CHINESE INDONESIANS REASSESSED

History, religion and belonging

Edited by Siew-Min Sai and Chang-Yau Hoon

ROUTLEDGE

Chinese Indonesians Reassessed

The Chinese in Indonesia form a significant minority of about 3 percent of the population, and have played a disproportionately important role in the country. Given that Chinese Indonesians are not seen as indigenous to the country and are consistently defined against Indonesian nationalism, most studies on the community concentrate on examining their ambivalent position as Indonesia's perennial "internal outsider." *Chinese Indonesians Reassessed* argues for the need to dislodge this narrow nationalistic approach and adopt fresh perspectives which acknowledge the full complexity of ethnic relations within the country. The focus of the book extends beyond Java to explore the historical development of Chinese Indonesian communities in more peripheral areas of Indonesia, such as Medan, the Riau Islands and West Kalimantan. It reveals the diverse religious practices of Chinese Indonesians, which are by no means confined to "Chinese" religions, and the celebration of "Chinese" ethnic events. Presenting a rich array of historical and contemporary case studies, the book goes beyond national stereotypes to demonstrate how Chinese Indonesians interact with different spaces and environments to establish new Chinese Indonesian identities which are complex and multi-faceted. The book engages with a larger global literature concerned with diasporic Chinese identities and practices and offers sophisticated and empirically grounded insights on the commodification of ethnic cultures and religions.

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Chinese Indonesians Reassessed

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Introduction

A critical reassessment of Chinese Indonesian Studies

Siew-Min Sai and Chang-Yau Hoon

Reassessing the "Chinese Problem" in Indonesia

Constituting between 2 and 3 percent of Indonesia's total population, Chinese Indonesians form a heterogeneous ethnic community (Suryadinata, Arifin and Ananta 2003; Mackie 2005). They are but one out of more than 300 ethnic groups in a country that has celebrated its ethnic diversity by adopting, since its independence in 1945, the official motto of "Unity in Diversity" (Ind.: *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika*). Despite such a motto, Chinese Indonesians do not possess the same status as other ethnic community groups who are perceived as "native" (Ind.: *asli/pribumi*) to Indonesia. A long history of Chinese migration to Indonesia beginning from pre-colonial times appears to condemn this ethnic community to the permanent status of "essential outsiders" (Chirot and Reid 1997), a popular idea expressed through labelling Chinese Indonesians as "non-natives" (Ind.: *non-pribumi*). As Aguilar's perceptive remarks on the hidden racialized logic of Indonesia's thinking about its territorial space suggest, "the Chinese are attributed a definite and knowable place of origin – China – and a first set of ancestors from 'outside' who first set foot on 'Indonesia.' With a focus on the past and the many first landings that the past is made to hold, the descendants (*keturunan*) are indelibly linked to the first-generation immigrants and, in an unbroken chain, remain forever aliens" (Aguilar 2001: 517). Given the contentious ways in which the Chinese have been defined against Indonesian nationhood, the diagnostics of Indonesian nationalism continue to cast long shadows on studies concerned with this ethnic community. Against such a backdrop, this book embarks on a collective attempt to angle new directions in studies on the ethnic Chinese and issues pertaining to Chineseness in Indonesia. The key problem the book addresses is the limitations of studying the Chinese in Indonesia as an ethnic community and the need to move beyond the issue of Chinese (non)belonging to the Indonesian nation.

The chapters in this book reflect a continued engagement with the ambivalent position of Chinese Indonesians. The book is, however, premised on the argument that it is timely to bring a renewed sense of cogency and critical reflection to the burgeoning research on the ethnic Chinese and Chineseness in Indonesia. The stunning increase in the number of articles and books published on the Chinese Indonesians in the aftermath of the regime change in May 1998 underscores

the extent to which scholars have given this heterogeneous community unprecedented attention in the field of contemporary Indonesian Studies. This post-1998 state of affairs stands in marked contrast to the Suharto or pre-Suharto years, when research on the Chinese Indonesians was seen as "a marginal enterprise" (Lindsey and Pausacker 2005 :1). The New Order regime's long-standing discriminatory policies against Chinese Indonesians, coupled with a history of "anti-Chinese" sentiments in Indonesia, are key reasons for this marked interest in Chinese Indonesians expressed by scholars, experts and researchers alike. An immediate trigger for this heightened attention was the dramatic outbursts of violence in different parts of Indonesia which accompanied Suharto's downfall. The violence that took place was immediately ethnicized by the media as "anti-Chinese" (Heryanto 1999). It was disturbing to witness numerous instances of violence – including mass rapes – perpetrated against women of apparent Chinese descent. Reports of such violence hogged the headlines of both the local and global media for weeks, galvanizing numerous Chinese communities in different parts of the world into condemning the spectacle of "anti-Chinese" violence in a dramatic show of ethnic solidarity (Tay 2006).

The chapters in the book exemplify the expansiveness of the scholarship and, more significantly, they depict how scholars are moving beyond the adoption of a narrow ethno-nationalist framework in their research on Chinese Indonesians. This is evident in the recently published edited volume *Chinese Indonesians and Regime Change*, which problematizes the nation-state paradigm and the political economy approach, both central to studies of Chinese Indonesians, especially during the New Order period. The editors acknowledge that "so far only few attempts have been made to reassess these [approaches] in regard to the modern historiography of the Chinese Indonesians" (Dieleman, Koning and Post 2011: 6). The book departs from the state-centered perspective, which often presents the Chinese as disenfranchised victims, juxtaposed against a strong and oppressive state; and treats the Chinese as insiders, not outsiders, and as active agents, not as passive bystanders, in historical events.

Nonetheless, the discourse of "*Masalah Cina*," otherwise known as the "Chinese Problem," remains a major stumbling block in any attempt to reinvent this field. A key phrase in the nationalistic discourse on the ethnic Chinese and Chineseness in postcolonial Indonesia, "*Masalah Cina*" is popularly used in an unconscious manner, as a shorthand reference to a range of multi-faceted problems – whether historical, institutional, economic, racial, socio-cultural, or religious – that obstruct Chinese Indonesians from either identifying themselves or being identified fully as part of the Indonesian nation-state.

While existing scholarly literature demonstrates both an empathy and a critical awareness of the myriad ways in which the Chinese community has been discriminated against, victimized, or made scapegoats for the socio-economic problems afflicting the Indonesian nation, it is not always obvious that scholars make a sufficiently clear distinction between the complex problems Chinese Indonesians confront in becoming encompassed within Indonesia and the dominant discourse of *Masalah Cina*. This distinction is important to identify precisely the ideological work that *Masalah Cina* does in anchoring a particular discourse about

the Chinese and Chineseness in Indonesia. Casting the Chinese in the country as a "problem" on a "national" scale, the discourse of *Masalah Cina* not only abets the minorization of the Chinese, it reduces the long history of Chinese presence since pre-colonial times to a question of whether and how the Chinese can eventually fit into the Indonesian nation. Chinese Indonesians and Chineseness are therefore prefigured as a "national problem" to be checked, regulated and eventually overcome with artificial policies and solutions discussed below. The diagnostics of Indonesian nationalism therefore permeate the discourse of *Masalah Cina*. The entrenchment of an ethno-nationalist paradigm is further attested to by the evident difficulties in dislodging discussion of the Chinese or issues pertaining to Chineseness in Indonesia from *Masalah Cina*, even after May 1998.

It is necessary to account for as well as to explain the workings of the *Masalah Cina* discourse by shedding light on its historicity. This is mainly because the discourse performs multiple functions of erasure, including suppressing the historical circumstances of its own beginnings. Anti-Sinicism evidently has a history in Indonesia that predates 1945. However, as Pramoedya Ananta Toer's well-honed historical sense suggests, "what is surprising about anti-Chinese racism is this: why does it occur in an independent Indonesia?" (cited in Purdey 2003: 1). The *Masalah Cina* discourse problematizes the Chinese and Chineseness in Indonesia by collapsing the different dimensions of the historic presence of Chinese communities in the country into one alleged problem and solution with a convenient phraseology. The emergence and dissemination of this discourse, it must be emphasized, constitutes a historical event in and by itself. It heralded the beginnings of the New Order regime as the government undertook to implement a "comprehensive solution" to the "many-faceted Chinese problem" in the late 1960s (Coppel 1983: 29). In *Indonesian Chinese in Crisis*, Charles Coppel writes that although there was a sense in post-World War Two Indonesia that the Chinese residents, be they Indonesian citizens or otherwise, were felt to be "a problem,"[1] it was only in 1967 that the New Order government found it necessary to embark on an all-encompassing solution, and more importantly, possessed the capacity to enforce a coordinated policy when compared with the ad hoc way the presence of Chinese residents in post-war Indonesia was dealt with by earlier Indonesian central and regional authorities.

The New Order government's total solution would eventually be laid out in a three-volume publication in the late 1970s that contained almost all the laws, regulations and policies relating to the Chinese in Indonesia under the macabre title *Guide to the Solution of the Chinese Problem in Indonesia* (Ind.: *Pedoman Penyelesaian Masalah Cina di Indonesia*) (Coppel 2002). The government's solution basically involved compelling the Chinese to lose all traces of their Chineseness, which necessitated outright bans on nearly every aspect of what was seen as "Chinese tradition and culture," including the Chinese language, Chinese schools, newspapers and other kinds of Chinese-language mass media. Chinese-language materials were not allowed into the country. The public use and display of Chinese characters were strictly forbidden. The number and type of Chinese organizations, or any group with large number of members who were of Chinese descent, were heavily circumscribed. Chinese-Indonesian citizens were

also encouraged to change their names to "Indonesian-sounding" ones. What is perhaps less obvious is how the adoption and execution of one alleged *total* solution has created the unfortunate effect of reducing and prefiguring the problem in a fixed direction. In the discourse of *Masalah Cina*, the problem is pre-defined as one of the inability of the Chinese to *assimilate* into the Indonesian nation, hence justifying the extreme measure of eradicating all traces of Chineseness.

This takes us to our next point, the dominance of an assimilationist discourse during the New Order period and the ideological work *Masalah Cina* performs as part of a military-endorsed Assimilationist (Ind.: *Pembauran*) Program from the 1960s onwards. Commenting on the various possible options for accommodating ethnic diversity in Indonesia just before the end of the New Order regime, Thung Ju-lan writes that "the discursive competition between assimilationism, multiculturalism and the subjectivity of conditional belonging has not yet taken place in Indonesia. So far an assimilationist discourse rules" (Thung 1998: 23). Historians have shown how this came to pass. For instance, Mary Somers Heidhues and Charles Coppel have documented the ideological and political contestation between two groups within the Chinese community – the integrationists versus the assimilationists – who proposed two different approaches to how the Chinese could be accepted fully as Indonesian citizens in the 1950s and 1960s. The integrationists were represented by the organization "*Baperki*" which stood for "*Badan Permusjawaratan Kewarganegaraan Indonesia*" (Consultative Body for Indonesian Citizenship). *Baperki* was established in March 1954 to contest the proposed legislation that would limit the number of Chinese eligible for Indonesian citizenship by changing existing citizenship requirements. Existing citizenship regulations permitted local-born Chinese who were Dutch subjects to automatically become Indonesian citizens via a passive system, whereas the proposed 1954 law permitted only those whose fathers were born locally to qualify for citizenship and only if he/she made an active choice to become an Indonesian citizen. Although *Baperki* was a mass organization, it functioned like a political party. Its political platform was laid out in the 1955 elections, which called for an end to racial discrimination, particularly through unifying the race-based legal system left behind by the Dutch and through redefining "domestic capital" to include non-native businesses established in Indonesia. Under *Baperki*'s banner, the integrationists were committed to the position that Indonesians of Chinese descent should be accepted as a group with their own special social and cultural institutions. The onus, then, was on the Indonesian majority to accept the Chinese community. At the same time, *Baperki* emphasized that Chinese Indonesians must, of course, embrace Indonesian nationality fully. On the issue of ethnic culture and identity, *Baperki* advocated "cultural pluralism" (Somers 1965: 256). *Baperki*'s position was that Chinese Indonesian citizens should be treated equally as one of the many ethnic groups (Ind.: *suku bangsa*) in Indonesia and was insistent that the Chinese could become Indonesian citizens while remaining culturally distinct. As Heidhues notes, *Baperki* worked on the premise of the undesirability of discrimination and had made fighting discrimination in Indonesian life its first priority since its inception (Somers 1965). *Baperki* became closely allied with the Indonesian

Communist Party (PKI), which was supportive of its anti-discrimination stance. It was also a keen follower of President Sukarno's politics.

As Indonesia moved into the 1960s, it was *Baperki* and the integrationists who represented the status quo and, as Somers observes, the more "conservative force" (Somers 1965: 257). Compared to *Baperki*, the assimilationists started informally as a small, loose group of Chinese Indonesians who were reacting to the unsettling effects of "PP-10"on the community and the left-ward drift of *Baperki*'s politics. PP-10 (or Presidential Instruction no. 10), decreed in 1959, stipulated a ban prohibiting foreigners from engaging in retail trade in the rural areas in Indonesia. Although the ban targeted "alien Chinese" – non-Indonesian citizens who were Chinese – the impact of PP-10 was so widespread that almost all those of Chinese descent felt its effects. Within the community, the fall-out from the PP-10 ban triggered another round of questioning of their shaky position in the country and highlighted the apparent ineffectiveness of the integrationists' position (Somers 1965: 251–59). Coppel dates the beginnings of the assimilationist movement to the publication of their ideas in the *Star Weekly* newspaper in March 1960 (Coppel 1983). Reacting to the integrationists' position, the assimilationists opined that Chinese Indonesians had not done enough to gain full acceptance into the Indonesian nation despite becoming Indonesian citizens. They urged Chinese Indonesians to participate actively in "ethnically inclusive" organizations, expressed disapproval of organizations made up mostly of Chinese members, encouraged Chinese Indonesians to drop their Chinese names, adopt Indonesians names and to inter-marry with indigenous Indonesians. The assimilationists were adamant that Chinese Indonesians must disassociate socially and culturally with all "alien Chinese." The assimilationists' program therefore, proposed that Chinese Indonesians "must cease to be culturally distinct from the Indonesian majority and must dissociate themselves from Chinese traditions" (Somers 1965: 258). The assimilationist movement took institutional form in 1963 when it became the Lembaga Pembina Kesatuan Bangsa (Institute for Nation-Building, or LPKB for short). From the very beginning, it had close links with and enjoyed the support of the military (Coppel 1983). The internal dissension within the Chinese community along integrationist-assimilationist lines thus overlapped with the larger political divide in Indonesian politics during this period – between the left wing led by the PKI under Sukarno's patronage and protection on one side and the right wing helmed by the army on the other.

When the 30 September Incident in 1965 and the 1966–67 anti-communist massacres occurred, the LPKB managed to prevail over *Baperki*. Coppel argues that in the turbulent years following 1965, the LPKB played important roles mediating between the Chinese community and the army. It helped, for example, in alleviating the effects of violence visited upon Chinese communities in particular locales due to *Baperiki*'s close identification with the PKI. Stressing the usefulness of LPKB's ties with the army and the amenability of the assimilationist message to the larger national society at a time of unprecedented crisis, Coppel writes that the influence of the assimilationists was crucial when a "new accommodation" between the New Order government and Chinese Indonesian community eventuated in the late 1960s:

> [The LPKB's] previous association with the army and other anti-communist Indonesians had been a valuable demonstration to their partners that they were "good" Chinese who were neither pawns of Peking nor camp followers of the PKI. Their assimilationist ideas, which put much of the blame for the Chinese problem on the Chinese themselves because of their "exclusivism" and "feelings of superiority," were also welcome to many indigenous Indonesians … The official adoption of the policy of assimilation of citizens of foreign descent, the encouragement of name-changing amongst [Chinese Indonesian citizens], the principle that there should be no discrimination amongst Indonesian citizens but a clear distinction between citizens and aliens, and the abolition of the old colonial distinction between Europeans, Foreign Orientals and Natives – all these originated in recommendations from the assimilationist Chinese in the LPKB.
>
> (Coppel 1983: 175)

Where the development of Chinese Indonesian identity is concerned, the political ascendency of the assimilationists and the subsequent hegemony of their ideas in this "new accommodation" were among the most profound consequences of the violent transition of power after 1965. The "new accommodation" emasculated the Chinese with state-imposed assimilationism but allowed Chinese capitalists free play in the economic arena in partnership with the power-holders. With the political death of the integrationists, a competing influential voice on the value and meaning of (Chinese) Indonesian citizenship was eliminated and the "Chinese Problem" assumed concrete form after 1967. No longer was the "Chinese Problem" understood as a consequence of long-standing discriminatory institutions, laws and policies preventing equality of citizenship rights for Chinese Indonesians which was propounded by the integrationists. Instead, the "Chinese Problem" morphed to become the *Masalah Cina* discourse. Attaining cultural homogeneity with the native Indonesians was conceivably the only way Chinese Indonesians could work toward embracing their Indonesian nationality fully.

