Introduction

Indonesia is one of the world's big countries in terms of population with almost 220 million inhabitants. It has an area of more than 2 million sq miles and is comprised of more than 17,000 islands. Indonesia consists of 370 ethnic groups with around 400 languages and various social patterns and cultures. It has 5 major islands: Java-Madura (51,042 sq miles), Sumatra (182,900 sq miles), Kalimantan/Borneo (208,300 sq miles), Sulawesi/Celebes (73,000 sq miles), Bali (2,100 sq miles) and West Irian (163,300 sq miles). Java-Madura has a dense population, where almost 60% of Indonesians reside. Borobudur Temple, one of 7 wonders of the world is in Java. Indonesia is predominantly Moslem. Other religions are Hinduism, Buddhism, Protestantism, Catholicism, Confucianism, and other local ones, such as Pangestu, Subud, etc. The Javanese are the biggest ethnic group in Indonesia, while the Chinese are only around 3% (around 7 million people), spread all over Indonesia, and consist of various tribes and dialects: Hokian (the biggest), Hokcia, Khe, Konghu, Kwangtung, Shantung, Sinhwa, Tiociu and others. Before the Dutch colonized Indonesia, relationships between the Chinese and the other local citizens were very good, assimilation of culture and individual relations happened naturally. During the 18th to the 20th centuries many problems arose attacking the Chinese ethnic groups. The last tragic incident happened in mid-May in 1998, with more than a thousand victims of foray and rape, firing and destruction of buildings. This incident was followed by a big exodus of the Chinese to other countries.

The problem now is how to anticipate and prevent all possibilities for this human tragedy to recur. How can the Chinese community in Indonesia and in the world, construct good relationships based on humanism, egalitarian spirit, respect for one another, solidarity, protecting and loving God's creations in the world. FPUB, one of the inter-faith communities (not only inter-religious) has been trying to offer a recipe for real brotherhood between human beings on an inter-ethnic, inter-faith, inter-religious and inter-social approach. It works for real brotherhood that is built on human values while respecting the individual’s own faith and values.

The Chinese in the Javanese Moslem Environment:

Despite the small number of the Chinese community in Indonesia, the Chinese have contributed significantly to Indonesian economics and culture. In politics and law, their contribution is small, but they have also often become the object of discrimination and extortion, this mostly happening after the 30 September 1965 events. The Chinese almost always have become the scapegoat. Socio-political problems related to the Chinese (no matter how small is the problem) have often become very sensitive and big issues in Indonesia since the epoch of Dutch colonization, all through the periods of independence, the old order (Sukarno Era) until the new order (Suharto Era). Before the Dutch colonized Indonesia, riots against the Chinese never happened. The Colonial Dutch practiced the divide and rule system. The Chinese community was collected in a specific area, called "pecinan" (Chinatown). We can now find in almost any city in Indonesia this specific name. It is used to refer to the name of the streets where the Chinese community live. Some of the local people have a bad image of the "pecinan". As I mentioned earlier, the biggest tragic incident took place in the middle
of May 1998 in the form of racial riots, house firing, mass rapes and foray to hundreds of Chinese and buildings in Jakarta. An unresolved problem till now is that every time riots take place, whatever be the cause, it is the Chinese people who are always the hardest hit. In times of peace, good relationships prevail between the Chinese and their varied religious groups and other ethnic groups which also have various religions. During the Reform Era, with President Gus Dur, equality under the law, the politics and especially the culture and dignity of the Chinese were upheld. However, Gus Dur’s democratic intentions to repeal discriminatory regulations, met only with some success because of the anti-reform forces. Imlek New Year with all cultural accessories, media expression, and Chinese organizations were permitted again. The president even attended the celebration of Imlek New Year which was carried out by the Senate of the Confucius Religion (Matakin). Most of the Chinese in Indonesia are either Confucian, Buddhist, Catholic or Christian. Only a small number are Moslem.

Many people think that there is no bearing between the Chinese and the Moslem growth in Java. In reality they are related hand in glove. The research of Sumanto Al Qurtuby (2003), student in post graduate studies at Satya Wacana Christian University indicates that the Moslem entered Java for the first time through travellers with the Chinese and Moslem Mongol army who entered Java and remained in the north coastal area of Java, and then married with the Javanese women. This was marked by the existence of the Sampokong temple in Semarang which was built by commander Chengho (he is a Moslem) and a Moslem's grave Samcaikong in Cirebon, a city near the Port of Java North Sea. He also wrote about the harmonious life of Chinese society, both Moslem and non-Moslem, with the local community in the north coastal area of Java at that time. This research also confirms that eight among nine 'Walitsanga' (nine men who spread Islam in Java) are Chinese. This thesis is supported by Slamet Mulyana, a history professor from Indonesia University in his book. Collapse of Majapahit Monarchy and Rise of Moslem Monarchy in Java. His book was prohibited in 1971.

This historical phenomenon could clarify the issue often raised that the conflicts in Java are caused by ethnic and religious differences. The conflicts emerged with Dutch colonialism and is perpetuated today by groups that take profit from these conflicts. This matter has become the biggest challenge for FPUB Yogyakarta (Yogyakarta Interfaith Forum): to integrate in every activity (interfaith dialogue, peace campaigns, media communications, publications) the peace discourse through real brotherhood values. This campaign is not done only orally, but in practice, for example, people from various faiths can gather, praying and sharing a common vision; working together to look after and even build collectively the place of religious service of any kind of religion. We are networking with the other interfaith forums in Indonesia, as well as with overseas partners. As more and more overseas partners join us, we are sure that the noble purpose of Yogyakarta Interfaith Forum will be more successful, because we believe that what we do selflessly will be blessed by God. Thank you very much. Amiens. Sadhu-Sadhu-Sadhu.