, could lead to SARA problems, with all humility, I ask your permission to give adequate attention so that your "children" may always feel the coolness of working on earth. This Pancasila and anxiety can pass.

Besides that, because you happen to be a law graduate, I would like your response to the letter of the MENKO KESRA dated October 15, 1983, Number: 764/MENKO/KESRA/1983, that Confucianism is not a religion but a philosophy of life. The letter above is used as the number one reference by the Head of the Regional Sospol Office Tk.II Semarang (copy attached). I do not know whether a minister can issue a "fatwa" like the one above. Confucianism is a religion for me, and I am an extraordinary lecturer in the Confucian Religion course at Gadjah Mada University, Yogyakarta. What about the status of PnPs No. 1/1965, which has become Law No.5 of 1969, as quoted by Mr Drs. Uung Sendana LL was published in Suara Merdeka Daily on June 6, 1991.

On this auspicious occasion, I would also like to report that until now, Confucian adherents are not allowed to include Confucianism in their KTP. What do you think? Is it more advantageous for the Confucians to be marked (-) in the religion column on their KTP? A photocopy of my KTP is attached.

This letter was written out of encouragement from within myself and my conscience, bearing in mind that I am also a servant of the state. I am a Level I P-4 trainer in my organization. Therefore this letter is entirely my responsibility.

My identity is briefly attached.

Thank you for all your attention and response.

May God Almighty always bless you in leading the Indonesian nation.

Yours faithfully,

Drs. Chandra Setiawan, MM.

Copy:

1. Dear The Minister of Religion of the Republic of Indonesia
2. Dear Mr Minister of Home Affairs RI
3. Dear. The Coordinating Minister for People's Welfare of the Republic of Indonesia
4. Dear. Mr MENKO POLKAM RI
5. Left behind

Confucian religious figures, Chandra Setiawan, to this day (during the reign of Kyai Haji Abdurrahman Wahid), have received a response with the issuance of Presidential Decree No. 6 of 2000 concerning the Repeal of Presidential Instruction No. 14 of 1967 concerning Religion, Beliefs, and Chinese Customs. In this way, all obstacles to licensing the implementation of Confucian religious worship that has been going on so far have been eliminated. This Presidential Decree is valid since it was stipulated in Jakarta on January 17, 2000.

In 2001, President KH Abdurrahman Wahid made Chinese New Year an optional holiday for ethnic Chinese. President Megawati Soekarno Putri continued this policy by establishing the Chinese New Year as a national holiday through Presidential Decree No. 19 of 2002 concerning the Chinese New Year on April 9, 2002.

Another form of recognition of the Confucian religion after the reformation (1998/99) was the issuance of Government Regulation Number 55 of 2007 concerning Religious Education and Religious Education. One of the contents of this PP mandates that Confucian Religion Subjects be held in the formal education pathway. This is not a new thing in Indonesia. Previously, during the time of President Soekarno, Confucian religious education was implemented. It is just that when President Soeharto took office, Confucianism then seemed to disappear because the government did not recognize it.

He admitted that the existence of ethnic Chinese and Confucianism in Indonesia also influenced the development of culture in Indonesia. Nowadays, people can learn Mandarin widely. Lately, Mandarin is often used as a business language. The Chinese culture has also begun to be freely demonstrated in Indonesia. Cultures such as Barong Sai, Dragon Liong, the Celebration of Cao Goh Meh, and the Chinese New Year Celebration are currently very easy to find in Indonesia (wisnu.blog.uns.ac.id accessed August 29 2020).

### **Conclusion**

Confucian religions, which are recorded and written in the Su Si and Ngo King Scriptures, are good teachings so that their followers maintain and respect these teachings.

The recognition of Confucianism in Indonesia has had its ups and downs. Presidential Decree Number 1 of 1965, enacted through Law Number 5 of 1969, stipulates that Islam, Christianity, Catholicism, Hinduism, Buddhism and Confucianism are the official religions of the Indonesian population. During the New Order era, all Confucian worship activities were prohibited by Presidential Instruction (Inpres) No. 14/1967 concerning Religion, Beliefs, and Chinese Customs. President KH Abdulrahman Wahid then revoked Suharto's Presidential Instruction with Presidential Decree (Kepres) No. 6/2000. Ethnic Chinese can even celebrate Chinese New Year freely and openly.

Factors that support the recognition of Confucianism as the official religion in Indonesia are since Indonesia entered the reformation period in 1998, which was marked by an era of openness and freedom, acceptance of Pancasila ideology as the sole principle in Confucian religious organizations, involvement of Confucian followers in strengthening Indonesia's national security, and demands democratization and protection of human rights, especially freedom of religion guaranteed by the 1945 Constitution.

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