As Thung observes with the benefit of hindsight, the hegemony of assimilationism for more than three decades resulted in much-reduced scope for articulating alternatives to assimilationism (Thung 1998). Ironically, not only did state-sponsored assimilation fail to eliminate the "native" (Ind.: *pribumi*) versus "non-native"/Chinese Indonesian (Ind.: *non-pribumi*) binary, persistent problematizing of Chineseness through the *Masalah Cina* discourse sensitized Indonesians – Chinese and non-Chinese alike – to imagined threats of cultural/national subversion and inclined them toward holding on to racialized understandings of both Indonesian nationalist as well as Chinese identities. As Heryanto argues, instead of disappearing completely, Chineseness was "always under erasure" (Heryanto 1998: 104). Even after the downfall of the regime in 1998, the *pribumi* and *non-pribumi* binary which reproduces racialized perspectives about Indonesian nationalist and ethnic identities remains entrenched (Heryanto 2005). Other writers such as Jemma Purdey and Christian Chua have emphasized the Machiavellian motivations of New Order assimilationism, which, they argue, was never meant as a sincere gesture of dissolving the divide

between the *pribumi* and the *non-pribumi*. Instead, assimilationism was wielded as a deliberate instrument to create widespread negative perceptions of a stigmatized community that could be utilized in multiple ways to manage or redirect popular unhappiness and/or keep an important economic force under control (Purdey 2003; Chua 2008). Their arguments appear to be backed by retrospective statements from prominent leaders of the original assimilationist group who now claim that the assimilationist agenda was "hijacked" by the New Order government (Purdey 2003).

Charting new directions in Chinese Indonesian Studies

In the face of blatant discrimination against the Chinese in Indonesian society as a result of forced assimilation, scholarship in Chinese Indonesian Studies has demonstrated sensitivity and empathy to the plight of the community over the last few decades. The existing literature has reacted critically to New Order assimilationism in several ways. First, historians and scholars such as William Skinner, Charles Coppel, Leo Suryadinata, Mona Lohanda and Anthony Reid have pointed to the pre-1945 past to explain the complexity of Chinese presence in contemporary Indonesia. In so doing, they have suspended the "blame game" to provide historically grounded accounts of changing Chinese identities in Indonesia. In addition, the historical approach of using fine-grained analysis of particular acts or events of violence against Chinese communities in different locales in Indonesia has proven to be particularly useful in facilitating understanding of these events without generalizing all and sundry as "anti-Chinese" in character (Purdey 2006).

Second, scholars have also highlighted the contributions of this ethnic community to the development of Indonesia. A special issue of Cornell University's *Indonesia* journal in 1991 entitled *The Role of the Indonesian Chinese in Shaping Modern Indonesian Life* provides a prime example. The exemplary writings of Indonesianists researching the development of Indonesian national language and literature demonstrate conclusively that localized Chinese had been long-time native users of *Melayu* – the lingua franca of the Dutch East Indies that was later reconstituted as *Bahasa Indonesia*, Indonesia's national language – and were a major force in popularizing the language that served as the vehicle for disseminating early Indonesian nationalist ideas. Ahmat Adam (Adam 1995), for example, credits Chinese publishers, editors and writers as one important group responsible for the development of the *Melayu* press that enabled the imagination of the Indonesian national community. Claudine Salmon's writings on the literary works produced by the Chinese using *Melayu* are a *tour de force* in Indonesian Studies. More recently, Karen Strassler has documented the role of the Chinese in popular photography for providing ordinary Indonesians with a means of visualizing Indonesian nationalist modernity during the 1950s and 1960s (Strassler 2008).

Finally, the extant literature has also challenged ethnic stereotyping of Chinese Indonesians by emphasizing their heterogeneity as well as the extent to which Chinese persons who are locally born and settled for many generations

in Indonesia are in fact acculturated, if not fully assimilated into local society. Amongst acculturated/assimilated Chinese Indonesians, scholars have understandably paid most attention to those conventionally labeled as "*Peranakan* Chinese." *Peranakan* Chinese, who are mostly concentrated in Java, are perceived to be the most assimilated Chinese Indonesians because they lost recognizably "Chinese" attributes, especially the ability to speak in a Chinese language, even before the language ban came into effect.[2] To further showcase the heterogeneity of Chinese Indonesians, Charles Coppel and Dede Oetomo have called for more work to be done on Chinese communities outside of Java as early as the 1970s. Mary Somers Heidhues, who began writing about the political activities of the Java-centered *Peranakan* Chinese community in the 1960s, eventually moved to research the less-known Chinese Indonesian communities settled on Bangka Island and West Kalimantan. Heidhues' work on these communities points to the localization of Chinese Indonesians that are not widely perceived to be as "assimilated" as Java's *Peranakan* Chinese Indonesians because they have come to identify themselves by place of birth and residence in Indonesia (Heidhues 2003).Other scholars also observe that Chineseness in Indonesia is not only inflected by one's place of birth and residence but by class, cultural and religious differences (Hoon 2008) and, increasingly, generational differences as well (Sai 2010; Dawis 2009; Budianta 2007).

These important directions in Chinese Indonesian Studies have given the field its critical edge. However, to the extent that scholars are preoccupied with assimilationism and its effects and continue to be interested primarily in the larger question of Chinese position and identification with the Indonesian nation, the field remains defined by and invested in studying Chinese Indonesians as an ethnic community within an ethno-nationalist framework. Moreover, although scholars are critical of forced assimilationism, the distinction between the New Order discourse of *Masalah Cina* and scholarly discourse on the problematic encompassment of Chinese Indonesians in the country has not been clearly demarcated. The two sets of discourses share common interest and common ground in the "Chinese Problem." As Coppel notes, Chinese Indonesians themselves perceive the presence of a "Chinese Problem" (Coppel 1983: 30). Coppel is referring to the struggles with nationality, identification and discrimination that confronted the Chinese in Indonesia for much of the twentieth century and, if we may add, for the twenty-first century as well. As such, scholars studying the Chinese Indonesian community were and remain concerned with the larger problem of Chinese encompassment in the Indonesian nation. Scholarly writings and the *Masalah Cina* discourse have evolved historically from the years when the citizenship status of the Chinese in Indonesia (but also elsewhere in Southeast Asia) during a politically turbulent period made Chinese identification with China and Indonesia a pressing issue on the ground and in academia. Since the 1950s and 1960s, the *Masalah Cina* discourse and Chinese Indonesian Studies have crystallized around this issue, which has not faded away. Comparable to the concerns of the *Masalah Cina* discourse, the difficulties the Chinese have experienced in either identifying themselves or in being accepted as Indonesians in the country remains a key problem for scholars interested in this field of study.

Much of the scholarship after the regime change in May 1998 remains fixated on the old problems of Chinese (non)belonging to Indonesia. Such scholarship has focused on the impact of the regime change after 1998 on the different Chinese Indonesian communities, specifically the complexity of their identity politics. This is understandable given the dramatic ways Chinese Indonesians were implicated as the Suharto regime made its exit. The very visibility of Chinese Indonesians has sent researchers scurrying back to the old preoccupation with the *Masalah Cina* discourse and the long-standing issue of how the Chinese are pre-defined as "essential outsiders" against which Indonesian nationhood is constituted. While researchers have arrived at their own conclusions about whether different groups of Chinese Indonesians have embraced their Indonesian nationality, been accepted politically, socially and culturally by the rest of Indonesian society, or reinforced their ethnicity in new and old ways, these differing arguments do not indicate any clear shift to a new paradigm in Chinese Indonesian Studies. Instead, what is witnessed is the interrogation of a new situation with an old question.

Chinese Indonesians Reassessed argues that it is necessary to unpack the ethnonationalist framework and the "Chinese Problem" it embeds. The individual chapters showcase updated research and they point collectively to the inadequacy of this framework and how specialists in the field are reflecting on materials in new ways. Taken as a whole, the book encapsulates a broad time frame from the late nineteenth century to the post-1998 period and includes new material on Chinese communities settled outside Java as well as on Chinese Christian and Muslim communities that have hitherto fallen below the radar because of overwhelming attention on "traditional Chinese" religions in Chinese Indonesian Studies. There is an element of a "new generational voice" in this effort to take stock and push the field in new directions. Most of our contributors are emerging scholars or just starting out researching on the Chinese in Indonesia. Instead of tackling "the Chinese problem" in isolation, or arguing for or against integration, assimilation and other possible alternatives, *Chinese Indonesians Reassessed* argues for the need to put the geographical scale of "the national" under interrogation. Instead of taking the Indonesian nation as the sole framework of analysis, we critique the diagnostics of Indonesian nationalism. Evidently, we are aware that we can never discount Indonesian nationalism, historic or otherwise, as an important force still animating in an ongoing project of nation-building. We wish to argue, however, that "the nation" constitutes *one of the* and not *the sole* analytical category. Taking a step or two away from the diagnostics of Indonesian nationalism permits considerations of when, why and how the identities of the differentially located Chinese communities in the Indonesian archipelago are scaled *not necessarily and not always in nationalist terms.*

Chinese Indonesians Reassessed proposes a re-examination of "the national" in several ways. First, we issue a clarion call to be less Java-centric in our focus. Consciously or otherwise, "the national" scale in Indonesia tends to be oriented toward Java Island. To counter the "Java effect," the book (Chapters 4 to 7) sheds new light on important areas in Indonesia where there is a higher-than-national-average concentration of the Chinese population, notably the Riau Islands

(3.72%), West Kalimantan (9.46%) and Medan in Northern Sumatra (10.65%).[3] In spite of the significant presence of the Chinese in these areas, little attention has been paid to these Chinese communities by researchers.

Second and more importantly, the book explores expressions or conceptualizations of geographical locations that depart from "the national." This fosters a deeper appreciation of the impact of different senses and sensations of space on identity formation amongst Chinese Indonesians. The book demonstrates through a rich array of historical and contemporary examples of differentially situated Chinese Indonesian communities that their identities and self-interpretations are not simply formed by putting a hyphen between Chinese ethnicity and Indonesian nationalism. Instead, we argue that the formation of Chinese Indonesian identities has implicated and/or abetted different kinds of spaces beyond the nation-state. Chapter 1 by Didi Kwartanada showcases turn-of-the-twentieth-century expressions of "trans-border modernity" that were apparently inspired by the pan-Asian networks of the founders of the Tiong Hwa Hwe Koan (the Chinese Association or THHK in short) movement. Chapter 2 by Siew-Min Sai charts the emergence of the "Nanyang (South Seas) diasporic imaginary" which was taught and disseminated by teachers in Chinese schools in the Dutch East Indies in the 1920s or 1930s. Chapter 3 by Charlotte Setijadi examines expressions of cosmopolitanism in independent film-making in post-1998 Indonesia. Chapter 4 by Yen-ling Tsai proposes studying "sites of racial formation" such as old Chinese school buildings in Medan to better understand problems of emplacement and displacement of the Chinese in Indonesia. Chapter 5 by Yew-Foong Hui raises the notion of "trans-local Chinese subjects" who exited from West Kalimantan in the 1950s and found themselves suspended between imagined homelands of both "Indonesia" and "China." Chapter 6 by Lenore Lyons and Michele Ford examines the complex rationalization of ethnic identification and political allegiances by Riau Chinese. Chapter 7 by Margaret Chan looks at the hybridized performance of localized identity by Chinese spirit mediums in Singkawang in West Kalimantan. Finally, Chapters 8, 9 and 10 by Chang-Yau Hoon, Wai-weng Hew and Syuan-yuan Chiou respectively explore problems of rescaling the universalistic beliefs of Christianity and Islam for Java's Chinese communities.

In addition, the content of several chapters overlap significantly. Chapters 1 to 3 concern knowledge and cultural production. Chapters 1 and 2, in particular, address the history of education for the Chinese during the pre-World War Two period. Chapters 4 to 7 are about Chinese communities on Indonesia's borderlands, while Chapters 7 to 10 focus more specifically on religion. We have grouped these chapters together to facilitate reading them as a group rather than as stand-alone pieces.

In urging the suspension of scholarly assumption about the primacy of "the national" in Chinese Indonesian Studies, we are undoubtedly influenced by current literature investigating the fluidity of interconnections amongst Chinese communities dispersed throughout the world (see McKeown 2001; Ong and Nonini 1997). While seeking to present our findings and arguments in a more sustained and holistic manner, our critique of the nation-state paradigm is

not entirely new. Michael Godley and Charles Coppel took early steps in this direction when they adopted trans-border perspectives to study the economic activities of Chinese businesses based in the Dutch East Indies (Godley 1981). A trans-border perspective can also be seen in a study of Chinese Indonesians who left Indonesia for China in the 1950s and 1960s, some of whom settled eventually in Hong Kong from the 1970s onwards (Godley and Coppel 1990; Godley 1989). Officially classified as *guiguo huaqiao* or "Returned Overseas Chinese" by the Chinese state, these sizable communities settled in different parts of China and Hong Kong are receiving increasing attention from scholars studying diasporic Chinese communities. Difficulties in obtaining citizenship, discriminatory policies, particularly the PP-10 ban, and political instability in Indonesia during the pre-1965 period have caused many Chinese Indonesians to leave for China. As Tan Chee-Beng observes, they now make up a large part of those classified as *guiguo huaqiao* and have received more academic attention than returnees from other parts of Southeast Asia (Tan 2010, 2011; Chin 2003). It is also noteworthy that an important part of this secondary literature on the returnee communities is written in Chinese and produced by scholars based in China and Hong Kong (Wang 2006; Huang 2005). Scholarship on the *guiguo huaqiao* and the historical interconnections of dispersed Chinese communities offers influential trans-border perspectives.

However, a second category of scholarship must be highlighted. This form of scholarship is mainly from a historical nature, moving in parallel with and unpacking the territorialized cogency of "Indonesia" through tracing roots to older modes of religious cosmopolitanisms, global flows and creole nationalism (Azra 2004; Laffan 2003). Only recently, historian Eric Tagliacozzo has proposed the possibility of producing "trans-regional studies of Indonesia if these can be accomplished without marginalizing Indonesians from their own histories, or from their own present" (Tagliacozzo 2010: 2). Tagliacozzo was writing in the introduction to a special *Indonesia* volume dedicated to exploring the *longue durée* approach as a means of expanding the historical depth and breadth of the more recent "transnational turn" in Indonesian history. This "transnational turn" is also observed by other specialists researching Indonesia. John Sidel writes that "the trajectory of modern Indonesian history no longer seems to cohere in narrowly national – or nationalist – terms" (Sidel 2007). It seems overly archaic that in spite of new developments in cognate fields of study and reinterpretation of Indonesian history, the bulk of the scholarship on the Chinese and Chineseness in Indonesia remains bound, implicitly or otherwise, to the issue of Chinese (non)belonging to Indonesia. This is surely revealing of the heavy restrictiveness imposed by adopting an ethno-nationalist framework.

