

The Smoke of The Incense and The Roar of The Lion: Confucianism Under The Colonial Political System in Indonesia

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Received : 27 December 2022
Accepted : 13 January 2024
Published : 28 March 2024

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Abstract

This article aims to provide a brief overview regarding the existence of Confucianism as a religion in the Dutch East Indies and its relationship with the colonial ruling regime during the last four decades of Dutch rule. With the overview, it is hoped that the type of colonial policy that was made towards the Chinese ethnic belief could be understood, whether in social or political aspects and also its relevance to world developments that took place at the time. To realise this goal, the method used in this paper is the historical research method which consists of four stages: data search (heuristic), source criticism, interpretation, and reconstruction as a form of final academic presentation. With this method, it is hoped that a short paper can be presented that is arranged in a reconstructive manner and is able to provide answers to research problems. As a final conclusion, this paper reveals that in principle, colonial political interests cannot be separated from the existence of religion in her colony, including Confucianism. Especially the international aspect that began to colour the existence of this religion in the Dutch East Indies colony became the main motivation for the colonial government to determine their policies. In this case, the dualistic nature of Dutch colonial policy can be recognised.

Keywords

Confucianism; Colonial; Political System; Soft Power; Chinese-Indonesia

INTRODUCTION

When exactly Confucianism entered Indonesia cannot be ascertained with a number of years. However, the existence of this religious sect can be assumed to be closely related to the presence of its adherents who show social, geographical, and philosophical identities. It can be said that the adherents of this religion are Chinese ethnic, who have entered and operated in the

Indonesian archipelago since the beginning of the Gregorian era.¹ They brought their social identity which originated from their homeland with them to Southeast Asia. With this social identity, they not only present themselves physically different from other ethnicities, but also their worldview including their belief that show a specialisation in social interaction with other nations.²

The interesting thing to observe is that the presence of Chinese ethnic from their homeland has brought their own belief, in this case the Confucian religion or *Konghucu*.³ As a social entity, the existence of Chinese ethnic with their belief displays a special and different social identity compared to other entities that live and interact with them. Both indigenous people and other migrants show stark difference compared to these Chinese ethnic, especially in terms of beliefs. Yet throughout the centuries of their existence, only the Chinese ethnic have not preached the Confucian religion to other people or ethnicities, like Buddhism or Islam in Asia or Christianity by the Europeans. Since before and during the implementation of positive law in *Nusantara*, the Confucian religion has been practiced only by Chinese ethnic and is synonymous with them.

From there, an issue arose when the phenomenon was placed under the context of legal administration by the colonial ruling regime, which built her power structure based on formal juridical principles and different from the previous indigenous rulers. The integration of Chinese ethnic into this colonial social structure, especially since the mid-19th century with the adoption of the principle of citizenship (*onderdanschaap*) by the colonial rulers, brought significant changes in the life and mobility of this ethnic

¹ The testimony of a Chinese traveller, Fa-Hien who arrived in Java in 414 AD states that Fa-Hien had not seen any Chinese on the Java coast and Fa-Hien was the person who introduced Java to the ruler of China. Thanks to this information, the relationship of interaction between the Chinese empire and Java was established, which was legalised in 435 with the name *Dja-va-da* in the official archives of the Chinese Empire, and around 515 it was changed to *Langgasu* or *Langga*. However, major trade flows began to take place from China to Java under the Tang Dynasty (618-906) followed by the opening of diplomatic relations with the Kingdom of Kalingga. L.H.W. van Sandick, *Chineezzen Buiten China: Hunne beteekenis voor de Ontwikkeling van Zuid-Oost Azie special van Nederlandsch Indie* ('s Gravenhage, 1909, M. van der Beek), page 157.

² A Dutch who is considered as Chinese expert and was once the Advisor of Chinese Affairs to the Governor-General of the Dutch East Indies, P.H. Fromberg, said that the term 'China' refers to a racial notion. Because it relies on this notion, there are of course differences because in this world there are various races that are not the same. In addition, according to Fromberg, this racial specification refers to physical form of the individual that no longer refers to political connotations such as nationalism or culture such as social. However, regarding Confucianism, this is different. P.H. Fromberg, *De Chineezzen en het Nationaliteitsbeginsel: Rede voor de Vereeniging Chung Hwa Hui gehouden op 6 Maart 1920* ('s Gravenhage, 1920, Chung Hua Hui), page 8.

³ In the process of transmission, the traditional Chinese community in China in the era before AD also brought Confucian teachings to Korea and to Japan. However, no Japanese people embraced this religion and continued to believe in Shintoism. This is in contrast to Buddhism, which was later accepted and adopted in Japan. G. Nypels, *Japan-Nederland in Oost-Azie: eene militaire studie* (Haarlem, 1899), DeErven Loosjes), page 2.

group.

However, considering the many writings have been made regarding the subject, this article tends to review the Chinese ethnic religion, namely Confucianism under the colonial political system. In this case, it needs to be seen whether the Dutch East Indies government regulated the existence and religious activities of these Chinese from a political aspect as they did with Christianity or Catholicism in the West, or using a customary approach as they did latterly with Islam in Indonesia. Of course, all of this is inseparable from the legal-administrative interests of the colonial regime, especially to maintain their principle of power which rests on ‘*rust en orde*’.

