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Mapping 'Chinese' Christian Schools in Indonesia: Ethnicity, Class and Religion

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Abstract Schools are not “innocent” sites of cultural transmission. They play an active and significant role in transmitting values and inculcating culture. Schools also serve as a site for the maintenance of boundaries and for the construction of identities. Previous studies have recognized the relationship between education and identity. Building on existing literature, this study examines the ways in which Christian schools can be a site for the construction and maintenance of religious, ethnic and class identities of the ethnic Chinese in Indonesia. The study surveys four prestigious “Chinese” Christian schools in Jakarta. Through a brief but thorough profiling of the schools, the study explores the complexity of and identifies issues associated to religion, ethnicity and class, in relations to Chinese-Indonesians and the Indonesian society at large.

Keywords Chinese-Indonesians · Christian education · Religious education · Faith schools · Ethnicity

Schools are not “innocent” sites of cultural transmission. They play an active role in transmitting values and inculcating culture (Levinson and Holland 1996). They also serve as a site for the maintenance of religious, class and ethnic

boundaries. The role of schools in constructing identity based on ethnicity, “race”, class and religion has been recognized in various researches on education and identity. For example, Chinese schools have been important sites for transmitting Chinese culture and maintaining Chinese identity: Cushman and Wang contend that no single institution has been more effective in maintaining “Chineseness” than have Chinese schools (1988). Paul Willis has eloquently documented the role of schools in constructing class identity in his infamous book *Learning to Labour: How working class kids get working class jobs* (1977); and Miedema (2006), in her article, “Educating for Religious Citizenship: Religious Education as Identity Formation”, highlights the importance of religious education provided in schools in shaping students’ identity. Referring to the case of Indonesia, Lyn Parker argues that schools are “overwhelmingly powerful institutions of national culture and state power” and their primary function is to produce good citizens (Parker 2003). Building on such understanding on the significant roles a school plays, the objective of this study is to examine the ways in which “Chinese” Christian (read: Protestant) schools in Indonesia can be a site for the construction and maintenance of religious, ethnic and class identities, particularly in relations to the nation’s ethnic Chinese.¹

¹ It should be acknowledged that the identification of a Christian school as “Chinese” is problematic because all Chinese schools (or more precisely, Chinese-medium schools) were closed down since 1965, after which ethnic Chinese students entered either state or private schools with a national curriculum. “Chinese Christian schools” here refer not to Christian schools with a Chinese curriculum but those that are owned by ethnic Chinese and attended predominantly by ethnic Chinese students. When referring to the context of Indonesia, this paper uses the terms “Chinese”, “ethnic Chinese” and “Chinese-Indonesians” interchangeably to refer to Indonesians of Chinese descent.

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This study maps out the field by surveying four prestigious “Chinese” Christian schools in Jakarta.² These schools are selected because they represent the most prestigious and reputable elite Christian schools in the nation’s capital, and also for practical reasons such as access through researcher’s personal network. The study draws upon material from primary sources of in-depth interviews with founders, administrators and board members of the schools, as well as pastors of the church to which the schools are affiliated; and secondary sources such as church and school magazines, promotional materials used by the schools such as pamphlets, flyers and prospectuses, and other scholarly literature. This study encompasses a historical review, ethnographic fieldwork, as well as discourse analysis of texts. Through triangulation, the study provides glimpses into an aspect of the education context of the Chinese minority in Indonesia.

An overview of ethnic Chinese education in Indonesia

Chinese immigrants who settled in the archipelago before the establishment of Dutch colonial rule were mostly absorbed into the local society (Somers 1965). However, in the nineteenth and early twentieth century, the Chinese found assimilation into native society virtually impossible. This was largely due to the structure of Dutch colonial society and divide-and-rule policies. In the Netherlands East Indies, the population was divided into three “racial” groups with different legal rights and privileges: the Europeans were at the top, the Foreign Orientals (mainly Chinese) were in the middle and the natives were at the bottom. Under these conditions, for the Chinese to assimilate into indigenous society would have meant a drop in social status and loss of privileges. Among other institutions, schools became an important site for social segregation during colonial time, as this section will demonstrate.

