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The Relationship Between Confucianism and Materialism with Environmentalism Awareness Among *Tionghoa* Tin Miners in the Bangka-Belitung

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Abstract

This study examines the relationship between the *Tionghoa* (Chinese) ethnic group and their efforts to preserve the environment in Bangka and Belitung Island. The research method used was a qualitative case study design. The study included seven informants, selected through purposive sampling. Data analysis followed the Miles–Huberman technique, including data collection, presentation, interpretation, and conclusion. This study adopts the rational choice perspective, which emphasises the role of individuals in creating social change. The results show that the *Bangka Tionghoa* (Chinese) ethnic group's efforts to preserve the environment are driven by a rational choice to protect natural resources that support their economic livelihood. Although they are protected for pragmatic reasons based on materialism, Confucian values influence the efforts passed down from their ancestors. Love, compassion, and justice ('ren' and 'yi') shape human relations. Humans can cooperate if they possess these traits. San Cai, or Three Main Entities, is a Confucianism ontology emphasising humans' obligation to God (the Creator), other humans, and the earth ('*Tian Ren He Yi*'). According to Confucianism, all religions view mankind, nature, and God as inseparable oneness for a sustained and harmonious macro life. The views and choices of the ethnic *Tionghoa* community regarding their livelihoods and beliefs are rational social actions. This choice is based on the level of knowledge and understanding that individuals possess related to the benefits of the risks obtained when choosing an economic and sociocultural effort. This level of expertise and experience is essential for individuals to understand the choices made by the ethnic *Tionghoa* or Chinese context of diversification and changes in livelihoods outside the tin mining sector, which impacts environmental damage that also contributes to forming environmental citizenship.

Keywords: Confucian values, rational choice, *Tionghoa* ethnicity,

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INTRODUCTION

Bangka Belitung is one of the largest tin-producing areas in Indonesia. Tin production in Bangka Belitung is able to dominate tin production in Indonesia, reaching 90% of total production (Rebuin et al., 2023; Syafrullah et al., 2019) and the second-largest tin producer in the world, exploited for centuries before Indonesia existed (Handini & Hariansah, 2021) around 17th century (Ibrahim Ibrahim et al., 2019). The two islands that form the province together with Singkep, Karimun-kundur, and mainland Sumatra, especially Bangkinang, are called the South East Asia Tin Belt.

According to Bangka-Belitung provincial government staff, income from tin mining is the largest compared to other sectors (Personal Interview, 2023). Based on a report from Tempo, in 2022 alone, revenue from tin will reach IDR 413.68 billion. However, in 2023, income from tin mining will decline. However, it remains the most significant contributor to the province's income as tin prices fluctuated along with its production (Ibrahim Ibrahim et al., 2019). Figure 1 provides an overview of the potential wealth of tin resources (the areas in purple shade) in the Bangka Belitung Islands (Badan Pusat Statistik Provinsi Kepulauan Bangka Belitung, 2021).

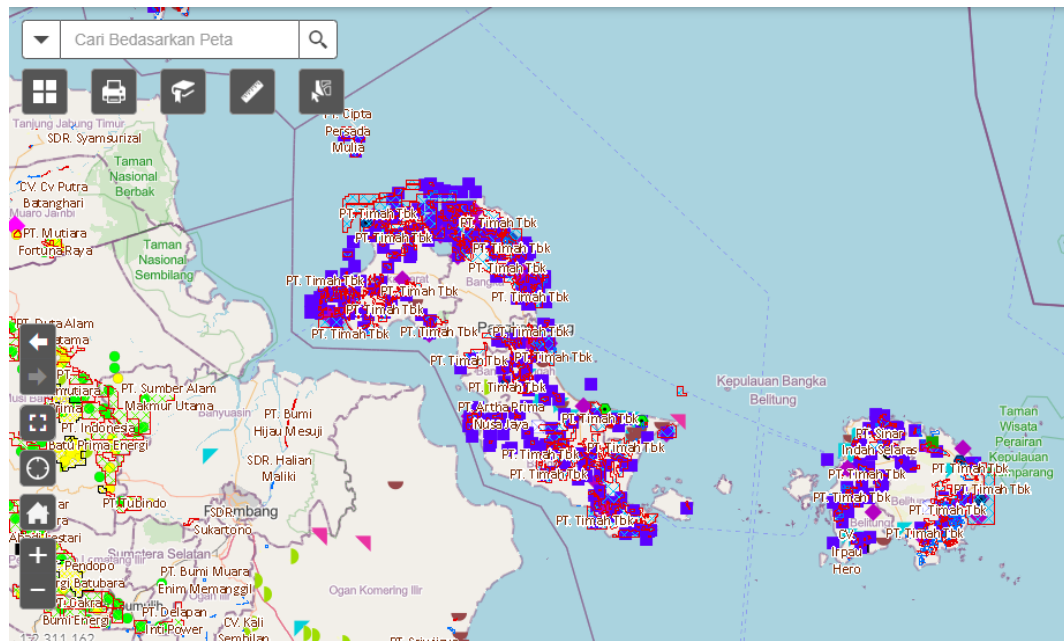


Figure 1. Map of the Tin Mining Business Permit Area (MBPA) from Geoportals Data Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources, Indonesia

