



**ISLAM AND THE STRUGGLE FOR
MULTICULTURALISM IN SINGKAWANG,
WEST KALIMANTAN:**

**Local Ulama, Theological-Economic Competition and
Ethnoreligious Relations**

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Abstract: This study explores the dynamics of multiculturalism in Singkawang, the most tolerant city in Indonesia. It surprises every scholar studying conflicts as the city can adequately manage conflicts. It was evidenced by the cessation of the deadly conflict, the Sambas 1999 in the city, and by the establishment of ethnocultural groups inherited since the Dutch colonialism that generated pseudo-multiculturalism, in which all ethnic and religious communities have been tolerant but exclusive and fragile to conflict. Fortunately, as the champ of economic but socio-political competition, the Chinese have an ancestral tradition of sharing their wealth considerably. This is with no regard to either the profane or sacred places or their Muslim counterparts' social or ritual activities. Supposedly, instead of refusing "infidelity" contributions, local ulama appreciate and, in return, struggle to promote the substitution of pejorative calls of Chinese with Tionghoa. In conclusion, theoretically, economic welfare is the mayonnaise poured over Singkawang's "Salad Bowls," maintaining its conducive but pseudo-multiculturalism.

Keywords: multiculturalism, inter-ethnic relation, salad bowl, local ulama

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.20414/ujis.v27i1.516>

Introduction

AS A MULTI-ETHNIC and multicultural nation, Indonesia comprises 633 ethnic and sub-ethnic groups interacting within and across

ethnic groups.¹ These interaction networks experience waxing and waning owing to differences in interest among these groups. Consequently, cooperation and conflict become logical consequences.

The evolution of Singkawang as a multicultural city dates back two centuries when the Dutch colonial government allowed Chinese migrants from British-occupied Malaya to enter the West Borneo areas, where gold and other mineral resources were found. The subsequent waves of migration were marked by the foundation of the Chinese gold *kongsis* (companies controlled and owned by Chinese strongmen) at the end of the middle of the 18th century.² This circulation of Chinese people and valuable goods became intensive, encouraging them to settle permanently in Singkawang rather than merely using it as a transit village. It is because Singkawang was a strategic location on the shores of the South China Sea, connecting the gold mining centres of Monterado and Sambas Sultanate during that period.³

Thus, by the early 19th century, Singkawang became a multi-ethnic city settled not only by the Chinese and the native Malays and Dayaks but also by immigrants from Arab countries and India. The Dutch built a military base at the end of the 19th century, making Singkawang a colonial government district. The colonial government then assigned Southern and Western Singkawang as Chinese neighbourhoods, Eastern Singkawang as Chinese and Dayak neighbourhoods, Northern Singkawang as Malay neighbourhoods, and Central Singkawang as a mixed and segregated neighbourhood of Malays, Chinese, Arabs, and Indians. Later, due to cultural assimilation and religious relations,

¹ Gemawan Dwi Putra, "Asal Mula Nama Indonesia," *Indonesiabaik.Id*, last modified 2018, [https://indonesiabaik.id/infografis/asal-mula-nama-indonesia#:~:text=Nama "Indonesia" pertamakali muncul di,dan George Samuel Windsor Earl.;](https://indonesiabaik.id/infografis/asal-mula-nama-indonesia#:~:text=Nama%20Indonesia%20pertamakali%20muncul%20di,dan%20George%20Samuel%20Windsor%20Earl.;) Indonesia.go.id, "Logan, Sang Pencetus Nama Indonesia," *Redaksi Indonesia.Go.Id*, last modified 2019, <https://indonesia.go.id/ragam/budaya/sosial/logan-sang-pencetus-nama-indonesia>.

² Any Rahmayani, *Pemukiman Tionghoa Di Singkawang Dari Masa Kongsi Hingga Masa Kolonial*, ed. M. Nursam (Yogyakarta: Ombak, 2014), <https://opac.perpusnas.go.id/DetailOpac.aspx?id=910713#>.

³ Abroorza Ahmad Yusra and Ruslan Karim, *Masjid Raya Singkawang : Pilar Teguh Umat Dan Kota*, ed. Andi Fachrizal (Singkawang: s.n, 2015).

Arabs, Indians, and Malays were known as Malays, making Chinese a counterpart.

This article portrays the cultural, ethnic, and economic segregation practised by various communities in Singkawang. By cultural segregation, this article means to explore the term "tolerance" attributed to them in which communalism is overwhelmed in their cultural lives. Each community lives in their own "boxes", reluctant and even afraid to interact with "the others" except for transactional purposes. Thus, the knowledge, understanding, and appreciation of "the others", which should have been the principal foundation of true tolerance, becomes questionable. The context and historical origins of the multi-ethnic and religious city in West Kalimantan give rise to the "pseudo-multiculturalism" hypothesis.

"Pseudo-multiculturalism" in Singkawang is easily found in a satire familiar among the Malay communities to describe the city's cultural segregation: Dayaks are "*tukang cangkul*" (farmers), Malays' "*tukang pikul*" (Porters) and Chinese' "*tukang kumpul*" (Gatherers)." At first glance, this satire expresses a funny joke but clearly indicates social irony. How can a functional professional level or class be associated with ethnic groups? In the context of Malay ethnic group, the possibility relies on their willingness to abandon their social identities both as people of the old Sambas Sultanate and, more importantly, as Muslims who have confidence in their cultural superiority, as many religious preachers said that Muslims are acknowledged as "the greatest people on Earth" (*kuntum khayra ummatin*). The satire shows that Muslims are merely portrayed as "porters" who carry and shoulder non-Muslim Chinese.

Since the declaration of political independence on 17 August 1945, Indonesia has experienced several painful, bloody, and deadly conflicts, such as the communist rebellion in 1948 and 1965, Santa Cruz incident in November 1991, the Mei tragedy in 1998, the Sambas conflict in 1999, Sampit conflict in 2001, and Ambon conflict in 2011. The first two are political conflicts, while the others are ethno-religion-social.

Regarding Samba's ethnic conflicts, digital records were revealed through reports, photos, videos, and other documents.

The only words that can be described take the form of unanswered questions concerning the extent to which the miserable ethno-conflicts can lead and the extent to which the horrible ethnocultural differences trigger human massacre.⁴ Singkawang, which used to be part of Sambas, witnessed a tragedy. The bloody ethnic conflict was right to its eye. Amazingly, of the long tradition of multiculturalism, the dark history of Sambas ethno-social conflict was fully stopped at the border of Singkawang.