Rather than argue for the primacy of one geographical scale, especially "the global" or "national", over another such as "the local" and vice versa, the chapters in the book demonstrate further that there is a need to take heed of the fine interplay of geographical scales. In raising the issue of non-national geographical scales to critique the ethno-nationalist framework, we are aware of the temptation to assert that "the local" and/or "global" is either subversive of or complicit with "the national." We have eschewed glib generalizations and have instead chosen to

provide empirically grounded case studies that illuminate how Chinese identities and Chineseness in Indonesia can be better understood by taking into account the interplay of different geographical scales. For instance, Didi Kwatanada argues that in reacting to the absence of any provision for modern education for the Chinese by the Dutch colonial government, founders of the THHK movement drew their ideas about modernity primarily from Asian sources to establish schools that served and ultimately shaped the local community in Batavia at the turn of the twentieth century (Chapter 1). Siew-Min Sai goes on to argue in her chapter (Chapter 2) that formalistic construction of knowledge in Chinese textbooks while Sino-centric in nature expresses a perspective on localization of the Chinese in the Dutch East Indies against the larger backdrop of European imperialism by using a concept of the larger "Nanyang" region popular amongst Southeast Asian Chinese. Charlotte Setijadi writes that independent Chinese Indonesian film-makers project cosmopolitan sensibilities in their work through the specific lenses of Chinese Indonesian experiences (Chapter 3). Yew-Foong Hui's evocative portrayal of what he calls the "translocal Chinese subject" from Pemangkat in West Kalimantan pushes us to rethink the idea of nationalist space – whether Indonesian or China – especially when these have been radically reconfigured by major geo-political shifts and mediated by intense memory-work (Chapter 5). Lenore Lyons and Michele Ford argue in their chapter on the Chinese in the Riau Islands (Chapter 6) that although immediate regional influences such as mass media transmissions from Singapore and Malaysia have made Riau Chinese more "Chinese," for instance in their relative proficiency in Mandarin Chinese compared to Java-based Chinese, their intimate knowledge of Indonesia's neighbors does not necessarily facilitate identification with the dominant Chinese majority in Singapore or the Chinese in Malaysia. Instead, Riau Chinese, according to Lyons and Ford, communicate an understanding of identity that holds the Riau Islands to be distinct from Singapore, Malaysia and the rest of Indonesia. Significantly, these findings support the emphasis that some ethnographers of "out-of-the-way" places in Indonesia have begun to put on the "middling" geographical scale, i.e. regional dynamics and politics (Spyer 2000; Lowenhaupt-Tsing 1993) or on "the translocal" (Ho 2006) in explaining what used to be conventionally accounted for with the sleight-of-hand "local society." It seems that for any place-bound ethnic community in Indonesia or elsewhere for the matter, accounts of "local society" cannot be simply taken for granted but constitutes a subject that needs to be investigated and explained. Closer attention to the interplay of different geographical scales can perhaps make it easier to keep both the inevitability of Indonesian nationalism as well as highly romanticized notions of the "resistant local" at bay.

The argument for attributing significant relevance to geographical scales beyond the national is perhaps most instructive for the chapters on religion in this book. The religious lives and practices of Chinese Indonesians is one topic that exposes the weaknesses of the ethno-nationalist framework most glaringly. In spite of the importance of religion in Indonesia, this topic is surprisingly under-researched in Chinese Indonesian Studies. Where religion is concerned, the preference has been for studying ostensibly "Chinese" religions such as Confucianism or religious practices in Indonesia's *klentengs* (or Chinese temples), which is revealing

of academic bias about what constitutes Chinese ethnicity and Chineseness. The chapters on religion in our volume seek to break new ground by investigating the much-neglected Chinese Christian and Chinese Muslim communities in the country. Since the dissemination of these world religions in any given community cannot be direct and immediate but requires further reinterpretation and transplantation of universalistic beliefs to suit local needs and references, the adoption of these faiths by Chinese Indonesians requires creative but also risky processes of rescaling both religious and ethnic identities. In his chapter on Java's Chinese Christian communities, Chang-Yau Hoon (Chapter 8) delves into the long history of incompatibility between Christianity and Chinese religious practices which was transposed onto the Chinese Indonesian Christian community via transborder Chinese missionary networks. While the problem of incompatibility of faiths plagues Chinese Christian communities, Chinese Indonesian Christians are "doubly alien" in the eyes of *pribumi* Indonesians, who perceive both Chineseness and Christianity as inauthentic to Indonesia. The two chapters on Java's Chinese Muslim community present a useful counterpoint to Hoon's chapter on Chinese Christians. Although Chinese Muslims are not marked by religious difference and are accepted as members of the same faith as the Indonesian Muslim majority, Wai-weng Hew's (Chapter 9) and Syuan-yuan Chiou's (Chapter 10) essays on this community do not portray a neat picture of religious communion. Just as Chinese Christians were compelled to navigate the question of fit between universalistic beliefs and Chinese traditions, Chinese Muslims also confront the question of whether there is a place for a more assertive ethnic Chinese identity in Islam. Unlike Chinese Christians whose "foreignness" to Indonesia appears unequivocal in popular imagination, the space for Chinese Muslims to showcase their Chineseness appears more flexible. Interestingly, while the performance of stereotypical Chineseness by some Chinese Muslim preachers for the purpose of "marketing" Islam was accomplished with great aplomb, as discussed by Wai-weng Hew, the hybridized practice of *Imlek Salat*, which is an Islamic prayer performed during Chinese New Year festivities, was highly controversial, as discussed by Syuan-yuan Chiou. This uneven, if surprising, reception of Chineseness amongst followers of Islam in Indonesia reminds us of Werbner's injunction not to celebrate hybridity uncritically, because "in reality, hybridity is not essentially good, just as cultural essentialism is not intrinsically evil" (Werbner 2001: 149). We return to the issue of discrepant receptivity of Chineseness in the next section.

Ethnicity, Inc. in Indonesia: Chineseness as ethno-commodity

> [To survive … c]ultures, like brands, must essentialize … successful and sustainable cultures are those which brand best.
>
> (Cited in Comaroff and Comaroff 2009: 18)

There remains an outstanding issue that is in part connected to the globalizing economy which, in our view, demands greater attention from specialists in Chinese Indonesian Studies. This issue concerns the political economy of

Chineseness as manifested in the commodification of Chineseness, especially what is widely perceived as common denominators of "Chinese culture" but also of more tangible emblems such as confiscated properties once owned by the Chinese community that is discussed by Yen-ling Tsai in Chapter 4. The commodification of Chineseness is easily one of the most striking phenomena concerning the state of Chineseness in Indonesia today, the implications of which remain under-investigated. Several chapters in *Chinese Indonesians Reassessed* address this issue directly, including Hew's analysis of the marketing and consumption of Chineseness amongst Indonesian Muslims, which he argues produces an "essentialistic Chineseness" suitable for consumption in "Pop Islam" (Chapter 9); Margaret Chan's study of the spirit-medium parade on the fifteenth day of the Chinese New Year festivities (known as the *Capgomeh* in Indonesia) in Singkawang in West Kalimantan, which, she argues, is about the performance of localized Chinese identity but also a prominent example of ethnic tourism (Chapter 7); Hoon's and Chiou's discussion of the contentiousness over brazen commercialization of Chinese New Year celebrations (known locally as *Imlek*) amongst Chinese Christians and Muslims (Chapters 8 and 10); Charlotte Setijadi's analysis of post-Suharto films, which demonstrates how the cosmopolitan sensitivities of independent Chinese Indonesian film-makers draw strength from but also cater to the market of international film festivals (Chapter 3); and finally, Yen-ling Tsai's investigation of the "political economy of transactions" (Ind.: *transaksi*) underpinning negotiations between Chinese communities and the government over confiscated school buildings in Medan and elsewhere in Indonesia (Chapter 4). The operative dynamics of this political economy, she argues, collude to put Chinese Indonesians in a persistent double-bind, as the most assimilated foreigners in the country.

In a remarkably lucid treatment of the commodification of ethnic cultures as a global phenomenon, the Comaroffs provide several sharp insights on the characteristics of the "ethno-commodity." The ethno-commodity, as they point out, defies classical economic theory because, *pace* Walter Benjamin, the mechanical reproduction of an explicitly cultural product or practice for the marketplace does not always cause either its aura or its value to dissipate. Neither is authenticity the most important element of a commodified culture. Drawing from a wide variety of examples from different parts of the world, the Comaroffs note that there are too many examples where a commodified cultural form or practice is wildly successful because of its marketability and accessibility and despite being made kitsch or far from authentic. Neither are producers and consumers of ethno-commodities wholly dupes of market forces, since more often than not, strategic and tactical concerns drive acts of production and consumption undertaken to ensure the survival and continuity of cultural traditions, even if a good measure of conscious invention is called for. What seems to be happening in the production and consumption of ethno-commodities is the discovery of new ways of reanimating and experiencing ethnic cultures beyond simply nostalgic recuperation or lamenting denigration and cultural loss (see also Gans 1979; Bankston and Henry 2000).

The rise of the ethno-commodity is indicative and part of a macro shift in commodity production from tangible goods and services to the intangibles: "to a greater extent than ever before in the past … [commerce *sui generis*] involves the fulsome cultivation of highly charged sentiments, at once emotional and cognitive, to chosen lifestyles" (Comaroff and Comaroff 2009: 28). As they succinctly put it, "just as culture is being commodified, so the commodity is being rendered explicitly cultural – and consequently, is comprehended as the generic source of sociality" (Comaroff and Comaroff 2009: 28). However, these characteristics of the ethno-commodity, they argue, leave us with ambiguous effects which appear unaccounted for. In many parts of the world, especially so in impoverished areas where the ethnic industry provides the few means of sustainable livelihood or in areas where local ways are threatened with irrelevance or extinction, the commodification of ethnic cultures can be empowering (see, for example, Bankston and Henry 2000). Yet this comes at the cost of reducing historically sedimented cultural knowledge and ways of life to highly objectified "essences" and/or formulaic marketing slogans. Another pertinent concern lies in the question of who the main beneficiaries are when ethnic cultures are turned into ethno-commodities. It is not always clear that economic benefits accrue only to members of an ethnic group which then raises simultaneously the question of criteria of membership, especially when foreign capital is involved. The many examples of foreign venture capital working in tandem with numerous Indian Nations to set up and manage casinos on reservation land in America as discussed by the Comaroffs in their book is one such case in point. Given overwhelming scholarly attention to the role of identity politics where the study of ethnicity is concerned, the Comaroffs suggest that the dynamics and effects concerning the production and consumption of ethno-commodities have not been given systematic theorization.

Some of what scholars have observed about the pervasive commodification of Chineseness echoes the Comaroffs' theoretical treatment of the ethno-commodity. Several commentators and researchers, including those whose essays are collected in this volume, agree that the commodification of Chineseness after May 1998 is nothing short of phenomenal. A good example is *Imlek* festivities and the ubiquitous *barongsai* or Chinese lion dance, which became immensely popular after President Abdurrahman Wahid (1999–2001) abolished the 1967 ban on Chinese culture and language. This was followed by an announcement by his successor, President Megawati, in 2002, who declared that *Imlek* would be a national holiday beginning in the year 2003. *Imlek* celebrations in Indonesia have since taken place against the backdrop of euphoric recovery of all things "Chinese." Analysts such as Hoon have noted the divisive debates within and outside the Chinese Indonesian community surrounding *Imlek* celebrations and other signs of Chineseness such as Chinese ethnic clothing or the Chinese language (Hoon 2009). Several Chinese Indonesian intellectuals have expressed discomfort at the "excessiveness" of *Imlek* celebrations and overt displays of "Chinese" symbols and have urged fellow Chinese Indonesians to show greater sensitivity toward the culture of the dominant Indonesian majority. This criticism, as Hoon notes, is also articulated by Indonesians who are non-Chinese.

Yet these contentious signs of Chineseness, it seems, are here to stay, *particularly in their essentialized and commodified forms*. Aimee Dawis' evocative portrait of how she spent her first *Imlek* national holiday in 2003 in Jakarta reinforces this point:

> [T]he whole of Jakarta was awash with vibrant colors of red and gold – not only in the Chinatown areas of Glodok and Gajah Mada but also in the posh shopping malls such as Plaza Senayan in south Jakarta and Plaza Indonesia in central Jakarta. Displays of cherubic dolls wearing traditional Chinese costumes appeared in the windows of Sogo department stores at Plaza Senayan, and red ribbons fluttered down from the high, domed ceilings of the mall …
>
> Other than public spaces such as malls and stores, "*Gong Xi Fa Cai*" or "Happy Chinese New Year" messages proliferated the mass media in Indonesia. The local newspapers also included articles on the meanings behind Chinese New Year. Many advertisements were also published to promote *barongsai* performances at housing complexes along with store advertisements offering discounts on the occasion of Chinese New Year. The Chinese characters *fu* for luck and *xi* for happiness were also used in many of these advertisements, which used the prosperous colors of red and yellow in the background.
>
> (Dawis 2009: 184–85)

As Dawis emphasizes, this 2003 scene was impossible before 1998. Like Dawis, Purdey observes that it has now become commonplace for the Indonesian President, ministers and government officials to attend events organized by Chinese Indonesian groups where the *barongsai* is performed. In Makassar in October 2008, the military command overseeing South Sulawesi incorporated the *barongsai* into its celebration of the Indonesian Army sixty-third anniversary. Purdey writes that "not long ago it would have been unimaginable that the military (backers of Suharto's assimilationist policy) would incorporate a Chinese cultural display into its sacred nationalist rituals" (Purdey 2009).

Where the market has capitalized relentlessly on the attraction of ostentatious signifiers of Chineseness in Indonesia, it does appear to signal a greater degree of acceptance of Chinese ethnicity and Chinese Indonesians by the larger Indonesian society. The sight of non-Chinese Indonesians wearing ethnic Chinese costumes during *Imlek* celebrations in public spaces or learning to speak and write Mandarin Chinese does hint at the release of signifiers of Chineseness from manifestly biological markers of ethnic identity. In so doing, however, stereotypical notions of Chinese culture and Chineseness are reproduced, disseminated and consumed. Although potentially empowering and liberating for Chinese Indonesians, the effects of this marketplace liberation remain equivocal and uncertain. Chinese Indonesian commentators and activists remain suspicious of what they perceived to be "tokenism" given that Chinese Indonesians continue to confront discrimination on a practical and day-to-day basis even after regime change (Wibisono 2009; Tjhin 2009).

As our analytical frameworks strain to keep up with a rapidly changing and fluid situation, it is perhaps obvious that a singular preoccupation with identity politics plaguing Chinese Indonesians may obscure the production and consumption of Chineseness as an ethno-commodity in Indonesia. What does it mean to live an ethnic identity under the pervasive workings of the sign of the commodity? What are the effects, if any, on the production and consumption of Chineseness against one's constitution of ethnic subjectivity? How does this in turn relate to the experiences of ethnicity, not only for Chinese Indonesians, but for non-Chinese Indonesians as well in this day and age? In their own ways, some of the chapters in *Chinese Indonesians Reassessed* have grappled with these questions and arrived at their own conclusions. Setijadi observes that Chineseness has lost some of its allure for young Chinese Indonesians after more than a decade of openness. For this group, the ethno-commodity seems to have lost some of its aura. Hew observes in his chapter that although essentialistic ideas about Chineseness appear effective in "marketing Islam," Muslim Chinese preachers themselves appear to wear their Chinese identity very loosely, if at all, in their everyday lives. This makes it apposite to consider the following questions: what aspects of ethnic cultures are amenable or susceptible to commodification and under what circumstances does the commodification of ethnic culture occur or is nothing spared from the relentless force of encroaching neoliberal capitalism? How does commodification change how one experiences or performs one's ethnic identity? The issue of discrepant receptivity of Chineseness is also discussed pointedly by Chiou, who argues that public acceptance of *Imlek Salat*, ironically a hybridized cultural practice, is limited by the possession of deep cultural capital of the dominant Islamic Indonesian majority which confined space for deliberate acts of hybridization by the Chinese Muslim community he studied.

The Comaroffs' insights into the global rise of the ethno-commodity form part of a larger analysis of what they see as a two-part dialectical process involving on one side widespread commodification of ethnic cultures and on the other an equally widespread phenomenon of the incorporation of ethnic groups as profit-making entities whose primary mission is to generate economic value out of selling their culture. Whichever way this process begins, the Comaroffs stress that there is a proclivity for the two processes to merge into one, giving rise to what they call "Ethnicity, Inc." Significantly, they argue that "the form" of the dialectic may be "broadly similar everywhere" although, substantively speaking, the dialectic works itself out differently, depending on such factors as the proportionate weight given to the two sides of the dialectic, state and institutional intervention, and whether the dialectical process is actually completed (Comaroff and Comaroff 2009: 140).The caveat is therefore that this dialectic is "less linear, less teleological, more capricious than either classical economics or critical theory might suggest" (Comaroff and Comaroff 2009: 20). It may be useful to point out that although Chineseness as an ethno-commodity has become the latest "in-thing" in Indonesia after May 1998, Ethnicity, Inc. is not a new phenomenon in Indonesia at all. Rather, it had begun surfacing during the New Order period. The case of Ethnicity, Inc. in the commercialization of local culture in Bali is

perhaps one of the most striking examples anywhere in the world of how this dialectical process, as analyzed by the Comaroffs, came to a resolution.