The Chinese had not received a modern education in the Netherlands East Indies before 1901. When the Dutch laid the foundations for European and native education prior to the twentieth century, the Chinese were largely left to their own device. However, things began to change with the rise of pan-Chinese nationalism in Southeast Asia in the early twentieth century. In 1900, the Chinese in Java established

the Tiong Hoa Hwee Koan (THHK or the Chinese Organization) to foster educational and cultural nationalism among the Chinese in the colony (Wilmott 1956). Among others, one of the objectives of the THHK was to promote Chinese culture and Confucianism and to provide Chinese schools with a modern curriculum (Kwee 1969). As Cushman and Wang contend,

No single institution has been more effective in maintaining a sense of China’s cultural heritage than have Chinese schools; their curricula and medium of instruction ensured that Chinese cultural values were transmitted to successive generations of young Chinese (1988: 33).

The THHK schools that were first opened in 1901 in Batavia were popular among both *peranakan* (Indies-born or “mixed” blood) and *totok* (China-born, “pure” blood) Chinese because the Dutch had not provided any education for the Chinese. The revival of Confucianism and Chinese education provided a new identity for some *peranakan* and “awakened” them to feel a sense of pride in being Chinese (Somers 1965).

Fearing that the THHK and its schools would orient the *peranakan* Chinese politically towards China, the Dutch colonial administration established the Dutch-Chinese school (or HCS—*Hollands Chinesesche Scholen*) in 1908 to meet the challenge posed by the pan-Chinese nationalism. With the establishment of these schools, colonial government education had reached all sectors of the population: Europeans, Natives and Foreign Orientals (read: Chinese). These Dutch-Chinese schools had won many *peranakan* from the THHK schools. The HCS attempted to teach Western values through the medium of the Dutch language under conditions of exclusivism: the schools segregated the Chinese from the natives as they were established exclusively for the Chinese (Somers 1965).

In the monograph, *Dutch Colonial Education: The Chinese Experience in Indonesia, 1900–1942*, historian Ming Govaars (2005) documented the ways in which education provided by the Dutch in the colony were chiefly based on “race” and class segregation. Consistent to the racial hierarchy above, three types of elementary schools were established by the Dutch: the European Elementary school, the Dutch-Chinese school and the Dutch-Native school. The school fees were charged according to the hierarchy (i.e., the European Elementary school being most expensive) and admission was limited to students of the particular racial community. Due to the desire of the Chinese for a European education for its social stature, the Dutch-Chinese school used Dutch as its language of instruction and was classified as western elementary education, to which the European School Regulation applied. In contrast, although the Dutch-Native school used Dutch

² This article is the result of the findings in an earlier stage of an ongoing research on Chinese Christian schools in Indonesia, for which the author conducted fieldwork in Jakarta over an intermittent period of 8 weeks between 2009 and 2010. The larger project deploys fieldwork techniques of participant observation, interviews, focus group discussions and classroom and school yard ethnography to examine the complex relationships between religion, ethnicity and class in faith schools. This article is derived from materials collected in the “survey” stage of the research.

together with Malay or local language in its curriculum, it was governed by the Native School Regulation (Govaars 2005). The Dutch-Chinese school was not just an exclusive school in terms of its racial composition. It was also elitist in many ways serving mainly the upper-class Chinese:

The stiff fees, the exclusion of non-paying pupils, a faculty composed entirely of expensive European teachers, a curriculum nearly identical to that of European schools, Dutch as the language of instruction, the admission requirements which effectively limited the pupils to a minority of Chinese *peranakan*: all this made the Dutch-Chinese school an education institution for the more affluent. From its establishment in 1908 it was never accessible to more than about ten percent of all Chinese children (Govaars 2005: 94).