However, the advantages of tin-rich resources also give rise to problems, four of which are: 1) environmental issues, 2) social issues, 3) law violation issues, and 4) economic issues (Bidayani & Kurniawan, 2020). Tin extraction initially occurred on terrestrial sites, but currently shifted to marine environments as deposits depleted in land, causing environmental issues like coral reef degradation and decreased fishing productivity (Rismika & Purnomo, 2019).

Apart from that, tin mining also plays a role in changing the demographics in Bangka Belitung through the flow of immigrants from other regions in Indonesia and outside Indonesia. Historically, the arrival of Chinese immigrants to the islands of Bangka-Belitung has existed since pre-colonial times. Still, historical records related to large-scale migration for tin mining needs were only recorded in the Dutch colonial era (Sya et al., 2019). Research by Erman, (2010) describe *Billiton Maatschappij*, a Dutch government-owned tin firm on Belitung, began operations in 1852 and later became a joint venture enterprise, *Gemeenschappelijk Billiton Maatschappij*, depending on Chinese labour.

Although Bangka Island recruits Chinese workers through kinship connections, the migration flow is smooth. The arrival of the mining workers, who are ethnic Chinese or recognised as *Tionghoa* in Indonesia term, is dominated by male workers. They are skilled workers in mining, especially in metal management (Ibrahim Ibrahim, Hidayat, et al., 2022). Over the years, they lived in different locations on the Bangka-Belitung Islands. Many of them no longer return to their hometowns for various reasons, so they stay and become Indonesian citizens for generations. The number alone makes up 30% of the population of Bangka-Belitung and makes this province adjacent to South Sumatra the largest concentration of ethnic Chinese in Indonesia (Dwi Aprilia, 2021; Nirmala et al., 2021; Widodo et al., 2019). The presence of ethnic Chinese working in tin mining has significantly impacted the civilization of the people in Bangka Belitung. The long-standing exploration and exploitation of tin metal have had social, economic, political, and cultural effects on the lives of the local population in Bangka-Belitung province (Idi, 2012; Sya et al., 2019).

The majority of the Chinese ethnic population on Bangka-Belitung Island engage in Confucianism as religious practices (personal interview with Bangka-Belitung demographic agency, 2023). There are three gods worshiped in the temple building on the island: the God of Commerce, the God of Agriculture, and the God of the Sea (Theo & Lee, 2014). This research focuses on the Bangka-Belitung Island *Tionghoa* ethnic community's efforts to preserve their culture and protect the environment. The community recognises the impact of environmental

changes on their socio-cultural existence and aims to construct their culture in harmony with nature. The article explores the community's reasons for diversifying their livelihoods and transitioning away from tin mining to other industries that are more environmentally friendly.

BACKGROUND OF STUDY

Chinese ethnicity in Bangka-Belitung Province

This research focuses on the Bangka-Belitung Island Chinese ethnic community's efforts to preserve their culture and protect the environment. The community recognises the impact of environmental changes on their socio-cultural existence and aims to construct their culture in harmony with nature. The article explores the community's reasons for diversifying their livelihoods and transitioning away from tin mining to other industries that are more environmentally friendly. According to the 2020 Population Census (SP2020), 8% of Bangka Belitung citizens are identified as ethnic Chinese. People of ethnic Chinese descent that were born, raised, and living in Bangka Belitung often claim to be Malay-Bangka. According to Suryanto, the Head of MAKIN for Bangka Belitung Islands Province (Interview, March 16, 2023), at least 30% of the population is *Tionghoa*.

Most ethnic *Tionghoa* descendants on this island practise Confucianism and Buddhism. However, some practise religions other than Confucianism and Buddhism such as Islam and Christian. Table 1 shows the distribution of the population based on religion adhered to by the people of Bangka Belitung in 2021 (Badan Pusat Statistik Provinsi Kepulauan Bangka Belitung, 2021).

