

“Interracial Courtship”:

A recent dilemma in the contemporary social relation of Chinese Indonesians
A study from discussions on social media

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I. Introduction

Long since the anti-Chinese violence in May 1998 happened, the revitalization of the Chinese Indonesian culture and traditions has been taking place. Thanks to Abdurrahman Wahid¹ who lifted the discriminative regulations made by the New Order regime, the Chinese Indonesian culture and traditions are now acknowledged as part of the rich Indonesian culture. Chinese Indonesian (henceforth abbreviated as CI) communities, social gatherings, and clan clubs were founded and have been openly showing their activities thereafter. The Chinese annual festivals, such as the Imlek² and Cap Go Meh³, are celebrated in public and broadcasted in electronic and social media. It is not rare that in such festivals, especially the Imlek, voices to blend with the rest of ethnic groups in Indonesia are spoken. Interestingly, the voices come from big names who represent the CI ethnic.

However, these voices of blending are also a source where a new problem arises. To what extent is the blending? How do we say that we have blended well? Do we have to let non-CI men marry CI women as well? Those are but a few questions that often come up whenever a discussion of blending is in. The later question, from what I have seen, always brings up hot debates as to whether or not they agree and are willing to do it. The CI is no longer reluctant to hand their help to those in need and poverty, or to participate in public

¹ The 4th Indonesian Prresident who took office in October 20 1999 until July 24 2001.

² The Chinese Lunar New Year.

³ The closing event of Imlek, celebrated in the 15th day of the 1st month on the Chinese lunar calendar.

events or social cause held by other ethnic groups. But as for interracial courtship, especially for CI women, they would be very reluctant.

Why, then, is it now necessary to discuss this interracial courtship issue, especially because it is known in fact that the ethnic has been living in Indonesia since centuries ago? The answer to this question is because of the rise of East Asian pop culture has grown a spirit of orientalism and self-identification. This pop culture is brought to the country with the help of globalization, electronic media, and internet. It has been well known to teens for nearly a decade since early 2000s. Interestingly, the fans of the pop culture are not only the CIs, but also other ethnic groups in Indonesia. From fans gathering and social interactions that follow, the young generations learn to see and care for their Chinese ethnic friends, who have been so long marginalized. Unlike the old generations, the young generations no longer question their nationalism toward Indonesia which indicates that they approve their Chineseness. However, they are now questioning the possibility of their friendship to go to the next level, that is interracial courtship.

This study observes the phenomenon of the CI's dilemma of possible interracial courtship. This study tries to answer the following questions: (1) what does the effect of East Asian pop culture toward self-identification and interracial courtship?; (2) what are the factors for disapproving interracial courtship?; and (3) what does the effect of self-identification toward interracial courtship. The source of data for this study is CI groups in Facebook and Kaskus. Facebook is a global social media in the internet where groups based on ethnicity are easily found and joined. Kaskus is one of the biggest online forums in Indonesia whose users are mostly teenagers and early adults.

II. Research Methodology

II. 1. Research Data

The data for this study is collected from online websites: Facebook and Kaskus. Facebook is a worldwide social networking website, and Kaskus is one of the largest online forums in Indonesia. In Facebook, there are groups based on ethnicity, religion, clan, school, etc. where the users can join or be invited to be the member. Each member, after joining the group, can post and discuss topics related to the group specification. The data used for this study is collected from such group.

In Kaskus, members of the forum can post a thread to discuss a topic, and comment on other threads available. However, internet users do not have to be a forum member to read every post on every thread as long as the thread is not made restricted. If a thread is restricted, only Kaskus members can read the posts in that thread. The data used for this study is collected from unrestricted threads.

Due to the limited availability of data, the data is restricted to comments which were posted from July 16 2009 until May 25 2012. In total, there were 893 comments collected from the two websites. However, not all comments discussed the topic related to this study because there were junks, spam, off-topic comments, and invalid comments. After the data was organized, there number shrink to 74 comments. The steps of organizing data are presented in the following paragraph.

After the data was collected, the next step was to organize the data. In doing so, I first divided the data into two to split off the on-topic comments from off-topic ones. This step is necessary to make it easier to analyze the on-topic comments and put away unrelated ones. The data was then classified according to each factor that becomes the obstacle of conducting interracial courtship. The factors are: (1) family, (2) stereotypes, (3) environment, (4) history, and (5) culture and traditions. Plus, there was a separate classification of data which

discussed why CI women did not wish to be in courtship with CI men. In addition, since the data is in Bahasa Indonesia, I translated each one of the comments in English by myself.

Since the data is from online websites, the validity of the data is questionable. No one can guarantee if the collected comments are false or sincere, nor can I make sure that the identity of the members is not fake (e.g. one claims to be a CI but actually not). To solve this matter, I neglected comments which lack explanation and reasoning. Such things are usually short in sentence and are ignored by other members, and therefore are invalid and untrustworthy. The following is an example of invalid comment which is compared to a valid one.

Invalid comment:

“Well, not really. I am now in courtship with a CI woman. We are fine, although I’m jobless.”

Valid comment:

“Sorry bro, but don’t be racist. It all depends on the culture. My neighbors are Batak people whose parents are orthodox. They have to get married to Batak people too, and they even consider the clan name. (My friend of) Manado is not allowed to be in courtship with the non-Manado too. My Balinese friend is also ordered by her parents not to be in courtship with the non-Balinese. Maybe you are also ordered by your parents not to be in courtship with the CI. But there is my CI friend who is in courtship with a Javanese. Another friend of mine is also CI, but she is a Moslem and wearing veil. Moreover, some people (including me) befriend others without considering the religion, race, ethnic, or whatever you may call it. Once again, NO RACISM. It all depends on our perspective.”

Although this method may not be enough to separate valid comments from invalid ones, it is still worth doing. In my opinion, it is better to be selective and strict to data rather than being ignorant to the validity of the data. However, because the data is restricted to certain websites and from certain period of time, the findings of the analysis may not accurately point out the matter in a different field of data and period of time. Thus I can only guarantee that the findings do represent the bigger picture of the matter.

II. 2. Why Websites and Not Interviews or Questionnaires?

In academic study, it has been common for researchers to do interviews and questionnaires to obtain data. Each of the two is a popular method, and is academically acceptable. On the other hand, obtaining data from websites, where the identity of the participant and the validity of the data are not guaranteed, is sometimes argued as to whether it is feasible and ethical. By feasible it means that the responses are considered as secondary data which may result in an analysis which is based primarily on intuition. Thus the result of the analysis may be inaccurate (Stangor:2007).

However, obtaining data from websites has one benefit than collecting data from interviews or questionnaires. Such benefit is the space-and-time advantage. The space-and-time advantage protects the internet users from direct, face to face confrontation, which potentially causes offensive yells or even physical fight when the topic of discussion is too sensitive or the debate gets too hot (Haryanto:2008). Internet users can express their feeling such as anger, sadness, grievance, or empathy without fearing that their interlocutors witnessing them. They can speak up their opinion or ideas without fearing to be accused orthodox, unjust, vulgar, or insulting in front of other people. They can finish their arguments without being interrupted. They can also take back or edit what they have said at any time they want. They are not given limited time so that they have a lot of time to think. In brief, they can express very aggressively in an unlimited time while their face, profile, and whereabouts remains hidden. Such benefit cannot be obtained from interviews and questionnaires where the participants might respond in a wise, subtle manner to save their face while actually their minds speak the opposite. Knowing such benefit, I chose to do this method of research in a hope that I can obtain the sincerest comments about the sensitive issue.

In addition, Bordens and Abbot (2011) suggests that internet research is ethical as long as the identities of the participants remain confidential. It can be done by assigning pseudonyms to replace their real names (2011:207). However, the problem is not yet over as the next concern, as alerted by Pittenger (2003), is the protection of the participants' responses. Because the responses are stored in a database, it is possible that hackers will gain access to the data and do something harmful to the participants. To avoid this problem, Pittenger (2003) suggests the researchers to edit any data collected and shuffle the arrangement of the data which is often arranged chronologically on a website.