The Confucian View of Power Relations

Confucianism, taught by Confucius, a philosopher who lived in China around five thousand years BC, is a philosophical and ethical teaching to be used as a guide for life. Although he believed in the existence of a great power that organised and created this world, his knowledge of God as espoused by the religions of the world to the west of China was vastly different. The main emphasis in his teachings was more on the realistic horizontal aspect, namely on man’s relationship with man and man’s relationship with nature.

Starting from that view, Confucius himself later applied his teachings to the stability of life built into the system of government to regulate and protect all human beings in their interrelationships. For this principle, he expressed the following:

Kung Fu Tse vertrouwt dat de heilzame invloed van een deugdzaam vorst op zichzelf orde en rust in diens rijk zal verzekeren. Door riten, rythmen en mystiek moeten de menschen tot gehoorzaamheid en deugd worden opgevoed. Regeeren is rechtuit gaan. Indien de vorst het volk rechtuit voert, wie van zijn onderdanen zal het wagen af te wijken? Als een land eens honderd jaar lang goede heerschers had, dan kon de misdaad geheel zijn uitgeroeid en de doodstraf worden afgeschaft.⁴

Confucius believed that the positive influence of a wise king would ensure order and tranquillity in his kingdom. Through rituals, rhythms and mysticism, people should be educated to be obedient and pious. The government will continue to progress. If the king justly promotes his subjects, who of his subjects would dare to deviate? If a country has a good ruler for a hundred years, crime will disappear completely and the

⁴ Marie Hubert Francois Richard Vrijens, *Onderzoekingen over inhoud en ontwikkeling van het staatsbegrip* (Maastricht, 1926, Van Aest), page 91.

death penalty will be abolished.

From Confucius' views above, it can be seen that in his time, the government system had developed and so had the legal system. However, it can be assumed that the condition of the state at that time showed disorder so that his philosophy contains an ideal situation if the various rules he formulated are fulfilled. In this case, the figure of the ruler becomes very decisive for the life of his subjects and also the progress of his country, in addition to good law enforcement without having to eliminate someone's life.

The above statement is evident from the writings that describe the period in Chinese history before and at the time of Prophet Confucius' birth, which inspired him to compose his philosophy. These writing is recorded as follows:

China was in die eeuwen een feodale staat, waar de heerscher een groot aantal vasallen onder zich had. Vanzelfsprekend was het streven van alle vassallen er op gericht hun gebied te vergrooten, en zich hoe langer hoe meer van den heerscher onafhankelijk te maken. Om dit gevaar tegen te gaan moest een heerscher buitengewoon krachtig en verstandig zijn, en de koningen van de dynastie waren helaas geenszins zulke bijzondere persoonlijkheden. Het land werd hoe langer hoe meer door innerlijken strijd verscheurd. De macht van den rijksbeheerder brokkelde af en verbleekte ten slotte tot een schaduw. De vasallen kwamen door hun pogingen hun voortdurend leefden ze met elkander in oorlog. Zwaar leed de groote menigte der bevolking onder die toestanden.⁵

For centuries, China was a feudal state whose ruler over a large number of vassals. All vassals tried to expand their territories and, in the process, became more independent. To prevent this danger, one had to be a very strong and wise ruler, and the kings of the dynasty were unfortunately no such thing. the state was increasingly torn apart by internal conflicts. The managing power of the kingdom collapsed and eventually disappeared into the shadows. The vassals through their endeavours always lived at war with each other. Many people suffered greatly under these conditions.

By looking at the meaning of the above writing, it can be surmised that the emergence of Confucian philosophy is more similar to the publication of Niccolo Machiavelli's political philosophy in Italy in the 14th to 15th centuries, which took place against the backdrop of political conflict as a

⁵ H. Hackman, *Chineesche Wijsgeeren –I: Confusius en Lao Tse* (Amsterdam, 1930, H.J. Paris), page 8.

result of the weakening power of the central authorities. Machiavelli, who is negatively perceived as the politician who inspired the rule of dictators and absolutism in Europe, wrote his philosophical views with the idealism of saving the state and protecting the people from suffering due to civil war and division.

Confucius, who came from a family of bureaucratic background (his father was the governor of Yen Chou city in southwestern Shantung), was deeply affected by the upheaval in his country. He and his family were among the victims of this upheaval, which resulted in him living in poverty and learn many lessons. However, it was through his life experiences, including joining the royal bureaucratic corps, that Confucius was able to formulate his philosophy, which later became the basis for the Confucian worldview.

In principle, Confucius taught the existence of a harmonious relationship in human beings as the most basic unit of life. When a human being can stabilise himself and be at peace with himself, then this will be the main capital to build stability and harmony in the family that descended him or that he formed as a new family. A stable and harmonious atmosphere in the life of a family will affect the positive atmosphere of the surrounding environment that forms a unit of social life. When this social environment grows and develops into harmony, then it becomes the main capital for the harmony in a country.⁶

To build such a stable situation, the leader becomes a very important factor. Apart from the individual, the leader of the social unit plays a significant role in being able to organise and realise harmony in life. The head of family or parent becomes the basic figure in creating harmony and stability in life, at least within a family. Furthermore, in accordance to the level of stratification, the head of state becomes the highest figure responsible for realising stability in the government of his country among his subjects.

