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THE RESILIENCE OF CHINESE MUSLIMS

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HIGHLIGHT

The research is focused on Chinese Muslims (Muallaf) that need resilience to become a true Muslims (Kaffah)

ABSTRACT

This research aims to analyze the resilience of Muallaf in Pontianak city, especially Chinese Muslims. Chinese Muslims were the focus of this research. The main tool in qualitative research was the researcher (human instrument). The result of this study is the resilience can be seen when Chinese Muslims can face challenging situations and know how to deal with them. This is due to the fact that shariat of Islam has affected the personality of Chinese Muslims. Moreover, after they chose Islam as their new religion, the social rejection from Chinese family members did not break their struggle to become true Muslims (kaffah). In addition, the mentors provide guidance to Chinese Muslims not only on how to pray and read the Qur'an, but also provide motivation to Chinese Muslims in order to help them overcome the anxiety of various problems they face and help them to become true Muslims (kaffah).

KEYWORD

Resilience, Islam, Chinese Muslims (Muallaf)

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A. INTRODUCTION

No person ever guesses that his/her ethnicity, nation, religion, or way of life had anything to do with his/her birth. Human is created for divine purpose. It is a choice to adhere to and believe in a certain religion. The first Persian which convert to Islam namely Salman al-Farisi (Sakinah et al., 2018) and Bilal bin Rabah (Tim/ptj, 2021) known by the name Muadzdzin Ar-Rasul. They were not originally Arabs. Changing one's religion to Islam does not imply losing one's individuality. Instead, it means increasing one's firmness of faiths.

Uniqueness occurred because Chinese identity was formed in the context of Indonesian history different from the histories of other countries (Yunariono & Andriati, 2020). Even so, it is not something new if there are Chinese in Indonesia which are Muslims or convert to Islam. It has been proven by Cheng Ho, the Famous Chinese explorer and admiral is a Muslim (Raya, 2023). Even in his various nature expeditions, there were missions to spread Islam. In fact, the choice to become Muslim does not make them change their ethnicity.

The fact that found during the observation was that the Chinese who left the Confucianism to embrace Christianity or Buddhism do not face any problems, but it would be a big challenge for them who convert to Islam. They always get the challenge within their own family. It can be concluded that if a Confucius choose to become a Muslim, she/he be avowed no longer a Chinese person. Moreover, those who become a Muslim get alienation experience from the family, social sphere and even their livelihood.

In fact, the act of becoming a Muslim (conversion) does not change their ethnic identity. Chinese Muslims still remain as a person of Chinese ethnicity even though they have become Muslims. As Turner, or also Burkley, in his expression which refers to being an inseparable part of the group as an actor, identity makes it easier for outsiders to recognize someone as a member of a particular ethnic group which refers to descent from common ancestors, and this can be seen from language identity, traditions and behavior patterns (Sinaga, 2017).

One who converts from non-Muslim to Muslim faith or who harbors a soft place for Islam is referred to as *Muallaf*. Numerous factors, such as marriage, stability and comfort, unusual occurrences, and in rare cases, personal awareness, might lead someone to change their beliefs and convert to Islam (Misbah et al., 2023). That are the reasons the Chinese who convert to Islam, their life is full of social and economic dynamics, even culture. They have socially and culturally abandoned elements of their ancestral culture. On the other hand, they have to accept the risk of being separated from their family (non-Muslim Chinese). In economic aspect, they must be able to cooperate or compete with their non-Muslim ethnic Chinese brothers and the entire community from other ethnic groups who are Muslim.

Getting new problems as a Chinese Muslim is part of the life of the Mualaf itself. These problems have come since they decided to embrace Islam. the severity of the feeling of being ostracized by the family. They also do not receive an inheritance and even employment issues that led to the commercial dissolution of family company networks. Moreover, many of them are unsure if they conducted their worship in line with the rules in Islam. The consequences are some of Chinese converted to Islam have returned to their ancestral religion (Confucianism). In fact, they desperately need lessons on how to become real Muslims just as other religions worship through their religious practices. Therefore, coaching and guidance for Chinese Muslim converts to strengthen their faith is needed so that they have resilience as Muslims.