II. 3. Similar Studies

A similar study by Willmott (1960) discussed the matter of interracial marriage in Semarang⁴ from 1948 – 1955. Willmott conducted a survey on many Indonesian Chinese from both old and young generations about the possibility of marrying the indigenous. From the survey, he concluded that the percentage of Chinese women marrying Indonesians was much lower than that of the Chinese men. When a Chinese woman married an Indonesian, the family was considered 'lost', and that was really a pity for the woman and the family. Willmott also found out that the old generations tended to oppose mixed marriages or gave no comment about the matter. However, the young generations at that time were far less opposed to mixed marriages. The most common comment was to get married with two conditions: (1) if they really loved each other, and (2) there was the proviso of parental consent because it was unlikely for them to approve due to racial differences. Nevertheless, there were also a small number of young generations who strongly opposed due to the feeling of superiority even though it was stated often implicitly than explicitly (1960:90-93).

⁴ The capital of Central Java province, which has a considerably large population of CIs since the Dutch colonialism era.

Unfortunately, Willmott did not provide profound explanation as to why his participants consent or oppose to interracial marriage.

Another similar study by Pitt (1984) discussed the nature of courtship and marriage in the Chinese community in Indonesia. Pitt collected data from magazine columns published in 1939 until 1942. Pitt also faced a similar problem in which she could not guarantee that her data was valid because the writers of the letters used pseudonyms. She also could not guarantee that her findings accurately displayed the problems of the broader society. Pitt found out that there were various problems encountered by young Chinese people in the matter of courtship and marriage. The problems were categorized as follows: (1) conflict between parents and children over the choice of spouse, (2) choice of characteristics for a spouse, (3) courting procedures, (4) problems with concubines, (5) insufficient income delaying marriage, (6) pregnancies, (7) inter-ethnic marriage, and (8) divorce (1984:165-169). Pitt concluded that CI parents had a role and right in approving or disapproving a prospective partner that their children chose.

III. Cautions

As the topic of CI may be a sensitive issue, there are some things that need to be sorted out before discussing the matter.

First, whenever the term CI is mentioned in this study, it applies to the Indonesians of Chinese descent, and thus their nationality is Indonesian. The term Chinese-Indonesian does not apply to the Chinese descent whose nationality is not Indonesian⁵. In fact, the term CI

⁵ It is interesting to see that during the New Order era, researchers used the term 'Indonesian Chinese' in which it linguistically puts emphasis on the 'Chinese' as the head noun, which implicitly means 'Chinese who live in Indonesia'; compared to studies during the Reformation era, the term is 'Chinese Indonesian', which puts emphasis on them being 'Indonesian' which underlines the acceptance of Chinese descent as Indonesians.

itself is still not a suitable diction when discussing CIs (as we might see later) who are very conservative, less conservative, or lives in a different region or province.

Second, the term 'indigenous' is used in this study to distinguish the CIs from other Indonesian people who are of other ethnicity. I am sorry because I cannot find other suitable words to replace the word '*pribumi*'⁶ which is offensive and insulting for the CI. This is also the reason why I write this paper in English. Hence the term 'indigenous' is used. With all respect to CI, the term is not meant to be insulting. It is just for the sake of this study.

On a side note, this term may also be ambiguous because there are a lot of ethnic tribes in Indonesia. To which ethnic tribe does the term 'indigenous' refer is not clear. Does it refer to each and every single ethnic tribe in Indonesia, from Sabang to Merauke? As we might see later in the analysis, the term 'indigenous' implicitly refers to just a few tribes of all ethnic tribes in the nation. However, naming these tribes explicitly will bring more problem than using the ambiguous term 'indigenous'.

Third, as there will be many ethnics mentioned in this study, the problem of generalization may pose false perception to readers. Although, for example, an ethnic is said to have some kind of negative stereotype, it does not apply to every people of that ethnicity. The reason is that generalization, by nature, comes from what is seen in most situations for most people in reality. It is a conclusion that falls only in the category of 'majority'. In other words, although generalization describes the majority, the description may not be true for an individual per se. Thus, any arguments that disagree with the generalizations mentioned in this study because of reasons of personal basis are therefore rejected. Generalization is not meant to mark an individual, but rather it emphasizes the likelihood, possibility, or general description of something that is large in population.

⁶ It literally means "sons of the soil". During the New Order era, this term was used to discriminate CIs from the indigenous.

IV. Theoretical Review: Pop Culture and Process of Identification

Pop culture is the most dynamic product of human civilization. It can be consumed by people in every corner of the globe regardless of their nationality, socio-economic status, or personality. Pop culture is broadcasted via audio-visual media such as television and internet, by which this media brings amusement in the form of style, spectacle, special effects, images and imagery (Strinati:2004). This visual pleasure is able to stimulate brain to get to know what has just been seen – locations, settings, people, clothes, physical appearance, and ornaments. This visual pleasure is also imbued with conversations containing local cultural and traditional values, motivation, and value of life⁷.

Pop culture is consumed more by teens rather than adults because teens need reference to shape their psychological emotion and behavior. Audio-visual media is the most easily-found source of reference in this globalization era, and by this media pop culture influences the taste and preference of the teens in the form of cinema, TV programs, music, advertisements that prioritize on image rather than quality (Strinati:2004). This will stimulate the young people's choice to wear what their idols wear, use gadgets that their idols use, drink what their idols drink. They will not really pay attention on the quality of the product (2004:206-216). Even if the same brand that the idols possess is not available in local stores, any brand from the idols' nation or region would be okay. But then, what does this theory have in relation to East Asian pop culture and CI?

As a reference for psychological shaping, pop culture can be used as a means to identify self. According to Hall (1996), there is a process of 'being' and 'becoming' identification. In 'being' identification, *who we are* or *where we came from* is the way of

⁷ This is in relation to East Asian pop culture, compared to the Western one that emphasizes more in actions.

distinguishing oneself from 'other', and it is constituted on outside representation such as physical appearance. In 'becoming' identification, *what might we become* or *how do we represent ourselves* is the way of distinguishing oneself from 'other' which is constructed within representation and is questioning one's own identity in the basis of history, language, and culture. This 'becoming' identification is also followed by responsibility and involvement in culture change (1996:4).

This concept is useful in identifying gender and race. For example, if a man identifies himself as Chinese because he has fair skin, slanted eyes, and speaks Mandarin or one of the Chinese dialects, he identifies himself as 'being Chinese'. But if he identifies himself because he behaves according to Chinese culture and traditions and does that from his awareness that his ancestors are from China, then he identifies himself as 'becoming Chinese'.

However, this process of identification is also a source of debate when there is a process of identification that *crosses the margin*. For example, if there is a non-Chinese man who is interested in Chinese culture and tradition and behaves according to them, he is 'becoming Chinese' although he realizes that he is not 'being Chinese'. The same goes for if a Chinese man identifies himself as Indonesian because he behaves according to Indonesian culture and traditions, and that he and his family were born in Indonesia, he identifies himself as 'becoming Indonesian' although he realizes that he is not 'being Indonesian'.

This concept, however, still leaves questions: (1) is it possible for the two processes of identification occur at the same time?; (2) Is it the conscious or unconscious mind that does the identification?; (3) Is the process intentional or unintentional? Nevertheless, this study is not on the attempt of answering these questions. This theory is needed, as we will discuss later, to see the effect of pop culture in self-identification and interracial social relations between the indigenous and CI.