In this matter, Lee Dian Rainey wrote as follows:

If parents neglect or abuse their children, they are not acting according to the expectations we have for “parents”. If teachers do not bother to teach their students, they are not living up to the behavior we expect from their title. If these people do not act as fathers, mothers, or teachers, then they do not deserve these titles and should not be called by those names. People have to act to virtuously and responsible before they can properly be called parents or teachers. If a ruler does not rule virtuously, then he is not a proper ruler and does not deserve the title. This idea has

⁶ James Legge D.D., *The Life and Teachings of Confucius* (London, 1807, N. Trubner and Co), page 29.

serious political consequences.⁷

In Lee's view above, it can be seen that beyond the actors who appear as responsible figures, there are expectations of others on their functioning and behaviour. These other can refer to those who are directly related or associated such as students, family members, or citizens, but can also be those who are indirectly related such as members of the social environment.

In addition to expectations, there are also consequences that arise from the behaviour of these figures according to the limits and scope of their authority. The head of family or a teacher is different in scope from a ruler, but the obligations and impacts remain the same, especially towards other members under his authority or in the surrounding environment. For the ruler, his behaviour that is not in accordance with the established rules and norms will have a great impact not only on the people, but also on other rulers and this will lead to wars or conflicts that sacrifice everything, not just the ruler himself.

Particularly regarding the ruler who governs a country, Confucius' view can be observed as follows:

The ruler governs only with the consent of the people, and that it is ultimately the ordinary man who retains the right to choose his own government. The role of the common people is to keep government in check and ensure that it follows sound policies. These common people are the touch stone by which the Three Dynasties were kept to the straight path. By gaining the people, the kingdom is gained, and by losing the people, the kingdom is lost.⁸

By looking at the above statement, it can be surmised that Confucius' view of the system of government is similar to that of Western democracy, albeit using a different approach. If liberal democracy emphasises the aspect of election through polls, then Confucius was more inclined to the aspect of life philosophy, namely acting as a good leader at all levels. One of the good traits is to protect and give members the right to monitor his steps and help direct him, but there is no election for the ruler other than the system of government.

The Confucian philosophy of power, which appears in the above quote, is further elaborated in the quote below:

⁷ Lee Dian Rainey, *Confucius and Confucianism the Essentials* (West Sussex, 2010, John Wiley and Sons), page 29.

⁸ Michael Schuuman, *Confucius* (New York, 2015, Basic Books), *chapter nine*

The character of a ruler is like the wind and that of the people is like grass. In whatever direction the wind blows, the grass always bends. That there is also a cosmic dimension to the ruler's responsibilities with respect to benevolent and humane rule is unarguable, but the ruler nonetheless remains very much the paternalistic parent of the people. Truly kingly government is found when men of seventy silk to wear and meat to eat, when the common people are neither hungry nor cold. All things are already complete in oneself. There is the work of great men and there is the work of little men. Some labor with their minds and some labor with their strength. Those who labor with their minds govern others; those who labor with their strength are governed by others. This is a universal principle.⁹

Although there are utopian tendencies in this view, Confucius affirmed that cooperation and harmony would lead to success. Differentiation of labour is found in the view of power relations by Confucius, each with its own rights and responsibilities. Thus, goals can be achieved if harmonious conditions are created, while harmony will be realised if there is fair and equal cooperation by the forming elements.

In the history of China, to realise the above doctrine, Confucius adapted to the existing structure. Under the imperial regime with a strong feudalist structure gripping the people,

Confucius advocated using feudalism and the system of propriety against absolute monarchy. Confucius observed with dissatisfaction as feudalism's grip slackened and the relationship between ruler and subordinate become one of command and obedience. He proposed restoring the system of propriety as a way of reviving feudalism.¹⁰

Perhaps what Confucius meant by feudalism in this case was the power of the nobles who owned hereditary lands. Within the power structure in China, this group became the main counterweight to the sole power of the king or emperor, so it was the same as in Japan but different from Indonesia where the king was the centre of power and the nobles were dependent on him.

But as in Indonesia, land ownership was considered as very important phenomenon in the power structure. The control of land and its exploitation would grant its owner the power to rise up against the intervention of others,

⁹ Peter Nosco, "Confucian Perspectives on Civil Society and Government" in Daniel A Bell, *Confucian Political Ethics* (New Jersey, 2008, Princeton University Press), page 34.

¹⁰ Ma Licheng, *Leading School of Thought in Contemporary China* (Singapore, 2013, World Scientific Publ), page 200.

such as the control of land by the feudal lords which protected them against the pressure of the king because with the control of land the lords could obtain the labour to work it to become their strength in facing the royal troops.