Table 1: Number of Religions in Indonesia's Population in 2022

Religion	Amount (people)	Percentage (%)
Islam	241.6 million	87.02
Buddha	20.65 million	7.43
Christian	8.5 million	3.06
Confucianism	4.69 million	1.69
Catholic	2.02 million	0.73
Hindu	74.89 thousand	0.03
Faith Stream	117.41 thousand	0.04

Tin Mining Impact on Bangka-Belitung Environment

The massive tin mining in Bangka-Belitung over the years has damaged the environment on these two islands. Many researchers found mining activities in Bangka-Belitung province have been disrupted due to poor patterns, resulting in numerous environmental damage both on land and at sea (Ibrahim Ibrahim, Sulista, et al., 2022; Rebuin et al., 2023; Rismika & Purnomo, 2019; Sukarman et al., 2020). In the past, tin mining often occurred on land, but according to Yudianto (2009) this is because there is little potential on land, most of it is the dregs of past mining, and as a result, mining in the sea is now widespread.

Mining on land causes deforestation, a decrease in the quality of clean water, and many holes left by mining excavations (Ismi, 2022), which cause further loss of life. Tin mining in the ocean causes damage to coral reefs (Putra et al., 2019; Siringoringo & Hadi, 2015), pollution of the sea with dangerous heavy metals (Yusuf et al., 2022), and destruction of mangrove as coastal supporting ecosystem cannot play their role normally (S. P. Sari & Rosalina, 2016). As a result, the fishermen who live close to these tin mining areas are ultimately unable to go to sea because the marine ecosystem has been damaged (Ahmad, 2022; Aisyah et al., 2019; Jihan et al., 2022).

Mangroves have significant benefits. For a long time, coastal communities have used particular parts of mangroves for medicine, food, building materials, preservatives, and dyes for fishing nets commonly used by fishermen and others. The mangrove ecosystem contributes to the fertility of the surrounding waters by supplying nutrients resulting from the breakdown of organic material, especially in the form of nitrites and nitrates. Besides being a habitat for various organisms, primarily molluscs and gastropods, the mangrove ecosystem is part of the life cycle of fish, crabs, and certain marine organisms. Physically, dense stands of mangrove trees protect coastal areas from wave action, seawater intrusion, and abrasion.

Environmental damage also causes conflicts between residents, the government, and the private sector who manage tin, as in the sea, where almost 80% of this province's territory is ocean and coastal (Sujadmi &

Murtasidin, 2020). However, when discussing environmental damage, many research publications focus on illegal tin mining practices that do not comply with procedures, causing ecological damage (Marvianto & Toni, 2020; Nugraha & Wikaningrum, 2022; Rosmita, 2022; Sulista, 2019), besides causing social conflict, state revenue, and health worker safety and security issues (Prianti & Juarsa, 2022). Even though the police and other agencies have taken preventative and repressive steps against illegal mining, it is still difficult to stop.

According to research from Haryadi (2015), illegal tin mining is influenced by eight criminogenic factors: disorientation of governance, politics of control, smuggling areas, economic needs, low legal and environmental awareness, ineffective coaching and supervision, seasonal and selective law enforcement, and the need for effective legal products. These factors contribute to the occurrence of illegal mining activities. However, an alternative viewpoint that seeks to justify illegal mining, called community mining, argues that economic factors do not solely drive the proliferation of community mining in the Bangka Belitung region. Instead, it is also a result of growing discontent over the extraction of their natural resources by external entities. In contrast, individuals residing in the local area were limited to be passive observers, as any attempt to engage in tin mining activities during the monopoly era of PT. Timah Babel (a state owned company) would result in their incarceration (Indra Ibrahim, 2015). According to Irawan et al. (2014) illegal mining which is recognised by the community as conventional mining has a significant economic impact at the grassroots level.

In fact, the government and the people of Bangka-Belitung themselves are not remaining silent in dealing with environmental damage. Rehabilitation of former mining land into agricultural land (Subardja et al., 2012) and the implementation of the Management of Sea Water Pollution Control (Rismika & Purnomo, 2019) are a few examples. State-owned PT Timah, Tbk, the primary tin mining concession holder in Bangka-Belitung, also engages in several programmes, such as conservation through the optimisation of marginal reserves, the use of processing byproducts, and the extraction of low-grade minerals and allied minerals (Aji, 2020). From a local community perspective there are also interesting findings from the research conducted by Haryadi et al. (2022) who stated that although tin mining permits have not been socialised, they acknowledge that their work harms the environment. According to ideas and notions, miners are more ecocentrists since they use nature as an object than ecocentrism, which prioritises environmental sustainability. Local wisdom played an important role to restore the environment, as is done by ethnic Malays who believe in the spiritual power of nature (Henri et al., 2022) and ethnic Chinese with their beliefs.

Confucianism and Environmentalism

According to Majeri Mangunjaya et al. (2015), the role of faith is perceived as a significant determinant in driving individuals to modify their conduct towards the environment. The relationship between ecology and religion, generally known as "eco-theology" at the moment, involves shifts in worldview and behavioural patterns. According to Luetz & Leo, (2021) the field of eco-theology has garnered increasing attention from various religious communities, both within specific denominations and across different ecumenical contexts. Eco-theology is actually a praxis that effectively returns religion beyond vertical worship (rites). According to Trapnell (2002) Religions must recognise how the environmental crisis alters core spiritual truths about the universe.