However, there were some *peranakan* Chinese who were more accustomed to the Malay language than to Dutch or Chinese and were financially weak. They could not fit into either the Dutch-Chinese school or the THHK school. Based on such considerations, the Netherlands Indies government later launched the Malay-Chinese schools in 1927 to cater to the education needs of the underprivileged *peranakan* Chinese (Lohanda 2002). However, the establishment of the Malay-Chinese school was met with fierce protest by the Chinese community. They perceived the school as being inferior and second class and that it was only capable of producing "street sweeper, errand-boy, auto handy-man etc." (Govaars 2005: 147). This brief survey of colonial Chinese education shows that schools were indeed a contested site for the production and maintenance of class and racial identity.

All Dutch and Western mission schools were closed down and only Chinese- and Indonesian-medium schools were permitted to operate during the Japanese occupation (Dawis 2008). As a result, the number of Chinese schools escalated and continued to rise after Indonesia's independence. However, the political context in post-colonial Indonesia prohibited its ethnic Chinese minority to attend Chinese-medium schools after 1958. The remaining Chinese-medium schools that catered for the needs of Chinese students who were not Indonesian citizens were closed in 1966 after President Suharto came to power. With the military-backed assimilation policy implemented by Suharto's New Order regime, all Chinese were urged to enter Indonesian-medium schools, both private and public. Although a number of Special Project National Schools that offered Chinese language as a teaching subject were allowed to be established in 1968 for the *totok* Chinese, they were all converted into Indonesian national schools in 1975, marking an end to Chinese-language education in Indonesia (Suryadinata 1978a).

The New Order administration (1966–1998) actively promoted religious affiliation in order to prevent the re-emergence of Communism. Every Indonesian was required to register a religion to which they adhered. Many *peranakan* Chinese who were influenced by both Western and Indonesian culture converted to religions that were also observed by *pribumi* (native, non-Chinese) Indonesians such as Christianity, as the religion did not have the stigma of being "foreign" in a way which Chinese religions did (Suryadinata 1978b). Consequently, Christianity experienced a boom in Indonesia during the New Order. One of the follow-on effects of the conversion to Christianity among the ethnic Chinese was the proliferation of Christian schools to cater for such rise, which will be discussed below.

A survey of "Chinese" Christian schools in Jakarta

After the closure of Chinese-medium schools in Indonesia in 1965, Chinese-Indonesians had to enrol in Indonesian-medium schools. However, options in education for children of Chinese descent were very limited. Some ethnic Chinese would not consider sending their children to state schools because of mistrust in the standard of education provided by state schools. For those Chinese who were interested in state education, many were discriminated against in their admission into the schools on the basis of their ethnicity. As Bjork (2002: 471–472) conjectures, "Accepted into the public schools only when *pribumi* students did not fill all of the desks, many Chinese children were left without any formal education options". This created a demand for alternative schooling outside the public system. In response to such demand, some Chinese Christian churches started to establish privately funded faith schools to accommodate Chinese students who were in such limbo. Other Chinese Christian schools that were established prior to the New Order experienced an unprecedented rise in enrolment, and had expanded rapidly after since. These schools became well accepted among the Chinese, both Christians and non-Christians, who cherished the quality of education and discipline provided by the schools. Coppel (1983) observes that during the New Order most Chinese-Indonesians enrolled their children in private Christian schools. This trend has continued to the present day.

In general, there are three kinds of private Christian schools administered and attended by ethnic Chinese in contemporary Indonesia. These schools are mainly managed by educational foundations, established either by Chinese churches or wealthy Chinese Christian business people. The first type is Christian schools that are established by and affiliated to Chinese churches. While the

church does not interfere with the day-to-day operations of the school, it defines (and, sometimes, dictates) the general direction, values, vision and mission of the school. Secondly, there are Christian schools established by ethnic Chinese philanthropists, business people or organizations unaffiliated to a church. Last but not least, there are the homeschool academies that follow an international Christian education curriculum called Accelerated Christian Education (or School of Tomorrow).³ These academies are mainly supported by and affiliated to Charismatic churches in major Indonesian cities. As the homeschools are relatively new to Indonesia, this study will only examine the first two types of private Christian schools.