With the principle as stated above in the context of power relations, between the ruler and the people, Confucianism can be the foundation for the establishment of power and government structures by oriental despots, as stated by Karl Wittfogel. In his view of oriental despotism, Wittfogel agreed with Confucius regarding the figure who determines and plays a strategic role, when he said, “if a good man rules a country, then within a hundred years everything will change for the good.”¹¹

Confucianism in The Colonial Political System

On 3 October 1928, in the building belonging to the Tiong Hoa Hwe Koan Foundation, on Molenvliet street (Glodok village), Batavia city, a big celebration was held by the Chinese people in the city. The celebration was intended to commemorate the birthday of Confucius or Prophet Kong Hu Cu according to their belief and religion. The celebration is usually accompanied by a procession along Molenvliet street, so all the shops in Glodok village close and do not open their businesses for the day, while all the Chinese houses fly the flag of China as a form of their participation in the celebration. The event will end with lectures in the building by Chinese figures and then a feast together as a form of social intimacy.¹²

Not only the celebration to commemorate the birth of the Prophet, but also the death of the Prophet Confucius became an important commemorative agenda among his adherents who generally consisted of Chinese ethnic. On 30 March 1926, in the building belonging to the Khong Kao Hwee organisation in Surakarta, a celebration was held to commemorate the death of the Prophet Confucius. In the celebration, which was attended by adults and children, lectures were held on his teachings or to commemorate the life of the Prophet.¹³

Both of the above celebrations were held annually and in various cities in the Dutch East Indies by the Chinese community. From various phases of Chinese life, respect for these celebrations is clearly shown in the form of contribution and passive respect.¹⁴ This proves that many Chinese

¹¹ Karl A. Wittfogel, *Oriental Despotism; A Comparative Study of Total Power* (New York, 1981, Random House), page 138.

¹² “Confusius Herdenking” in *Bataviaasch Nieuwsblad*, 8 October 1928, 1st sheet.

¹³ “Herdenking van Confusius Sterfdag” in *Het Nieuw Vorstenlanden*, 1 April 1926, 2nd sheet.

¹⁴ “Geboortedag van Confusius” in *De Locomotief*, 16 October 1933, 6th sheet. In the city of Semarang, when the celebration was held, Chinese-owned banks and shops are closed for the day.

people in the Dutch East Indies embraced Confucianism and they also played an active role or participated in developing and preserving this religion. However, this does not show the inclusive nature of their belief and their social relations, as there was no effort among the Chinese ethnic to spread the teachings of the religion and recruit people outside of them into the sphere of religion and belief.

Nevertheless, this religion shows a strong organisational structure both physically or administratively. Physically, the existence of this religion is evidenced by the existence of buildings or infrastructure directly related to the implementation of their worship such as temples (klenteng) and foundation buildings. Also the form of procession as mentioned above proves that there is a special liturgical form that sustains its religious life and involves the active role of its adherents.

In addition, organisationally, this religion is also evidenced through the existence of foundations which, although not solely managing the interests of the religion and also involving other interests of Chinese ethnic, confirm the dynamisation of its religious life. Several foundations that were actively involved, as in the above celebrations, show that there were organisational forms that sustained the liturgical and ceremonial aspects of Confucian religion in the Dutch East Indies.

During the era of her rule and her relationship with the social life of her subjects, the Dutch East Indies government had little contact with the religion of her people, especially the religion of her Asian subjects, particularly Confucianism or Kong Hu Cu. Compared to Christianity and Islam, the colonial government's relationship with the activities or liturgies of the Confucian religion was based more on her relationship with the Chinese ethnic as the majority of its adherents. However, the relationship with the Chinese ethnic also did not touch the field of belief, as was the case with the Arabs and other Foreign Easterner groups. There has never been any instances of the colonial government intervention or contribution to the existence and activities of the Confucian religion.

However, the above facts do not mean that of the Dutch government did not pay attention to the belief of the Chinese ethnic. In a lecture given by Reverend J.A.R. Terlet at the Loge Deli building in Medan at the end of July 1933, European attention to Confucianism was shown. Among others, his lecture was published in the local press.

Confusius werd geboren in 550 voor Christus, terwijl Laotse in de periode leefde van 604 voor tot plm. 80 na Christus. De invloed van deze

*beide Chineesche wijsgeeren zijn nu nog steeds te voelen, daarom roert spreker deze kwestie aan, aangezien men hier in Indie dagelijks met Chineezen in aanraking komt en er die suit den aard der zaak bijzondere belangstelling voor China is. China dat een van de oudste landen is, nu in opkomst en zal daardoor veel met Europa te maken krijgen.*¹⁵

The Prophet Confucius was born in 550 BC, while Laotse lived in the period from 604 BC to about 80 BC. The influence of the two Chinese philosophers is now increasingly felt, hence the speaker raises this issue given that in the Indies people come into contact with the Chinese on a daily basis and the nature of this issue devotes special attention to China. China, which is one of the oldest countries, is now developing and will have more contact with Europe.

Although Terlet was not a government official and had no connection whatsoever to the bureaucratic structure of the colonial government, his views could have had influence among Europeans due to his status as a priest and public figure whose views were widely trusted.

In addition, while it is possible that his perspective was that of Christianity, Terlet's opinions were not limited to the spiritual aspect. Instead, he relates the teachings and beliefs of Confucius to international politics, in this case relations with China and her role in international politics in the 1930s, including differences with Western views and interests related to Confucianism.¹⁶ To counter the strategies adopted by the new generation of Chinese ruling elites in Asia, especially towards the Europeans, Terlet proposed that they deepen the foundation of the Chinese philosophy of life, namely the teachings of Confucius.