IV. Discussion

I. The Effect of East Asian Pop Culture toward Self Identification

Since the discriminative regulations toward CI were lifted, the revitalization of the CI culture, traditions, and celebrations has been going on⁸. At the same time, the rise of the East Asian pop culture floods the media, especially online and electronic media. Starting in 2000s, the Taiwan, Japanese, Korean entertainment industries have been competing one by one with the Western to attract the Indonesian audience who are mostly teenagers (Tjhin:2008). The teens, who have been westernized in pop culture, find a brand new alternative in idols⁹, traditions, and lifestyle. Not only there are idol fanclubs or Harajuku fashion style, but Japanese and Korean culinary also attack big malls in big cities, especially in Java. Of course, those would not have existed without the increasing interest of young generations. This momentum is also apparent from the establishment of courses and institution majoring in Mandarin, Japanese, Korean languages and culture. The attendants are both the indigenous and CIs. This gives an indication that the rise of the East Asian pop culture grows the spirit of orientalism which impacts the awareness of self-identity (2008:131). Getting curious to the CI events celebrated in public and at the same time influenced by the East Asian pop culture, the Indonesian young generations are starting to show their face to their friends who possess similar, but different, physical and cultural identity. Their eyes are open for the CI.

The above statement may look rather speculative. However, the young generations now feel the impact of such influence. It is proven below, as taken from the data.

[1]

I just want to tell my story and ask questions. But I am sorry if this may sound offensive to a certain ethnic.

I am 25. I have a job and a girlfriend. As a normal man, I like to see sexy and beautiful women. But I love to see women with oriental or Chinese face more than any other beautiful

⁸ For more details, see Lindsey and Pausacker:2005, or Lan:2010.

⁹ Those which are of high popularity include: Meteor Garden, L'arc en C'iel, Japanese cartoons, SNSD.

women. I don't know why, but since I was in Junior High School I have been dreaming of having an oriental or Chinese girlfriend. In the past, when the J-Dorama¹⁰ was booming, I really loved to watch the female actors. And now SNSD¹¹ is booming, it's just so tempting to see them. I am not a K-Pop¹² fan, I just love to see their oriental face.

But why is it very rare for me to see a CI woman dating an indigenous man? That's why, I have never approached a CI woman. There is some stereotype that a CI must be in courtship with a CI.

Now I want to ask, especially to my sisters here who are of CI:

1. Have you ever loved an indigenous man?

2. What will you do if an indigenous man is approaching you? Will you step back from him? Or will you just let him approaching you?

Anyway, this is not about religion because that is not the case. Maybe some of you can give your opinion.

[2]

It just happens that I love oriental women, but it must not be considered that I'm obsessed. It's just a matter of taste. Just like you guys perhaps love chubby or slim women. For me, oriental women are very pretty. But I have been wondering why it is so rare for me to see an indigenous man dating a CI woman. So I'm asking why.

[3]

I am wondering why men from other ethnics are dreaming of having CI women as their girlfriend. Is it because of the Korean booming now?

It is clear that some indigenous men have been wishing to take CI women as their girlfriend. What is interesting is that their reason, ***among other possible reasons***, is related to the East Asian pop culture. They are influenced by the beauty of their idols. They watch that their idols are beautiful and then their physical beauty becomes a preference for looking for a girlfriend. Moreover, it is also possible that the similarity in culture and traditions accompany this reason. The East Asian culture and traditions can be watched from the broadcasts of the pop culture, and introduced by the idols in their social etiquettes. This makes it easier for the Indonesian audience to identify that their culture and traditions are similarly 'Eastern'. However, there are very few Japanese, Korean, or Chinese who live in Indonesia, by which it

¹⁰ Japanese drama broadcasted on TV series

¹¹ A Korean girlband

¹² The abbreviation of Korean pop music

turns the indigenous eyes toward CI who undoubtedly also possesses oriental face and similar culture and traditions.

It is also interesting that the indigenous use the word 'oriental' to refer to CI even though 'oriental' means something that is associated with the eastern part of Asia such as Japan, China, Korea (Collins Cobuild:2006). By using the word 'oriental' to refer to CI, those men think that CI has similar physical appearance, and they thus identify CI as 'being East Asian'. The indigenous identification of CI as 'being East Asian' is derived from similar physical appearance and culture, which indicates that this is a product of visual representation of the pop culture.

In addition, the East Asian pop culture has attracted young generations in general, and not specific to CI young generations. In this case, the pop culture provides a new channel for the social relations of the indigenous and CI young generations. This new channel can be in the form of language courses or fanclubs. And it must be noted that sharing the same interest is the best way of having intimate friendship. Although this may sound very practical and not all interracial courtships are initiated from this, the new channel does give more interesting moments than school or campus. Via this pop culture, the border between the CI and indigenous young generations is weakening. As time goes on, the identification of CI as 'being East Asian' will turn out to be 'being Chinese', especially during Imlek and Cap Go Meh because by that time the indigenous will realize that their *East Asian* friends are celebrating the events in public and thus they identify them as 'being Chinese'.

This young indigenous acknowledgment of CI as 'being Chinese', however, is also followed by their expectation of CI as 'becoming Indonesian'. Since CI is constitutionally approved as a group of Indonesian ethnic, the young indigenous expect that there should not be serious racial problem in intimate social relationship which later potentially becomes interracial courtship because the two sides are now 'fellow Indonesians'. Unfortunately,

indigenous man faces difficulties in convincing CI woman to be their girlfriend. Some pieces of data are provided below.

[4]

I wonder why CI woman's boyfriend is always CI man. Please help me guys. Is it because of their ancestral tradition? Or is it because they do not want to be with the lower class? I asked this because I often see CI couple, and almost never see CI-Javanese couple, CI-Ambonese couple, CI-Papuanese couple, or CI with other ethnics. Please help me find the answer.

[5]

*Why must CI get married to CI? I have many neighbors and acquaintances who are CI men. It is easy for them to marry indigenous women. But when indigenous men want to be in courtship with CI women, they find it difficult to get permission from the women's parents. Do the CI parents look down on indigenous men, to the point that they doubt their ability to earn wealth?
It's so sad considering that CI women are pretty.*

[6]

*Well, that's the most difficult question that I still couldn't find the answer.
Whenever I approach a CI woman, it's always difficult. The problem is always the parents. I don't know what makes the CI woman's parents rarely or never give permission to indigenous men. Maybe some of you can help me find the answer.*

[7]

Why are there many indigenous men attracted to CI women, compared to CI men who are attracted to indigenous women? This is my life experience. My neighbors, my parents' friends, my friends and their family also experience that. Furthermore, there are many threads from indigenous men who complain about why it is difficult for them to get CI women as their girlfriend, compared to threads from CI men who complain about the difficulty of getting indigenous women.

The data no.4-7 show that indigenous men find something strange; that is, the CI is both exclusive and inclusive in terms of interracial courtship. They are inclusive when CI men are trying to date indigenous women, but somehow exclusive when indigenous men trying to approach CI women. It is noted that indigenous men are demanding a chance to be in courtship with CI women, but they encounter a thick wall from the CI parents. What, then, are the reasons for CI parents for not allowing their daughters to be in courtship with indigenous men? Is it true that it is the parents who become the obstacle, or is it the indigenous men who are just making a speculation about it? Unfortunately, I could not obtain data which seem to be from CI parents; maybe it is because having discussion in internet websites is not common for them. However, some CI men and women are willing enough to

give their explanation, as well as responses from indigenous men who have experiences in this matter. In general consensus, there are factors that become the obstacle.

II. The Factors for Disapproving Interracial Courtship

1. Family factor

From my analysis, it can be concluded that CI parents get paranoid about the indigenous. What is causing the paranoia and where it comes from are not apparent from the data provided below. Still, because of that paranoia CI parents make a rule, forbid, and warn their daughters to not even try having courtship with indigenous men. Some of them even get to the point of frightening their daughters to leave their family and trying to confine them to a CI environment so that they will not get a chance to have a date with indigenous men. And if CI parents find out their daughters are in courtship that they have forbidden, they are likely to make the courtship end by either getting angry with their daughters, giving contemptuous looks to their boyfriends, or forcing them to breakup. Thus, they are not necessarily clannish or keeping aloof socially from interracial friendship. However, they are very reluctant in terms of interracial courtship.