Another prominent example of the workings of Ethnicity, Inc. is the New Order government's politically motivated creation of the "'Beautiful Indonesia'-in-miniature" (Ind.: *Taman Mini "Indonesia Indah"*) theme park in the 1970s. Inspired by Disneyland no less, this initiative was personally spearheaded by President Suharto's wife. "*Taman Mini*," as it came to be called, is located on the outskirts of Jakarta. At the heart of the theme park, there is an 8.4-ha pond which contains miniature islands created to reflect Indonesia's territorial space. Cable cars providing visitors with an aerial view of the park overlook this pond. *Taman Mini* also houses recreational facilities, including a 1,000-room hotel and a shopping center of "international standards" (Pemberton 1994: 152; see also Acciaioli 1996) and is a popular venue for cultural performances and competitions. Central to the park's main attractions are customary houses (Ind.: *rumah adat*) and exhibition pavilions showcasing the carefully distilled and differentiated ethnic cultures of Indonesia's 26 provinces. Every regional pavilion displays items reflecting the area's dominant ethnic culture, particularly musical instruments, ethnic crafts and traditional wedding clothes for bride and bridegroom. John Pemberton writes that distilling Indonesia's ethnic diversity into 26 highly objectified architectural forms and formulaic "essences" abets a distinctive sensation of ethnic belonging. First, *Taman Mini* presents an already disciplined ethnic diversity captured through standardized forms. It is a "dedicated, unitary recuperation of difference within a representational framework of the local" (Pemberton 1994: 12). Second, the customary houses encourage the recuperation of ethnic origins denuded of any history or content. The inverted commas marking Indonesia in *Taman Mini*'s official name accentuate, in fact, the difference between the object of representation, that is, "Beautiful Indonesia," and the represented object, that is, Indonesian realities. Just as there is "Beautiful Indonesia," there are "Javanese," "Balinese," or "Malay" cultures in *Taman Mini*. In truth, the copy can never exhaust the real; "Beautiful Indonesia" and for that matter "Javanese," "Balinese," or "Malay" cultures do not exist apart from their status as "signs of" in a theme park. But, as Pemberton reports, the materiality of the customary houses all brought under a single gaze – cast in "a form so totally unconfusing, so endowed with an abstracted miniaturized clarity" (Pemberton 1994: 152) – introduces a degree of accessibility and completeness to experiences of ethnic cultures such that Indonesians prefer to go "home" to "Central Java" or "Bali" in "Beautiful Indonesia" to satisfy their longing for "home" while saving the trouble of actually going back. Pemberton's ethnography on *Taman Mini* illustrates the value of the ethno-commodity as a "generic source of sociality" possessing the capacity to reanimate experiences of ethnic identities in Indonesia (Comaroff and Comaroff 2009: 28).

The *Taman Mini* packaged ethno-commodity has more than accidental relevance for the commodification of Chineseness after May 1998. Illustrative of the New Order government's lack of recognition and tolerance of Chinese culture, *Taman Mini* does not showcase the cultures of communities who trace their descent beyond Indonesia, including not only the Chinese Indonesian community

but also the Arab Indonesian and Eurasian communities (Heryanto 2005; Kusno 2000). In 2002, in a symbolic gesture of reclaiming space within the nation, a Chinese Indonesian community organization, the "Indonesian Chinese Social Association" (Ind.: *Paguyuban Sosial Marga Tionghoa Indonesia* or PSMTI for short) announced plans to build a museum complex in a Chinese Indonesian Cultural Park (Ind.: *Taman Budaya Tionghoa Indonesia*) in *Taman Mini*. In 2003, permission was given by the foundation managing *Taman Mini* (which was still owned by the Suharto family) for PSMTI to use two hectares of land to construct the museum park (see Figure I.1).

According to Yumi Kitamura who has studied this project, PSMTI plans for the Chinese Indonesian Cultural Park do not demonstrate a departure from "Suharto's method of packaging ethnicity by wedding clothes, dances and the authority of *Taman Mini*. The Chinese Indonesian Cultural Park can thus be seen as a belated assimilation into the Suharto's regime's ethnicity policy" (Kitamura 2007). Tellingly, plans for the museum to narrate Chinese Indonesian history with the objective of nation-building in Indonesia do not match overall construction plans. In adopting the New Order/*Taman Mini* formula of representing ethnic cultures by casting cultural "essences" in the form of customary houses and pavilions, the most important buildings and structures in the park appear to display "China" more than any form of identity which is "Chinese Indonesian."

Figure I.1 Pictorial representation of plan for the Chinese Indonesian Cultural Park in *Taman Mini*

The buildings are modeled after world-famous and easily recognizable Chinese architectural forms – in particular the Forbidden City in Beijing and the gates of the Eastern and Western Qing Tombs – which are not necessarily authentic to the history of the Chinese in Indonesia. Kitamura writes that these impressive buildings overshadow the only building that reflects the historic presence of the Chinese in the country. This is a replica of the *Candra Naya*, once located in Jakarta's Chinatown. Constructed in the late nineteenth century, it was home to Khouw Kim An, the last Chinese officer of Batavia during the Dutch colonial period. After the Japanese Occupation, the building housed important Chinese organizations such as the Sin Ming Hui and its school. *Candra Naya* was the site for the first Indonesian Badminton Association Congress in 1957 and it subsequently became the headquarters of the Indonesian Student Action Front (or "KAMI") after 1965. The *Candra Naya* therefore holds significance not just for Chinese Indonesians but for Indonesian history as well. True to form, the building is an architectural hybrid, combining a blend of Dutch colonial Batavian architecture with southern Chinese styles (Kitamura 2007). To date however, a replica of *Candra Naya* has not materialized in the park, which remains under construction.

The challenges related to construction of the Chinese cultural park did not end with the politics of representation of what to include or exclude in plans for the museum park. Many decisions depend largely on the logic of capitalism, which encompasses contribution and distribution of resources and donors' agendas. During his visit to the site in late 2009, Hoon found that the construction was taking place at a slower pace than planned. At the time of the visit only these structures had been built: the gates, which resembled those at the Qing Tomb (Figure I.2); a Chinatown-styled building; a Cheng Ho Museum; a Chinese gazebo; and a replica of the bridge featured in the Chinese legend, "The Butterfly Lover" (Figure I.3). The delay was mainly caused by challenges associated with fund raising. Contrary to the assumption that the project would undoubtedly be financially supported by rich Chinese conglomerates who reside in Jakarta, they were among the least responsive in contributing to the cause, as they did not see any benefit or profit in such a project. Most donations came from middle-sized Chinese entrepreneurs outside Java, such as those in Riau, Bangka-Belitung, West Kalimantan, Menado and Medan, who were more assertive about an authentic Chinese identity and who took pride in the construction of patently "Chinese architecture" to represent Chineseness in Indonesia.

Writing about a different kind of building but extending the discussion on how ethnic cultures are materialized, Tsai's chapter presents a different political economy undergirding Chineseness, one that reconsiders our dominant understanding of the *Taman Mini*-sque ethno-commodity. Central to the story she tells are two school buildings in Medan built by the local Chinese community, which were lost to government confiscation after 1965. Like the Chinese Indonesian Cultural Park, these school buildings and the land they sit on are tangible markers of Chinese presence in Indonesia. The establishment of the museum park after 1998 and, more so, the efforts of the Medan Chinese community in attempting to reclaim their communal properties (with varying degrees of success) throughout the New

Figure I.2 The gates of the park are styled after those of the Eastern and Western Qing tombs

Figure I.3 The “Butterfly Lover” bridge and gazebo; the Cheng Ho Museum is in the background

Order period are efforts on the part of Chinese Indonesians to find a legitimate way to belong to Indonesia. However, instead of visible displays of an ethnic Chinese "essence," which the Chinese Indonesian Cultural Park is meant to embody, these comparatively nondescript communal buildings are less ethno-commodities in and by themselves than they are what Tsai calls "sites of racial formation." During the New Order period and after, negotiations between Chinese Indonesians and the authorities in Medan over the buildings exemplify how Chinese Indonesian communities have generally "transacted" with official authorities, which basically involves Chinese Indonesians paying for the provision of governmental services. Tsai argues, somewhat counter-intuitively, that these transactions, often interpreted as examples of discrimination against the Chinese, are revealing of a perverted assimilation into the Indonesian state (as opposed to the nation), which she understands as an alternative form of assimilation integrating Chinese Indonesians into the political economy of governance. Following Tsai, the buildings at the heart of these transactions in this political economy are not ethno-commodities in the usual sense of the word, that is, aesthetic and lifestyle pleasure products of the neoliberal age. Instead, the buildings perform the function of "ethno-commodities" in a different way because as their ownership changes hands, what gets transacted in the process are racial stereotypes of both kinds, of *non-pribumi* Chinese Indonesians who are rich and willing to pay because they are perceived as undeserving of Indonesian citizenship and of the racist *pribumi* dominated state as greedy and corrupt. In the end, whether it is the Comaroffs' notion or old school buildings analyzed as "sites of racial formation," it is important to understand that ethno-commodities are not lifeless material objects. They do not simply mediate but also actively abet particular experiences of ethnicity and ethnic cultures in Indonesia.

A reassessment of the "Chinese Problem" in Indonesia is timely. Against a changing social and political landscape, any foray into the study of Chinese Indonesians may best be seen through a wider lens which encompasses research into areas beyond Java. For a more comprehensive understanding of this ethnic community, one needs to step into the thus far less traversed terrains of the Riau Islands, West Kalimantan and Medan, to name a few. With a wider lens of coverage, further assessments of the "Chinese Problem" may then turn to focus on the interplay of senses and spaces within identity formation.

Tangible manifestations of "Chineseness" may best be observed through architecture, festivals and traditions. Buildings, be they of the past or present, are symbolic of the façades of any prevailing forms of "Chineseness." Beyond being a symbolic landmark, the outward appearance of a building is representative of remnants of Chinese culture that Chinese Indonesians now seek to preserve and showcase. Festivals and the celebrations that come along with them, whether lavish or simple, indicate an outward pronouncement of Chinese identity. As discrimination against Chinese Indonesians persists, one must reassess the inherent problems that have plagued Chinese Indonesians for far too long. It is argued here that this entails moving beyond the *Masalah Cina* discourse and an ethno-nationalist framework. Admittedly, any movement away from such a framework is difficult. Nonetheless, a call to reassess the "Chinese Problem" is

made here, in order to attain a more meaningful appreciation of the nuances of identity politics that continue to be in force.

The larger question remains, "where do we go from here?" We argue that the starting point lies in drawing a clear distinction between the problems that have plagued Chinese Indonesians and the dominant discourse of *Masalah Cina*. One must certainly move beyond the adoption of *Masalah Cina* as a departure point, for it only serves to further buttress preconceived notions of the assimilationist discourse. It is by now clear that existing attempts toward embracing the motto of "Unity-in-Diversity" have been far from successful. We suggest that apart from making policy changes, adopting a different lens and framework in analyzing the population of Chinese Indonesians may be helpful before any effective policies are reviewed and introduced. In *Chinese Indonesians Reassessed*, we highlight the subtleties that sometimes go unnoticed in existing studies of Chinese Indonesians and it is hoped that further literature in this field will emerge using the lens of a broader and more all-encompassing framework, to better tackle the problems confronting Indonesian society. It is with such a hope that *Chinese Indonesians Reassessed* was birthed, and is thus presented.

Notes

1 Coppel mentions in a footnote that the title of an anti-Chinese tract published in the 1950s and authored by A.J. Muaja was "The Chinese Problem of Indonesia" (Coppel 1983: 183).
2 See Sai 2010 for a critique of a language-biased definition of the *Peranakan* Chinese.
3 These figures are taken from the 2000 census. The figure for Riau excludes Bangka-Belitung, which is 11.54%, while the figures for the two major cities in West Kalimantan, i.e. Pontianak and Singkawang, are 17.03% and 41.71% (see Suryadinata *et al.* 2003; Dawis 2009).

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1 The Tiong Hoa Hwee Koan School

A transborder project of modernity in Batavia, *c.* 1900s

Didi Kwartanada

> Education would be dynamite for the rigid caste systems of colonies.
>
> (Kennedy 1945: 311)

> It is to be remembered that the members of the Tiong Hoa Hwe Koan are among the most intelligent and progressive of the Chinese people.
>
> (Denyes 1911: 30)

This chapter focuses on the *kaoem moeda* or the "enlightened Chinese" in Java at the turn of the twentieth century. For hundreds of years, the Chinese prospered economically in the colonial Dutch East Indies, since they successfully served as mediators between the Dutch colonizers and the local native population. However, in their daily lives they experienced discrimination in legal matters and it was not easy for their children to receive a European education. Toward the end of the nineteenth century, reacting against their legal marginalization, several elites within the Chinese community led the way to urging the Dutch and the other communities in the Indies to consider the Chinese as "modern subjects" of the Dutch Crown. These efforts at updating their status were accompanied by parallel efforts in modernizing or reforming the community. One of the most important modernizing endeavors was the establishment of a "modern Chinese" school, complete with a "modern" curriculum, teaching methods and, of course, teachers. What remains remarkable was that they achieved their goal without the help of the colonial government, but by cleverly developing their transborder trade network into one that purveyed new knowledge and cultural products.

The *kaoem moeda* or "*kaoem moeda bangsa Tjina*," which can be rendered literally in English as the "youth of the Chinese nation," was a term used by a group of Chinese to describe themselves at the turn of the twentieth century in Java.[1] I have translated this term as "enlightened Chinese" because members of this group often described themselves as the carrier of "the light" (Ml.: *terang*) of progress, in contrast to those whom they described as living in conservatism or an "age of darkness" (Ml.: *djaman kegelapan*).[2] The *kaoem moeda* consisted predominantly of men and women who saw themselves as progressive in their outlook. Many of them had been successful in business and were journalists,

writers or community leaders who had some form of education, often in a private home environment or some exposure to "Western" or "European" education, for instance in schools established by Christian missionaries. While many of the *kaoem moeda* were born in the Indies and came from families that were long settled there, there were *kaoem moeda* who were newly arrived immigrants from China. In general, the *kaoem moeda* can be defined not so much by education, family background or immigrant history as by a common purpose. They were not satisfied with their position as second-class citizens in the new world of the twentieth century and believed that only by embracing modernity could they reach a "civilized" status in colonial Indonesia.

This chapter features what was probably the most remarkable yet controversial achievement of the *kaoem moeda*: the establishment of the Tiong Hoa Hwee Koan (literally, the Chinese Association, henceforth THHK) school which was founded in Batavia on 17 March 1901. Although there have been several studies of THHK, much remains to be clarified.[3] The existing literature on the THHK movement tends to overlook the importance of the *kaoem moeda*'s transborder connections in the establishment of the THHK school in Batavia.[4] For example, Mona Lohanda provided interesting analyses of the THHK officers' occupations, dialect backgrounds and their importance for the organization, but she did not comment on how these drew on a wider transborder network (Lohanda 1996: 110–26). This chapter maps the transborder connections of the *kaoem moeda* that provided inspiration and enabled them to establish the school.

"Modernity" in the Dutch East Indies context has often been seen as mainly "Dutch" in origin. In this chapter, I argue that the *kaoem moeda* were not just inspired by Dutch modernity but drew inspiration from a range of non-Dutch sources. Drawing on their global trade networks, they were able to obtain resources, especially teachers and teaching materials for the THHK school. Thus, the *kaoem moeda* succeeded in this initial attempt at circumventing Dutch authority to build their own schools, prompting the Dutch to reconsider the wisdom of not providing any education for their Chinese subjects in the Indies.