After the Suharto regime collapsed in 1998, there has been a process of democratization in Indonesia. As the nation abandons the assimilation policy and moves towards multiculturalism, Chinese identity and culture experienced resurgence as prohibitions on Chinese-language education were lifted (Hoon 2008). These new developments in post-Suharto Indonesia coincide with the rise of China. Consequently, there has been a renaissance of Chinese culture across Indonesia (see Hoon 2009). Learning the Chinese language has become a popular pursuit for both Chinese and non-Chinese-Indonesians. Many state and private schools have included Mandarin in their curriculum, and universities began to establish a Chinese department to cope with such demand. Some private schools, including Christian schools, have even implemented a tri-lingual curriculum, known as “National Plus” curriculum, whereby English, Indonesian and Chinese are taught (Dawis 2008). With such developments, the label of “Chinese” schools may now refer to schools that include Chinese-language in its curriculum. However, the usage of “Chinese Christian schools” in this article does not necessarily reflect this new phenomenon, as it refers to Christian schools that have predominantly ethnic Chinese students in its student population, regardless whether they offer Mandarin in their curriculum or not.

This section will feature a brief profile of four elite Chinese Christian schools in Jakarta: Christian School of Indonesia, Agape Christian School, Eagle’s Wings School, and People-Building School.⁴ The term “elite” refers to schools that are attended by mainly middle- and upper-class ethnic Chinese and are equipped with very good facilities compared to most schools in Indonesia. They also charge a considerable fee (some of which have their fee payable in either US or Singapore dollars) and excel academically. These schools are chosen because they represent some of the most popular schools for the ethnic Chinese in

Jakarta. Notwithstanding the limitations of the sample, by only focusing on the elite schools allows comparisons to be made more easily.

Christian School of Indonesia

With more than 60,000 students and 145 schools spanning across 16 cities in four provinces (Jakarta, West Java, Banten and Lampung), Christian School of Indonesia (CSI) is the most established and one of the largest Christian schools in Indonesia. The CSI schools operate under the auspices of a *peranakan* Chinese Christian church synod, of a Presbyterian denomination, based in West Java. In fact, the genesis of this church can be traced to the Dutch mission movement in West Java in the 1920s.⁵ This church inherited a number of Dutch mission schools that were closed down during the Japanese Occupation in Indonesia. After the War, the church rebuilt and revived the schools with assistance from the Dutch who returned to Indonesia under the banner of the Netherlands Indies Civil Administration (NICA). During this period, Chinese church leaders began to take concrete steps towards self-reliance within their religious organizations. The aim was to reduce and ultimately free the local Chinese Christian churches and schools from the influence of Dutch Christian churches and education subsidies from the colonial government. They picked up the tab in supporting Christian schools when state subsidies were ceased in 1949.⁶ This resulted in the push for Chinese churches to create separate organizations to manage and build new Christian schools.

Although the school management team was largely made up of ethnic Chinese and many of the church activities were catered to the Chinese community, there were already signs that some Chinese churches had been assimilating into the wider Indonesian community. These were clearly signs of a rising awareness amongst church leaders that a process of localization (or indigenization) would have to take place. In the aftermath of the failed communist coup in 1965, the Chinese church that founded the CSI decided to change its chartered name from Chinese into Indonesian to indicate its integration into the wider Indonesian community. This marked a significant change in the organization’s identity, from one which was ethno-centric and Christian-based, to become one which is national-centred and based on a belief in the equality of all religions. More importantly, the church also integrated the national Pancasila ideology into its mission in the field of

³ For further details, see www.schooloftomorrow.com.

⁴ Due to ethical considerations, pseudonyms are used for schools and informants to protect their identity and confidentiality.

⁵ The historical overview documented here is derived from annual reports and anniversary magazines of the church and the school.

⁶ By December 1949, the Dutch government has given a diplomatic recognition of a sovereign and independent Indonesia as represented by the RIS (Republik Indonesia Serikat).

education.⁷ Many Indonesian Christians and other religious minorities subscribe faithfully to the Pancasila ideals because it protects their minority interests in a predominantly Muslim country (Kipp 1996).