In his lecture, Terlet said that the basic beliefs of Confucianism as follows:

De grondidee kwam tot uiting dat de mensch de beslissing over het recht in zijn eigen binnenste draagt, hij heeft een maatstaf in zich zelf, en is hierdoor onafhankelijk van het religieuze leven. Men was overtuigd van de verantwoordelijkheid, het lichaam rein te houden, aangezien het lichaam van de ouders was verkregen. De mensch is een deel van de gemeenschap en heeft dus een verantwoordelijkheid ten opzichte der gemeenschap. Hij heeft er veel aan te danken doch daar tegenover staan de plichten.

¹⁵ "Confucius, Lao'tse en onze tijd" in *De Sumatra Post*, 28 July 1933, 3rd sheet.

¹⁶ At the time of Terlet's writing, there were news in China whether the Christian Church could accept the presence of Confucianism. This stemmed from the fact that everywhere in Chinese families, Confucius statues were revered just as much as the saints in Christian doctrine. As a solution, the Catholic Church in Manchuria allowed the erection and maintenance of Confucius statue as a form of honour, but not as an object of worship. "Christendom en Nationale Traditie in Verre Oosten" in *De Koerier*, 12 August 1936, 5th sheet.

The basic principle suggests that man is decisive in his personal rights, he has his own measure and is thus free from religious life. People believe in the responsibility to cleanse the body since the body is acquired from the parents (ancestors). Man is part of the community and thus has responsibilities in relation to the community. He has much to be thankful for but also has obligations towards it.

Using this basic principle, Terlet connects the Chinese people as Confucian adherents cannot be released or separated from the community. However, the community referred to is not limited to the community of fellow Confucian adherents or Chinese ethnic group only, but the wider community, namely the Dutch East Indies society. Therefore, although he adhered to the Confucian religion or belief, Chinese people remained subject to the Dutch East Indies society which in this case was represented by the colonial government as the representative of the Dutch government in Europe.¹⁷

Terlet's view as well as several other responses from the West had prompted a reaction from the adherents of Confucianism. In a meeting of the Khong Kauw Hwee organisation held in Lombok alley, Semarang in early June 1939, several young Confucian figures expressed their views that were different from the older generation. They considered that the teachings of Confucius were no longer limited to its identity with Chinese culture, but extended beyond national boundaries. This is evidenced by their reference that in some parts of China, mission and zending schools opened there also taught Confucian philosophy. On the other hand, the older generation feared that this contact with foreign traditions and culture would lead to a dilution of Chinese culture or even the loss of Confucian teachings.¹⁸

Meanwhile, by placing it in such structural political relationship, Terlet opened the opportunity for the Dutch colonial government to intervene in the institutions or liturgical activities of the Confucian religion.¹⁹ However, until the end of her rule, the Dutch colonial government did not issue a specific regulation concerning or regulating this faith. The regulations that were

¹⁷ It is possible that Terlet's views were influenced or partly a response to the emergence and fame of the Chinese philosopher, Kung Hu Ming's view, which in the third decade spread to a number of countries. According to Kung Hu Ming, the Western nations need soldiers and priests to control themselves, while Chinese people do not need priests because they have already embraced Confucian philosophy in their souls as self-control. Thus, force does not need to be used to tame or conquer something. "Europa naar Chineesche opvatting" in *De Locomotief*, 17 December 1917, 11th sheet.

¹⁸ "Kong Kauw Hwee Avond" in *De locomotief*, 7 June 1939, 2nd sheet.

¹⁹ It is suspected that Terlet also knew the basis of loyalty related to love relationships in human life: the love of ruler to people, father to son, man to woman, brother to brother and between friends. The ruler's love for the people became the basis for good relations between the Confucians and the Dutch colonial government. "Socialisme in het oude China" in *De Indische Courant*, 10 January 1925, 8th sheet.

issued mostly applied to the Chinese ethnic as a community of subjects (*onderdaan gemeenschap*) within the colonial structure, and not their belief. Even when the international community witnessed tense conflicts, mainly involving China in the 1930s decade, the Dutch colonial government did not show any change of attitude in her policy towards the Chinese ethnic in the Indies, especially towards the Confucian religion.

It is possible that this attitude of the colonial government was also influenced by the attitude of the central government in Den Haag towards the Chinese community living in the Netherlands. So far, the Queen's government (*Koninklijke Bestuur*) had not intervened against this ethnicity, quite the opposite, they respected and provided facilities for the existence and activities of Chinese ethnic in the Netherlands who were considered as their subjects. This was also the case with respect for the form of Confucian religious liturgical activities performed by the Chinese community as its adherents in the Netherlands.²⁰

The government in Batavia followed suit, particularly with regard to Confucian form of worship in the Dutch East Indies. Without considering the views of certain segments of Westerners, the Dutch East Indies government seems to have been conducive to the activities and existence of Confucian celebrations. When the Indies faced the threat of war in May 1940, after the occupation of the Netherlands by the German army on 15 May 1940, a Confucian celebration was held at the Confucian temple in Buitenzorg (Bogor) on 26 May 1940 to ask for the safety of Queen Wilhelmina and her family who had fled to London. The celebration was not only attended by European officials, but also by indigenous officials including the regent of Buitenzorg and his wife. In the ceremony led by six Confucian priests, all individuals and organisations involved in the religious event were present.²¹