The existing literature also regards the THHK school as the first attempt to build a modern school for the Chinese in Java. Recent writings indicate, however, that there were earlier schools built by the Chinese in Java that experimented with a modern curriculum. A recent essay by Claudine Salmon reveals the existence of a "modern" Chinese school named *Nanyang Xunmeng Guan* (literally, the "South Seas Training School"). This Confucian school was established by Tjioe Ping Wie, who came from a prominent local Chinese family in Surabaya and who studied in China, where he obtained a licentiate degree. Tjioe then returned to his hometown and established this new school (Salmon 2009: 48–49). Another example is the establishment of a Singapore-oriented school in Batavia in 1892. The origin of this school lies in the visit in 1887 of a Manchu envoy who was actually an overseas Chinese from Penang. While this school turned out to be unsuccessful, it showcased the transborder networks of Chinese communities in Java which connected them to Singapore, Penang and China, underscoring how Java's Chinese utilized these ties for the betterment of their children's education. Nine years later, the same story was repeated as the THHK appeared in

Batavia. The main difference was that the network supporting the THHK school was much more global in scope (Nio 1940).

On the *kaoem moeda* and being "modern" in colonial Java

The new age of the twentieth century offered many novelties to Asians living in colonial Java. The main inspiration, especially for educated people, regardless of their ethnicity, was the advent of a Europe-centered modernity. Takashi Shiraishi, for example, uses the term *kaoem moeda* in a non-racialized way to describe the generation of Dutch-educated youth at the turn of the twentieth century. In the Dutch East Indies, according to Shiraishi, Dutch modernity was all the rage and it was exemplified by the popularity of Dutch words used by Dutch-educated youth, such as *vooruitgang* (progress), *opheffing* (uplifting), *ontwikkeling* (development) and *opvoeding* (upbringing).These words signified forms of progress (Shiraishi 1990: 27). There was also a strong association of modernity with being "civilized," which was also understood in Dutch terms. In the eyes of the Dutch colonizers, a perfect Chinese was "a highly civilized, Dutch-speaking and Christian Chinese" (Anon. 1909: 5).

It was not surprising that Western knowledge found admirers among the Chinese, such as one *Peranakan* Chinese from Makassar who sent a letter to the Governor General. He had exclaimed that "the science of the Dutch nation, who rule over us here in the Indies, is the perfect learning, as it is used around the world by various nations."[5] As Shiraishi argues, mastery of the Dutch language was "the key to open the modern world and age" (Shiraishi 1990: 90). The language provided "access to the Dutch world in the Indies" and the Dutch "exemplified modernity" (Shiraishi 1990: 90). Therefore, anyone educated in the Dutch system would strive to master *Westersche beschaving* (Western civilization) because being considered a *beschaafd* (civilized) person was one of the ultimate goals in life. The struggle to be "civilized" and, thus, equal to the Dutch and other Europeans was a common phenomenon in Asia at the turn of the twentieth century (cf. Winichakul 2000 and Hirano 1993). Because of their pariah status, the Chinese of Java were even more exposed to this pressure to strive for a civilized status than the Javanese. In the late nineteenth century, due to criticisms from Dutch politicians and journalists who witnessed extreme poverty among the Javanese, the Dutch government adopted an "ethical policy" to improve the lives of the Javanese. These critics put a large share of the blame for the poverty and misery of Javanese on the Chinese, calling them "the bloodsuckers of the Javanese" (*bloedzuigers der Javanen*) (see also Lohanda 2003: 22–30).

Another significant factor contributing to the striving to be "modern" among the *kaoem moeda* was the widespread "evil" image of the Chinese in the nineteenth-century Indies. In the mid-nineteenth century, during the pacification of West Borneo, the Dutch military commander called the Chinese "the most immoral of all immoral nations," who would "only listen to force" to mend their ways (Moor 1989: 59). Another officer admitted the importance of the Chinese, but at the same time was derogatory toward them: "If it weren't for the Chinese, we would have missed out on a lot of things, but still we despised those dog

eaters" (Dharmowijono 2001: 226). Dutch authors enhanced this negative image through their novels about life in the Indies. The "miscreant" (*aterling*) and "cunning" (*sluw*) Chinese were among the common stereotypes of the Chinese in Dutch Indies novels from the late colonial period (Dharmowijono 2004). It is not surprising that the ethical policy supporters deliberately painted a "negative picture about the Chinese involvement in a wide range of economic activities" (Dharmowijono 2004: 171). It is related to their role as middlemen in economic life, in which the Chinese were active in trade, money lending, opium and tax farming, and other "pariah" activities, considered "dirty jobs" by the Javanese and Europeans (see Carey 1984).

Therefore, the late nineteenth century was not a good time for the Chinese. The Dutch put severe restrictions on Chinese children entering European schools; they had to live in ghettos and apply for travel passes if they wanted to go anywhere. The long-time source of colonial government income, the revenue farm, was abolished and changed into a government monopoly. The rising Japanese, fellow Asians, were given European legal status in 1899, leaving the Chinese to experience themselves as second-class "foreign orientals." How could they then achieve "civilized" status and, at the same time, be "modern"?

The *kaoem moeda* and the establishment of the THHK school in Batavia

One night in June 1900, a group of Batavia's *kaoem moeda* who were members of the newly established THHK gathered at the house of Phoa Keng Hek, their president, to celebrate his birthday. During the conversation, nine people initiated the idea of founding a modern school. They were, in alphabetical order, Ang Sioe Tjiang, Khoe A Fan, Khoe Siauw Eng, Lie Hin Liam, Lie Kim Hok, Oey Koen Ie, Tan Kim San, Tan Tjong Long and Thio Sek Liong (Nio 1940: 13). The idea snowballed, so that, in less than a year, the school was established using the name of the association. It was opened on 17 March 1901 (Nio 1940: 22). The THHK school in Batavia is one of the earliest examples of the *kaoem moeda*'s transborder project because, as we shall see, the school was built and relied on their international networks, which stretched around Southeast and East Asia and which extended to the United States.

The transborder character of education for the Chinese in Southeast Asia had actually emerged much earlier. A business magnate from Semarang, Be Ing Tjoe, was a good example of how funding flowed from Java to the British colony in the Straits in mid-nineteenth century. In 1849 and 1854, along with other merchants, he donated money to two Chinese schools in Singapore, the *Chongwenge* and the Chinese Free School, respectively (Salmon 2000: 85). In 1906, Oei Tiong Ham, who was also from Semarang, donated $10,000 to purchase land for the Tao Nan School, which was the one of the first six modern Chinese schools to be set up in Singapore. Four years earlier he donated $150,000 to Raffles College (Song 1967: 331, 353). An early transborder teacher was exemplified in the case of Foo Nyen Thyam, who was born in Pontianak in West Borneo of Hokkien and Hakka extraction. At age 15, Foo had studied in China for two years between 1853 and 1855. On

his return to West Borneo, he worked as a Chinese clerk, before becoming head Chinese teacher at the mission school in Sarawak, where he taught for 17 years. In 1887, he was hired as the school master at the first Chinese school in Kuala Lumpur. Since he was able to speak and teach in four dialects and also knew Malay, it was noted that he could handle his job successfully (Stevenson 1966: 66–68).

Of the nine founding leaders of Batavia's THHK, some are more studied than others. Lie Kim Hok (Mand.: Liu Jianfu, 1853–1912), Phoa Keng Hek (Mand.: Pan Jinghe, 1857–1937), as well as his son-in-law, Khouw Kim An (Mand.: Xu Jinan, 1867–1944), who was not part of the original nine, are well known (see Suryadinata 1995). But it is the transborder connections of three of the founding leaders that are particularly important and relevant to our story. They are Khoe A Fan (Mand.: Qiu Yafan), Lie Hin Liam (Mand.: Li Xianglian) and Tan Kim San (Mand.: Chen Jinshan). Unfortunately, they are not as famous. Although their names appear in the historical literature, not much is known about them. A close reading of Nio Joe Lan's meticulous and authoritative history of Batavia's THHK movement shows that the three were always given tasks that capitalized on their transborder trade contacts. Khoe A Fan was responsible for purchasing school supplies and recruiting teachers from Japan. He even sent his daughters to be educated in Japan. His business networks with Japan were therefore central. Lie Hin Liam was responsible for establishing relations with American Methodists, and Tan Kim San, who had studied in Singapore in his youth, contacted Lim Boon Keng, who had spearheaded a similar movement in that British colony. I have summarised their transborder ties and responsibilities in Table 1.1.

Of the three leaders featured in Table 1.1, Khoe is the most neglected. An article from the progressive journal *Straits Chinese Magazine* published by Lim Boon Keng and other like-minded reformists in Singapore in 1906 actually credited Tan Kim San and Lie Hin Liam with working hard for the THHK school at Batavia but left the kudos mostly for Khoe (Anon 1906: 100). Khoe was born in Canton (i.e. Guangdong) and for some years held the position of magistrate in Fujian, where he was known as Kioe Han Hiang. In 1909, British authors Wright and Breakspear described Khoe's transnational business empire, which had started in the late 1880s, as follows:

> Under one name or another, the Handel Maatschappij Lian Hien for the last twenty years have been carrying on a large and *successful trade in almost every port between Java and Japan.* They are known in Sourabaya and Semarang as Tek Yei Liong, in Singapore as Him Wo and Nam Chau; in Hongkong as Tek Hing Wo; in Canton as Lun Hing; in Kobe as Wing On Chong and in Yokohama as Wing On Woh. The firm are [*sic*] general importers and exporters and deal in all kinds of Chinese and Japanese produce.
>
> (Wright and Breakspear 1909: 479; Post 1995: 164–65)

THHK Batavia was indeed fortunate in having Khoe A Fan and Lian Hien Trading Company among its supporters because of Khoe's Japanese connection. In the very early days of the THHK school Japanese influences and the Japanese model of modern education were important. A letter from the Central Committee

Table 1.1 Transborder connections of the three THHK leaders

Name/dialect	*Occupation*	*Transnational connection*	*Remarks*
Lieutenant Khoe A Fan • Cantonese • China-born	• Import and export of Japanese and Chinese products under the name Handel Maatchappij Lian Hien • Director of *Chop Hin Liong* rice-mill • In partnership with another Cantonese, Lieuw A Yoeng (later also active in THHK Batavia) • Appointed by the Dutch as one of the Chinese officers (lieutenant) at Batavia	Business networks spread across Southeast Asia and East Asia. His trading companies were located at: • Surabaya and Semarang (Tek Yei Liong) • Singapore (Him Woo and Nam Chau) • Hongkong (Tek Hing Wo) • Canton (Lim Hing) • Kobe (Wing On Chong/Kwong Wing On) • Yokohama (Wing On Woh)	• When preparations were underway to establish the THHK school, assigned to contact Dr Lim Boon Keng in Singapore • Responsible for THHK needs related to Japan (recruiting teachers, purchasing teaching materials) • In 1903 travelled to Japan to purchase the latest teaching equipment and recruited Lim Vie Yie to be the second school master for THHK Batavia • In 1905, sent his two daughters to study in Japan
Kapitan Lie Hin Liam • Hokkien • Batavia-born?	• Owner of "considerable landed property, a silk factory and several other large commercial undertakings in and around Batavia" • His brothers Lie Hin Pang and Lie Hin Sia owned the largest rice mill in Batavia (*Hoat Hin*) • Appointed by the Dutch as one of the Chinese officers (kapitan) at Batavia	n.a.	• In 1904/5, sent on his personal initiative a report to the viceroy in Canton, Khiem Tjoen Swan, on the progress of Chinese education in the Dutch East Indies. Shortly after, the viceroy sent Lauw Soe Kie (Liu Shih-chi) to inspect THHK schools • Established relations with American Methodist Episcopal missionaries in 1910 • Methodist missionaries-cum- THHK teachers stayed on his estate
Tan Kim San (1873–?) • Hokkien • Born in Batavia	Businessman	Studied in Singapore in his youth, probably at Methodist-run Anglo-Chinese School (ACS) From December 1904 until the closure of the magazine three years later, Tan acted as the *Straits Chinese* magazine (published by Chinese modernists in Singapore) agent in Batavia	• Fluent in English • When preparations were underway to establish the THHK school, assigned to contact Dr Lim Boon Keng in Singapore • In 1911, sent by THHK to Singapore to work with the Methodist Episcopal Church in Singapore

Sources: Lohanda (1996: 113); Wright and Breakspear (1909: 476, 479); Nio Joe Lan (1940); Suryadinata (1995); Tan Khik Djoen (1909).

of THHK Batavia written in July 1900 calling for the foundation of the Chinese school already made reference to Japan (Nio 1940: 14, 22; Williams 1960: 69). Interestingly, the THHK school had adopted the Japanese model of a modern education system slightly earlier than China. It was only in July 1901 – four months after the inauguration of the THHK school – that Zhang Zhidong and Liu Kunyi, the Governor General of Liangjiang, suggested to the Manchu throne that China adopt a modern school system modeled on that of Japan (Bailey 1990: 27). *Kaoem moeda* preference for the modern Japanese school system meant that the THHK school needed supplies and teachers trained in or who had good knowledge of the Japanese system. Khoe, with his Cantonese background, connected the THHK school to Japan through the transnational networks of his Cantonese dialect group. Cantonese was the main medium of communication amongst Chinese communities in Japan's major port cities of Kobe, Yokohama and Nagasaki (Shimizu and Hirakawa 1999: 62; Ng 2003: 86, 99). Furthermore, as Shimizu and Hirakawa argue, it was the Cantonese who "controlled the Japan–Batavia trade" (Shimizu and Hirakawa 1999: 62).

Teacher recruitment and three intra-Asian networks

In the foundation of modern schools during the early twentieth century, a number of similarities between China and Java were present. In 1901, imperial China issued an order to convert all traditional academies (Mand.: *shuyuan*) into modern schools (Mand.: *xuetang*). But modern schools in China, like the THHK school in Batavia, were confronted with the problem of obtaining suitable teachers and textbooks. Like some of the THHK schools that were established elsewhere in Java, there were "schools without teachers and textbooks" in China (Reynolds 1993: 90, 304). When the *kaoem moeda* drafted requirements for the first school master for the THHK school in Batavia they stressed that the person should be able to teach "the Chinese script and language in the modern way currently employed at schools in China and Japan." The modern system should enable the student to quickly master the learning Chinese (Nio 1940: 14). In addition, the teacher must be able to introduce Mandarin Chinese[6] to the pupils and had to deliver a public talk on Confucianism at least once a week and if possible in Hokkien (Nio 1940: 16). In its early years, the THHK school put a strong emphasis on Confucianism, which was championed by Lie Kim Hok (1853–1912),[7] who

> sought to realize his desire to form an organization for the propagation of Confucianism. Confucianism was not merely to be exploited to introduce various reforms but was to become the body of spiritual knowledge for all the Chinese people of Indonesia. To achieve that purpose, it was necessary to have Chinese children study Chinese characters and language in order to be able to read the books of the Confucian religion. Therefore, THHK had to establish Chinese-language schools and invite teachers truly learned in Confucianism to serve in the schools.
>
> (Kwee 1969: 15)

The recruitment of what the *kaoem moeda* considered to be suitable teachers for the THHK school in Batavia took place via intra-Asian transborder networks in which Lie, Tan and especially Khoe played major roles. To facilitate documentation and analysis, I have divided the networks into three sets. The first network revolved around the famous Dr. Lim Boon Keng, the Confucian modernizer from Singapore, who was widely known amongst the *kaoem moeda* and rest of the Chinese community in Java for his Confucian Revival Movement.[8] In 1899, Lim started a Mandarin class at his home, where every Sunday evening his friends would study the new language and listen to him talk on Confucianism. Since the number of his pupils increased, the class was moved to a more spacious venue the following year. Lim's achievements in learning Mandarin and promoting Confucianism matched the needs of the THHK leaders and they approached Lim for advice about finding a school master. The two leaders sent to meet Lim for this purpose were Khoe A Fan and Tan Kim San (Nio 1940: 16). In Table 1.1, we see that Khoe's business empire also extended to Singapore, where he owned two major export–import companies. As for Tan Kim San, he was also a logical choice since he had studied in Singapore in his youth. As luck would have it, Lim at that time had employed a private Mandarin Chinese tutor named Louw Koei Hong (Mand.: Lu Guifang). Taking into account the greater collective good of Java's Chinese community, Lim kindly let the new THHK school in Batavia employ his tutor as its first school master (Nio 1940: 17; Kwee 1969: 16; Williams 1960: 73). This was the start of cordial relations between Singapore-based Lim and the *kaoem moeda* leaders of Batavia.[9]

When Louw Koei Hong's engagement with THHK Batavia expired in 1903, his contract was not extended (Nio 1940: 17: Williams 1960: 73; Govaars-Tjia 2005: 55).[10] He was later transferred to Malang, East Java, while his two assistants (who probably served as Louw's translators) – Liauw Lian Thing and Tjiong Tian Djee – went to Pasuruan, also in East Java (Tan 1909). It should be noted that since most of the students spoke Malay in their daily conversations, the Mandarin teacher usually needed a translator to help him translate Mandarin to Malay or Hokkien (Lohanda 2003: 53).