The vision of the Christian School of Indonesia (CSI) is “To become a quality Christian educational institution in Faith, Knowledge and Service”, and its mission is “To develop student’s potential optimally through good quality education and teaching based on Christian values”. Indeed, the school has built a prestigious reputation based on its academic quality. However, the academic performance among different CSI schools is not consistent—CSI schools in Jakarta, for instance, are more reputable than their counterparts in other cities or town. One CSI school that stands out is located in West Jakarta where a majority of Chinese reside. Expectedly, this school has close to 100% ethnic Chinese in its enrolment. It has consistently been ranked as one of the best schools in the whole nation, and its students frequently won national and international competitions, such as the Science Olympiad.

The student population in the CSI schools located in big cities like Jakarta are composed of mainly Chinese. In small towns, however, the ethnic composition is more mixed, with a larger population of *pribumi* students. Admission to the school is not based on ethnic or religious criteria. However, non-Christian students would need consent from their parents for them to receive a Christian education in the school. This includes participating in activities identified as “Christian” such as daily morning devotion, Christian religious classes, and fortnightly chapel services. The fees charged by the CSI schools are not standardized—they depend on the location and the curriculum offered by the school. For instance, the CSI schools in Jakarta are generally more expensive than those in smaller cities and those schools that offer an international curriculum charge a much higher fee compared to those that offer a national curriculum. This class implication partly explains their higher ethnic Chinese composition in Jakarta compared to other areas. The CSI schools hire both Christian and non-Christian teachers on its staff, “as long as their [non-Christian] religion does not interfere with the school values”, according to the General Secretary of the church synod (interview, 15/06/2009).

Agape Christian School

Established in 1979 by one of the largest evangelical Chinese churches in Jakarta, Agape Christian School (ACS) is probably the second largest provider of Christian

education for the Chinese community in Jakarta. Like CSI, ACS also operates under the auspices of its church synod. The ACS has seven campuses: four in Chinese concentrated areas of Jakarta; and three in other cities outside Jakarta. The academic performance of ACS is comparable to that of the aforementioned Christian School of Indonesia, as numerous national and international science and math medals are won by its students every year. According to the Academic Director of ACS, the school has three objectives: (1) to offer a quality education, (2) to be a vessel of the Great Commission (i.e., a channel for evangelism), and (3) to develop national human resources based on Christian values (interview, 08/06/2009). The school motto: “Better Education in Science and Truth” tries to amalgamate secular scientific knowledge with a biblical “Truth” which is seen by the church as absolute. As the vision and mission of the school states respectively, “To be an excellent Christian educational institution which declares Christ as the source of all wisdom and knowledge”, and “To educate students holistically based on Christian values”. The school philosophy further reinforces the importance of a biblical faith in the following statements printed in the school prospectus: “We believe in a God-centred education with the Bible as the inspired authoritative word of God. Molding of character through discipline is one way to develop man and woman of integrity” (p. 3).

Spiritual development is greatly emphasized in the school. This is not limited to the students, but also extends to teachers and staff. According to the school prospectus, there are four activities to promote spiritual development for teachers, staff and students: (1) daily corporate devotion, (2) worship service and retreat for participants to acquire a Christian worldview, (3) community support through peer group, and (4) character building. The Academic Director of the school reveals that among the five selection criteria for the school’s teaching staff, the first two are (1) describe your “calling” to be a teacher⁸ and (2) describe your ministry in church (interview, 08/06/2009). Both these questions limit candidates to either belong to the Christian (Protestant) or Catholic faith.

The ACS develops “social sensitivity” through Character Building lessons, and social and spiritual activities such as retreats, social programs, mission trips, student fellowships and work with World Vision (School Prospectus, p. 29). However, it is unclear what “social sensitivity” means in this context. When asked how the school equips the students to live with differences in a multicultural and multi-religious society, the school’s Founder responded: “We have not considered

⁷ Pancasila is the state ideology of Indonesia, which consists of five principles: the belief in one supreme God, humanism, nationalism, popular sovereignty and social justice.