According to Pepper & Leonard (2016), worldviews shape and drive environmental attitudes and behaviours. Eco (Theo) logical worldviews—beliefs about God, the Earth, and humanity—are essential in religion. Understanding communitarian and anti-communitarian human behaviours, constructing social networks, embracing sustainable technologies, and creating an integrative repertoire of religious symbols, aesthetic endeavours, and ceremonies are all parts of religious eco-dimensionality that influence behaviours (Bratton, 2018). The big goal of eco-theology is to reconnect human relationships with nature in the context of purity. As described by Thomas Berry (2013) on the world of wonder:

"We have lost our connection to this other deeper reality of things. Consequently, we now and ourselves on a devastated continent where nothing is holy, nothing is sacred. We no longer have a world of inherent value, no world of wonder, no untouched, unspoiled, unused world. We have used everything. By "developing" the planet, we have been reducing Earth to a new type of barrenness. Scientists are telling us that we are in the midst of the sixth extinction period in Earth's history. No such extinction of living forms has occurred since the extinction of the dinosaurs some sixty-five million years ago."

The concept of eco-theology emphasises the importance of our relationship with nature, which is seen as a manifestation of God. Therefore, harming wildlife is equivalent to damaging our connection with the divine. It is argued that addressing the environmental crisis should be a concern for all religions despite the challenges posed by modernity. Certain negative attitudes, called *neritic*, involve human arrogance towards the environment. Examples of such behaviours include illegal logging and marine exploitation. Nature is often perceived as having value only insofar as it serves human needs.

All religious teachings, both from the East and the West, teach environmental instructions. Confucianism, as a teaching that emerged from East Asia, also teaches similar things. Confucianism, also known as *Kongzi*, is a Chinese philosophy that emphasises humanistic principles over gods and spirits. It emphasises the importance of morality for societal order, sensitivity to social and economic needs, and societal management. According to Tucker (2019), the historical influence of Confucianism spread throughout East Asia, from China to Korea to Japan to Vietnam. Confucianism has profoundly impacted political ideas, institutional structures, social interactions, rituals, pedagogy, moral instruction, worldview, and historical interpretation, despite the stunning advances of industrialisation and Westernization.

Confucianism ideals still play a significant part in East Asian life. Regarding spiritual expressions, Confucianism's religious naturalism incorporates a dynamic cosmological perspective that is integrated into the communitarian ethics of the society, self-cultivation of the individual, and ceremonial presentations that integrate the individual, the community, and the cosmos (Brasovan, 2016; Chung, 2011; Zhuang, 2015). Confucianism believe humans are responsible for creativity and destructiveness, and cannot blame Heaven for dysfunctional families or world disorder. They emphasise that humans can survive natural disasters, and effective leadership can build economic institutions, political structures, and social organisations. However, humans can also destroy themselves and the environment (Weiming, 2001).

Confucianism believed that humanity is connected to heaven and earth, with heaven guiding change and progress and the planet serving as the natural context for human existence and seasonal changes (Tu, 1998). According to Christensen (2017), Confucianism emphasises the significance of value in all human activities, including the consumption of food. It acknowledges the importance of healthy food but rejects the notion of nature having solely instrumental value. Confucianism Thought promotes benevolence, embracing all living things and creatures, and promoting universal virtues like love and internationalism, as well as ecological ethics for environmental protection (Li, 2022). The International Confucianism Ecological Alliance On international Statement for Protection of the Planet (2018) describe eight point from Confucianism perspective to protect earth; (1). Principle of virtuous, responsible and caring life; (2). An ethos of responsibility and care; (3). Working through the structures of the world rather than rising above them; (4). Humanity as a partner with both Heaven and Earth; (5). The Earth is alive; (6). The world is a precious inheritance; (7). A sustainable harmonious relationship between humans and nature; (8). Just do what is right and proper and then all will be well.

METHOD

The research was conducted in Merawang District, a sub-district in Bangka Regency in Indonesia, with an area of approximately 207.27 kilometre squared, which has a significant population of *Tionghoa* ethnic groups. According to D. P. Sari & Buchori (2015), the soil in Merawang District contains tin ore minerals and other minerals such as kaolin, quartz sand, clay, and mountain rock. The Chinese community are actively involved in the post-mining environmental preservation movement. The research used a qualitative approach with an intrinsic case study design, as it focused on cultural studies and aimed to interpret and explore the experiences of the research subjects (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994).