Therefore, this study examines the sociological dynamics of ethnic-religious relations in the long-term struggle to build a multicultural society in Singkawang, West Kalimantan, Indonesia. It seeks to explain how local ulama and ethnic institutions have shaped the behaviour among the different ethnic groups between Malay Muslims and non-Muslim locals. The latter are Chinese (Budhis, Confucianism, Christians, and Catholics) who interact within the framework of cultural commitment to establish "the most tolerant city" in Indonesia, a label attributed to 2021 research by the Setara Institute.

This study admits that while spontaneous interactions between those distinct groups have uniquely maintained the reality of tolerance and multicultural society in Singkawang, the open-minded views of various types of local ulama on Islamic teachings and multiculturalism have framed the wider Islamic community of Singkawang. Local ulama has struggled to mitigate conflict potentials—especially between the Malay Moslems and the Chinese—to perpetually maintain its title as "the most tolerant city in Indonesia".

This study was explorative, with in-depth interviews with respondents varying in social status, such as the elite and non-elite and ages 15-60's. The non-elite verified data from the elites. In addition to interviews, this study performed purposive sampling to conduct discussions implementing reflective thinking to gather

⁴ 1.189 were killed. 168 were seriously wounded. 34 injured. 3.833 houses were burned. 58.544 people were evacuated to Pontianak. Verelladevanka Adryamarthanino, "Kerusuhan Sambas 1999: Penyebab, Kronologi, Dan Dampak," *Kompas.Com*, last modified 2021, accessed October 21, 2022, <https://www.kompas.com/stori/read/2021/08/06/150000479/kerusuhan-sambas-1999-penyebab-kronologi-dan-dampak?page=all>.

data on socio-historical phenomena concerning inter-group interaction. The discussion took issues of Islamic teachings or Chinese ancestral teachings into account.

Researchers participated in social-religious activities to gather data on the origins of inter-group honesty in terms of appreciated interactions or social transactions. The researcher applied snowballing questions to hold the sequences of hypotheses, synthesis, and anti-theses. Finally, young people's critical perspectives, aged 15 to 20 years were additional ingredients in drawing conclusions. The word ingredients are functional, as this study examines whether the "Melting Pot" or "Salad Bowl" theory suits the Singkawang multicultural relationship.

Singkawang: One City, Many Ethnicities

A famous label for Singkawang among Indonesian society has been "City of *Amoy* (meaning Chinese ladies)" and "City of Thousand Temples", echoing the city character as "the most tolerant city in Indonesia".⁵ It disseminates the desire to prove a multicultural appeal on the site, particularly in the context of Singkawang concerning Chinese and Malay interactions. It is understood that the segregation of residential areas is a colonial policy that continues to this day. Ironically, the economic growth of ethnic Chinese spurs the trend of Chinese acquisition of Malay residences. While Chinese and Malays live in the same town, they often do not know and do not want to know each other. They drink coffee and eat in the same place but still in separate groups, even when speaking their languages. Furthermore, in the educational sector, there seems to be a virtual polarisation of "Chinese Schools" and "Malay Schools", especially performed by some culturally exclusive private schools in Singkawang.

It reflects that the city's pseudo-multiculturalism is supposed to maintain the social harmony of various communities inclined towards social conflict. This trend is especially felt by endogenous communities such as the Malays, as they have voiced their

⁵ Ghita Intan, "SETARA Institute: Singkawang, Kota Paling Toleran Se-Indonesia," *VOA Indonesia*, last modified 2018, <https://www.voaindonesia.com/a/setara-institute-singkawang-kota-paling-toleran-se-indonesia/4690956.html>.

concerns over their slowly declining existence. This problem became the focus of this study on the role of ulama—in the variety of learning and ethnic background—in the context of "multiculturalism". It was worth comparing the perceptions and imaginations of Chinese youth and the recent generation in fostering future harmony and multiculturalism in Singkawang.

Around the end of the 18th century, under Sultan Umar Akamuddin II (1760-1793), Sambas Sultanate enacted a policy which invited Chinese miners to increase the Sultanate's economy, following what had been made by the Panembahan of Mempawah, concerning this arrival of Chinese immigrants, stated the year 1750 for Sambas Sultanate and 1740 for Mempawah Sultanate,⁶ these Chinese immigrants in the Monterado mines then created *kongsis*, and built Singkawang, located only around 80 km from the centre of Sambas Sultanate, whose territory at the time reached as far as the northern reaches of the modern Mempawah Regency, specifically the Sungai Kunyit Subregency (144.2 km from Sambas). Thus, the Chinese and Malay interaction began in the 1700s, at the latest. Like other Malays in Sumatra, Malaysia, Brunei, Singapore, and southern Thailand, the Sambas Malay identity was intricately linked to Islam and its institution.⁷

Thus, Islamic teachings and learning institutions had an important effect on the character of the Sambasi Muslims.⁸ On the other hand, Chinese immigrants mostly hailed from the Hakka

⁶ Risa, "Etnis Cina Di Kesultanan Sambas Tahun 1760-1854," *Khatulistiwa: Journal of Islamic Studies* 05, no. 02 (2015), <https://jurnaliainpontianak.or.id/index.php/khatulistiwa/article/view/301>; Iswara N Raditya, "Republik Lanfang, Republik Pertama Di Nusantara," *Tirto.Id*, last modified 2017, <https://tirto.id/republik-lanfang-republik-pertama-di-nusantara-cwtg>.

⁷ Muhammad Ashshubli, *Islam Dan Kebudayaan Melayu Nusantara (Menggali Hukum Dan Politik Melayu Dalam Islam)* (Jakarta: Dewan Da'wah Islamiyah Indonesia, 2018).