The ceremony proved that the Dutch colonial government did not question the existence of this religion and considered it to be the authority and internal matter of the Chinese ethnic. Likewise, in other official ceremonies organised with the approval or by the colonial government, the contributions of Confucianism were welcomed. This is evident from the following

²⁰ Adherents of Confucianism in the Netherlands often performed their liturgical activities openly and received positive attention from both Dutch bureaucrats and the Dutch public at large. For example, at the end of June 1936 the Chinese Confucian congregation in Rotterdam held an open ceremony to commemorate Kee Leen, the sacred animal companion of the Prophet Confucius. The ceremony included the blessing of the statue according to Confucian liturgical rules and was followed by a procession around the city under the supervision of Rotterdam residents. "De Heilige Bok Kee Leen ingewijd op Katendregt" in *De Sumatra Post*, 2 July 1936, 9th sheet.

²¹ "Buitenzorg" in *Bataviaasch Nieuwsblad*, 27 May 1940, 3rd sheet.

speech delivered by Liem Hwie Giap, the head of the Dutch East Indies Football Association, at the opening of the colonial tournament in Bandung at the end of May 1941, as follows:

Als straks de oorlog zal zijn gewonnen, en Nederland herrezen zal zijn onder de bezielende en zegenbrengende leiding van Hare Majesteit Koningin Wilhelmina, dan wacht ons allen een nog moeilijker taak; het winnen van den vrede. Op de puinhoopen van deze wereld moet straks een nieuwe verrijzen. Een nieuwe wereld, waarin de volkeren naar wij hopen, in een betere verstanhouding dan thans het geval is, tot elkaar zullen staan. Dan zullen wij een stap nader zijn gekomen tot de verwezenlijking van Confusius leering, dat binnen de vier zeeën alle menschen broeders zijn.²²

When the war is won and the Netherlands revives under the blessed and energising leadership of Her Majesty Queen Wilhelmina, then only a more difficult task awaits us; the attainment of peace. On the rubble of the world, a new thing must emerge. A new world with nations that we hope will co-exist in better relations than now. Then we will go further to realise the teaching of Confucius, that in the four oceans all men are brothers.

In this speech, it appears that the adherents of Confucianism integrated themselves into Dutch rule (*Pax Neerlandica*) which they believed would revive after the war ended. From this, it can be surmised that in principle they believed that the pre-war status quo condition would be restored and that no changes would occur as a result of the development of the situation. In addition, it was believed that Confucianism would obtain an appropriate place in the newly restored structure under the Dutch East Indies system of law and authority.

Colonial Government Surveillance

Despite the colonial government's conducive and non-interventionist view towards the religious life of Confucianism adherents, this does not mean that there was no supervision at all by the Dutch East Indies colonial regime. Given that the view held by colonial officials was to make Confucianism synonymous with and part of the Chinese or Foreign Easterners community who were her subjects, political relations with the international community, especially with what was happening in China became one of the starting points for colonial policy towards Confucianism in the Dutch East Indies.

²² "Jaarcongres vol sportzin" in *Soerabajasch Handelsblad*, 3 June 1941, 13th sheet.

As was the case with Muslims through the Pan-Islamist movement at the end of the 19th century was of concern to colonial policy makers²³, political developments in China during the same period were also linked to the dynamics of Chinese ethnic life including the Confucian religion in this country. The Pan-Asian movement that began to reverberate in the early 20th century as well as the Chinese national revolution under Dr. Sun Yat Sen²⁴ became a special agenda for the colonial government's attention with its potential to threaten her power, or at least threatening the 'rust en orde' in the colony.²⁵

The Dutch press in the early 20th century, published a speech by the Chinese ambassador to the United States, Woe Ting-Fang, which was considered to be Confucian view of the West, especially Christianity. In his speech, he delivered as follows:

*Niemand kan ze in deze wereld nakomen, en het gedrag der Christenen is er verre van verwijderd. Hebt uwe vijanden lief. En in hetzelfde oogenblik sporen de zendelingen aan tot wraak en bloedvergieten. Christelijke legers ontzien bij hun optreden onderdom noch kunne. Zij beijveren zich alles te rooven, waarop zij de hand kunnen leggen. Welk een geweldig onderscheid tusschen leer en daad. Confusius gaat niet zoo ver. Vergeldt kwaad met goed, zegt de Christen. Confusius daarentegen; vergeldt goed met goed, en ongerechtigheid met billijkheid. Hij predikte geen vergelding of wraak, zooals velen die de leer van Christus belijden.*²⁶

No one can obey them in this world and the behaviour of Christians is far from it. Love your enemies, and at the same time the priests are engaged in revenge and bloodshed. Christian soldiers are not reluctant in their actions either because of age or ability. They tried to rob everything they could. What an incredible difference between teachings and actions. Confucius was not too far off. Christianity says repay evil with good, Confucius the opposite: repay good with good and injustice with justice. He did not teach retaliation or vengeance as is widely espoused in the teachings of Christ.