Data was collected through interviews and analysed using data reduction, display, analysis, and drawing (Creswell & David, 2018; Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). Case study research explores Bangka *Tionghoa* ethnicity's rational choice in maintaining Confucian values and fulfilling material needs to explain decision-making in social sciences. The study investigates the decision-making processes of ethnic *Tionghoa* tin miners on Bangka Island, focusing on environmental preservation.

For the interview questions, since this research is in the context of environmental activist training, which focuses on natural data processing efforts using the live-in method, the interview was unstructured because the researcher wants communication that is based on openness and does not make the research atmosphere stiff. The face-to-face focus group discussion format conducted in February 2023 lasted for two (2) hours.

Focus group discussions (FGDs) are a method where people from similar backgrounds or experiences discuss a specific topic. A moderator guides the group, allowing for open discussions. FGDs provide insight into a group's thoughts, opinions, and inconsistencies and can explore survey findings, local terminology, and provide insights into the change process. FGDs are useful in bridging research and policy, enabling smoother management and are a good method for designing questionnaires. During FGD, the researcher acted as a moderator that guides the group, allowing for open discussions. The questions asked during the FGD were:

1. What are the origins of Chinese ethnicity and Confucianism in Bangka-Belitung?
2. Do all ethnic Chinese on the island of Bangka-Belitung still adhere to the Confucianism?
3. Why did you decide to become a miner?
4. When did you start working as a miner, and when did you decide to stop being a miner?
5. For those who stopped being miners, why did you stop being a miner?
6. For those still mining, how do you implement environmental awareness in your activities?
7. Regarding environmental awareness, what is your response to environmental damage caused by mining?
8. How do Confucianism teachings influence environmental awareness?
9. If the reason for materialism turns out to be attached to a built environmental awareness, how do you, as an ethnic Chinese who adheres to the Confucianism religion, harmonize materialism and environmental awareness?

For data management and analysis, the researcher used manual methods, so interviews from the FGD were taped, listened to, transcribed, read, and re-read to ensure that the transcription matched what was communicated during the interview. Hard-copy transcripts were micro-analysed by breaking them down into units of meaning on a sentence-by-sentence basis through simple coding. At that time, there were ecological activities in Bangka Belitung province related to how interfaith communities in Indonesia responded to the environmental crisis. Through purposive sampling, four informants were selected: 1) a representative of the Indonesia Confucianism council, 2) a resident of Chinese-Confucianism descent who were still mining, 3) a Chinese-Confucianism descent who were no longer mining, and 4) a Chinese community leader who was also a cultural conservationist. All four informants are given pseudonyms. The following is a brief description of the informants in the Table 2:

Table 2. Informant description

No	Initial	Age	Domicile	Affiliation
1	M	57	Merawang District	Indonesia Confucianism religious council and former miners
2	L	45	Merawang District	Chinese Confucianism descent who were still mining
3	KY	58	Merawang District	Chinese Confucianism descent and former miners
4	AL	55	Merawang District	Chiness community figure in Bangka Belitung

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Ethnic *Tionghoa* or Chinese have lived and laboured in Bangka Belitung's tin mines since their arrival to these Indonesian islands years ago. The environmental impact of tin mining has been significant. In addition, tin mining operations are progressively expanding into marine environments. There is a risk of land and sea pollution as a result of this. Not all mining workers are of *Tionghoa* ethnicity, but many are working to reverse the industry's environmental impact. The *Tionghoa* ethnic group did this for reasons other than satisfying immediate material necessities, namely the preservation and implementation of Confucian ideas.

History of Chinese ethnicity and Confucianism in Bangka-Belitung

The *Tionghoa* ethnic community in Indonesia has been practising Confucianism since they came to the island and has even gained legal recognition from past Indonesian leaders like President Abdulrahman Wahid or Gus Dur (Zarkasi, 2014). Informant M described the history as follows:

“Confucianism experienced ups and downs before 1965 (before the communist coup); Confucianism as a religion and the right to express Chinese culture in public spaces are still recognized. However, after 1965, Confucianism and all Chinese ethnic cultures were marginalized and experienced systematic discrimination. The colonial era's ethnic segregation also had an impact on society's perception of the Peranakan Chinese community, leading to the dark times of the New Order era, This period ended with B.J. Habibie's presidency after Suharto's fall. In 1969, Minister of Religion Malik Fajar recognized Confucianism, but it did not directly improve the Confucian people's political status or civil rights. Confucians were not allowed to join the MPR and faced difficulties accessing civil registration because the Act PNPS No. 5 of 1969 remains relevant but after Gus Dur becoming president, his policy give us new hope’.