The reasons for not extending Low's contract in 1903, despite his capabilities in teaching Mandarin, were not clear. Apparently the THHK school in Batavia wanted to have "a Chinese teacher from 'the Great School' in Japan" to be its second school master (Nio 1940: 25). This leads us to the second set of intra-Asian network. The search for a new principal reveals a transborder network involving another famous reformer, K'ang You-wei.[11]

The "Great School" in Japan referred to the school established by the overseas Chinese community in Yokohama in 1897. This was known in Mandarin as the *Datong Xuexiao* or the *Daidō Gakkō* in Japanese (literally "Great Unity School"). It was the first Chinese school in Japan that aimed to teach Chinese[12] and Confucianism (Huang 1982: 293; Harrell 1992: 34).[13] As indicated by its name, the school was inspired by Kang's utopian philosophy of the *Datong* or the "Great Unity" (see further K'ang 1958). The students "were required to bow to the image of Confucius every Sunday and risked expulsion if they refused." Apart from Chinese, students also learned English, taught by graduates of Hong

Kong's Queen's College (Kyo 2006: 336). The *Datong* school with its Confucian ideology was deemed to be the right place to look for a teacher for the THHK school in Batavia.

When Kang You-wei visited Batavia in August 1903, the *kaoem moeda* leaders apparently heard about the school from Kang.[14] In October 1903, they decided to send Khoe A Fan to Japan to purchase the latest educational equipment and to recruit a new headmaster. The new headmaster, Lim Vie Yie, who was an overseas Chinese from Japan, was a graduate of the *Datong* school. It is no wonder that his name was recommended by Kang You-wei himself, as Kang was an influential figure in that school (Nio 1940: 25–26). Once again, Khoe's transborder Cantonese network came into play. The last intra-Asian network was more surprising as it was not recorded in Nio's authoritative account of the THHK movement. This was probably because it concerned a Japanese named Soejima Yasoruku (given as Yosoroku Soichima in contemporary sources).[15] Nio wrote his book in the late 1930s, when there was fierce anti-Japanese sentiment amongst the Chinese communities in Java due to the Sino-Japanese War. The source of this story was Tan Khik Djoen, a businessman and president of THHK in Malang. Due to its importance, I quote his reminiscence in full:

> Just right after the THHK Batavia transferred the school masters Lauw Kwi Hong [sic] and Lauw Siem Tjwan to Malang and Pasuruan, respectively, I delivered a suggestion to THHK Batavia. Wouldn't it be better if the THHK in Batavia made an attempt to use a Mandarin tutor from Japan or a student from China with a [teaching] diploma for I have a Japanese literati friend named Yosoroku Soichima [*sic*] in Tokyo. When he visited Java, on many occasions he told me about the Chinese students in Japan. T.H.H.K Batavia then requested me to send a letter to Soichima in Tokyo to ask him to send a Chinese student to teach at the THHK Batavia. Tong Hong Wie was the teacher who was sent to Batavia.
>
> (Tan 1909)

Thus Soejima, a Meiji Japanese intellectual, rather than an overseas Chinese ended up becoming the bridge between the THHK school in Batavia and overseas Chinese students in Japan. It was probably Khoe A Fan who later contacted Tong Hong Wie (sometimes appearing as Tung Hung-wei or Tang Hong Wie) on behalf of THHK Batavia.

Tong was a prominent figure by career and by marriage. He was born in Chekiang province in 1880 and became a Mandarin with the rank of *juren*. *Juren* were holders of the second degree and aspirants to the third in the Chinese imperial examination system. Tong went to Japan in 1901 for self-financed study at Waseda University (Harrell 1992: 63, 236; Williams 1960: 152–53). His father-in-law, Ch'ien Hsun (also known as Tsien Sun), was a prominent diplomat and was promoted around this time to be counselor of the Chinese legation in the Netherlands.[16] Tong later resigned from his position at the THHK school and returned to China, where he secured a position at the Department of Education in Beijing. In 1907, Tong returned to Java with Ch'ien to inspect the Chinese

schools there. This was an important trip since they proposed that the THHK school in Java send its best students to China to further their studies, so that upon graduation they could become Mandarins. Consequently, several students were sent to Nanjing to study in a school set up specially to cater for Chinese students who had returned from overseas, that is, the famous *Jinan Xuetang*, popularly known by its Hokkien name, *Kay Lam Hak Tong*.[17] This proposal was directed at promoting a tighter connection between Chinese communities that had settled overseas and imperial China. Chien, for example, had actively advocated for the establishment of a consulate in Java to benefit the local Chinese communities (Williams 1960: 152–53; Tan 1909). Following regime change after the establishment of the Republic of China in 1911, Tong remained influential in the educational field. During the Republican era, he held various positions at the Department of Education (Harrell 1992: 236). Tong later became "a direct link between the Batavia THHK and China." In 1914, the THHK school requested his assistance to find a new teacher in China (Williams 1960: 153).

These three sets of networks depict how the *kaoem moeda* were able to successfully overcome difficulties in finding prospective teachers for the THHK school in Batavia. In so doing, Batavia, and to a lesser extent Malang in East Java, were connected to the larger Asian cities of learning, including Singapore, Tokyo, Yokohama and Beijing. Taken together, the intra-Asian transborder networks of the *kaoem moeda* are good examples of sources and models of modernity that were not completely Dutch in character.

English-language education and the global network of the American Methodists

In this final section, I examine a transborder network that was very different in nature from the intra-Asian ones described above. This network was more global and connected the THHK school in Batavia with the United States and China. Although the THHK school adopted the Japanese model of modern education, they were interested in the English language as well. English occupied an important position in this school. At the THHK school in Batavia, English was gradually made compulsory from 1908 onwards. In May 1910, students in their fourth year and above studied only the Chinese language, singing and the history of China in Chinese. The remaining subjects including arithmetic would be taught in English (Sai 2006: 264–65). Outside Batavia, in Java, whenever a THHK school was financially strong enough, an English department would be added (Denyes 1911: 30). Thus, there was a high demand for English teachers, preferably native speakers. Initially the English teachers were local Chinese from Singapore and Penang. However, when the results were not satisfactory, the *kaoem moeda* approached the American Methodists (Methodist Episcopal Church 1910: 336).

From the outset, the Methodist connection was salient in the school's attempts to teach English. In mid-1901, the school had incorporated a short-lived private English school named the "Yale Institute" (Nio 1940: 40). This school was founded by a Lee Teng Hwee, a graduate of Yale University. Lee Teng Hwee was a local-born Chinese from Batavia. In his younger days, he studied at the

Anglo-Chinese School, a reputable school founded by missionaries from the Methodist movement in Singapore. Lee was a confidant of the well-known missionary Bishop Oldham. When Oldham visited Java for the first time in 1889, it was Lee who accompanied him (Anon. 1889: 4).

The transborder connection between the American Methodists and the *kaoem moeda* deepened when the American Methodist Episcopal Church decided to open a mission in Java. While there were visits by several Methodist pastors to Java during the late nineteenth century, the mission really started only in November 1905 (Lau 2008: 54). The first person in charge of opening up mission work in Java was John Russell Denyes (1869–1936), a Missouri-born minister (Shavit1990: 127). Denyes recognized the value of spreading the gospel in Java through working with the network of THHK schools in Java. To do this, he later made agreements with the THHK school in Batavia to provide teachers who could instruct in English. However, the first problem he had to overcome was that the schools preached Confucianism. How could a Christian congregation work so closely with a Confucian institution? Denyes argued that:

> [T]his arrangement *does not mean that these schools have become mission schools, nor have these organizations become Christian organizations.* It should also be understood that the Chinese people are not being deceived in any way as to who we are or what we intend to do. They know that these teachers are Christian missionaries and are working at the small salary which they receive because they are missionaries. The people are not asking for Christian religion, but they do want men of clean lives and high moral ideals as teachers for their children.
>
> (Denyes 1911: 30, italics added)

In another lengthy report to Bishop Oldham in 1910, however, Denyes kept his religious expectations. He wrote that:

> [I]n Netherlands India there are large numbers *of very intelligent and progressive Chinese.* Among these is an organization with a hundred or more branches known as the Tiong Hoa Hwe Koan. The objective of this society is to promote education and patriotism. In religious matters they stand for individual freedom of conscience. *When these people become Christians they will be among the most intelligent Christians of Asia.* Through our system of Anglo-Chinese Schools throughout the Straits Settlements and the Federated Malay States the Methodist Episcopal Church has won a large place in the respect and affections of these people. This is shown by the fact that their organization has recently appealed to our Mission to supply a principal for their English school in Batavia, they paying the salary and in that they have requested the District Superintendent to act as inspector of their English department. *It now remains for the Methodist Mission to show to those people that Christianity is promotive of and necessary to the highest and best civilization and the largest degree of true liberty.*
>
> (Denyes 1910: 26, italics added)

It is clear that Denyes was impressed by the *kaoem moeda* in Batavia, whom he called "very intelligent and progressive Chinese."[18] For him, the way to proselytize the Gospel to the *kaoem moeda* was not through the conventional way of preaching, but to show that Christianity represented the "highest and best civilization" they were seeking. To achieve this goal, he was prepared to aid their efforts in establishing modern education for the Chinese community. Denyes was convinced that:

> [T]hrough these teachers we shall be able to show to the Chinese· of Netherlands India that a true and noble civilization requires a foundation of spiritual truth which is found only in the religion which we teach. When they have come to realize that Christianity stands for all that is highest and best in life there will be no question of urging religion upon them, but they will of themselves call upon us to show them and their children the way of truth.
> (Denyes 1911: 30–1, italics added)

Taking into account the meagre results of earlier Dutch missionary efforts to convert the Chinese in the Indies to Christianity, it can be argued that perhaps Denyes had been overly optimistic.[19]

The cooperation between the *kaoem moeda* and the Methodists began in September 1909 when the mission agreed to inspect the THHK English school once every three months. In August the following year, Denyes was appointed as inspector for all THHK schools in and outside Java, an idea advocated by Lie Hin Liam (Nio 1940: 97).[20] In 1910 the Methodists reached an agreement with the THHK school in Batavia that the school would cover the travel expenses of missionary teachers from the United States to the Dutch Indies and would provide salaries. In return, the Methodists would give English lessons to the various THHK schools (Methodist Episcopal Church 1910: 336). In Denyes' words, "if the missionaries were not in these schools, they would not be in Java at all, for there is not enough mission money to bring them out" (Denyes 1911: 30).

Several dedicated Methodist missionary teachers became very active in providing lessons to students at the THHK school in Batavia. In 1911 it was reported that the Rev. Baughman "with one assistant teaches eighty boys and girls in six standards in English," while the Rev. Worthington "teaches three and half hours a day at Patekoan [the school's address], supervises the [THHK] English school at Pasar Senen" (Denyes 1911: 30). Other examples included a Brother and Sister Bower who lived on the estate of Lie Hin Liam in 1912. There was also a Sister Nichols, who, it was reported, did "excellent work as a teacher" at the THHK school in Batavia (Methodist Episcopal Church 1912: 298). To summarize, the Methodists supplied teachers to THHK schools in Batavia, Sokaradja, Poerbolinggo (all in Java) and Bangka Island. Apart from teaching at the THHK schools, the mission also ran its own Anglo-Chinese Schools in Buitenzorg and Surabaya (Methodist Episcopal Church 1916: 198–99). At the suggestion of Lie Hin Liam, the Methodists also acted "as an agent for the schools of Java" by bringing teachers from China. It was reported that at least five teachers came to Java from China through this network (Denyes 1912: 29; Methodist Episcopal

Church 1911: 338).[21] Methodism as a global institution had long been active in spreading Christianity in China. In this case, it was Christian transnationalism that connected the *kaoem moeda* in Batavia to China.

It is difficult to know precisely how many teachers came to the THHK school in Batavia and elsewhere via the transborder networks mapped in this chapter. Williams reported that by 1904, the THHK school in Batavia employed 15 Chinese teachers, 11 of them China-born. At about the same time, the THHK school in Semarang employed seven teachers. Only one was not from China, while Bandung hired three China-born teachers in 1906. As the parent school, the THHK school in Batavia received a great number of requests from various places in the archipelago for help with recruiting teachers. It therefore acted as a "teacher recruitment agency." As Williams concluded, "the flow of new personnel was steady and reached virtually all Indies centers of Chinese population" (Williams 1960: 73).

Conclusion

This chapter has focused on the under-studied transborder networks of the *kaoem moeda* leaders in Batavia at the turn of the twentieth century. Using their trade networks, these leaders managed to establish a modern THHK school for the Chinese population in Batavia. The use and importance of these networks demonstrate that the *kaoem moeda* were inspired by a range of non-Dutch sources and models of modernity during this period. Although the Dutch East Indies was Dutch colony, the *kaoem moeda* established a modern school that drew on a modernized Japanese education system and which taught Mandarin Chinese as well as English. This forced the Dutch to change their policy of not providing education for the Chinese in the Indies. In 1908, the Dutch established the first Dutch-Chinese school that instructed Chinese students in Dutch.

Despite their flaws, the *kaoem moeda* and the THHK school in Batavia should have a place in the history of modern overseas Chinese education. Compared to other overseas Chinese schools in Asia, the THHK's decision to teach Mandarin was apparently taken earlier than any other schools in Southeast Asia or Japan. Penang's Chung Hua School, the first Mandarin language school in the Straits Settlements or Malay States, was founded only in March 1904, three years after the THHK school in Batavia (Godley 1981: 140). Among the overseas Chinese in Japan, the first Mandarin school was only started in 1919 in Kobe (Ng 2003: 87). In this respect, the *kaoem moeda*'s transborder ties were invaluable in the spread of modern Chinese education overseas.