[8]

Well, how should I put it? I don't mean to be racist. But that's the rule. Life must have rules. We can't live without rules, can we? My family is really opposing that. I could get expelled from my house or no longer be regarded as a member of my family.

[9]

It's true guys. I was in courtship with a CI woman twice, but all must end because of that reason. In my first courtship with a CI woman, my girlfriend and I didn't really think about our racial difference. But her parents gave me contemptuous look when I first dated her. In my second courtship, I eavesdropped when my girlfriend's mother got angry in the kitchen, saying: "if you look for a boyfriend to be your husband, don't choose the WANA¹³. Why didn't you choose the TENGLANG¹⁴? You embarrassed me." Here I don't mean to be racist, but

¹³ It refers to the indigenous

¹⁴ It refers to CIs

what does all that mean? We live in Indonesia, don't we? Or have they forgotten the BHINEKA TUNGGAL IKA¹⁵?

[10]

1. My mother has warned me since a long time ago that I am free to choose a man to be my boyfriend as long as he is not (sorry) indigenous.

2. My mother allows me to befriend indigenous men, though. She is fine if that is the case. But my mother has said "If you bring a huana¹⁶ home, it's better for you to leave this house right away."

Things like this usually happen in a conservative CI family, including mine.... So in my opinion, if you want to be in courtship with a CI woman, then look for one whose family is more modern and less conservative.

[11]

My family is rather conservative, tends to be exclusive and has negative stereotype for the indigenous. Sorry, I don't mean to be racist as I just want to explain it as it is. And I must say that I disagree with them.

When my sister graduated from Junior High School, my parents intentionally took her to a Senior High School whose students are almost 90% CI. The reason was simple, they didn't want my sister to be in courtship with indigenous men. Likewise, when she had graduated, they took her to a university and chose a major whose students were nearly 100% CI. At the same time, they also watched carefully with whom she befriended. But ironically, under such tight control, she was found to be in courtship with an indigenous man. That was when she was in her second year. Unexpected, isn't it? How did they meet, knowing that her friends were nearly 100% CI? Surprisingly, the boyfriend was none other than her lecturer, who is also a true Javanese. The courtship began when my sister had just broken up with her ex (her ex was a CI man).

What made my parents really mad was the different ethnicity, different religion, the fact that he only had a big motorbike for transport and a ten-year difference in age with my sister! My parents hit the roof and forced my sister to end their courtship. They didn't really breakup, though, and went backstreet instead. I know this because I caught them at a movie theater and found them having dinner in other time. I didn't tell my parents about this.

2. Stereotype factor

The problem of stereotyping is the most sensitive issue from the data. Some comments contain mockery and foul words. What is more problematic is that the stereotypes have been circulating in popular public websites, and are read by potentially millions of people. From the data, the CI parents are thought to have some kind of chauvinist prejudice, while indigenous men are gossiping speculations without solid proof. This might bring sentiments to both sides and could potentially cause disharmony in their social life. Below are some pieces from the data.

¹⁵ The Indonesian motto of unity in diversity

¹⁶ *Huana, wana, fuannah* all refer to the indigenous. The only difference lies on the pronunciation because those three are articulated similarly

[12]

In my opinion, it is not related to race but rather to different principles and belief. These principles and belief are shaped from how the parents educate their children.

In this case, the parents are demanding their daughters to be in courtship and get married to a fellow CI because they believe that the same race (CI) has the same principles in life and social matter.

Generally, they believe that (please don't get insulted): indigenous men are lazy, not a hardworker, and they often enjoy their leisure time too much; are unfaithful and often involved in love affair; often divorce their wife; are difficult to convert their religion from Islam. There are many other stereotypes told by the parents to their daughters.

[13]

I have once asked my mother, why must the fellow CI? And she said because there are differences in culture which she fears will bring disharmony in the marriage life. Parents want their sons and daughters to be happy. If the marriage is of one ethnic race, parents already understand about the culture and principles which, I believe, must be similar. Hence they won't worry too much to let their sons and daughters live as husband and wife.

[14]

Why is it difficult? Because generally they (CI women) say that they have been dogmatized by their parents, neighbors, or friends who say that indigenous men are described as bad, evil, poor, nasty. Well, of course they would think so because they provide the examples only from jobless criminals, beggars, thieves, hoodlums, or men who like to be violent to their own wife (as seen from news)... Hence the CI women are scared.. Imagine if they have been dogmatized since childhood.

[15]

In my opinion, the reason is because indigenous men are famous for their laziness, while CI men are hardworkers. Maybe her father doesn't give permission because he thinks that her boyfriend will spend more of his time doing nothing than working hard for the sake her daughter's happiness.

It may still be possible to get the permission. Just prove that [you] are not a lazy man and, of course, that [you] are serious in your courtship with her. Actually, this racial matter or whatever you may call it is not a great obstacle.

[16]

Most of CI families don't really find it a problem if there is a CI man who wants to marry an indigenous woman. The reason is that he can pass down the family clan name. However, if it is the opposite, they will be stricter because they want their daughters find a man who can provide her wealth, at least as wealthy as the family.

The image of indigenous men is not good in the eye of CI parents. The reason is that in their daily life they have interactions with indigenous men who are of low social class such as servants, drivers, security personnel, debt collectors. If there are indigenous men who are of higher social class, they are the local authority who often give CI people hard times by making their business as the source of financial exploitation. Hence the image of indigenous men in the CI people mindset is not good.

Stereotyping about the two sides takes back to the 17th century, by which history recites that before the arrival of Dutch colonial administration in Batavia, the relations between the Chinese in Indonesia and the indigenous were harmonious (Setiono:2002). The

Dutch colonizers then took control over Batavia and Java, but were nearly expelled by the Javanese and Chinese who united. It was due to the local authorities, being bribed with power, land, and position, cleaved the union by ordering the indigenous to kill the Chinese. The Chinese massacre continued in the Java war period (1825-1830). It was apparent later that there was internal strife: some authorities were pro-Dutch colonizers and some others were pro-Chinese. Fearing the threat of the Chinese-Javanese union would once again strike someday, the Dutch colonizers seized the land and forced the indigenous to rent and plough them for crops and set high taxes on both the Chinese and Javanese. However, the Chinese were given a special position as tax collectors and were allowed to sell drugs and open gambling stalls to earn profit. With this ploy, the pressed and hopeless Javanese became mere peasants, the Chinese excelled in economy, and the Dutch colonizers enjoyed the taxes from both the Javanese and Chinese¹⁷. In addition, the Dutch colonizers kept a close watch on the Chinese by placing them in Chinatowns with strict rules in order to keep them separate from the Javanese¹⁸.

Over the years, this ploy resulted in socio-cultural-economic gap that developed into a composite stereotype which is well articulated by Coppel (1983):

The Chinese are clannish, they keep aloof socially and prefer to live in separate areas. They cling persistently to the culture of their ancestral homeland. Their loyalty is dubious at best... Chinese who apparently identify with Indonesia are not genuine, they are only pretending to do so for opportunistic reasons rather than from a true sense of identification with the country and its people... Having been given a favored position by the Dutch, the Chinese dominate the Indonesian economy. (p.5)

Except for the poorest Chinese, it has been common for Chinese have at least one Indonesian servant; it would be rarity to find a case in which an Indonesian had a Chinese servant. Where intermarriage has occurred, it has usually been between a Chinese man and an Indonesian woman... It has been most unusual for a Chinese girl to enter into such a relationship with an

¹⁷ For a very detailed explanation upon this history, see (Kasdi:2000) and Setiono (2002, Chapter 5, 8-14).