Informant M, also added;

“Confucianism can indeed be considered a religion, just like what happened in Indonesia. However, traditionally, this was not the case; throughout most of Tionghoa history, there were no religious institutions established to manage and teach followers of Confucianism like a religion. Bangka-Belitung Chinese ethnicity has a livelihood system influenced by Confucianism in a continuous relationship between humans and nature. The largest adherents are in Bangka Belitung Islands, focusing on attitude determination in inter-actions rather than mission to convert to Confucianists”

A similar research by Triana et al. (2021) also concurs this view that in Indonesia, Confucianism is considered a philosophy rather than a religion. According to informant AL;

“Unlike other religions, Confucianism is unique in that it does not use missionaries to spread its religion. However, using missionaries in Confucian provinces to promote Confucian ideals and harmony is still interesting. This approach is not a conversion, but rather a way to promote Confucian values and ideals”.

Informant AL also added that the Confucian religion in Bangka-Belitung is in line with the Chinese community on both islands. Although not all Chinese citizens who first arrived or currently live in Bangka-Belitung are Confucians, the attachment of Confucianism to Chinese culture cannot be separated. Confucianism is not an ethnic religion, but the social construction makes it ethno-religious. Regarding origin of Chinese ethnicity in Bangka Belitung, Informant AL stated:

“Chinese mining workers brought to Bangka until the mid-19th century came from the Guang Dong area. When the British controlled Bangka, Chinese immigrants were also obtained from Guang Dong. This is commensurate with the Hakka group being the most dominant Chinese ethnic group in Bangka. Apart from that, the name Kong Fuk Miao, which uses the regional names Guang Dong and Fu Jian, reflects the history of the Hakka in their native land. Some observers argue that the name Kong Fuk / Guang Fu could be an abbreviation of Guǎng zhī fútián, which means, if humans want to enjoy a good life, they must also plant good seeds. Guang Fu is also widely used in temples such as Shandong and Guangdong, China, and Malacca and Pahang, Malaysia’

In addition, Informant AL shared that the existence of ethnic Chinese, both Confucians, and other religions, including Islam, are the majority in Bangka-Belitung. Each community living in harmony with other ethnic groups, including Malays as the indigenous tribe on the two islands. Figure 2 shows a picture of the influence of ethnic Chinese toward Bangka-Belitung culture and their assimilation with Malay people. Informant AL revealed;

“Chinese immigrants on Bangka Island, marrying local Malays and bringing their knowledge of their hometown's culture, traditions, and beliefs. They created architectural buildings, culinary offerings, and customs acculturated to suit local customs and geographical conditions. These memories are now a part of the historical and cultural heritage of the Chinese people on Bangka Island, with efforts from society, individuals, and the government to preserve their noble

values. *The Hetika Community, or Heritage of Chinese Bangka Island, is a persistent community preserving this culture*".



Figure 2: An ethnic Chinese village with a Confucianism majority in Merawang, Bangka

Confucianism and its Relation to Chinese Materialism

The Chinese ethnic community in Indonesia is still implementing Confucianism teachings. Informant AL stated that during the historical period of the arrival of the Chinese ethnicity, the implementation of Confucianism teachings related to social and economic needs appeared around the 1930's;

"At that time, ethnic Chinese in Palembang experienced an economic depression. To deal with these conditions, those in Palembang were not too affected and instead took advantage of the existing conditions. They shifted the role of European companies by relying on relations among ethnic Tionghoa in Singapore in the trade sector".

This information appears similar with the findings from a study by Husin & Maharihandono (2020) that stated the relationship between fellow ethnic Chinese is carried out on the basis of kinship to be able to help each other. Another research by Priatna (2019) also found the uniqueness of religion can indeed build social solidarity that unites society. Informant M added,

"Materialism in the context of Chinese culture, mainly if Confucianism influences it, is not capitalism-style Materialism where there is exploitation and maximum profit accumulation. But based on benevolence and harmonious relationships, making a profit should not be the primary motive of an individual or society but must have value".

Similarly, informant AL stated;

"Material possessions are fleeting and short-term, while Confucianism offers enduring values and spirituality. These values make for a fine living, long-termism, and add meaning and significance to our lives, making the spirit of humankind stand tall and great".

To understand Chinese materialism based on Confucianism or other Chinese philosophy, Kalmanson (2018) opined that materialism can only be understood when we understand *qi*, which can be translated as "living matter" or "vital matter"; and ideas related to the achievement of materialism are always based on the principle of *Li*, which means "principle" or "structure."

Materialism is also related to efforts to survive amidst the pressure exerted by other social groups on ethnic Chinese overseas. According to informant AL;

"Just as the Jewish community is entirely under pressure from the community in which they live, this is also the case experienced by the Chinese community in Indonesia. Even

though the relationship between the Chinese community and the local community has so far been harmonious, there is still pressure that is sometimes put on them by the local community, especially when it comes to politics. Entering this, in many places in Indonesia, Chinese community groups often experience stigma, persecution, and restrictions. The events in 1965 and 1998 are examples of how materialism is the primary way to escape oppression and, at the same time, help the surrounding community”.