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Notes

1 For the contemporary use of the term, see Rivai (1906–7); also Kwee Tek Hoay (2001). Adam (1995: 104–5) is likely the first scholar who elaborated on Rivai's definition and use of *kaoem moeda*, particularly its application to the "enlightened" Chinese.
2 The dichotomy of light and darkness was a common phenomenon in the early twentieth-century public sphere; see Anderson 1979: 219–48.
3 See Williams (1960); Bocquet-Siek (1984); Lohanda (1996, 2003); Govaars-Tjia (2005). A recent PhD thesis also covers THHK. See Sai (2006).
4 See Bocquet-Siek (1984); Lohanda (2003); Govaars-Tjia (2005). Williams (1960) is an exception.
5 This quotation is taken from Anon. (1905).
6 Mandarin Chinese was the most suitable choice to serve as medium at the newly opened THHK school in Batavia. There was pride among each dialect group, which sometimes led to bloody clashes between different groups in the Chinese community. Phoa Keng Hek was aware on this difficult situation and he selected Mandarin Chinese, which was a "strange" language among the overseas Chinese in Nanyang. See Kwee (1969) and Williams (1960).
7 Although he was educated and lived among Christians, Lie Kim Hok never became a Christian and instead decided to be a devout Confucian. In 1896 he published the first biography of Confucius in the Malay language, which had a big impact for the "reinvention" of Chinese identity among the Malay-speaking Chinese in Java. See Kwartanada (2011).
8 Further on Lim's odyssey in Java, see Kwartanada (2007).
9 Lim was an honorary member (Dutch: *Eerelid*) of THHK Batavia (Nio 1940: 94). Later, he was awarded a gold medal from THHK Batavia for his contributions (Khor 1958).
10 Tan Khik Djoen (1909) gives the first school master's name as Lauw Kwi Hong. We know very little of Low's background. Suryadinata (1997: 89–90) described him as a Hokkien from Singapore who studied Mandarin Chinese textbooks from Japan, but in another work, Suryadinata described him as an overseas Chinese living in Japan (Suryadinata 1999: 9).
11 Kang Yu-wei (1858–1927) was a reformer, philosopher and a propagator of Confucianism in late nineteenth-century China. Humiliation and defeat by Japan raised the concerns of educated Chinese, who called for reforms. Prominent in this group was Kang, "who made the attempt to transform China within the framework of the Confucian tradition into a society capable of living in the modern world" (Franz 1967: n.p.).
12 The language of instruction at Datong school was most probably Cantonese and not Mandarin Chinese, as Cantonese was the main Chinese dialect spoken amongst the Chinese living in Japan.
13 Nio (1940: 26) commented correctly on the origin of this school: "Ta Tung school is not a real Japanese school, it was a school established by the overseas Chinese in Japan."
14 Kang's radical reinterpretation of a progressive Confucius featuring him as "the prophet of progress" was a timely answer for the *kaoem moeda*, who sought spiritual foundation to their quest to modernity. In Java, he was given the honorary Javanese title of *poedjonggo*, which means a sage, scholar, man of letters, and sometimes one versed in the mystic sciences. In the words of Liem Thian Joe (1933: 173–74), a local Chinese historian who wrote in the 1930s, Kang "awakened the Chinese in the South Seas archipelago, particularly in Java."
15 Soejima Yasoroku (1875–1950) was a well-known political commentator during the Meiji-Taisho period. He is known as the person "who named the Straits Settlements, the Malay States, Siam, French Indochina, the Netherlands East Indies, British Borneo, Portuguese Timor, British (formerly German) New Guinea, the Pacific Islands, and

the Philippines, as comprising the Nan'-Yô." Soejima was also a prolific writer and at least 13 books and numerous articles are credited to him. Therefore, he was one of the strongest advocates for the Southern Forward Movement (*Nanshin-ron*), which called for Japan to give more attention to Southeast Asia in contrast to the traditional view of looking to the North (China and Russia), known as *Hokushin-ron*. (See Yu-Jose 1999: 40–41; also http://www.worldcat.org, keyword: "Yasoroku Soejima," accessed 3 November 2006.)

16 Ch'ien Hsun started his career as supervisor of Chinese students in Japan, and later served as a diplomat in Russia, the Netherlands and Italy (Boorman *et al.* 1967: 367).

17 This was a special school designed for the overseas Chinese. It was established around 1906 and closed down in 1911. See Govaars-Tjia (2005: 55–56); Suryadinata (1995: 252).

18 A year later, Denyes repeated his fascination, perhaps to convince his colleagues (see Denyes 1911: 30).

19 See further the chapters on Confucian religion in Coppel (2002).

20 For a concise and useful discussion on Methodist–THHK Batavia cooperation, see Sai (2006: 265–67).

21 Denyes went on a "study trip" to China with THHK Batavia's sponsorship to inspect the modern schools in China and recruit teachers at the same time (Nio 1940: 97–98).

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2 The Nanyang diasporic imaginary

Chinese school teachers in a transborder setting in the Dutch East Indies

Siew-Min Sai

Introduction

This chapter foregrounds a regional context in understanding the development of Chinese-medium education in the Dutch East Indies during the pre-World War Two period. My attention on this regional context is aimed at rectifying the limitations of a nation-state-centered framework that tends to overwhelm studies of Chinese communities in Southeast Asia, particularly in Indonesia. Such an approach takes the territoriality of the nation-state as the baseline in understanding sentiments of belonging to a locale, which in turn buttresses nationalistic notions of "foreignness" and "indigenity." In Chinese Indonesian studies, the paired terms "locally oriented" and "China-oriented" suppress and entrench at the same time a bifurcated nation-state framework that treats the study of Chinese communities in Indonesia, to borrow the words of another scholar, as an "academic loyalty test" (Zheng 1997: 424).[1] This makes it difficult to appreciate a regional context as well as the ideological work and processes involved in the production of regional sentiments of belonging, particularly those centered on the "Nanyang" (literally the "Southern Ocean" but often loosely translated as "Southeast Asia") in the Dutch East Indies. Yet, the Nanyang clearly captured the imagination of a literate group of Chinese teachers in the Indies whose modality of life and work revolved around this region during the pre-World War Two period. Except for those occasions when the Nanyang is casually analyzed as a staging ground for Chinese nationalist ideologies or practices of Chinese transnationalism, not much thought has gone into why, how and what it means to engender a regional as opposed to a national or global scale of identification for a group of historical actors.

I use the term "Nanyang diasporic imaginary" to refocus attention on the term "Nanyang," which emerged as an important geographical concept for generating and disseminating knowledge about the region for literate Chinese traveling and settling in the different colonies in this part of the world. Such knowledge was manifestly empirical and allegedly accurate, not to mention supported by the edifice and authority of the scientific enterprise. Yet, scientific knowledge about the Nanyang was at the same time interlaced with intense ideology-making. The "Nanyang diasporic imaginary" is therefore a cultural artifact produced by a class of literate Chinese who worked and traveled in the region extensively,

teaching conceptions of Chinese settlement and localization that depart significantly from those of the European colonizers. My use of the word "imaginary" does not imply that the Nanyang was a fictive entity. Indeed, from the point of view of these educators, it could not be more real. Instead, the word is used to emphasize the discursive creation and elaboration of the Nanyang as objective reality by this group of knowledge producers.

Moreover, the popularity of the Nanyang as a regional concept is rooted in historical and sociological realities. It is tied to the immigration and settlement of the Chinese in Southeast Asia since pre-colonial times, which had intensified during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries with the expansion and consolidation of colonial states in this part of the world. This seems to have abetted a greater degree of consciousness about their "Chinese" identity amongst long-time settlers and sojourners alike. At the same time, the rise and circulation of political ideologies, including reformism and nationalism, emanating from mainland China further encouraged different senses of being Chinese. The foundation and rapid establishment of schools by the different Chinese communities in Southeast Asia and the advent of greater numbers of literate Chinese who served as educators in these institutions around the turn of the twentieth century emerged from these inter-related phenomena. In his contribution to this volume, Didi Kwartanada traces how key founders of the THHK school movement utilized their transborder networks to set up schools in Java. This chapter paints a different transborder world traversed by Chinese educators. Throughout the pre-war period, Chinese-medium schools remained embedded within a larger regional social world. The interconnections amongst schools in the Dutch East Indies and those in its immediate environs undoubtedly encouraged sentiments of regional co-belonging. By tracing the multiple itineraries of educators who taught in these schools and who based themselves eventually in Java, as well as through examining their attempts to produce teaching materials tailored specifically for their students in Java, this chapter documents and analyzes the formation of a transborder literate community during the pre-World War Two period.

I focus in particular on two teachers and their geography-cum-history textbooks. Situ Zan was a geography teacher who rose to a prominent leadership position amongst the Chinese in Jakarta during the post-war period. He produced an early Chinese-language geography textbook that introduces and teaches the Nanyang as a geographical concept to primary school students in the Indies. Huang Su-feng, in comparison, was an obscure teacher who taught briefly in Java but he was an extremely prolific writer of textbooks. Examination of their lives, times and work helps shed some light on the regional social world centered on the Nanyang. In addition, this study of Chinese school teachers in a transborder setting raises an alternative optic on the dissemination of Chinese nationalism outside of mainland China – one that brings into view its articulation under conditions of full-scale colonialism in Southeast Asia.[2] I suggest that because conventional accounts of Chinese nationalism in Southeast Asia tend to regard expressions of Chinese nationalism elsewhere as carbon copies of an original nationalism developed in continental China, they tend to neglect the encounter

of these educators with colonialism in Southeast Asia as an important context informing their lives and work. Close examination of Situ Zan's and Huang Su-feng's textbooks reveals, however, a long-standing preoccupation with the colonial order in the region.

Roving itineraries: Chinese school teachers in a transborder world

Sally Borthwick has investigated educational reforms in mainland China toward the end of the twentieth century. She argues that the initial period from 1894 to 1900 was a period of experimentation within China. Schools "were opened on the initiative of individuals, setting their own fashions, completely devoid of system; the gradation of levels was incomplete, and such names as higher, middle and primary school had not been formally adopted" (Borthwick 1983: 56). The lack of systematic coordination and haphazard implementation in the nascent modernization of China's education system during this period was especially acute for elementary education, the kind that was first popularized in the Indies. Borthwick writes:

> Few elementary schools on the Western model were opened during the first period of reform. Even after the state decreed their establishment in 1901 and regularized their structure in 1904, the young child's contact with Western knowledge most likely came from within the familiar framework of family private tuition-style schools or traditional schools.
>
> (Borthwick 1983: 55–56)

Until 1904 and 1905, when decisive measures were taken to adopt the Japanese education system in its entirety in China, education reform was proceeding in fits and reversals. Borthwick's account of educational reform in mainland China offers some contrast to the rush to set up Chinese-medium schools in the Indies following the foundation of the Batavian THHK during the same period.

Apart from China and the Dutch East Indies, the establishment of Chinese-medium schools was similarly getting off the ground in Singapore and elsewhere in British Malaya. Recognizing the limitations of over-emphasizing the influence of educational reforms in China as a factor in this development, scholars now argue for more local agency as communities experimented and created different educational models for their modernized schools:

> The search for change by the Chinese community predated the 1903 Qing educational reforms. Hence, the privately-managed schools of the Chinese communities had to seek alternative models closer to home. In cosmopolitan Singapore, the Chinese old-style schools co-existed with the Western-tradition schools, which had been set up by the Government, Christian missions and private individuals from the early days of the nineteenth century. Chinese children also attended these schools when they eventually started Chinese classes. In 1838, the *Singapore Free Press* reported on

an "English Department" and a "Chinese Department" in the Singapore Institution which was founded in 1823.

(Wee 2001: 14)[3]

The bilingual English–Chinese school model[4] then developing in Singapore was a key feature of schools founded by Chinese communities long domiciled in the British Straits Settlements. Some examples include the *Cheang Wan Seng* School (1875), the *Cheang Jim Hean* Free School (1890s) and the Anglo-Chinese Free School established in 1885. The Anglo-Chinese Free School used English as the medium of instruction but offered classes on Chinese as a subject. Meanwhile, different "bang" schools catering to the different dialect-speaking groups in Singapore were being established. Thus, the *Toh Lam* School was established in 1907 by the Hokkien-speaking group, the *Tuan Mong* School by the Teochews in 1906 and the *Yingxin* School by the Hakkas in 1906. During the period when education reforms in China were threatened by reactionary forces, Chinese communities in Singapore were forging ahead by establishing their own modernized schools.

Over in Malaya, the first new-style Chinese-medium school was the *Chung Hwa* School (Mand.: *Zhonghua* School) set up in Penang in 1904 (see Yen 2003). It is interesting that the school's name in Mandarin Chinese – "*Zhonghua*" – was the same as the Mandarin Chinese name of THHK schools in Java. The signboards displayed outside THHK schools in Java simply stated "*Zhonghua Xuetang*"[5] instead of "*Zhonghua Huiguan Xuetang*" (Eng.: School of the Chinese Association) which would be a stricter translation of "THHK school." Like the schools founded by the Straits Chinese community in Singapore, the *Chung Hwa* School in Penang was a bilingual Chinese–English school. It used Mandarin Chinese as the medium of instruction and required English to be taught as the foreign language. After *Chung Hwa* School, Chinese-medium schools were also set up in Kuala Lumpur, Ipoh, Malacca and Johor Baru, areas where the Chinese in Malaya were concentrated. Modernized Chinese-medium education in mainland China and Southeast Asia thus developed coevally, a fact that tends to be elided when the frame of analysis is China-centric. This presumes a model of cultural transfusion which charts cultural influences as flowing in a unidirectional manner, that is, from China to Southeast Asia.

The development of Chinese-medium schools in the Dutch East Indies and Southeast Asia cannot be explained using a simple cultural transfusion model. Experimentation with modernizing Chinese-medium education, especially Mandarin Chinese education, in the Indies fed off intra-Southeast Asian influences as well as trends from China itself. As Kwartanada notes in this volume, the Batavian THHK was one of the earliest to attempt Mandarin Chinese instruction in the region, earlier than Penang's *Chung-Hwa* School. Yet the THHK school also adopted from the very beginning the English–Chinese bilingual model popular in British Malaya. Thus, more emphasis was placed on learning English than Dutch in the THHK schools in Java (Sai 2006).

Most significantly, throughout the entire pre-World War Two period, coeval developments in the field of modernized Chinese-medium education across the

South China Sea led to the emergence of a transborder community of educators and students. To begin with, the coeval establishment and development of Chinese-medium schools along coastal China and Southeast Asia from the late nineteenth century onwards created a simultaneous demand for teachers, school administrators and principals who could teach in Mandarin Chinese and/or Chinese dialects. Absence of job security, paucity of school administrators and teachers, the short period of development of modernized Chinese-medium schools, lack of higher education opportunities and teacher training institutes at the local level in Southeast Asia meant that communities anxious to educate their children in new-style Chinese-medium schools had to rely on educators who were not born or settled in the community. This fostered the emergence of a group of educators who, through their particular mode of work, life, personal friendships and relationships with one another, constituted a social world anchored by experiences of travel as well as temporary and semi-permanent settlement in and about the region and China. Chinese students born in Southeast Asia who wished to pursue their studies beyond the elementary level had to move outside of their own communities, to Singapore and Malaya and even eventually to Hong Kong or China for tertiary training. While some students, if they chose to become teachers, would return to teach in their hometowns, many joined their predecessors traveling the region in search of career opportunities. The pre-World War Two period was thus a time when the burst of local initiative and activity in establishing community schools throughout the region gave rise to extensive and dense networks centered on schools, students and the educators they employed. These networks were "translocal" in character because they were not confined within national or colonial boundaries but stretched outwards beyond specific locales. In short, although Chinese-medium schools in the Dutch East Indies were indisputably "local" entities in that they were founded by community leaders primarily as community schools to serve the educational demands and needs of the community, they were also liminal spaces, mediating access to a wider transborder world.

The Batavian THHK occupies pride of place in the history of Mandarin Chinese education in Indonesia. It is, therefore, apt to begin by examining its history and the community of teachers and students it sustained. Founded in 1901, it is widely regarded by both local residents in present-day Jakarta as well as academia as the first modernized Chinese-medium school in the Indies. The Batavian THHK served as a key nodal point for trained educators from cosmopolitan backgrounds coming from China or another part of the Nanyang to Batavia, from where they would then move to other parts of Java or elsewhere in the Dutch East Indies. The school appeared to be an inevitable "pit stop" for many of these trained educators who subsequently chose to base themselves in Java. Nothing illustrates its nodal character better than the fact that several of the most respected principals, school administrators and teachers of the Chinese community in Batavia were first recruited by or had almost always taught at the Batavian THHK. Several of the most famous Chinese-medium schools in Java were founded by teachers who had moved on from the Batavian THHK school. The first full-fledged Chinese-medium middle school in Batavia – the "Chinese

Middle School" (Mand.: *Zhonghua Zhongxue*) popularly known as "*Huazhong*" – was established in 1939 by four former teachers who had taught at the Batavian THHK school, namely Li Chun-ming, Zhang Guo-ji, Chen Zhang-ji and Li Shan-ji. They left the school when they became dissatisfied with the school board over contractual and curricular matters. Likewise, Situ Zan had taught at the THHK school in Batavia and helped establish the Batavia Middle School (Mand.: *Bacheng Zhongxue*), another highly regarded institution in the city.