Resilience in psychology can be interpreted as endurance, it is in the individual's ability to survive and revive from a difficult situation to restore happiness after facing an unpleasant situation or condition. However, the resilience of Chinese converts becomes a concern when they need many supports by mentors of convert so that they truly become Muslim (*Kaffah*).

Based on the facts from observation that experienced by Chinese converts, it turns out that it is full of problems. The decision to become a Chinese Muslim has social, economic and cultural consequences. Moreover, the requirement for them to resilience their faith as Muslims. As a result, the researcher conducted the research with title "Resilience of Chinese Muslims".

B. METHOD

The type of research conducted by the researcher was Qualitative methods. The information gathered was based on observations made through notes, photographs, and interviews. All of this were endeavors to examine relevant facts to the research issue and tie them to accepted theories in order to get conclusions or ideas regarding the "The Resilience of Chinese Muslims." Pontianak City was the site of this research. Chinese Muslims were the focus of this study. The principal tool in qualitative research was the researcher (human instrument). The researcher selected the topic, chose informants as sources for data, collected data, evaluated the data's quality, analyzed the data, interpreted the data, and made decisions based on his findings. The following were some of the data gathering tools used in this study: observational checklists, interviewing instructions, and documentation tools. The researchers utilize their ability to methodically correlate all of the data to define the data analysis procedure at the data analysis stage. Reduce data, show data, and make conclusions were the data analysis techniques used in this study. Persistence improvement, triangulation, and the usage of references were the methods that the researchers in this study employed to ensure that the data consisted accurate.

C. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Pontianak is one of the cities in Indonesia with a plural society. Pontianak, which is inhabited by many ethnicities, such as Malay, Dayak, Arab and Chinese descendants, along with Javanese, Madurese, Bugis, and other ethnicities, can often still be contested over the origin of their presence and beliefs. As a result, conflicts can occur merely because of 'claims' to be a local or migrant ethnicity, as well as about their beliefs.

According to the data by Tribun (Musliadi, 2019), Pontianak City has 667,053 residents. Based on Civil Registry Service, in 2019, the Malays at around 34.50 percent in the first place, the Chinese ethnic group at around 18.81 percent in second place, the Bugis ethnic group at around 7.92 percent in the third place, the Javanese ethnic group was around 13.84 percent, Madurese ethnicity 11.96 percent, and along with other ethnicities around 12.98 percent. Brach of PITI Pontianak City said that Chinese converts had reached 360 people (158 heads of families and 27 Chinese converts were unmarried).

Most of Chinese who have become Muslims due to Islamic dogmatism. Islam's dogmatism is to blame for the majority of Chinese converts to Islam. Their awareness of the cultural traditions of the Chinese and the Malay people has taught them important lessons about the seriousness of being a Muslim. It is hoped that once we all understand the actual significance of turning from Chinese to "kaffah" (completely, not half-heartedly) for the purpose of enlightenment and true happiness, we will all do so (Hakim, 2023).

The findings during the research is that there is rationality in their thinking, so they answer that becoming a Chinese convert is a rational subjective choice. The decision is taken through a process of deep contemplation and consideration. Phenomenologically, there are several things that underlie their consideration to become Chinese converts. The first interview results encountered at the beginning of this research regarding the basis of consideration of Chinese people becoming Chinese converts, due to the influence of other people's behavior.

For Chinese Muslims, the decision to become Muslim is objectively rational. Rational according to Chinese converts, and irrational according to the reasoning of other non-Muslim Chinese. wide-open space for social interaction allows for reciprocal relationships between non-Muslim Chinese communities and Muslim communities. The implication of social interaction is the existence of social actions that influence each other. Therefore, it was found that all informants believe that the religion they believe in is true. True in the sense of subjectivity. Strictly speaking, all informants agreed that Islam is the religion they believe has the ultimate truth.