⁸ Norahida Mohamed et al., "Sambas Sultanate and the Development of Islamic Education," *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences* 8, no. 11 (December 6, 2018): 950-957, <http://hrmars.com/index.php/journals/papers/IJARBS/v8-i11/4972>; Sunandar Sunandar, "Resonansi Maharaja Imam Muhammad Basiuni Imran (1885-1976) Di Sambas," *Medina-Te: Jurnal Studi Islam* 15, no. 1 (August 2, 2019): 75-91, <http://jurnal.radenfatah.ac.id/index.php/medinate/article/view/3542>.

people, as well as Teochews and a small number of Hokkiens and Cantonese, and almost all of the immigrant Chinese hailed from southern China. The Netherlands Indies colonial government referred to Hakkas as "Kheks" and Teochews as "Hok-Lo".⁹ After managing to establish the *kongsis*, the Chinese miners of Monterado found their social status improving; using the Lithography method mentioned four Chinese *kongsis*, which are: 1) Ta Kong or Tai Kong (Kongsi of Great River); 2) Lun Thien (Kongsi of the Raining Ricefield); 3) Shi Wu Kong Shi (Kongsi of the Fifteen); and 4) Sam Tiao Kong Shi (Kongsi of the Three River Branches).¹⁰

Based on this assertion, Singkawang was originally considered a Chinese settlement. Miners, farmers, and fishers migrating from China received the "protection" of the Chinese *kongsis* (an exclusive neighbourhood controlled by strongmen), which protected other Chinese merchants from opening stores to sell rice, meat, and other foodstuffs. After the 1770s, the growing *kongsis* was often embroiled in wars with the native populace, prompting the rulers of the Sambas to send their armies to control them. However, even after defeating the *kongsis*, the Sultan never severely abolished it—not daring to punish them, letting Chinese immigrants continue working in the mines.

Ultimately, the *kongsis* continued to grow and even became stronger with the arrival of Lo Fang Pak (1775), who created Hee Soon and united 14 Chinese *kongsis*, helped the Sultan of Pontianak (alongside VOC) to defeat Mempawah Sultanate, and finally led to the declaration of the Lanfang Republic. This development allowed Lo Fang Pak to be democratically elected as the first President of Lanfang. The Republic had significant autonomy in making and enforcing its laws. However, it was still obliged to pay tribute to the Sambas Sultanate, Pontianak Sultanate, and China's Qing Dynasty. The Lanfang Republic

⁹ Jozias Paulus and G Stibbe, *Encyclopaedie van Nederlandsch-Indie* (Leiden: s'Gravenhage: Nijhoff, 1927).

¹⁰ Iwan Suwandy, "The History of Chinese Overseas Goldmine in West Borneo Indonesia," *Driwancybermuseum's Blog*, last modified 2012, <https://driwancybermuseum.wordpress.com/2012/05/18/the-history-of-chinese-overseas-goldmine-in-west-borneo-indonesia/>.

survived for 107 years (probably collapsed in 1880) when the 13th President was forced to acknowledge Dutch colonial authority in Batavia.

As immigrants, the Singkawang Chinese become tougher because of the demands to survive in whatever conditions they face. Adaptation, cooperation, competition, and conflict with local communities are the consequences they embrace. Their historical reality is filled with such conditions before considering the bitter memories of the political transition between the Old Order and New Order periods, particularly in Indonesia – Malaysia Konfrontasi. One may argue that their political choice to support Sukarno's Old Order in opposing the formation of the (British) Commonwealth realms (Malaysia, Brunei, and Singapore), led them to join the Sarawak People's Guerrilla Army/People's Party of Northern Kalimantan, turned out to be unfortunate. When the Old Order collapsed in 1966, and the New Order started to persecute communist-leaning leaders and members, their status instantly transformed – from heroes to "traitors"; from an army/force to "Communist Chinese Gangs (*Gerombolan Tjina Komunis/GTK*)". The memories of both the PGRS/Paraku incident and "Mangkok Merah" forced many Singkawang Chinese to flee en masse. At least 27.000 were slain, 101.700 fled to Pontianak, and 43.425 relocated to Pontianak/Mempawah Regency.

Furthermore, they also had to put up with the New Order's political strategy, which in their eyes was discriminative (demonisation of ethnic Chinese, in the words of Michael J. Kristiono).¹¹ Surprisingly, when the New Order was finally deposed, the Chinese once again became victims of riots in May 1998, culminating in the collapse of the Suharto regime in 1998.¹²

¹¹ Michael J Kristiono, "Dari Tionghoa Ke Tjina: Telaah Sejarah Terhadap Demonisasi Etnis Tionghoa Di Indonesia [From Tionghoa to China: A Historical Review of the Demonization of Chinese Ethnicity in Indonesia]," *Verity: Jurnal Ilmiah Hubungan Internasional (International Relations Journal)* 10, no. 19 (November 13, 2018): 34–48, <https://ojs.uph.edu/index.php/JHIV/article/view/1309>.

¹² Mohamad Yoenus, "Puncak Kerusuhan Mei 1998: 1.217 Orang Tewas, 31 Korban Hilang, Dan 52 Wanita Tionghoa Diperkosa," *Tribunnews.Com*, last modified 2016, <https://www.tribunnews.com/video/2016/05/15/puncak-kerusuhan-mei-1998-1217-orang-tewas-31-korban-hilang-dan-52-wanita-tionghoa>.

In contrast, these political events have "forged" the Chinese, strengthening their capabilities to thrive, particularly in the current Reformation Era, after finally convincing others that Indonesia is their true homeland. At the same time, *Chungkuo / Zhōngguó / 中国*,¹³ or China, is merely their ancestral origin.¹⁴

The existence of the Chinese in Singkawang has become more established in subsequent political changes. This proposition can be easily observed. Every year, particularly a few days after *Imlek* (Chinese New Years), Singkawang always conducted festive activities thanks to the Cap Go Meh Festival.¹⁵ *Tatung, Barongsai*, and *Naga* have attracted tourists and travellers worldwide to Singkawang.¹⁶ The Chinese also see these festivals as Singkawang's pride and "sense of belonging" and "symbolic" relational, dimensional articulation illustrating Chinese–Malay harmony. The extent to which these annual festivals truly represent the Chinese character of Singkawang remains unclear. The fact is that, viewed from within the tradition, in which the resistance rituals towards the Dragon Statue monument,¹⁷ the

¹³ Sugiri Kustedja, "Tiongkok/Tionghoa, China dan Cina," *Jurnal Toddoppuli*, last modified 2011, <https://jurnaltoddoppuli.wordpress.com/2011/04/11/tiongkoktionghoa-china-dan-cina/>.