²³ N.J.G. Kaptein, *Islam, Colonialism and the Modern Age in the Netherlands East Indies: a Biography of Sayyid Uthman (1822-1914)* (Leiden, 2014, Brill), page 141.

²⁴ Gardner Bovingdon, "Hu Wants Something New: Discourse and the Deep Structure of Minzu Policies in China" in Susan H. Williams, *Social Difference and Constitutionalism in Pan-Asia* (New York, 2014, Cambridge University Press), page 169.

²⁵ This is evidenced by the connection between the political development in China and the Sarekat Islam movement, which began to develop in 1911 in Solo and quickly spread throughout Java. Sarekat Islam is considered the meeting point between the Pan-Islamic and Pan-Asian movement. Chiara Formichi, *Islam and the making of the nation : Kartosuwirjo and political Islam in twentieth century Indonesia* (Leiden, 2012, KITLV Press), page 50.

²⁶ "Een leerrede van Woe-Ting-fang" in *Middelburgsche Courant*, 13 April 1901, 2nd sheet.

Although Woe's alleged focus for the above speech was the issue of zending works and Christian missions in China²⁷, his commentaries touched on matters of faith and the comparison of the two religions. This certainly provoked a reaction among Western politicians regarding the dangers that could arise from China and particularly from the teachings of Confucianism.

The infiltration of Western culture in China in the early 20th century, followed by territory annexation in several cities by Western countries following their victory in the Boxer Rebellion in 1901, encouraged China's youths and intellectuals to turn back to old culture, including the Confucian faith. The October Revolution of 1911, which signified a major structural transformation in China, paved the way for the reorientation of the views of China's intellectual elites including those who studied abroad to the old beliefs that were considered capable of saving China from destruction by Western imperialism.²⁸

One Chinese intellectual figure, Prof. Dr. T.C. Chao of Beijing University emphasised in his speech:

*Thans kwam daarin een revolutie. China moet de natuur overwinnen. Confusius gedaagd voor de rechtbank van nauwkeurig onderzoek is te licht bevonden. Het confucianisme trekt de jeugd niet meer. Zijn ethiek bleef echter en werd aanvaard. In zijn gesaeculariseerden vorm wordt het confusianisme of de grootste vriend of de grootste vijand van het Christendom.*²⁹

Now a revolution is taking place. China must defeat nature. The carefully examined Confucianism is vindicated. Confucianism no longer appeals to the younger generation, but its ethics are still accepted. In its secular form, Confucianism can be the greatest enemy or the greatest friend of Christianity.

Although the speech implied a conflict of philosophies and teachings, what it actually meant was a conflict of civilisations or social conflict between two parties bound in political and power structures, namely China and the Western countries. Religion in this case was used as a basis for justification or as one of the targets of criticism in their respective cultural

²⁷ Two years prior to this speech, a conflict occurred in which a number of French pastors and Catholics in China were killed in a clash with the local communities. This incident was later developed into a warning for Christian missions in the country and Western fears of the radicalisation of religious movements in China. . . H.J. Bartels, *Zendelingen en Koloniaal Bezit of de plaats van zending en zendelingen in de Koloniale Geschiedenis* (Hardinxveld, 1904, B.D.K. Buse), page 17.

²⁸ "De Chinese Jeugd in Indie" in *Bataviaasch Nieuwsblad*, 30 October 1936, 21st sheet.

²⁹ "Oosterch Christendom" in *De Locomotief*, 20 August 1928, 3rd sheet.

value complexes.

Events and views in China herself also aroused suspicion among Western countries, including the Netherlands in the Indies. When in March 1927, a celebration of the birth of the Prophet Confucius was held in Canton, the Chinese government ordered the raising of a new flag as a demand for the recognition of her existence.³⁰ This can be interpreted that religious events were used as opportunities for the Chinese government to implement political strategies at the international level, which was primarily aimed at Western countries.

By monitoring these developments, especially with the efforts to garner support by the Chinese government from overseas Chinese, the Dutch East Indies colonial government began to feel the need to pay close attention to Chinese political movements channeled through Confucian religious activities. In this case, the colonial government learnt a lesson from Sarekat Islam which successfully became a forum for the unity of Muslims, that Confucianism could be used as a forum for various social groups among the Chinese community in the Dutch East Indies, which had been divided. They could be united through Confucianism to fight the government, at least against *zendings* and Western civilisation.³¹

Such suspicions increased rapidly among the colonial authorities in the 1920s, especially in the fear of the introduction of communist elements through Confucian teachings among the Chinese after the communist rebellion of 1926. This was evident when on 18 September 1928 there was a strike among Chinese tin mine workers on the island of Belitung. The strike, which ended in a clash between the Chinese miners and government field police, ended the action but also brought deaths and injuries.³²

As a consequence of the above incident, the government tightened supervision of the activities of Chinese mine workers. However, as a further result, this surveillance was extended in practice to all Chinese people and their activities. In this case, the worship activities of the Confucian religion were also not spared from the government's increasing scrutiny. During the celebration of the death of the Prophet Confucius on 10 October 1928, the

³⁰ "De Nieuwe Chineesche Vlag" in *Bataviaasch Nieuwsblad*, 21 March 1927, 2nd sheet.