Yutanto (the 1st informant, a student university of Buddhism), a Chinese informant, said that being Buddhist means believing in the truth of one's religion. "If you really want to see the 'moon', you don't just have to focus on the 'finger' or the direction". In order to feel and be able to witness the "moon" it is better to go through meditation. Yutanto's subjective view, as referring to the perspective of Buddhism, can be illustrated by suggesting that everyone does not need to bother themselves with questions, especially regarding responsibility for the suffering experienced in the chain of reincarnation. they also do not need to worry about what

will happen after someone reaches nirvana. It means that he really trust with what he believe in.

The research found that Chinese converts have the courage to leave their previous beliefs to try to understand the truth of other people's religious beliefs. This is through the openness of dialog space, as well as environmental factors. This can be considered as an initial effort made through social action to get out of personal problems and social problems. This reality then became the initial basis, as well as the reason for the Chinese who decided to become Muslims.

1. The Situation of Chinese Muslims among Non-Muslim Chinese

Ethnic Chinese historically came and occupied Pontianak City since 1811. Among them are scattered in various other areas in the West Kalimantan region. The presence of the Chinese has contributed to the development and progress of Pontianak City. Regardless of whether the Chinese are considered a hardworking ethnic group or not, their thrifty attitude and seriousness in pursuing their livelihoods have made them able to occupy elite positions, especially in the economic and trade fields in Pontianak City.

Chinese in Pontianak City tend to live in groups. Through a group way of life it is instinctive as a human being. The Chinese ethnic group's way of life can still be witnessed today. In some places it seems that their lives are "separated" from the lives of Malays and other ethnicities. They prefer to live in trade areas and in elite locations in Pontianak City. However, not a few of them also mingle with other ethnicities by choosing to live in the same area with people of other ethnicities.

Chinese who have succeeded in their economy can be seen from their established, exclusive way of life and appearance, but that does not mean they are easily "trapped" in conflict with other ethnicities communally. Chinese people in Pontianak City always maintain their attitude, are careful in their behavior and speech in every interaction with other ethnicities. Developing a sense of heart and gratitude for their living conditions, and also sharing with their group and other ethnicities as part of multiculturalism in Pontianak City.

As humanism ideals, no group wants to be drowned by the structure or system built by those who have dominated. It is a big job for the Chinese (non-Muslim Chinese and Muslim Chinese) if they want to be multicultural to integrate together on behalf of the Chinese. If Chinese multiculturalism really wants to be realized, at least the gaps and potential conflicts that Muslim Chinese always face can be minimized.

Chinese Muslims (Muallaf) are a minority not just among Indonesians as a whole but also among Chinese people, which has an impact on their identity, making them even more so because they are Muslim (Abidin, 2022). Efforts to minimize it require internal psychological awareness among the Chinese themselves. Among the main steps is to close the socio-economic gap between Muslim Chinese and non-Muslim Chinese through internal parties who already occupy strategic positions in the Chinese environment. they need to be given the understanding that identity has been pinned from birth to death, so there is no need to distinguish if one of them then converts from the religion of his ancestors.

The traditions, norms, values and beliefs that they believe to be Confucian must be able to be selected so that they can have a new identity as real Muslims. Therefore, Chinese who become Muslims do not mean that they have to lose their Chinese as ethnicity, but instead it is their Chinese that makes them an element of diversity in Islam. Diversity in Islam as Allah's statement in QS. Al-Hujarat: 13, is as follows:

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنَّا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ مِنْ ذَكَرٍ وَأُنْثَىٰ وَجَعَلْنَاكُمْ شُعُوبًا وَقَبَائِلَ لِتَعَارَفُوا ۗ إِنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ أَتْقَاكُمْ
إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلِيمٌ خَبِيرٌ

The meaning: "Oh mankind, We have created you from a male and a female and made you into nations and tribes so that you may know one another."

Making the decision to change one's religion is not a simple one. Even if it is a personal subject, religion has social consequences (Abidin, 2022). The pressure from the family, especially from the Chinese family (non-Muslims) has become a consequence of being *Mualaf* who decides to convert to Islam. The existence of pressure from the family is something that cannot be denied and avoided. This was also experienced by Toni Wijaya (the 6th informant), that when he decided to convert to Islam, his family immediately opposed him. He was scolded almost every day, so that he could no longer find peace at home. The same thing is also experienced by other Chinese Muslims colleagues. They also said that they often get blasphemy and curses from their families. They were kicked out of the house and then decided to live in the house of their Muslim family. Since then, they have continued to receive advice and have increasingly embraced Islam.