¹⁴ Katherine Chen, "I Do Not Belong in the Motherland," *Daily Nexus*, last modified 2018, <https://dailynexus.com/2018-11-29/i-do-not-belong-in-the-motherland/>; Chih-yu Shih, *Re-Producing Chineseness in Southeast Asia*, ed. Chih-yu Shih (London: Routledge, 2017), <https://www.taylorfrancis.com/books/9781317368243>.

¹⁵ Jhonni Sun, "Kebijakan Pemerintah Daerah Terhadap Kepariwisata Festival Tahunan Cap Go Meh Sebagai Upaya Pariwisata Berdasarkan Pasal 14 Ayat (1) Jo. Pasal 23 Undang-Undang Nomor 10 Tahun 2009 Tentang Kepariwisata Di Kota Singkawang," *Jurnal Nestor Magister Hukum* 3, no. 3 (2016): 1–31, <https://www.neliti.com/id/publications/209669/kebijakan-pemerintah-daerah-terhadap-kepariwisataan-festival-tahunan-cap-go-meh#cite>.

¹⁶ Yulita Dewi Purmintasari and Hera Yulita, "Tatung: Perekat Budaya Di Singkawang," *SOCIA: Jurnal Ilmu-Ilmu Sosial* 14, no. 1 (September 22, 2017): 1–7, <https://journal.uny.ac.id/index.php/sosia/article/view/15886>; Aan Rosady, "Perbedaan Perayaan Cap Go Meh Di Singkawang Dan Tempat Lain," *Roemahgersasi's Journal*, last modified 2012, <https://roemahgersasi.wordpress.com/tentang-singkawang-dan-tionghoa/perbedaan-perayaan-cap-go-meh-di-singkawang-dari-cap-go-meh-di-tempat-lain/>.

¹⁷ G. Fajar Wicaksono, "Pers Dan Pro Kontra Patung Naga Di Singkawang (Studi Analisis Framing Terhadap Pemberitaan Harian Pontianak Post Mengenai

meaning of harmony, tolerance, and multiculturalism in Singkawang ought to be puzzling, especially because in the face of inter-ethnic acculturation, Singkawang remains problematic. This superficial acculturation between Chinese ethnic identity and Malay Islamic identity became the cornerstone of the persistence of ethnic stereotypes in Singkawang. These factors have been worsened by the existing cultural segregation of residential areas and ethnic exclusivism in formal educational institutions, particularly private schools and universities.

Competition, Harmony and Threat to Multiculturalism

Singkawang is mostly associated with various types of Chinese icons. Such an image is understandable, especially because the Chinese population of this city is easily recognised due to its cultural performance. Besides being intrigued by and charmed by its cultural appeal, the Chinese community is well known as a group of people with hard-working habits regarding the economic struggle and power contestation.¹⁸ This image of Singkawang that is "synonymous" with Chinese culture is because of several reasons. First, the industrious habits of Chinese, alongside their perseverance in the commercial sector, are related to a purposeful mentality, positioning social tolerance as an instrument to protect their business and capital. Second, the Malays are viewed to prioritise "sincerity" in their understanding of tolerance, or in other words, the Malays lean towards value-oriented rationality. As stated before, Malays value human behaviour based on Islamic teachings, especially since Sambas Malays are familiar with the perspective of *Khatibi* religious order, which tends to be apathetic towards worldly concerns.

The strong Chinese drive for success contributes to strong character building in that they tend to act rationally, no matter

Pro Kontra Pembangunan Patung Naga Di Kota Singkawang Kalimantan Barat Di Bulan Mei Dan Juni 2010)" (Universitas Atma Jaya Yogyakarta, 2013), <http://e-journal.uajy.ac.id/765/>.

¹⁸ Jafar Fikri Alkadrie, Gorby Faisal Hanifa, and Annisa Chantika Irawan, "Dinamika Diaspora Subkultur Etnik Cina Di Kota Singkawang," *Intermestic: Journal of International Studies* 1, no. 2 (May 26, 2017): 130-143, <http://intermestic.unpad.ac.id/index.php/intermestic/article/view/24>.

how bitter. The Singkawang Chinese managed to transform a small transit village into a metropolis intricately tied to their ethnic identity. Their efficient working system and way of life, particularly in their interactions with other ethnic groups, helped elevate them to an elite position in Singkawang. Harnessing the platform of social tolerance, the Chinese, who are relatively richer and more powerful than others, are used to avoid participating in social work (*kerja bakti*) and communal gatherings (*gotong-royong*) in a village, for instance, but prefer to pay donations and money for these cultural practices. Meanwhile, Malays and other ethnic groups serve as workers and labourers, even though such togetherness in social activities is acceptable for Malays.

This identity stereotype is embedded within Singkawang society to differentiate between Chinese and Malays. For example, the common Malay expression that "Chinese will be Chinese" is an illustration that the Malays realise: the Chinese always base every interaction within their neighbourhood on goals or profits. It is illustrated in their social history, such as their initial arrival in Sambas Sultanate and their choice to take sides with the Dutch colonial government during the colonial era. This goal-oriented mentality is the main factor that has shaped the ethnic Chinese to dominate a city's economic and political lives.

Meanwhile, the Malays pejoratively see the Chinese goal-oriented mentality as a hypocritical tolerance because it is a mere instrument to secure their businesses and capital (fully economic-oriented). In this sense, the Chinese ignored the Malays' social-oriented goals, which is still not enough to foster Malay consciousness to "surpass", let alone compete for the economic and political dominance of the Chinese over the Malays. One factor that creates this situation is that real and evaluated Chinese resilience grows well because of being fostered over the "fields" of Malay value-oriented rationality.

These various descriptions of social reality between the Chinese and Malays further strengthen the view that "multiculturalism" in Singkawang is still pseudo-multiculturalism. Social and religious interactions between Chinese and Malays in Singkawang are steeped in economic and political ulterior

motives, as the "tolerance" and "multiculturalism" are not naturally born between fellow humans as social creatures.

This interaction between the Chinese and Malays shaped the potential conflict to emerge at certain points.¹⁹ It goes without saying that value-oriented Malays prefer to act tolerant and maintain Singkawang's "multiculturalism". Even though they realise Chinese economic and political domination, most Malays keep tolerating and appreciating the Chinese, even when the Chinese have no interest in knowing further about Malays. They are unaffected by the small but growing movement of "shopping only in Muslim stores".