¹⁸ In Chinatowns in big cities in Java, such as Jakarta, Semarang, Yogyakarta, Solo, Surabaya, there are Dutch-style old buildings surrounding the Chinatowns. This can give a picture how the Chinese were really under watch by the Dutch colonizers.

Indonesian man... Typically the Chinese performed the role of employer, shopkeeper and creditor; the Indonesian that of employee, customer and debtor. (p.18)

Likewise, the anti-Chinese violence that occurred in Indonesia post-war was more directed against property (involving the destruction of cars, shops, houses) rather than people (involving killing, torturing, raping) (Coppel:1983). Clearly, it is a product of socio-economic jealousy.

3. Environment factor

There is a belief from the young generations which says that environment affects the possibility of interracial courtship. From their experience, they believe that in some regions CI parents are not reluctant to let their children be in courtship with indigenous people. There is also consideration on the background of the family. If the family is an orthodox one who conserves their ancestral culture and traditions, then the possibility of interracial courtship is low. But if the family is of moderate background who does not really consider racial differences and can blend with local culture and traditions, then the possibility is high. Although there is no solid proof to this statement, and not all CI parents who live in the regions mentioned would be willing to accept interracial courtship, I personally think their reasoning is logical. Their reasoning, however, is derived from personal experiences, which may be different in other people's eye. In addition, similar to earlier discussion, CI people who are confined in CI environment such as Chinese or private school are unlikely to accept interracial courtship even though it is not entirely impossible.

[17]

I've once lived in West Kalimantan for more than two years, with nearly a year in Pontianak. Although I am a true Javanese, I was in courtship with a CI woman for twice there. My first courtship with a CI woman did not last long because she already had been in courtship with another man who happened to be CI. My second courtship with a CI woman lasted quite long before she was matched by her parents.

Then I moved to East Kalimantan.. I was also in courtship with a CI woman there. Her parents are very conservative, though, and her mother still finds it difficult to speak Bahasa Indonesia. Now they live in Tangerang.

At first her parents didn't really allow us to be in courtship, but even until now I'm still her boyfriend. It's true that there are many differences in culture and traditions but I can prove them that I'm serious about my courtship. That was really challenging.

[18]

You must consider in what kind of family the CI women are raised:

A. Conservative / pure-blood CI: they still continue and preserve their ancestral culture and traditions, including languages. They are also tolerant toward different race, religion, and culture. But the possibility for them to accept interracial marriage is little (except for indigenous whose social and economic statuses are of high class). For example, CIs in Sumatra and Kalimantan.

B. Peranakan Chinese / Mixed-blood / Qiaoseng: they have lived for tens of generations in Indonesia since the Tang Dynasty (7th – 9th century A.D). Most of them do not have Chinese name, no longer understand their ancestral culture, tradition, and languages. They are quick to assimilate and accept local religion, culture, and traditions. They are not against interracial marriage with other ethnics.

For example, CI people who live in Java and Sulawesi. You can see from CI who live in Benteng in Tangerang, or CI people who live in Bekasi. They have assimilated with the Betawi and Sunda culture. The result of the assimilation is, for example, the borrowing of Hokkian words such as 'loe', 'gwa', 'goceng', 'noban' in Betawi language¹⁹. Another example is CI people who live in Surabaya who are fluent in speaking Javanese.

My suggestion is, if you guys wish to be in courtship with CI women, either from conservative or mixed-blood family, then try to look for those who live in Java such as Jakarta, Bekasi, Tangerang, Bandung, Yogyakarta, and Surabaya. They are more welcome because they already understand local culture. If you shake hands and nod, they also shake hands and nod. If you can only speak Bahasa Indonesia, the same goes for them.

[19]

Well, it depends on the environment. CI parents usually put their sons and daughters in Christian private schools, starting from elementary, junior high, senior high, until university level. There are various reasons, some of them are: (1) they want their sons and daughters only befriend fellow CI, or (2) they fear of discrimination if they sent them to government schools. As a consequence, very few of them who are familiar with Batakese, Javanese, etc. who are of the same level either in social, economy, etc.

Related to the matter of CI environment such as in schools (e.g. data no.11&19), there is a strong tendency for CI parents to send their children to private schools founded by religion organizations. Most CIs choose Catholic, Christian, or Buddhist schools not only because of the quality of the schools but also because of the very high percentage of the number of CI students. There are perhaps socio-cultural and psychological benefits that that

¹⁹ There are a high number of Chinese loanwords in Bahasa Indonesia vocabulary. Those loanwords are mostly associated with trade, kitchen utensils, and culinary such as *sempoa*, *anglo*, *teko*, *soto*, *sate*, *lotek* (for more details, see Kong:2005). It is just unfortunate that many Indonesians are not aware of this.

kind of school has, compared to government schools whose students are mostly indigenous. Such benefits as longer holidays for Imlek, Cap Go Meh, Wesak, or other religious or cultural events give more time for students to celebrate those events together with their family. Another benefit such as behavioral shaping which does not violate the values of ancestral traditions if conducted in schools whose students, and perhaps employees, are mostly CIs. Another benefit such as minimum potential of racial conflict among students may also become the parents' consideration.

It is okay if the benefits mentioned above become the reason for CI parents to send their sons and daughters to CI schools. Moreover, Chinese schools, which were closed by the New Order, have been constitutionally allowed to operate. However, this chance may be misused by some CI people to form imagined communities by founding CI environment and persuading fellow CIs to join or take part (Meij:2009). This is most apparent in schools and universities (see data no.11&19). These imagined communities may affect the mindset of CI in their commitment of being part of Indonesia, since the acknowledgment of CI as part of the nation *de jure* must be followed by actions *de facto*. In other words, imagined communities may produce misguided mindset. Data no.11 serves as a perfect example of a misguided mindset, in which the parents intentionally sent their daughter to Chinese schools in order to confine her in imagined communities and protect her from the hands of the indigenous. In this case, the parents see educational institutions only from the race of the students, and not from the accreditation or quality of the schools. This means the parents are racist, which might be caused by negative stereotypes.

Poerwanto (2005) also finds this matter a problem in his research in Singkawang, West Kalimantan²⁰. He writes that CI parents preferred not to send their children to schools if

²⁰ West Kalimantan has a very large number of CI population. It is suggested that future researchers can take the province as the field of data. So far most studies about CIs are concentrated in Java.

they could not find Chinese schools that would accept their children (in this case, the children were unfortunately not admitted by the Chinese schools). They would not send them to government schools or other schools whose students were mostly indigenous. This is an example of how CI parents see schools not just as an educational institution, but rather as imagined community. They misguidedly see schools from the race of the students, not from the quality.

This argument does not mean to accuse that Chinese schools are imagined communities, nor it suggests the closing of such schools. The condition of the CI as a province-less ethnic group (compared to other ethnic groups which have a province to call it 'home') might also initiate the need of Chinese schools in many provinces in Indonesia. Moreover, government schools mostly do not provide lessons and teachers related to Chinese religions (Confucian, Tao, Buddha). Although this may be a dilemma, the misguided mindset that sees Chinese schools as a place exclusive only for CI must not weaken the commitment of 'becoming Indonesian'.

This argument, though, lacks support in that (due to limited literature that I read) I could not find research which profoundly discusses the reasons of the CI parents to send their children to Chinese schools, how and why they see them as imagined communities. This may also become a suggestion for fellow researchers to conduct a study on this matter.