In line with another research by Ioane (2016), the Chinese immigrants have faced challenges of acceptance and racial violence in host countries. To survive, they had to rely on their intelligence and strong work ethic to increase their wealth.

Of the four informants, three have been or are currently involved in the tin mining industry as miners; they are Informants M (57), L (45), and KY (58). These three started as tin miners at a young age and stopped at the age of under 60 except Informant L. Both informants M and L began working as a tin miner at the age of 20, while informant KY became a miner at the age of 25. Regarding their reasons for becoming miners, the three informants said it was for economic reasons, but apart from that, other reasons also accompanied, such as continuing a family legacy, a lack of other alternative jobs, and educational factors. Informant M said, "All Chinese people in Bangka-Belitung choose to become miners for economic reasons, but apart from that, there are other reasons related to the lack of jobs." Informant KY said,

"Economic factors are the main reason, especially as being a tin miner makes money easily and does not require certified skills."

Informant L added;

"My ancestors came to Bangka Island to become tin miners, so apart from economic factors, there is a call to preserve family heritage, especially since the tin mining business from generation to generation has been quite capable of increasing prosperity”.

Except for Informant L, the other three ceased working due to health reasons, the desire to find another job, and awareness of the environment. All the informants basically share the belief that tin mining has the potential to generate significant financial profits. On the other hand, they feel that their actions have dire consequences. They are directly affected by environmental damage caused by tin mining. This happens because the location of the tin mine is close to where they live. After freeing themselves from these constraints, they realised their actions were contrary to the principles they believed in, especially those of Confucianism. Informant KY said,

"My family had instilled, since childhood, the importance of continuing the traditions of my predecessors with a good way."

This fact encourages some Bangka Chinese people to expand their economic base by entering adjacent fields. However, many of them continue to work in the tin mining industry like Informant L who stated;

"they still worry about the impact of their actions on their siblings, parents, children, and grandchildren if they do not find alternative sources of materials that do not damage the environment but choice its not to much”.

This materialism to find alternative ways basically follows with the development of entrepreneurial skills, intelligence, courage, and the willingness to work hard day in and day out. Confucianism ethics are depicted in Figure 3 below. These ideals profoundly impact the ethnic *Tionghoa* group (Gondomono, 2015)

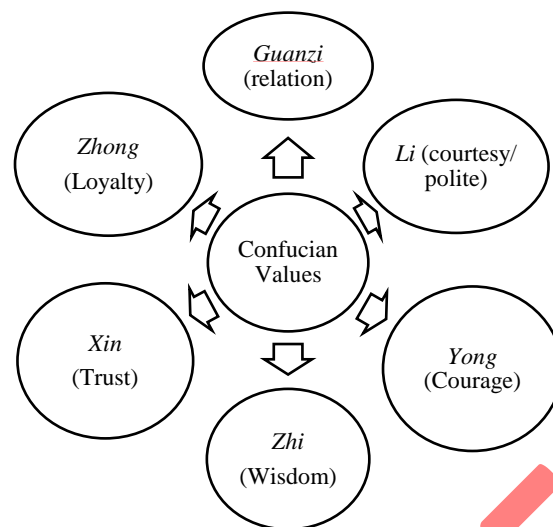


Figure 3. Confucian Values

Rationality in Environmental Conservation

The *Tionghoa* residents of Bangka Island are often devout followers of the Confucian religion practised by their forefathers and the principles of Confucianism are being used today. The profound Confucian perspective on nature and humanity that characterises *Tionghoa* culture is well documented. The ancient classics in *Yi Jing* (Book of Change) explore the dynamic relationship between humans and the natural world.

According to Informant M, those who follow Confucian principles are more likely to engage in environmental activism. This is one of the reasons why some of them have begun working in agriculture instead of mining or commerce. The *Tionghoa* people's capacity to diversify their economy away from tin mining is also a contributing element. The archipelago of Bangka Island has found a new source of economic capital in its enormous marine resources and in the initiatives to convert abandoned mining areas into ponds for fish and crab farming.

Informant M also added, Implementing Confucian thought is considered alongside contemporary issues like environmental degradation and climate change. However, Confucianism is sometimes related and emphasises on materialism. Hence, the Chinese descendants in Indonesia are generally stigmatised as greedy, but that is wrong. Confucianism and Chinese culture believe materialism is not human-centred but requires *Yin* and *Yang* equilibrium.

For Informant AL, the rationality for implementing conservation is not only for the future but also against dangerous exploitation due to industrialism and capitalism. He also added that industrialism and capitalism will use anything as a production material for profit. They regard natural ecosystems only as materials and resources and consume them until they are exhausted. Developmentalism has focused only on short-sighted interests and even turned the ecosystem into a resource, with the consequences currently being seen.