The Chinese and Malays are frequently engaged in the same room, place, and public facilities in various public spaces, from markets to cafes. They sit and converse in cafés or restaurants, enjoying their ordered meals and beverages. However, they tend not to recognise each other; even if they know each other, they still segregate their social interactions. This situation illustrates that the intermixing between the Chinese and Malays is still limited, imaginary, and fake. When investigated further, mutual understanding between ethnic groups (Malay and Chinese) is very pitiful.

Understanding others, people, or groups with different cultural identities—as described above—is a prerequisite for hindering social prejudice. As this behaviour is usually a biased assessment based on a certain group's perception of another social group, it might be related to the relative power of that other group, which triggers a sense of being threatened. This condition creates a situation in which one's group may confront other groups, including key values in opposition to other groups' key

¹⁹ Asmayani Salimi and Susetiawan, "Kerusuhan Sambas: Konflik Antara Suku Melayu Dan Suku Madura Di Kabupaten Sambas Kalimantan Barat" (Universitas Gadjah Mada, 2014), <https://repository.ugm.ac.id/44297/>; Eka Jaya PU, "Konflik Etnis Sambas 1999 Arah Disintegrasi Bangsa," *Kalpataru: Jurnal Sejarah dan Pembelajaran Sejarah* 3, no. 1 (April 16, 2018): 1–10, <https://jurnal.univpgri-palembang.ac.id/index.php/Kalpa/article/view/1605>.

values. These values produce a sense of differentiating and conflicting identities between them.²⁰

This framework of identity conflict is illustrated in Singkawang's multicultural life. It can be said that social prejudice among the Chinese community is related to their lack of knowledge and understanding of Muslims (read: Malays). The most extreme example of this lack of knowledge can be found in the various Chinese culinary enterprises in Singkawang. Many Chinese culinary businessmen write the label "Halal" in their products without understanding the concept of halal itself. In their eyes, as long as the product contains no pork, it is "halal". According to a local ulama during the interview, despite the verses of the Quran and the hadiths, foods considered "not halal" included carcasses, blood, pork, and animals slaughtered not in Allah's name. In short, Chinese culinary businessmen put "halal" labels, ignorant of the existence of MUI's Halal Certificate. This ignorance of Chinese businesspeople allowed them to write and attach "halal" labels freely. It may not be problematic for the Chinese people because of their limited understanding. However, this ignorance might threaten the Chinese and Malays harmony.

Furthermore, Singkawang Muslim-Malays witnesses the phenomenal success of the 8-story PT. CV Arli's "Sharia Mall". This Sharia Mall, with its queue of buses carrying consumers from out of town, has become a point of pride for Singkawang Malays expressed in such cultural confidence: "jalan-jalannya di Grand Mall Singkawang, belanjanya di CV. Arli, meaning that "we hang out in Grand Mall Singkawang, and we shop at CV. Arli". Among PT. CV. Arli's uniqueness lies in the presence of staff who are prepared to lend "Awrah Covering" to visitors wearing shorts. Noerlizha Dzulhijjah Tarani's description captures the essence of PT: CV Arli: "*...Karena pemiliknya Islam, pegawainya berpakaian syar'i bahkan banyak akhwat memakai cadar maupun niqab. Ikhwan (laki-laki) cingkrang, dan insyaa Allah nyunnah*" which means "... because the owner is a Muslim, the workers dress up according to Sharia,

²⁰ Dominic Abrams, *Processes of Prejudice: Theory, Evidence and Intervention, Equality and Human Rights Commission* (Manchester: The Amdala Centre, 2010), http://equalityhumanrights.com/uploaded_files/research/56_processes_of_prejudice.doc.

many sisters wear *hijab* and *niqab*, many brothers use Islamic pants... *insya Allah*, these are to indicate "sunnah"

In the above context, there is a strengthening trend of the value-oriented identity of Malays in Singkawang, which is translated simply as an openly performed action with the shopping "following sharia manner". When this phenomenon is connected with the issues of "product from Muslims" and performed through PT. CV Arli's pictures (illustrated in one's bearded face and wearing pants that do not cover the ankles), the Salafi message of the enterprise, produce a strong sense of Malay-Islamic cultural identity. Thus, the fear of threats to tolerance and multiculturalism in Singkawang is the same experience in Malaysia, where economic competition can ultimately create a conflict of identity, eroding the long-term social tolerance and harmony between the existing ethnic and religious groups.

However, some Muslim Malays have developed more nuanced and open-minded business strategies. The Hotel and Resto Dangau Group, owned by Muslim Malay families, performed this different strategy appeal. For example, Dangau restaurants prefer to show the quality of food and services in their restaurants instead of exploiting their Islamic identity. As these restaurants do not indicate such an identity, consumers who visit these restaurants have come across religious and ethnic boundaries. This business strategy moves beyond identity issues that attract people from different ethnic and religious backgrounds to restaurants. This phenomenon indicates that it contributes to and promotes multicultural practices in Singkawang.

In short, the arguments discussed above concern two opposing trends: the ignorance of Chinese culinary businessmen concerning the true meaning of "halal" for Malays on one hand and the rise of Muslim Malay identity symbols like PT. CV Arli's Sharia Mall. The clash between these two opposing risks aggravates pseudo-multiculturalist problems in Singkawang. As some commercial strategies undergo cultural identity exploitation, others keep them while preserving their multicultural identity, in which more objective and product-quality-oriented marketing is preserved. This practice, performed by Dangau Group restaurants and hotels, has shaped the economic competition between Malay

Muslims and Chinese business people in a more multicultural manner. It is assumed that PT develops different strategies. CV Arli and Dangau Group create a balance of power between the different identities of the Malay business. Thus the problem Chinese culinary business's overly lax attitude towards "halal" labels is not threatening tolerance and harmony within this city

Ulama's Responses to Chinese Cultural Dominance

In a religious context, the small settlement of the Chinese population that would have become Singkawang originated from a settlement of Sambas Malays (Muslims) and Dayaks (Kaharingan) communities.²¹ Singkawang's economy grew rapidly not long after the Chinese arrived and settled, but it also attracted other overseas communities to the city, especially from India. Chinese migrants in Singkawang built *Twa Pek Kong* or *Kelenteng* (Vihara Tri Dharma Bumi), serving as the "centre of worship".²² This was followed by the Indians and Arabs who built Masjid Raya Singkawang in 1885. These two nearby places of worship (only around 200 meters from one another) became symbols of religious and cultural harmony in Singkawang.