4. History factor

As has been discussed earlier, the Dutch colonizers introduced three social classes. They were the Dutch in the highest position, the CI in the second position, and the indigenous in the lowest position. These social classes had legal rights and privileges, and assimilation to the lower class meant degradation in social status (Coppel:1983). Hence the CI people view themselves superior to the indigenous. This was a means for the Dutch to separate the CI

from the indigenous, familiarly known as *divide et impera* (divide and rule ploy). Even if the wish to assimilate existed, the Dutch colonizers' policies stood as the obstacle. The CIs were placed in Chinatowns and they were required to obtain *passenstelsel* (travel document) if they wanted to travel outside. They were also expected to dress according to their ethnicity. This policy was called the quarter system (*wijkenstelsel*) (Setiono:2002). Breaking this policy was regarded as a criminal offence. Hence the Dutch colonizers actively discouraged the crossing of ethnic boundaries (Coppel,1983:13-14). Unfortunately, it is still apparent in nowadays life that the feeling of superiority and inferiority still lives in the mind of both the CIs and the indigenous (esp. the old generation).

[20]

If you ask me why most of CI people are racist, try to watch the 97-98 incidents. If you think that was just their past, the annals of history, you are wrong. Many CI parents whose sons and daughters are now of our age experienced those incidents. How could they not be racist to the indigenous, if it was the indigenous who were racist to CI in the first place and then the CI people were robbed and killed? I personally think they are indeed orthodox, because there are people who are good and bad, but I can understand why they are that orthodox.

[21]

I don't deny that there are people who think that CI people are superior to the indigenous and thus it is improper to befriend them. This view is derived from the colonization which lasted for three centuries. During that time, CI people were put in a superior position from the indigenous. Maybe that view has taken shape in our everyday life.

[22]

Remember the Chinese massacre tragedy in: (1) Batavia in 1740, (2) during the period of war in Java in 1825-1930, (3) in Java in 1946-1948, (4) in May 10 1963, (5) in August 5 1973, (6) the Malari Incident in 1974, and (7) May 1998. Those incidents affect on how they treat the indigenous...

It is also known that during the New Order, the CI became the subject of discrimination. The New Order regime which lasted for 32 years (1966-1998) was begun and ended with two anti-Chinese riots. Before and in the beginning of the regime, the CI people were accused of supporting the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI) which at that time was thought to plan a coup d'état. The accusation had some grounds on the thought that the CI people were communists. They were feared that they would be the Trojan Horse for China. A

riot then erupted in the capital in 1966. And the mayhem of May 1998 also proved to be the end of the regime. During the 32 years, the regime issued discriminative rules that forbid everything about Chinese such as languages, writings, media, schools, festivals, and gathering clubs (Suryadinata:1984; Lindsey and Pausacker:2005). Riots of either small or large scale also occurred in other cities or towns in the archipelago, with the CI as the scapegoat. Thus the New Order regime was started by anti-Chinese violence, made discriminative regulations during its days, and was ended by another anti-Chinese violence.

With such black history, it is unlikely that CI people are not haunted by their past. CI parents nowadays, who are around 45-55 in age, must have experienced, witnessed, or at least been informed about, the bitterness of the repeated attempts of ethnic cleansing. Being the survivor of the tragic discrimination and mayhem, it is understandable if the CI parents take the wound to heart. Thus it is no wonder if they keep distance from the indigenous to the point that they would be protective toward, especially, their daughters.

5. Culture and tradition factor

If researchers who study CI often divide CI into two categories: *totok* (pure-blood) and *peranakan* (mixed-blood), I have a different approach which categorizes CI into three: conservative, less-conservative, non-conservative. If the *totok* and *peranakan* categorization is mostly based on the bloodline (such as where one was born and lives), my categorization is based on the conservation of culture and traditions. Conservative CIs are very concerned about their culture and traditions. Mostly they have faith in the *Sam Kauw*²¹, believe in signs such as Shio²², and pray for their ancestors during Qing Ming²³, speak their dialects, and in

²¹ The three Chinese religions: Confucian, Buddha, Tao. Sam Kauw is considered to be the combination of the three. In this line, I put emphasis on the three religions and the Sam Kauw.

²² Chinese Zodiac

some way are exclusive toward other sub-ethnics (Tiociu, Khek, Hokkian, Kanton, etc). Less-conservative CIs are CI people who are less concerned about their culture and traditions but still identify themselves as CI in ethnicity. Mostly they are Catholic or Christian but may still celebrate Qing Ming. Some of them speak their dialects but are not exclusive toward other sub-ethnics even though may still be exclusive toward the indigenous. Non-conservative CIs are those who are no longer concerned about their ancestral culture and traditions. They are mostly either Catholic, Christian, or Moslem, no longer pray for ancestors during Qing Ming, do not understand their dialects, tend to identify themselves as indigenous rather than as CI, and thus not exclusive toward the indigenous.

[23]

For me, it's better to conserve our own bloodline. If we remain pure-blood, there won't be problem when it comes to our ancestral traditions. Imagine what racial differences can do if even religious differences can erase Chinese traditions? It's okay, though, if you don't care for every little piece of your ancestral traditions. That's your choice, not my choice.

If you guys ask the indigenous here, if you are in courtship with CI people, will you follow their traditions? Those such things as burning hio²⁴, and pray for ancestors, which must not be wrong in every small detail. I believe that most of you will mind doing it. The same goes for us CI people. It's difficult for us to follow your (indigenous) traditions.

If you think I'm conservative, try to think from other perspective as well. Don't just judge me from your own perspective. It's true I love my ethnicity, but it doesn't mean I hate other ethnics.

[24]

I feel aggrieved if I remember this. Too conservative.

So, from the beginning of my courtship, they go to a fortune-teller and ask him if we really match each other. It was seen from our Chinese names and our parents' Chinese names, our birthdays, birth hours, shio, etc.

I was accused by her family for reporting false birthday and shio, which is of 6 months 13 days difference in birthday. They don't trust me even though I have shown them my legal birth certificate which notes my birthday and birth hour. The birth certificate also matches the hospital document of bornbabies, family certificate, KTP²⁵, passport, driving license, and confirmation from my mother.

What kind of fortune-teller did they consult to?

²³ A period when the Chinese visit their ancestor graveyards and hold a prayer ritual there. In some dialects, it is known as Ceng Meng or Ceng Beng. The difference is just a matter of pronunciation.

²⁴ Chinese joss stick used in traditional prayers

²⁵ Resident Identity Card

According to the data above, conservative CIs still find it difficult to accept interracial courtship. They will also do traditional things such as going to fortune-teller or asking for *ciam-sie*²⁶ in order to know if the couple matches each other. It is their belief that certain shio is not compatible with other shio, and that match can be predicted from Chinese names.

The data also shows the preference of purity both in bloodline and culture, which is typical of conservative CIs thinking. In primordial view, not only limited to CI, culture and tradition must not be contaminated. Hence interracial courtship is thought as an attempt of contamination. But in the case of CI, to which ‘pure’ culture they refer to is not clear. In the very beginning of Chinese migration to Indonesia, all of them were men and none were women²⁷. At that time the Chinese men had no choice but to marry indigenous women. In decades thereafter, the Chinese culture and traditions have blended with the local culture, creating what is known as the Peranakan Chinese culture; a hybrid which is denied by China as a part of China’s culture. It means the so-called ‘purity’ in bloodline and culture has been ‘contaminated’ from the very beginning. However, it can also be argued that what they mean by ‘purity’ in culture is *looking to China’s culture as reference and put aside the Indonesian influence* which gives indication to conservative CIs as ‘becoming Chinese’ rather than ‘becoming Indonesian’.

Looking again in the data, conservative CIs prefer identification which is ‘being Chinese’. Even if there is an indigenous man who is ‘becoming Chinese’ and understands all the small things about Chinese culture and traditions, it is still unlikely that he will be given a chance for interracial courtship. The reason is, as stated in the data, by physic he is indigenous and not Chinese. But it also indicates that conservative CIs are being practical because the negative stereotypes have already blinded the genuine personal characteristics.

²⁶ A tool used in Chinese religious prayers to perceive what is considered as the gods or goddesses answer.