⁸ The term “calling” synonymous to “vocation” originates from the Christian concept of being selected by God for a particular occupation.

this. We only equip our students on challenges in acquiring knowledge. We have not considered how to equip our students to interact with people who are different from them. We mainly focus on academic matters” (interview, 23/12/2008). It appears that “social sensitivity” refers to helping students to be sensitive to the onslaught of the secular world, as suggested in the following statements: “Together with the Religion and Character Building courses, our spiritual program will help students to defend their faith. We make sure the students are aware that they are not immune [sic] from an attack of worldly values” (School Prospectus, p. 29).

In fact, besides the good academic reputation, strict discipline and adherence to the Bible have become major selling points of the school. This is illuminated in “Parents’ Testimonies” published in the school prospectus (pp. 34–35). For example, a parent wrote,

My husband and I had chosen ACS among so many school choices for our two boys because of its biblical fundamental. In this broken world, we believe that only with biblical teaching NOW that can save our boys for the FUTURE, for whatever situation they will face later in their life, when we are not around to help them. We see ACS is very serious with its belief in Christ Jesus, from whom all blessing [sic] and knowledge come (emphasis in original).

Eagle’s Wings School

With five campuses across Jakarta and its satellite cities, Eagle’s Wings School (EWS) is one of the most well-funded and prominent private Christian schools in Indonesia. The school offers its curriculum in English and Indonesian and has many expatriate teachers on its staff. While its student population is mostly made up of upper-class Chinese-Indonesians, the student body is considerably international and diverse—for example, there are students from Australia, US, UK, Korea and elsewhere. EWS was established in 1993 by an ethnic Chinese-Indonesian tycoon who converted to Christianity in 1990. The founder has also established a private Christian university and an institute of nanotechnology in Jakarta, both furnished with world-class facilities. The founder has a deep conviction to promoting quality education in Indonesia. He believes that education, or more precisely, the development of human resource, is the key to developing a strong nation (26/06/2009).

Although not affiliated to a church or a denomination, the EWS is strongly committed to “fundamental” Christian values.⁹ The vision and mission of the school are, “True

⁹ The term “fundamental” is used in the school’s hiring statement when describing its faith: “The school might be considered ‘fundamental’ from the point of view of basic Christian truth”.

Knowledge, Faith in Christ and Godly Character” and “Servant Leaders with a Biblical Worldview”, respectively. Among other selection criteria, evidence on “demonstrable Christian faith” has to be met by teachers who apply to join the school. As the recruitment document demonstrates,

The school is a Christian faith community. It is not enough for a teacher to ‘not object’ to Christian faith, beliefs and principles. Every teacher must have an active involvement and assist in building up the faith community. In practice this means that every teacher is involved in leading Bible study groups with students, faculty and staff. Every teacher will be involved in the prayer life of the school, praying with, and for, students, families, colleagues and others. Every teacher will be a part of a small fellowship/care group involving mutual support, Bible Study and prayer. Every teacher will have an involvement with a Christian church community.

With this strict criterion on faith stipulated, the school can ensure a teacher would subscribe to “fundamental” Christian doctrines (including “creationism”) that are set out clearly in the hiring document and would be able to guide the students to become “active disciples of Christ”.

People-Building School

Founded in 2001 People-Building School (PBS) has grown swiftly from one to six campuses, four in Jakarta and two other major Indonesian cities. Targeting the upper middle-class Chinese, the school provides an education based on an international (read: Singapore) curriculum. As stated in its website, “Singapore, being recognized as having one of the best education system [sic] in the world and having an integrated bilingual curriculum, serves as a good model for our school curriculum”. While classes are conducted in English, students have to learn Chinese and Indonesian as second languages.