Nowadays, Malays in Singkawang work overwhelmingly as farmers and fishers settled mostly on the city fringes. However, new generations of their families have begun to shift into civil servants or become employees in Chinese-owned stores and companies. It can be argued that most Malays' economic orientation is typically to fulfil their daily needs framed with traditional Islamic teachings, "where the main obligation of human beings is to help their pursuit of salvation in life and afterlife."

Chinese economic domination in Singkawang is not only felt by the Malay ethnic community but also by Arabs and Indians, who mostly work as merchants. It reveals that the various ethnic

²¹ Tiwi Etika, "Perjuangan Kritis Agama Kaharingan Di Indonesia: Tantangan Berat Dan Masa Depan Agama Asli Suku Dayak," *Jurnal Studi Kultural* IV, no. 1 (2019): 1-12, https://books.google.co.id/books/about/Perjuangan_Kritis_Agama_Kaharingan_di_In.html?id=39RoDwAAQBAJ&redir_esc=y.

²² Salimi and Susetiawan, "Kerusuhan Sambas: Konflik Antara Suku Melayu Dan Suku Madura Di Kabupaten Sambas Kalimantan Barat."

communities also witnessed pessimistic and hopeless behaviour concerning the prospect of economic and political competition against the Chinese. Furthermore, many Malays today are preoccupied with a benefit-oriented Chinese lifestyle, uprooting themselves from their cultural outlook in the face of Chinese hegemony. However, such cultural changes have helped Chinese businesses grow even larger by supplying agricultural products to Chinese traders and spending money in Chinese stores.

In the early 2000s, a new network of companies was established by the Malay trader in Singkawang, PT CV Arli, not long after the Indonesian monetary crisis and the collapse of the New Order government. This emerging company is the most important stepping stone in the Malay effort to challenge formidable Chinese economic domination. However, the Malays' efforts to appear as an economic power in Singkawang have not been organised collectively as many successful economic network operations. Still, their emergence has exhibited the strong role of the family in the business, creating a family-oriented culture in the Malays' economy. One of the reasons for this failure is that, in general, Malays still live in a rural culture with consumptive lifestyle habits, making it extremely difficult to develop a business enterprise that may challenge Chinese control. As a result, Malay economic opportunities are extremely difficult to grow, let alone produce more entrepreneurs following the path of PT. CV Arli's owner.

Singkawang is unique compared to other cities in West Kalimantan and Indonesia. As one enters the city, the signs of "Chinese control" are strongly visible. Houses, stores, shrines, and lanterns are affected everywhere by Chinese cultural styles, while people converse in Chinese. Furthermore, Malaysians, who discussed the Chinese "strong movement" to buy lands around 5 km and closer to the city centre, can feel Chinese cultural dominance. This trend caused a massive increase in real estate prices. Unfortunately, such economic changes strengthened the Chinese cultural position in Singkawang, driving the Malays further to the outskirts, and leaving them behind the formidable Chinese superiority. Based on this economic and social change between the Chinese and Malays, this article investigates the

potential of social conflict through the lens of local ulama who experience this trend of pseudo-multiculturalism.

Three diverse types of ulama can be found within the Singkawang Muslim community: the first is mainstream ulama. This group of ulama tends to have double standards in looking at the rationality side, trying to objectively compare the power dynamics between "values" (of Malays) and "material benefit" (of Chinese). This ulama is usually affiliated with the Ushuluddin boarding school of Singkawang, whether working as staff or alumni.²³ This group is admired as a defender of multiculturalism and inter-ethnic harmony in Singkawang.

The prominent role of this mainstream ulama can be seen through its moderate and nuanced interpretations of Islam, especially those related to social interaction. Pesantren Ushuluddin is respected as a traditional Islamic school that has produced many religious scholars. Their active engagement in working for the government and society allowed them to safeguard religious tolerance and harmony socially and politically in Singkawang. Their religious stance and its implementation in cultural programs initiated by the government that tend to support national policies can categorise them as "State-aligned Ulama". They articulate the government's visions of tolerance and multiculturalism that, include promoting visions of religious and ethnic relations through both inter-religion associations and Islamic-based civil society organisations such as Majelis Ulama Indonesia (MUI). They champion educational and tutorial programs to train Chinese culinary business people about the importance of proper halal certification by the MUI for their various culinary products.

Second, the ulama and religious leaders associated with mystical orders is known as *jamaat tharekat*. Two important *tharekat* organisations established in Singkawang are the *Naqshabandi* Order, based in the *Makarimu al-Akhlaq* religious school, and the Khatibi Order (named after Syaikh Akhmad Khatib al-Sambasi),

²³ Misdah Misdah, "Pesantren Di Kalimantan Barat: Kajian Komparasi Tiga Pesantren Dalam Perspektif Manajemen," *Khatulistiwa* 5, no. 1 (2014): 15–31, <http://jurnalainpontianak.or.id/index.php/khatulistiwa/article/view/262>.

which is based in Sambas Regency.²⁴ The influence of this second group of ulama is relatively weak because of their disengagement with societal affairs, let alone the problem of cultural tensions between the Chinese and Malays. In their religious activism, it seems they are not interested in "worldly concerns" in complicated city problems. This group tends to pursue afterlife salvation (called intensifying rituals, such as *dzikir* and *shalawat*). However, one should note that the characteristic relations between a follower and their ulama, or master (*mursyid*), cannot be neglected because the total loyalty of disciples towards their masters could trigger dramatic conflicts and actions. Fortunately, as far as the issues of multicultural society are concerned, the main concerns of these orders are spirituality and philanthropy.²⁵ However, these general concerns might morph alongside socio-political changes, as recorded in the case of religious order followers in Priangan in the 20th century,²⁶ Banten 1888, and the most extreme, the Sanusi Order, categorised by Nicola Ziade as a revivalist group.²⁷

The third group comprised *Salafi* Ulama. This recently recognised group is based on Ibnu Taimiyyah boarding school and is associated with a Puritan outlook in their religious teachings. However, this group's more prominent and visible influence spreads among PT CV Arli employees, with its characteristic *salafi* appearance, beards, non-ankle-covering pants, whole-face veils

²⁴ Patmawati Patmawati and Elmansyah Elmansyah, "Eksistensi Tasawuf Di Kalimantan Barat: Kajian Terhadap Perkembangan Tarekat," *Handep: Jurnal Sejarah dan Budaya* 3, no. 1 (December 10, 2019): 75–100, <http://handep.kemdikbud.go.id/index.php/handep/article/view/56>; Ali Muzakir, "Petunjuk Baru Silsilah Ahmad Khatib Sambas: Tiga Teks Tulisan Melayu," *Jurnal Lektur Keagamaan* 13, no. 2 (December 20, 2015): 513, <https://jurnallekturkeagamaan.kemenag.go.id/index.php/lektur/article/view/238>.