Those hit most by mining-related environmental destruction are starting to take action to protect their home. Crab pond farmer Informant M said that he and several of his friends used to work in a tin mine but have since shifted careers. They dug a pond in an area once used for tin mining. Informant M and a few of his coworkers believe that repurposing abandoned mine sites as aquaculture zones is a viable strategy for slowing the spread of environmental degradation. Informant M is a Confucian descendant of the ethnic *Tionghoa* who believes that nature should be cultivated for its value.

Informant M believes that problems will arise if there is damage to the natural environment, especially in areas where agriculture and aquaculture are thriving. He went on to say that they cannot have a secure way of life apart from nature. Therefore, it is essential to keep things under check. To this end, informant M and his team joined with municipal authorities and environmental groups to plant mangroves along the coast. They believe that Mother Nature reward them and their descendants abundantly if they treated her respectfully. This is consistent with the teachings of their ancestors, which they revere to and follow to this day.

Informant M and his ethnic *Tionghoa* coworkers understood that they could not pursue much economic material by destroying the current financial resources. Data from field informants supports the conclusion that the *Tionghoa* ethnic group in Bangka engaged in strategic behaviour. The values that guided the decision to act this way is manifested in the outcome. They believe that following the teachings of Confucius will allow them to prosper economically.

Rational choice theory focuses on making decisions based on goals and preferences. The ethnic *Tionghoa* groups in this study acts with a purpose and goals, aiming to achieve cultural and materialist values based on rational interests and beliefs. In this study, the decision to shift their livelihoods is driven by the desire to avoid environmental damage and become financially successful in other areas of livelihood like the fishing and crab pond industry. This action resonates with the study participants of being the actors who have control over overcoming each final goal and the values are the goals to be achieved (George Ritzer & Goodman, 2005; George Ritzer & Goodman, 2004).

The *Tionghoa* ethnic group focuses on achieving both material and cultural values through their actions. They utilise resources to gain economic benefits while also embracing the teachings of Confucianism to preserve their cultural values. Their goal is to avoid environmental damage while still utilising natural resources to meet their economic needs. This is driven by their desire to provide the best for future generations. Confucian teachings have influenced their understanding that every action has consequences.

CONCLUSION AND FUTURE STUDIES

The findings from this research show an eco-theologically based environmental awareness among Chinese people who adhere to the Confucian religion amidst their efforts to strengthen prosperity through materialism. The Chinese community on Bangka Island has experienced the ecological damage caused by tin mining. It must be overcome through pro-environmental tactical efforts and the search for economic alternatives to mining. The rationality of the ethnic *Tionghoa* community's perspectives and choices in their livelihoods and beliefs is evident in their social behaviours. This decision aligns with individuals' cognitive abilities and comprehension regarding the advantages and drawbacks of selecting a course of action, encompassing economic and socio-cultural aspects. The acquisition and understanding of knowledge at this level play a crucial role in enabling individuals to comprehend and evaluate their decisions and those of the ethnic *Tionghoa* community. The *Tionghoa* ethnic community residing in Bangka Regency is recognised for its notable aptitude in making logical decisions about diversification and adaptations in its livelihoods beyond the tin mining industry, which mitigates adverse environmental consequences.

The Bangka ethnic *Tionghoa*, who is part of the Forest Farmers Group (KTH) in Bangka Regency, offers logical and practical justifications for their current selection of livelihood sector. Despite the persistent viability of tin mines, the local community has become increasingly aware of the adverse consequences of this industry. Moreover, their adherence to traditional values rooted in Confucianism has prompted a shift towards engaging in crab fishing and trading activities. The alteration in their way of life primarily entails the ongoing pursuit of materialistic goals while simultaneously upholding the principles espoused by Confucian teachings. The Chinese population believes adhering to Confucian principles when seeking resources will yield optimal outcomes. To understand the decisions made by the ethnic *Tionghoa* in the context of diversification and changes in livelihoods outside of the tin mining sector, which affect environmental harm and contribute to developing environmental citizenship, people need this degree of expertise and experience.

The limitation of this research is the absence of ethnographic-based field observations, so it does not directly examine the Chinese community's genuine efforts toward environmental preservation efforts among the Confucian Chinese community. For future research, it is necessary to expand the scope of study to followers of other religions or interfaith groups on Bangka-Belitung Island to build environmental awareness while harmonizing it with positive materialism.

DECLARATION OF STATEMENT

I now declare that this paper is a sincere, precise, and comprehensive representation of the presented study. It is ensured that no significant elements of the investigation have been excluded, and any deviations from the initially intended research (and, if applicable, registered) have been duly clarified.

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STATEMENT OF CONFLICT OF INTEREST

I declare no self-interest in the study conducted.

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