This school is not established by or affiliated to any church, nor does it have a name that suggests a Christian faith. The vision of the school is “To provide an environment nurturing life long learning”. Despite the seemingly secular outlook of the school, there are several signposts that warrant the school to be categorized as a “Christian” school, at least for the purpose of this study. Firstly, the school was founded by several Chinese Christian business people in Jakarta who are dedicated to offer an education based on Christian values. All members in the school management and all teaching staff are Christians, although they came from different denominations. Furthermore, the school is a member of the Association of Christian Schools International. Finally, morning devotion is carried out on a daily basis and students have to attend the school chapel service once a week. Nevertheless,

the school uses the terms “faith builder” instead of “Christian education” to describe the religious activities that students have to participate. Although a majority of the students are ethnic Chinese, not all of them are Christians (School Superintendent, interview 19/06/2009). For instance, in the campus in West Jakarta which the author visited, only about 50% of the students are Christians. While morning devotion is compulsory, parents can opt for their children not to attend the weekly chapel service. The school does not actively evangelize to the students but conversion to Christianity does happen in annual retreats which students voluntarily attend.

On ethnicity, class and religion

Christian schools are an important site for the reproduction of ethnic, class and religious identities among the ethnic Chinese. The maintenance of an ethnic boundary, as anthropologist Frederik Barth (1994) contends, sets apart an ethnic group from another and ensures the continuity of the ethnic group. As such, Hoon (2008) argues that Christian schools in Indonesia serve to maintain a physical and spatial boundary where young Chinese define their identity against the non-Chinese. In fact, the domination of ethnic Chinese students in the schools profiled above is not coincidental. *Pribumi* students are a minority in these schools for two reasons: firstly, many Muslim *pribumi* are reluctant to enter a Christian school, and secondly, these schools charge a considerable fee which is only affordable by those who are affluent.¹⁰

The four schools discussed earlier target wealthy Chinese in Jakarta as their primary clientele. Before the “national plus” and “international” curriculum was introduced in Indonesia, many well-heeled Chinese parents would send their children overseas to Singapore, Australia and United States for secondary and tertiary education. Viewing education as a thriving market, private schools, including Christian schools, began to provide internationally recognized curricula to attract and retain students who would have otherwise moved overseas. Most students who graduate from these schools eventually pursue a tertiary education overseas. Contrary to Parker’s (2003) observation on the primary objective of state schools in producing good citizens, the aim of Chinese Christians schools is to prepare students for entry into overseas universities.

¹⁰ Christopher Bjork’s research on a Chinese Catholic school in East Java attests to this assertion, as he observes, “The high monthly fees prevented many [*pribumi*] families from even considering sending their children to St. Timothy’s. Religion might also have deterred students from applying to St. Timothy’s. In a country that is roughly 90% Muslim, many families might have viewed a Catholic school education as an unappealing option (Bjork 2002: 471).

A side-effect of the global outlook and exclusiveness of Chinese Christian schools is that they tend to contribute little to equip students to live in the multicultural society of Indonesia. While some of the schools teach citizenship education to satisfy the requirement of the Ministry of National Education, they place little praxis to it. Moreover, to some students who enjoy high mobility in life citizenship is a superfluous idea. The Christian School of Indonesia (CSI) is an exception to the lukewarm attitude to citizenship education displayed by other Chinese Christian schools. As shown in its history, the church that founded CSI had aspired to be an inclusive Indonesian church and had shown commitment to nation building. Recognizing that its students may not have much experience in interacting with their fellow non-Chinese citizens, CSI has endeavoured to address such limitation. The school implemented a social programme called “Live in” to allow students to go on a short-term stay with underprivileged Indonesians in villages in rural Indonesia. This programme aims at giving students exposure to living with people who are different from themselves and seeks to encourage students to engage in inter-ethnic and interfaith dialogues.

Other schools surveyed in this study perceive “character building” as their contribution to the production of good citizens. As the Founder of Eagle’s Wings School conjectures, “We contribute to nation building by building the character of our students in accordance to Biblical principles. In becoming good Christians, they will also become good citizens of the country” (interview, 26/06/2009). Character building based on Christian values has become a major selling point for Chinese Christian schools in attracting students in the competitive education market in Indonesia. Several school administrators specified that school discipline is an important consideration for Chinese parents when choosing schools for their children. Many Chinese parents in Jakarta claim to be too occupied with their business activities. Hence, schools are entrusted with the responsibilities of not just to educate but also to discipline the children on the parents’ behalf.