²⁵ Ulya Fuhaidah, "Tariqa and Philanthropy: The Study of Tariqa Qadiriyyah Naqsyabandiyyah Movement in Kuala Tungkal, Jambi," *Insaniyat: Journal of Islam and Humanities* 3, no. 1 (December 3, 2018): 29–46, <http://journal.uinjkt.ac.id/index.php/insaniyat/article/view/7509>.

²⁶ Dudung Abdurahman, "Gerakan Sosial Politik Kaum Tarekat Priangan Di Abad XX" (UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta, 2008), <http://digilib.uin-suka.ac.id/id/eprint/15222/>.

²⁷ Nicola A. Ziadeh, *Sanusiyah: A Study of a Revivalist Movement in Islam* (Leiden: Brill Academic Publishers, 1958), <https://brill.com/view/title/6273?language=en>.

(*niqab*), and the rule to "cover *awrah*" for all customers. Even though there are only a limited number of Salafi followers in Singkawang, economically speaking, the presence of PT. CV Arli Mall in the city presented symbolic cultural pride for Malays. In other words, the *Salafi* PT. CV Arli has presented and restored a certain degree of social and economic confidence in Malays in Singkawang, imbuing their ethnic and religious superiority vis-à-vis the Chinese.

In West Kalimantan, Salafi networks emerged with *asatidz-asatidzah* study groups, which flourished in the early 2000s. These study groups show the presence of interconnections between one *Salafi* cell and another, both locally and regionally, nationally, and internationally.²⁸ For Pontianak and its surroundings, *asatidz* and *asatidzah* have their own study groups and institutions,²⁹ each with their own names.

The spread of this *Salafi* group in Singkawang cannot be separated from the discourse on Salafis in Indonesia. Many studies on Salafism have found that the spread of *Salafi* networks can be broadly divided into three: 1) *Salafi* who promote "*sunnah*" or the model of the Prophet's life as their main theme. This group promoted *Afdaliyat sunnah* and the Prophet Muhammad to contain the modern life of Muslim society. Jama'ah Tabligh promotes such an attitude of religious practices;³⁰ 2) the *Salafi* who involve themselves in political affairs as part of the networks' response to democratic politics in Indonesia after 1998, as represented by Prosperous Justice Party (PKS); and 3) *Salafi* who make the matter

²⁸ Zoltan Pall, "Modalities of Salafi Transnationalism in Southeast Asia," *Kyoto Review of Southeast Asia*, 2021, <https://kyotoreview.org/issue-23/modalities-of-salafi-transnationalism-in-southeast-asia/>.

²⁹ Din Wahid, "Nurturing Salafi Manhaj A Study of Salafi Pesantrens in Contemporary Indonesia," *Wacana* 15, no. 2 (July 1, 2015): 367, <http://wacana.ui.ac.id/index.php/wjhi/article/view/413>.

³⁰ Umdatul Hasanah, "Keberadaan Kelompok Jamaah Tabligh Dan Reaksi Masyarakat (Perspektif Teori Penyebaran Informasi Dan Pengaruh)," *JURNAL INDO-ISLAMIKA* 4, no. 1 (June 20, 2014): 21–44, <http://journal.uinjkt.ac.id/index.php/indo-islamika/article/view/1559>; Nurhayati Nurhayati, "Khuruj and Family Economic Resilience: Study on Jama'ah Tabligh Family in Medan City," *Al-Ahkam* 29, no. 1 (May 8, 2019): 67–84, <http://journal.walisongo.ac.id/index.php/ahkam/article/view/3087>.

of *Khilafah* meaning to establish global Islamic umma as their main themes, such as the emergence of *Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia*.³¹

The *Salafi* group that spread in Singkawang is mostly of the first type, prioritising adherence to *sunnah* and largely ignoring political contestation. It may be because of the owner of the PT. CV Arli is among those who have undergone the aforementioned "*hijrah*". However, the minimal role of *asatidz* and *asatidzah* in pushing an exclusivist attitude toward religious diversity might facilitate the segregation of social interactions, harmony, and multiculturalism in Singkawang.

One aspect of social life that became an arena of contestation by the *ulama* was educational institutions. Considering that schools are the ideal institutions to support inter-ethnic intermixing and tolerance, most *ulamas* affiliated with the *Pesantren Ushuluddin* in Singkawang urged the municipal government to create an intermixing program for students in high schools. Private schools must prioritise intermixing, such as regulating a minimum of 30% of students from "other" ethnic groups. Implementing such regulations clearly requires backup, such as cross-subsidies and governmental support.

Interestingly, several young Chinese students of SMK Syafiuddin Singkawang, particularly Susan and her friends, openly expressed their hopes for Singkawang's future. Even though their school had only two Malay students, they fully realised that the future of Singkawang must be truly multicultural. The future of Singkawang they imagined considers the presence of Malays in the city alongside the Chinese. One of the potential multicultural instruments that they think can aid in warmer relations and encourage intermixing between Chinese and Malays is culinary businesses.

So far, Susan and her friends are quite distressed by Malay Muslims' reluctance to consume the various Chinese culinary products that are counted "*halal*" according to them. According to them, the reluctance of Malay Muslims might be because Chinese

³¹ Ayomi Amindoni, "Selain Di Indonesia, Mengapa Puluhan Negara Larang Hizbut Tahrir?," *BBC Indonesia*, last modified 2017, <https://www.bbc.com/indonesia/indonesia-40652360>.

entrepreneurs are still not fully committed to promoting unique Chinese cuisines. One of them expressed their plans to manage the Chinese culinary business that Malays enjoyed. They mentioned several Chinese cuisines that should have fit Muslim (Malay) "taste", such as: *Bak Pau*, *Chew Kwe*, *Jin Phia*, *Tau Sa Phia*, *Jiu Tui Tau Sa dan Go Jin*.