Along with the times, the freedom to choose religion among them gradually began to be accepted in the Chinese family environment, while making Chinese citizens more and more diverse. Although gradually, but the Chinese who embrace Muslims will continue to grow. According to the research results, PITI Pontianak City Branch always provides guidance, direction, and protection to Chinese *Mualaf* who join the organization's community.

Based on the Islamic Shari'a learned by the muallaf, Chinese Muslims always build good relations with their non-Muslim brothers and sisters, living side by side peacefully. They already know and recognize that they have become Muslims not because of coercion. In Islamic law, it is always emphasized to respect the existence of other religions and their adherents. As acknowledged in various interviews, the interest of a number of Chinese Muslims in Islam is because Islam is a religion that never tells them to close themselves to other people or groups, as long as it does not endanger their existence.

There are some Chinese *Muallaf* who have managed to reconnect with their non-Muslim Chinese families who were interviewed. According to Acuan and Suyanto (the 2nd and the 3rd informants), they often eat together, but only food that is in accordance with Islamic teachings or that does not contain elements that are forbidden. The family bond between Chinese Muslims and Chinese non-Muslims makes them realize that Islam is a religion of humanity that always creates a peaceful life with all human groups.

In Pontianak City, Chinese Muslims have never had problems with Muslims from other ethnic groups. Even with his non-Muslim Chinese family, it is the same. although at first there was tension, but according to Melly (the 4th informant), this condition has increased familiarity and mutual respect. this is because in family and kinship relationships there are boundaries that must be respected. it makes good tolerance between them.

Some Chinese Muslims admit that they will always maintain good relations with their families, even though they have converted to Islam. The adaptation system takes place naturally. Acuan (the 2nd informant) said that "*orang yang memiliki keberuntungan, saat menghadapi masalah sesuatu selalu memandang sisi baiknya, dengan sendirinya dalam perjalanan hidup ini dia akan sering menjumpai banyak keberuntungan yang sulit di mengerti; sehingga kemalangan dapat berubah menjadi keberuntungan, dan bahaya dapat berubah menjadi sesuatu yang aman*, a person who has good luck, when facing a problem, always looks on the bright side. In the course of life, he will often encounter a lot of luck that is difficult to understand; so that misfortune can turn into luck, and danger can turn into something safe".

2. Islamic Guidance for Chinese Muslims

Islamic guidance is part of Islamic da'wah activities. A good da'wah is one that directs its people to achieve a balance of life in the world and the hereafter. Religious guidance for Chinese converts is an effort of assistance, help and empowerment, so that they can be empowered as a new convert to Islam. *Hidayah* (guidance) is one of the most crucial and essential parts of Islam. *Hidayah* has a major influence on a person's degree of Islamic religion. Without *hidayah*, people are unable to understand Islam or even accept it (Maimun, 2023).

Religious nature is the potential that humans have, namely the tendency to monotheism. Religious nature as a potential requires an influence that comes from outside the human being. This influence can be in the form of guidance, coaching, training, education, interaction between others and so on, so that it is generally known as socialization. The implementation of these activities does not necessarily go as planned. Obstacles and problems will certainly emerge from various directions and all of that is part of learning.