³¹ "Eene nieuwe beweging onder de Chineezzen" in *De Telegraaf*, 24 August 1921, 7th sheet. Among others, this movement was motivated by the officials of the Khong Kau Hwee organization, which was based in Surabaya and was later moved to Bandung in the second decade of the 20th century.

³² "Relletjes op Billiton" in *Bataviaasch Nieuwsblad*, 19 September 1928, 1st sheet. This riot occurred at the Klapa Kampit tin mine in relation to the coolies' acceptance of low wages. They asked the company for a wage increase but were refused, so a strike was the result. The company called in the police to break up the strike and force the labourers back to work. This resulted in open conflict. The colonial inquiry report mentioned the instigation of radical elements among the workers, allegedly by communist agents.

government brought in a larger force to Belitung to monitor the liturgical practices, something that had never happened before.³³

In addition to communist elements, the colonial government was also suspicious and uneasy when there was a rapprochement between Confucianism and Islam, especially among their followers. Although Sarekat Islam (later Partai Sarekat Islam, and Partai Sarekat Islam Indonesia) was believed to be antipathic towards the Chinese throughout its existence, this did not necessarily prevent engagement between the two parties. Through existing access, contacts could be made, namely through the Chinese Islamic community.

This meeting point was realised in the celebration of the death of the Prophet Confucius in October 1939, when in Semarang the Kong Kauw Hwe organisation held a commemorative event and presented a speaker from Medan, Haji Yap A Siong, who happened to be on a mission trip around Java. Yap A Siong himself was the head of the Chinese Islamic Association (Hoa Ming Hwie Kauw Hwee)³⁴. In his visit, he was accompanied by Gafar Ismail and both delivered lectures. In keeping with the celebration, both gave lectures on Confucius and his teachings.³⁵

The above event was not the first for Yap A Siong who had been on a propaganda trip since ten months earlier. In February 1939 in the city of Semarang, Yap A Siong had also delivered a lecture on the role of Confucius in Islam in front of the functionaries of the Chinese Islamic Association.³⁶ During his trips in a number of cities in Java, Yap A Siong continued to convey the view that, at the very least, there was no conflict between the two teachings so that the two communities should live side by side in friendship.

In response to these conditions, the colonial government began to tighten her surveillance, especially after the European War broke out in September 1939, which had the potential to impact Asia. Therefore, in the last years of Dutch rule in Indonesia, the security forces tightened their surveillance on all forms of colonial activities, including Chinese ethnic.³⁷

³³ “Op Billiton” in *Bataviaasch Nieuwsblad*, 6 October 1928, 1st sheet. The security forces were brought in from the special police force in Batavia. The Batavian government feared that the commemoration of 10 October 1928 would be linked to the commemoration of the Chinese revolution of 10 October 1911 (Wuchang Day) by Dr Sun Yat Sen, which would inflame the spirit of radical nationalism among the Chinese community. “De vloek van eht Bolsjewisme” in *De Locomotief*, 20 November 1928, 15th sheet.

³⁴ This organization was formed on 13 January 1936 in Brayan island, Medan and its first head was H. Yap A Siong, “Persatuan Islam Tionghoa” in *Soerabajasch Handelsblad*, 20 September 1939, 10th sheet.

³⁵ “De Islam Tionghoa” in *De Locomotief*, 12 October 1939, 2nd sheet.

³⁶ “Chineese Islam” in *De Locomotief*, 8 February 1939, 2nd sheet.

³⁷ “Islamietische Propaganda” in *Bataviaasch Nieuwsblad*, 29 January 1940, 3rd sheet.

CONCLUSION

By reading this brief explanation of the existence of the Confucian religion in the Dutch East Indies under the colonial regime during the first half of the 20th century, when major political changes were taking place in the colony, it can be understood of the direction and nature of the policies that reflected the attitude of the colonial authorities towards the Chinese religion. With her strict identification with Foreign Eastern ethnicities, the regulation of Confucianism could not be separated from the colonial policy towards foreign minorities in the Dutch East Indies colony.

However, in contrast to the previous period, during the period encompassed in this paper, namely the first four decades of the 20th century, the colonial policy towards Confucianism, as well as towards the Chinese, was increasingly linked to changes in the international community, particularly to the events in China and her relationship with Dutch interests in East Asia. Thus, the international aspect emerged in determining colonial policy towards a faith that was adhered by foreign Asians in her colony.

The second thing that emerged as a phenomenon in this development is the dualism of policies based on colonial attitudes and interests. On the one hand, Confucianism as a Chinese ethnic religion did not experience intervention and was tended to be accepted as one of the supports for the colonial pillar as well as the existence of its adherents. On the other hand, there was still suspicion among colonial policy makers, especially when the changes taking place in China were considered a risk to Dutch interests in the East.

With the above two interrelated aspects, there was no definite legal regulation in the Dutch colonial rulers in the Indies, especially towards Confucianism. They classified it as an internal affair of the Chinese ethnic that did not need to be intervened by the colonial regime, or in other words, it was considered as a field of Chinese socio-cultural rather than political interests, although also in the policy dualism of political interests emerged mainly related to China's changing views towards Western imperialism in the East.

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