²⁷ See (Joe:2004, pp.14-16), (Onghokham:2009, pp.2-4), and (Idi:2009, pp.134,139-140).

This can be considered as a precaution step because the negative stereotypes have existed before the examination of the personality begins.

We can look again in the data no.8-11 on how the CI parents react when they know their daughters dating indigenous men. The getting angry, making of the rule, forcing to breakup, giving contemptuous look; all these have begun before the men have a chance to prove themselves. Yet negative stereotypes are difficult to be extinguished because they already give birth to what is called generalization. Though generalization cannot, and should not, be used to mark an individual, it gives a description of a possibility on the bigger picture. Even if, supposedly, an indigenous man is given a chance to prove himself as 'becoming Chinese' as conservative CIs likely require, the process is time-consuming and it does not guarantee a satisfactory result. Some CIs will find the indigenous as good as they are, but others may find more who are worse from their expectation.

So for conservative CIs, trying to find a 'becoming Chinese' indigenous man is like a woman trying to find an almost-perfect man who is loyal, financially well-off, does not smoke, does not drink liquors, does not tell lies, does not play gambling, who after a long time concludes that such a man does not exist. Thus, for being practical, CIs try to save time and effort by preferring 'being Chinese' man rather than wasting time by examining the 'becoming Chinese' indigenous, because 'being Chinese' man is more likely to be 'becoming Chinese'.

The Source of Dilemma

So far this study has introduced five factors that show the reasons why CI parents are very reluctant toward interracial courtship. The factors, however, are interrelated. It means that CI parents are not only concerned about one factor, but rather a combination of more than one factor.

The study also finds few exceptions where indigenous men are in courtship with CI women even though they are not given permission by the parents (data no.11&17). Some of them went backstreet when the CI parents knew their courtship and force them to end it. The question that arises, then, what is the reason for CI women to go against their parents' objection. Is just because of love? Or is there another consideration that influences their decision? This study finds some worth-looking data.

[25]

I have a friend who once was in courtship with a rich CI man. She told me that the man, however, was conceited and arrogant, and her mother always thought that she was always right. Thus when my friend had a problem with them they always put her in the wrong side. My friend got stressed and she was not comfortable with that kind of courtship. At the same time, there was a handsome indigenous man who was approaching her and willing to listen to her grievance and sighs. Then my friend broke her courtship and started a new courtship with the indigenous man even though that indigenous man was not rich. When I asked her why, she thought that she could earn money by herself and that her indigenous boyfriend, despite of him being not rich, never asked her for money. Moreover, he could understand her. So she felt that it was better for her to live happily with him rather than live with her ex who treated her as a bird in a cage.

So if you CI men are wondering why your CI girlfriends broke your courtship and started new courtship with indigenous men, try to remember that woman wants to be understood. It's not that they steal your women, maybe it is you who put yourself as a man unworthy of their love.

[26]

There is a friend of mine who was bewildered as to why she had never been in courtship, especially when she was already 30. She was then introduced to a CI man who was 5-8 years older than her. He had a house and a shop, was financially well-off, and a workaholic. They then agreed for courtship, but when their courtship was around a month, her boyfriend told her that he wanted to marry her. This friend of mine got confused as to whether to agree or not because she was still in the process of learning about him. But then her boyfriend told her: "if you are married to me, you will live at my home, take care of the shop, while I will run another business so that we can earn more money." My friend was surprised and later on she broke her courtship. No wonder, I say. How could you respect a man who wants to get a wife but treats her like a servant?

[27]

Maybe one of the reasons that I could think of is because of being too conservative with traditions. I was told that Hakngin²⁸ men traditions do not allow men to touch household equipments. The problem is that in this era such reason is unacceptable, especially if we do not live in a town or village where it is easier to employ a servant. If a man is not allowed to help his wife in taking responsibility in household matter, should the wife take care of everything (including children, while there is no servant)? Do they think a wife is a superwoman?

[28]

Must live under the same roof with parents-in-law for the sake of being 'filial'. The word 'filial' is often misused by men to have women serve themselves and their parents. They know

²⁸ It refers to people of Hakka. Hakka is one of Chinese sub-ethnic groups.

wife and parents-in-law often do not get along well, but still they want us to live under the same roof with their parents just for their own convenience. That way, parents-in-law are always in the upper position and wives can only cry in the corner without being able to share their problem with their husband. Being filial does not always mean that we must serve them like a servant and live together.

The above data indicates that CI men seem to prefer simple women who prefer to stay at home, do not argue against the parents' wishes, can do household chores, can look after children, and are not more educated or wealthier than them. Surprisingly, this finding is very similar to the Pitt's finding (1984), in which the object of study was columns published in 1939-1942. These two findings show that CI men preference of a proper prospective wife, in general, has not changed over decades. Note also that modern CI women now call it "*treated like a servant*".

From the data, it is also found out that CI women fear that they will live a difficult life once they are married to CI men from conservative family. Almost all experiences obtained from the data find a general consensus that CI women are afraid of being treated like servants. They must serve both the parents-in-law and the husband, in addition to doing the household chores. They believe that in the era of woman emancipation, women must not be marginalized and must be treated fairly. However, it is not in line with the traditions of CI family, especially those of conservative family. Conservative CI people will call people who do not obey traditions or their parents as being unfilial. Hence CI women, who think they could not cope with heavy tasks that await them after married to CI men, prefer to breakup their courtship. For them, it is a better choice rather than being accused unfilial.

The Filial Piety

Being filial is really emphasized in Chinese traditions. Some teachings, one of them is the De Zi Gui, require people to be obedient to their ancestors, especially parents. This is known as filial piety (for more details, see Editors:1997 and Willmott:1960, pp.204-205).

Confucian teachings also encourage people to be filial to their parents, for it is the root of benevolence, and the source of every teaching (Suryadinata:1988). Being filial to parents, during their life, can be applied by adjusting oneself to what the parents want. The teaching of filial piety is the basic concept of righteousness in Confucianism (1988:46-63).

This particular teaching, though the young CI generations may not know what it is, is passed down usually in sayings such as: “*you must obey what your parents say; your parents know better than you; your parents are experienced; your parents know what is best for you; your parents will not disappoint you; your parents have sacrificed many things for you, so you must repay them with your obedience; do not disobey your parents, or you will hurt them; your parents are old and weak, do not disappoint them by being unfilial; be obedient to your parents while they are still alive;*” or other similar sayings. This kind of teaching is very good, but is very potential to be misused (see Editors, 1997:9-11). The teaching can be exploited by egoistic parents for their own sake, rather than for the children’s sake. Willmott (1960:273) even said that the practice of filial piety often had to be imposed by severe discipline which made children’s respect to their father was characterized far more by fear and silent anger rather than by love and admiration. The frustrations of severe punishment were such that the positive values of filial piety were reduced to minimum.

Although not all CI parents hold their faith on Confucianism, Confucian teachings have been taking shape in their culture and traditions because Confucianism itself is not regarded as a religion in China, but as a way of life which is practiced in everyday life since a long time ago. In addition, the mixture of Confucianism and patriarchal traditions of Chinese put woman in a subordinate position to man. Chinese families, especially conservative ones, put woman as the ‘other’ whose business is just around kitchen and well (Meij:2009). Not only that, a father of a family has the ownership of the wife’s and children’s belongings as

well as the right to abuse, kill, or sell a woman in his family (usually daughters) (for more details, see Wijaya:1997). Hence woman is considered to be less worthy than man.

Logically, derived from the above point, it should not be a problem for CI parents if their daughters are in courtship with indigenous men because, as conservative as they might be, Confucianism and ancestral traditions look down on woman. What should be a problem is if their sons are in courtship with indigenous women. However, the data shows that what happens is the opposite: CI parents are very reluctant to give permission if it is the daughters that do the interracial courtship.