Guidance to the Chinese Muslims is carried out by the Chinese Muallaf Management in Pontianak City. PITI (Persatuan Islam Tionghoa Indonesia) is one of Chinese Muallaf organization in Pontianak City. Integrating Chinese ethnic Muslims with other Muslims, Chinese ethnic Muslims with non-Chinese Muslims, and Chinese ethnic Muslims with other Indonesians are all goals of PITI (Yunariono & Andriati, 2020). The Chinese Muslim community relies on its unique aqidah and ideology, as the source of its rules and laws as well as its ethics and morals. Islam in his view is a religion that carries the mission of rahmatan lil 'alamin, so it learns a lot about tolerance, encourages freedom of thought and freedom of opinion, strengthens brotherhood, helps each other and pays attention to each other's interests and loves fellow human beings. *Bagi kalangan Tionghoa muslim PITI merupakan tempat atau wadah untuk silaturahmi dan upaya untuk saling mengingatkan dalam memahami ajaran Islam yang mereka yakini*; for Chinese Muslims, PITI is a place or forum for

friendship and efforts to remind each other in understanding the teachings of Islam that they believe in (Nofra & Auliahadi, 2019).

Fostering the *aqidah* of Chinese Muslims in Pontianak City has faced many problems and needs to be resolved wisely. There is collaboration between the Mentor and the Chinese Muslims in strengthening their understanding of Islam. The purpose of providing this study is to develop the understanding of the Chinese Muslims congregation in Pontianak City. Chinese Muslims are motivated by every lecture given in several Chinese Muslims coaching places in Pontianak City, they look very focused (*khusu'*) in listening as a sign that they are serious in worship. Basically, the Chinese Muslims really need direction to become a *kaffah* Muslim..

The conclusion of the observations that have been made is that Chinese Muslims are so enthusiastic in following and studying Islam. This can be seen when *Muallaf* who follow every Islamic study given by religious leaders. Various activities are carried out to strengthen their understanding by studying together and providing motivation through preaching and doing *tahlilan* together. The Chinese Muslims look so enthusiastic in these activities.

3. Pattern of Islamic Guidance to Chinese Muslims

Islamic guidance activities are part of the Islamic da'wah element. Da'wah needs to be carried out as well as possible in order to help *Mualaf* to achieve a balance of life in the world and the hereafter. Islamic guidance to Chinese Muslims is a form of assistance, help and empowerment, so that Chinese Muslims have full confidence to embrace Islam, not easily weakened by any temptation that can disrupt their faith. With good guidance, it is expected that it would be possible to strengthen faith and be sincere in upholding the norms and foundations of Islamic law (Pransah et al., 2022).

There are many trainings have been conducted to Chinese Muslims by PITI Pontianak City Branch. The guidance to the *Mualaf* is centered at the Darussalam Al-Arief Mosque. The purpose of Islamic guidance is to form a *kaffah* Muslim person. When given religious knowledge, and they understand and are grateful to have become Muslims. Their *Aqidah* will be stronger when they are guided and coached.

This Islamic guidance and development activity is generally attended by Chinese Muslims. This is to teach the true *tauhid* in Islam. The mentors always teach Chinese Muslims to learn how to read the Qur'an properly and precisely. once they understand and can practice it every day without being guided again, they get further coaching. The further guidance is gradually to memorize the verses of the Qur'an. These coaching steps are considered important, because as a Muslim, one must be able to read the Quran first, study its contents more deeply and then memorize it gradually. When a person understands the teachings of Islam more deeply, he will be more obedient to Allah SWT and strengthen his/her faith.

Islamic activities and guidance are scheduled every day. The schedule of providing motivation to Chinese Muslims is always conducted at least twice a week, which is on Friday night and Sunday night. The results of observations also found that Islamic guidance activities were carried out from 05.00-06.00 WIB. For morning activities or after dawn prayers in congregation, the Mentor always teach them to read the Qur'an. After that, Islamic Guidance is also carried out at 18.00-21.00 WIB,

which is between Maghrib and Isha. Moreover, they always conducted prayers in congregation. The activity is filled with memorizing the Qur'an and *muhadharah*. Chinese converts who have just embraced Islam are given more Islamic material. For worship materials that are given are procedures for ablution, prayer, dhikr and others. they are taught and guided until they can carry out worship in accordance with the law.