Interestingly, besides all of them collectively already knowing and understanding that those cuisines should not contain pork, they even tried to avoid mentioning the term, probably a sign of respect/appreciation towards the religious values of Malays.

According to Susan and friends, dismantling communal differences to overcome segregation and reject ethnic exclusivity has long been their desire. It is time for the Chinese and Malays, especially Muslims, to know and enjoy each other's unique cuisines as belonging to all. Their dream, on a certain level, is in line with Sally Shortall's research results:

"the importance of economic interest vis-à-vis social and civic goals. It is further argued that the social capital debate gives renewed impetus to a romantic naïve view of rural communities, where civic harmony and inclusion triumphs and there is little room for power struggles, exclusionary tactics by privileged groups, or ideological conflicts".³²

The manifestation of cuisine as a unifier of Singkawang is also demonstrated by the Dangau Group, frequented not only by Muslims, but also by the Chinese. The sincerity of the Chinese and Malays must be manifested in each cuisine sold, thus helping build the foundation for true multiculturalism to emerge in Singkawang.

Susan and her friends, as well as Dangau Group are also justified in their beliefs, as they correctly identify economic welfare as a prerequisite for multiculturalism, as discovered by Roy Cerqueti, et. al., which can be summarised as follows: 1) tolerance is only possible in societies with high prosperity; 2) intolerance is

³² Sally Shortall, "Social or Economic Goals, Civic Inclusion or Exclusion? An Analysis of Rural Development Theory and Practice," *Sociologia Ruralis* 44, no. 1 (January 2004): 109–123, <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1467-9523.2004.00265.x>.

much more resilient than tolerance; and 3) cultural integration must proceed with economic integration.³³

Singkawang Chinese Social Welfare

Not to mention its long historical existence, which goes back to Hero Alexandria in the first century BC, nowadays Fire Station is necessary—no city without a fire station. Every mayor of the city must surely have a fire station and city management. However, Singkawang has not only governmental fire stations but also communal fire stations. Ridiculously, Singkawang people eagerly pinpoint those communal fire stations rather than the governmental ones. Fire stations like BPKS (Badan Pemadam Kebakaran Singkawang) Bhakti Suci, Dwi Tunggal, Tri Darma Bumi Raya, Tua Pekong, Siaga, Mandiri, Pasar Turi, and Pabrik Kopra are among the Singkawang private and communal fire stations. It has led to the Chinese social foundations of Singkawang. The fire station is for all. No discrimination.

Another unique aspect of Singkawang Chinese social welfare relates to donations in building mosques all over Singkawang. Names like Tjhai Cui Mie, Leonardi Tjhai,

Accordingly, the well-known local ulama, Muchlis, M.Pd. said that one-fourth of the total amount needed to reconstruct the oldest Singkawang mosque, Masjid Raya, first built by Indian merchant Bawasahib Marican in 1885, is a Chinese contribution. Muchlis added that the same happened in the reconstruction of Masjid Agung, the biggest mosque of Singkawang. Another literate local ulama, Safari Hamzah, admitted Chinese contributions to the Muslim ritual places.

Safari Hamzah once questioned Rina, the Head of Torsina three Chinese School, wondering why the Chinese were willing to share their wealth. Rina replied that her father, grandfather, and ancestors taught it. What shocked Rina was the acceptance and appreciation of Singkawang Malay Muslims' perspective towards the donation. She went on to say that it was refused for theological

³³ Roy Cerqueti, Luca Correani, and Giuseppe Garofalo, "Economic Interactions and Social Tolerance: A Dynamic Perspective," *Economics Letters* 120, no. 3 (September 2013): 458–463, <https://linkinghub.elsevier.com/retrieve/pii/S0165176513002693>.

reasoning when she offered her contribution on the day of 'Eid al-Adha when she lived in Bekasi. Not to leave Rita confused by the difference and hesitated to do so, Safari Hamzah provided her narration of the Prophet Muhammad (Bukhari 2615, Bab *Hadiyah min al-Musyrikin*) accepting gifts or donations from infidels.

Conclusions

Social tolerance and multiculturalism in Singkawang are at some level "artificial"—a term referring to low social genuineness. Ethnic or religious conflict hardly occurs because of the role of rational-moderate groups led by local ulama affiliated with Ushuluddin boarding school. Meanwhile, social tension between these ethnic groups and the economic classes in Singkawang has been made possible due to the rational-objective business strategy led by Dangau Group; a Muslim-owned company established in 2004. For this reason, the term "artificial multiculturalism" is attached to this form of tolerance, and multiculturalism means it is fragile, prone to collapse, and breaking apart.

As this study has revealed, the future of multiculturalism depends largely on views and roles articulated by the younger generations of the Singkawang population, especially the millennials who are in the formative period of their ages and are still studying in high schools. Their expectations, dreams, paradigms, and perspectives would determine Singkawang's multiculturalist future. The state of pseudo-multiculturalism in city's educational institutions is alarming. Most of these private schools are occupied only by the children of Chinese elites. At the same time, the lower-class Chinese seem only to enrol their children in public schools, "intermixing" with Malay children, since the latter only have limited options.

Even more ironically, this interethnic mixing is mainly seen in elementary schools, while the subsequent educational levels show much less intermixing. An extreme example of this pitiful state of intermixing in educational institutions is obtained from several millennial Chinese informants who studied in Vocational High School (SMK) Syafiuddin, who stated that there are only two Malay students in their school. One of the eight people interviewed simultaneously could only remember the name of one

of their fellow Malay students back in elementary school, while the others found it too difficult.

Based on this contra productive trend of segregation that threatens the multicultural character of the city, research concerning "social engineering" is needed, particularly research concerning government policies regarding intermixing programs, harmony, and multiculturalism in educational institutions. Intermixing behaviour and interethnic interactions only occur in public schools. Private schools, even those with Islamic labels intended to help the government provide education to people, ended up counterproductive to fostering multiculturalism and intermixing trends instead.

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