Research shows that Christian schools often exhibit a high commitment to moral values and discipline (see Francis 2005; Green 2009). Francis (2005) argues that a Christian school can replicate and reproduce an environment of a Christian community when a student is surrounded by other students who are committed to a belief in God and whose faith is grounded in the inerrancy of scripture. For this reason, many Christian parents send their children to Christian schools so that they can immerse in an environment that models the faith practice of their home or church. However, these schools do not only appeal to Christian parents, but many non-Christian Chinese parents in Jakarta also find Christian schools attractive for their children’s education. This is mainly due to the ethnic

Chinese concentration of the schools' population, exclusive social class environment, academic accomplishments, reputation, and discipline in the schools. Religion, here, is not seen as a threat or an obstacle to the students by the parents, but as a driver to reinforce discipline.

Last but not least, the definitions of "Christian values" between the schools can be quite different although all four schools profiled above claim to provide excellent education based on Christian values. It seems obvious that the EWS is deeply committed to maintaining an exclusive Christian education through its strict selection criteria for its teachers based heavily on a "demonstrable Christian faith", among other things. ACS follow a similar faith conviction as it perceives itself as a tool of evangelism. CSI, however, uses a different approach to define what it means by "Christian values". In the school's 55th Anniversary Magazine (p. 29), a leading pastor of the church synod wrote,

During the missionary period of the 19th century, Christian schools were used as a tool to spread the gospel. In other words, the objective of the school was to convert its students to Christianity. To this day... there are still many schools that are managed [by people] with this kind of mentality.... On the other hand, many schools understand the gospel of Jesus Christ in a different manner. [To them] the most important objective is not for a student to convert to Christianity, but to allow universal Christian values (*nilai-nilai kristiani universal*) to be a part of the student's life. Christianity is not just a religion but a set of noble values that God has bestowed [to us] through the work of Christ in His Kingdom. As such, schools are vessels of love, salvation and peace (my translation).

It is clear from the quotation above that CSI does not see itself as a device of evangelism. The meaning of the phrase "Christian values" stated in CSI's mission statement appears to be different from the same expression used in other schools. The citation above mentions an interesting idea of "universal Christian values". The English translation does not sufficiently capture the subtlety of the term. In Indonesian, the translation for the term "Christian values" is usually "*nilai-nilai Kristen*". The school chooses to use the term "*nilai-nilai kristiani*" with a small-letter "k" to show its universality. The General Secretary of the church synod argues, "We call it '*kristiani*' values because they are universal... they are commonly found in the world, even in other religions... the mission and vision of our church to the future is to be inclusive and multicultural. The same goes to our school" (interview, 15/06/2009). To contextualize what these "universal Christian values" mean, the Director of CSI explains, "Love, Care and Integrity. These are what we want to cultivate [in our students]. With regards to religion, they can make their own choice" (interview, 20/06/2009).

Conclusion

This study has discussed the nuanced aspects of how schools can be a site of identity formation and boundary maintenance. Through a survey of four prestigious Chinese Christian schools in Jakarta, the study has explicated the role of religion, ethnicity and class in the shaping of the schools' culture and identity. A review on the history of Chinese education reveals that the colonial legacy of racial segregation has, to some extent, been revitalized in schools in post-colonial Indonesia. Chinese Christian schools are only an example among the various educational institutions in Indonesia that are built on religious, ethnic or class exclusivism. Nevertheless, there are also schools (such as the Christian School of Indonesia) that actively engage their students with differences, in order to prepare them to live in a multicultural society.

The mapping of Chinese Christian schools in this study provides a glimpse into the multifaceted scene of education in Indonesia. Further questions can be raised from this study for future research. For instance, on a macrolevel: the relationships between the Ministry of National Education and Christian schools, and between Christian and other faith schools; and the challenges Christian schools face in a majority Muslim country; and on a micro level: How do students negotiate with "differences" in their life outside school? What happen to students when school life is over and when they exit the exclusive environment into the wider world of tertiary education or work? Further comparative research can also be carried out on comparing Christian schools with other faith schools in Indonesia and comparing Chinese Christian schools with Christian schools attended by mostly *pribumi*, as well as with Christian schools of a different class.

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