Suyanto (the 5th informant) as a Chinese Muslim admitted that Islamic guidance is very useful for them, as a fortress of *aqidah* so that it is not easy to apostatize from Islam. Islamic guidance is also a proof (*hujjah*) for them if they have argue with their families who are non-Muslim. He admitted that there were many changes he felt after attending Islamic guidance. He can be better at controlling his emotions and avoiding conversations that are not worth to be mentioned. Life has become more peaceful, he can control his emotions, and his speech is smooth and polite. The same thing was also expressed by Susanti (the 6th informant). She stated that the Islamic guidance she received was very helpful, especially in understanding correctly about the teachings of Islam. Given that they haven't learned much about religious teachings elsewhere, this activity will be very helpful to them (Burhanuddin & Pasilaputra, 2020).

The Chinese Muslim Development held in several places in Pontianak City is very good and fairly useful in order to help the Chinese Muslims understand the teachings of Islam. the process of learning can strengthen their faith, and it is truly felt by the Chinese Muslims themselves. They feel really calm, and receive a lot of enlightenment about the sciences of Islam. the conclusion is that they can feel a lot of new knowledge and are obtained as their curiosity grows.

The guidance of Chinese Mualaf also coordinated with the organization of Chinese Mualaf in Pontianak City, namely Forum Komunikasi Pembinaan Mualaf Tionghoa (FKPMT) in Pontianak City. This gives an understanding that religious guidance activities for Chinese Mualaf in Pontianak City are quite good and effective. The communication built by the mentors, or ustadz to the *muallaf* is also very good.

True Islamic religious education is very important to ensure that the *Muallafs* will get the best religious education so that they become perfect Muslims (Awang et al., 2023). The methods usually used in Islamic guidance activities for Chinese Mualaf are generally lecture, discussion and question and answer methods. There are several lecture methods carried out by the mentor, which are through directive methods and Rational Emotive Therapy (RET). This method includes dialog to Chinese Muslims who have just converted to Islam, this is done to find out how strong their sincerity and faith in Islam. The materials delivered to Chinese Muslims cover all the lesson about Islam in daily life. Specifically, the Islamic guidance material is in the form of; *aqidah*, al-Quran, fiqh, *sirrah nabawiyah*, and Arabic for daily communication. Moreover, for special material, the mentors also provide Christology learning as comparative religion. The goal is that Chinese Muslims can know that to become Muslim is their right choice. Strengthening their faith is also strengthening on *aqidah* and morals, along with an explanation of *ma'rifatullah* (understand about Allah SWT), Islam, and all about the Messenger. All the material presented so that the Mualaf becomes a kaffah Muslim, has a strong faith and is able

to become a reliable da'i as a successor to Islamic propagation, at least in the Chinese family environment.

According to Susanti (the 6th informant) found that there are still many Chinese converts who still lack Islamic guidance, so that many apostatize or return to their previous religion or belief. It is not easy to provide guidance to converts. There are some of them who want to be guided and some of them who do not want to be guided. The risk of not wanting to be guided is what makes them even more confused in seeking the Grace of Allah SWT and in the end they apostatize again. The obstacle in fostering the Islamic aqidah of Chinese *Mualaf* is their lack of understanding of Islam, but it is a natural thing because they return like newborn babies (back to the new *fitra*). Even so, those who want to be guided have a strong determination to follow every aqidah coaching activity so that it adds to their firmness as a Muslim. They always experience strong upheaval when they discover something new while learning. The turmoil continues to have a good impact on their behavior and faith.

D. CONCLUSION

There are some conclusions based on the results of this study. First, the risk of social rejection from the Chinese community or their families makes *Mualaf* (Chinese Muslim) experience sadness and anxiety. Positive responses and support from other Muslims' communities to Chinese *Mualaf* can turn these negative emotions into feelings of happiness so that they can strengthen their faith. Moreover, Islamic values always influence the way they live the perfection of life as a true Muslim (*Kaffah*). Second, Islamic guidance is crucial to prepare Chinese converts to become true Muslims (*Kaffah*). Guidance through structured schedule and intensive motivation is an important endeavor to strengthen the resilience of Chinese converts. In these activities, the Chinese Muslims appear to be really enthused. They feel incredibly at peace and learn a lot about Islamic sciences. When their interest rises, they are able to perceive a great deal of new lessons about Islam.

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