What happens in this case is that CI identity and self-consideration as a superior race to the indigenous helps improve the status of CI woman. Precisely speaking, the status of CI woman improves with a condition as long as there is an indigenous man approaching her, and the parents know about this. If the CI parents do not know, or if there is no indigenous man approaching, probably the status of the CI woman remains inferior. Thus the pride of 'being Chinese' overlaps the Confucian teaching and traditions.

On a side note, although the patriarchal system gives right to CI man to pass down the clan name, man is not the one who preserves the culture and traditions (Meij:2009). It is more likely the woman who preserves and teaches them to young generations. The reason is that values of traditions are taught to CI women and they are trained to practice every single thing, including cooking and preparations, for rituals of ancestor prayers and religious and cultural events (2009:81-83). Those are things that man most likely considers trivial. This means that the preservation of CI culture and traditions are in the hands of CI woman. This may also be one of the reasons why CI parents are reluctant to let their daughters in courtship with indigenous men.

Nevertheless, with the CI parents' experience as the target of discrimination and racial violence during the New Order, it is very possible for them to plant filial teachings to their

children and discipline them with punishment should they disobey. However the process of teaching must be off the mark if it is blended with the parents' long-lasting grievance or hatred toward the indigenous. This is apparent from the data we just discuss where it says that CI parents make a rule to forbid their sons and especially daughters to be in courtship with the indigenous. The punishment for breaking the rule is also severe. Hence, rather than getting accused of being unfilial, the young generations of CIs are afraid of dissenting their parents' wishes (Suryadinata:1988).

The Pattern of Courtship

In general the CI, once well-known for parental and matchmaking arrangement on marriage, seem to have a loose restriction in courtship. CI parents have allowed their daughters, especially, to choose a partner as long as he is not indigenous. This loose restriction is also apparent from those who have tried to be in love with the indigenous, which means that CI parents tend not to put very tight control with whom their daughters have close friendship or to where they go. However, CI parents think they still have the right to approve or disapprove the courtship. From the data, what matters the parents, in order of emphasis, are: (1) race, (2) religion, (3) culture and tradition.

The CI parents also seem to consider courtship as a very serious matter, as though their daughters' partners would be 90% their sons in law. This is apparent from how they react by the time they know their daughters are in courtship with the indigenous; from hitting the roof, giving contemptuous look, frightening the daughters to leave the family, and forcing to breakup. They do not see that courtship does not always end in marriage. This is of course different from the viewpoint of the indigenous, especially teens, who think courtship as a less serious matter where it is common to breakup due to distance, boredom, disloyalty, or arguments. In addition, it might also be considered that CI parents see interracial courtship as

a shame that can lower down their social status and pride, regardless of the socio-economic status of the indigenous partner.

It is also a custom for CI to start courtship and introduce the partner to the parents at a later point. This introduction is meant as a way of consulting to the parents, even though they know that interracial courtship is forbidden. It is also a sign of respect to the parents as well as asking for parental consent. In addition, introducing partner does not always mean that the parents have not got acquainted with him before. It is a sign that they are not just friends anymore; they are in courtship.

The Absurd Concept of ‘Fellow CI’

We have seen from data that the preference of CI parents over potential love partner for their daughters is fellow CI. But who is this fellow CI is very absurd. It only points out people of the same ethnicity, but of course there is no one who is *the same Chinese*. As we know, there are different subgroups of Chinese ethnic (Hokkian, Hakka, Tiociu, etc.) They speak different dialects and among them are people of different culture, religion, socio-economic status, national orientation, family background. Among the same culture, there are people who are conservative, moderate, and non-conservative. Among the same religion (either Moslem, Christian, Catholic, Buddha, Confucian, Tao, or Sam Kauw), there are people who are orthodox, moderate, and false. Among the same level of socio-economic status, there are people who are stingy and generous. Among the same national orientation, there are people who view Indonesia as a mere living place and there are those who view it as their motherland. Among the same family background, there are those who are *totok*, *totok* who are ‘becoming Indonesian’, *peranakan*, and *peranakan* who are ‘becoming Chinese’. Even in this so-called *sameness*, there are layers of differences. Yet in these vast differences among the same ethnicity, CI parents are still very selective.

CI parents can argue, of course, that if among the same ethnicity there lies differences, logically there must be much more differences between the CI and indigenous. It seems hard, or unacceptable, to think otherwise; that if among the same ethnicity there lies differences, how could the *fellow CI* be no different from the indigenous? Among the *same CI* they are different, and with the indigenous they are different. Can't this prove that both sides are the *same different*? Ironically, the difference between the so-called *fellow Chinese* and indigenous only lies in physical appearance, in identification of 'being Chinese'. So, for indigenous men who want to conduct interracial courtship with CI women, they must pass physical appearance examination first, which is impossible, before going to personality examination.

The Future of Indonesia: summary and suggestion

In the earlier part of the discussion, I have argument that the rise of East Asian pop culture, in coincidence with the revitalization of CI religions, culture, and organizations, has grown the awareness of self-identification. Both the indigenous and CI identify CI as 'being Chinese'. From the discussion, there might come a counter-argument that may say that the pop culture has manipulated, or poisoned, the indigenous young generations' taste and preference; or that the pop culture is not good for the development of Indonesia's *original* culture. I personally do not think that it is not good. The East Asian pop culture has helped awaken the young indigenous awareness of their marginalized friends. The once-marginalized ethnic has now come to surface and become the center of interest with the help of the *manipulation*. It is a good political movement, to introduce the pop culture to the young generations, rather than to make bold attempts to older generations (who keep silent racial prejudice in their hearts) to acknowledge CI as 'becoming Indonesian'. In addition, pop culture is not a threat to traditional culture because it is dynamic, ever-changing, and does not

always sell well²⁹. We cannot guess what would happen to CI ethnic if the East Asian pop culture did not sell well in Indonesia.

One effect of the pop culture, however, is that there are indigenous men wishing to conduct interracial courtship with CI women. But their attempts failed in the hands of the CI parents who identify them as not 'being Chinese', along with the other four factors that become the obstacle. Of course it is not good for the CI if this goes on. The reason is that CI has been constitutionally allowed to re-establish their Chinese identity. Yet, on the other hand, the indigenous still find it difficult to get permission for interracial courtship which gives them doubt over the CI commitment of 'becoming Indonesian'. If something happens, most probably caused by dirty politics, the old sentiments might resurface and the CI will once again be the scapegoat³⁰. The history tells that the scapegoat has been the CI.

Nevertheless, as we are now living in the era of multiculturalism, pluralism, and human rights, it is not acceptable if there is still a trace of racism or discrimination. It is also very possible that in the future both CI and the indigenous need to collaborate in melting pots, not only limited in economic matters, to develop the nation as a major force in the global mainstream. We can imagine what happens if the seeds of prejudice, suspicion, and hatred are still growing.

My suggestion is to give knowledge to people involved in interracial love about what has happened between the two races, and what will likely be of their future, and let them find out the differences by themselves. It will be their own decision whether to fight for the differences or to breakup. If they choose to breakup, it will not be a bitter one caused by the parents, but a worthy experience for their future. It is very possible to see interracial courtship

²⁹ One example of pop culture that does not sell well in Indonesia is the Bollywood pop culture. Bollywood only flooded the television, but did not succeed in becoming a trend in fashion, culinary, lifestyle or language and culture learning.

³⁰ Ester Jusuf (2000) estimated that an anti-Chinese violence occur once in a 10-year cycle in Indonesia.

between the two races if CI parents, as the major obstacle, give the knowledge fairly. This kind of support is sufficient to help the young generations. It is not that we are suggesting mass interracial courtship to happen. We must support interracial courtship because it is very possible that interracial courtship will accompany cross-culture understanding. It is also potential to end the bad stereotypes, ethnic sentiments, and bitter history for a better future of Indonesia.

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