The first principal of *Huazhong* was Li Chun-ming. Li Chun-ming was born in 1894 in Jiangsu Province. He received his elementary education in new-style schools in his hometown. In 1911, he entered the *Longmen* Teachers' Training School in Shanghai and later enrolled himself in another state-run teachers' training school which offered a higher level of instruction. This second teachers' training school was located in Nanjing. Li Chun-ming graduated in 1916. He began his teaching career at a middle school in Jiangsu Province and was recruited to teach in Singapore through the efforts of Huang Yan-pei,[6] who was then helping Tan Kah Kee recruit teachers from Shanghai for the Chinese High School in Singapore. From 1919 until 1923, Li Chun-ming taught Chinese language at the Chinese High School in Singapore. He returned to his native place to mourn the death of his father in 1923. After his father's death, Li continued to teach in different schools in his hometown. About a year later, in 1924, he received an offer to teach at the Batavian THHK school. He left for Batavia in January 1925. Seven months later, he left Java for a new appointment as the principal of another famous Chinese-medium school in Johor in Malaya. This was the *Kuanrou* Middle School. In 1927, Teacher Li returned to Singapore's Chinese High School, where he had started his teaching career in the region in 1919. Two years later in January 1929, he left to teach at Lombok. In 1931, he left Lombok again to teach at Kuala Lumpur, where he lived for another two years before moving to Lampung in Sumatra. Li Chun-ming only returned to Batavia in 1934. He taught for six months at *Yicheng* School in Batavia and finally moved to the THHK school, where he taught for five more years until 1939, when his disagreement with the school board caused him to leave the school to establish *Huazhong*.[7]

Li Chun-ming's teaching career and his travels in the immediate environs of Singapore and Java extended beyond the boundaries of the Dutch East Indies, spanning the South China and Java Seas. Singapore and Batavia were, significantly, cities that brought him twice to the region. Li would ultimately settle down more permanently in Batavia. Li's travels, settlement and resettlement in different places around the region were *not* exceptional. Instead, they characterized a way of work and life for many trained professional educators who had served in the numerous Chinese-medium schools all over Java and the Dutch East Indies, reflecting a transborder literate community that came into being during the pre-World War Two period.

Like Li Chun-ming, Zhang Guo-ji was introduced to Chinese-medium education in the region via the "Singapore connection."[8] Zhang was first recruited to teach in Singapore in 1919. Arriving in Singapore in 1920, he taught full-time at the *Daonan* School and for several hours a week at the Chinese High

School and the *Nanyang* Girls' School. In February 1921, he returned to China when his mother passed away. It was several months later, in October 1921, that Zhang made his second trip overseas. This time, he went to Java to head the THHK school in Pekalongan. The length of Zhang's stint at Pekalongan is unclear. An anniversary volume recently published by the school states that Zhang left the school to join the Batavian THHK but does not specify the date of his departure.[9] Another biographical account claims, however, that Zhang Guo-ji had returned first to China in 1927 before going to Batavia in March 1928 to head the *Guangren* School for four years. Zhang's stint at *Guangren* School is confirmed by testimony from a teacher, Zhou Bao-heng, who was teaching at *Guangren* School between 1929 and 1932.[10] By 1932, Zhang Guo-ji, like Li Chun-ming, was employed at the Batavian THHK and would teach at the school until 1939. Finally, Li Chun-ming was responsible for recommending Li Shan-ji, the third founder of *Huazhong* to teach at the Batavian THHK in the 1930s. Li Shan-ji came from a poor family and only managed to graduate from *Jinling* University in Nanjing with the support of relatives and family friends. He taught for nine years in China before making his way to the THHK school in Batavia in 1935.

This way of work and life for teachers who taught in Chinese-medium schools in the Dutch East Indies was not confined to those who were born in China. To the extent that educators born in Southeast Asia participated in these school-based networks, first as students before becoming trained educators themselves, their experiences mirrored colleagues who were China-born and they, too, criss-crossed the physical and political divides of territories and colonial empires. The biographical details of the fourth *Huazhong* founder, Chen Zhang-ji, demonstrate such a schooling and career experience.

Chen Zhang-ji was born into a poor farming family in Singkawang in West Kalimantan in 1907. Chen received his elementary education in his birthplace in Singkawang. When he was 13, he left Singkawang to study at the *Daonan* School in Singapore. Two years later, at about age 15, he left Singapore with a group of teachers and students to study in Beijing. In Beijing, he studied in the middle school attached to the Beijing Normal University. He would later enroll in Beijing University and Jinan University in Shanghai. Chen Zhang-ji returned to Kalimantan in 1930 when his father fell ill. In the same year, his father passed away, leaving the family in financial straits. Chen could not return to China to complete his studies. So, in June 1930, he took up a teaching position at a Chinese-medium school in Pontianak in West Kalimantan and moved subsequently to the Batavian THHK. Chen continued teaching at this school until 1939, when he left with Li Chun-ming, Zhang Guo-ji and Li Shan-ji to found *Huazhong*.[11]

Situ Zan was a highly respected teacher in Batavia. Like Chen Zhang-ji, he received his elementary education in Southeast Asia and moved to China to pursue higher education. In the 1930s, Situ Zan was already a very well-known figure in Batavia. In education, he was one of principal founders of the Batavia Middle School established in 1946. He was also one of the key founders of a teachers' union set up to protect teachers serving in Jakarta's Chinese-medium schools. During the post-World War Two period, he rose to special prominence

as the undisputed leader of the pro-PRC group within the Chinese community in Jakarta. He was an active leader in the semi-official body set up by the Chinese community in Batavia to mediate between the community and the PRC government. This semi-official body was known as "*Yajiada Zhonghua Qiaotuan Zonghui*" (Eng.: the Overseas Chinese Association in Jakarta) or simply the "Overseas Chinese Association" (Mand.: *Qiaozong*). The *Qiaozong* had evolved from an organization set up initially by the local Jakartan Chinese community to push for the establishment of diplomatic relations between the newly installed Communist regime in the PRC and Indonesia after the former came into being in 1949. In the 1950s and 1960s, *Qiaozong* functioned as an umbrella organization for groups and associations created by those Chinese in Jakarta who acknowledged themselves as PRC citizens (Suryadinata 1995: 158–59). Situ Zan rose to become the chairperson of *Qiaozong* in 1955, a position he held until he was deported by the Indonesian government in 1960.

Situ Zan was born in 1900 into a poor family in Kaiping Prefecture in Guangdong province, an area known for sending migrants to this part of the world. His father passed away when he was eight years old and the family sank deeper into poverty. At 11 years old, having had three years of education in the traditional village school, he left his mother and siblings to join an uncle then based near Kuala Lumpur in British Malaya. Situ was sent to a nearby Chinese-medium school and given extra English lessons in the evening. When Situ graduated from elementary school at the relatively late age of 15, he left Malaya to further his studies in Shanghai, first at the Shanghai Public School and later at the *Pudong* Middle School. Two years later, he gained admission to a teachers' training course at the *Jinan* School in Nanjing. There, he caught the attention of Huang Yanpei, who had been responsible for recruiting Li Chun-ming and teachers for the Chinese High School in Singapore. When Situ Zan graduated in 1919, Huang Yanpei recommended that he teach at the THHK school in Muntilan in Java. This move to Java heralded Situ Zan's life-long involvement with Chinese-medium education in the Dutch East Indies.

The trained and experienced educators I have discussed so far were among those who traveled most extensively around the region and between Southeast Asia and China during the pre-war period. Situ Zan uprooted himself constantly and moved very frequently, sometimes staying with a school for only several months. By all accounts, the intensity of his movement, settlement and resettlement in different places in the region was extraordinary. Between 1919 and 1935, the restless Situ Zan, vacillating between a career in teaching and journalism, had settled and resettled in Palembang in Sumatra three times, in Muntilan twice, in Batavia four times and in Koetoardjo in Java as well as in Singapore. From 1919 until 1921, he taught in Muntilan. In 1921, he left to teach at the *Zhonghua* School in Palembang in Sumatra. He then returned to Java, this time to teach at the Batavian THHK school in January 1922. He taught there for only four months before moving back to Palembang. In Palembang in 1923, he established a Chinese-medium school called the *Jugang Huaqiao* School (Eng.: Palembang Overseas Chinese School). There, Situ met his wife, Liu Jin-duan, a fellow teacher at the school.

Situ Zan headed the *Jugang Huaqiao* School until the end of 1925, when he resigned to return to China to visit his family and relatives. He returned to Java, once again teaching at the Batavian THHK school in April 1926, but did not stay for more than a year. In January 1927, he was appointed an "Inspector of Schools" by the revived Chinese education board, that is, the "*Hak Boe*" which the Chinese community had set up to regulate standards of Chinese-medium schools in Java. Because the *Hak Boe* was not effective, Situ Zan resigned after serving for one year, returning to Batavia this time to take up an editorial position at the Chinese-language newspaper *Gongshang Ribao* (Eng.: Commercial Daily). He stayed for another year with the newspaper but returned to teaching in Palembang in July 1929 at the *Aiqun* School. In March 1932, Situ was tempted to dabble again in journalism. He left Palembang to work for the *Huaqiao Zhoubao* (Eng.: Overseas Chinese Weekly) in Singapore. The weekly, however, lasted for only six months. Situ Zan returned to Batavia to take up another editorial position, which lasted another seven months before returning to teaching in Muntilan in May 1933. He only settled down in Batavia from 1935 onwards, when he was invited by the Cantonese clan association to head the *Guangren* School. After more than a decade of ceaseless traveling around the region, Situ Zan finally based himself in Batavia.[12]

Encountering colonialism: teaching Nanyang regionalism in the Dutch East Indies

The absence of appropriate textbooks and teaching materials suitable for Chinese-medium schools existing outside China was a chronic problem for educators. This was a problem that successive Chinese governments on the mainland tried but were unable to resolve. In the meantime, reflecting the local and "grassroots" character of Chinese-medium education in the Indies, textbooks and teaching materials – particularly in the earliest years when Chinese-medium schools were first started in the Indies – were also written and produced by itinerant educators with some experience teaching in the Indies or elsewhere in the region. Reacting to the chronic need for appropriate teaching materials on the ground, they wrote textbooks and produced teaching materials on their own initiative. Textbooks produced in this way were almost always labeled "textbooks suitable for children (for overseas Chinese schools) *in the Nanyang*" (see Table 2.1). The words "in the Nanyang" demonstrated that educators possessed a distinct geographical consciousness and recognized that the region they were living and working in was an integrated area called "the Nanyang."

Academic literature on Chinese communities in Southeast Asia has commented at great length on the relationship between the Nanyang Chinese and their expressions of Chinese nationalism in a transnational context. Some of these overtly nationalistic sentiments were clearly reproduced in textbooks written for Nanyang Chinese children, including, as we shall see, the geography textbooks produced by Situ Zan and Huang Su-feng. Historian Wang Gung-wu has usefully historicized the emergence of the "overseas Chinese" (Mand.: *huaqiao*) identity from the 1900s onwards (Wang 1992). Over the

years, Wang has consistently emphasized the need to situate this identity as an ideological product yoked to the dissemination of Chinese nationalism outside continental China. Of all the overseas Chinese communities dispersed globally, those in the Nanyang were the most exemplary and best studied. Wang notes that from the early decades of the twentieth century onwards, the Nanyang became a staging ground for the dissemination of Chinese nationalism but he is emphatic that a homogeneous overseas Chinese Nanyang community did not materialize. According to Wang, Nanyang Chinese nationalism did not originate organically from Chinese communities long settled in the region but was a "taught nationalism" disseminated by nationalists coming from China. Given the real differences, including differences in political attitudes toward Chinese nationalism in the numerous Chinese communities in the region, the projection of a unified Nanyang Chinese community was a chimera. Nanyang Chinese nationalism was constantly foiled or, as Wang puts it, "limited" by local factors, most significantly, by parallel nationalist projects developed by groups indigenous to Southeast Asia. These considerations have led Wang to argue for including Nanyang Chinese nationalism as one chapter in Southeast Asian history (Wang 1992). More recently, Anthony Reid has taken up Wang's call by including a chapter on the Chinese in his book on nationalism in Southeast Asia (Reid 2010). Reid's argument recognizes not that Nanyang Chinese nationalism was inhibited by other Southeast Asian nationalisms but rather that there was a "crucial relationship" (Reid 2010: 49) between the Chinese and Southeast Asian nationalisms. Reid argues that the Chinese had developed particularly "robust forms of supra-local community" and had established "commercial and information networks essential to the birth of many nationalisms" in Southeast Asia (Reid 2010: 49).

Moving along a similar vein of critique but pushing inquiry in a different direction from Wang, Prasenjit Duara and Ien Ang raise the larger issue of commensurability of transnational phenomena and practices with the territorial nation-state. Duara comments that:

> [It] was precisely the discourses of race and culture – pressed (and fitted) into the service of the territorial nation but always exceeding it – that provided the grounds for (Chinese) nationalists to appeal to these overseas communities. The nationalists made their appeals to the Chinese overseas on grounds of older, pre-national or *non-territorial* discourses of community such as Confucian culturalism or Han racism.
>
> (Duara 1997: 1043, my emphasis)

These were "recast as historical narratives that stressed rootedness and belonging to the *territorial* nation-state" (Duara 1997: 1043, my emphasis). Duara's point is that in its quest for legitimization, it is never quite adequate for nationalists to rely solely on promoting loyalty to the sovereign nation-state. Instead, the appropriation of transnational narratives was absolutely crucial to projecting the cohesiveness of the territorial nation-state. In his discussion, Duara uses as a case in point the historical tracts on the Nanyang Chinese written by prominent Chinese

nationalists to demonstrate how they sought to "nationalize transnationals" in the name of the nation-state (Duara 1997: 1049). Similarly, Ien Ang has interrogated both the ethnic marker "Chinese" as well as the concept of "diaspora." She contests the critical potential of the diaspora concept, pointing out that although diasporas exceed the territorial boundaries of the nation-side, this fact of geographical dispersal alone does not subvert the notion of the territorialized nation-state. Instead diasporas secure sameness through "an imagined community which is *de-territorialized* but which is symbolically bounded nevertheless" (Ang 2001: 83, my emphasis).

Geography textbooks about the Nanyang such as those examined in this chapter are excellent material for investigating the dissemination of "taught" Chinese nationalism in Southeast Asia, which helps to further expand the discussion on territoriality, transnationalism and the nation-state. A larger overseas Chinese nationalist imaginary did not necessarily take *de-territorialized* or abstract form. Even as meta-narratives of race and culture were deployed to "nationalize transnationals," an important revelation the textbooks offer is the extent to which educators felt compelled to give the Nanyang exact geographical definition. Their nationalistic narratives promoting the sovereign Chinese nation-state did not treat the Nanyang as an abstract or symbolic entity as they sought to ground the Nanyang in objective reality. They took great effort to materialize the Nanyang in a concrete, quotidian and accurate way, illustrating the extent to which the myth of transnational Chinese belonging in this instance was by no means de-territorialized but took clear territorial form. To understand this appeal of a "territorialized Nanyang," we need to turn to the authority and desirability of colonial geographical knowledge.

Situ Zan wrote an early geography book entitled *Geography of the Dutch-Led Nanyang East Indies* (Mand.: *Nanyang Heling Dongyindu Dili*). This was published around 1922 in the first few years when he began his teaching career in Java and Sumatra. In 1931, Situ Zan rewrote this geography book as a textbook specifically for teaching Nanyang geography to school students. This textbook was entitled *Textbook for the Geography of the Nanyang Dutch East Indies* (Mand.: *Nanyang Heyin Dili Keben*, henceforth the "GNDEI") and was published in Batavia. In the GNDEI, Situ Zan had designed a main narrator – a ten-year-old Chinese boy named "Guang-ming" (meaning "Brightness" or "Light") who lives with his family in Batavia, where he is enrolled in a local Chinese school. The textbook begins with Guang-ming in conversation with his father. Guang-ming is curious about his living environment:

> "What is this place that we are living in? Why is it that people outside are speaking Malay and other languages while in school we are being taught the national language [i.e. Mandarin Chinese]?"
>
> His father replies, "We are living in the colony of the Dutch government. It is called the Dutch-led East Indies Archipelago or "Nederlandsch Oost Indie." It is divided into four main parts: (1) Java, Sumatra, Borneo and Celebes; (2) the Moluccas; (3) the Lesser Sunda Islands; and (4) a part of New Guinea."[13]

To instruct his son further, Guang-ming's father decides to take him on a tour of the Dutch East Indies. The textbook was thus designed so that as Guang-ming and his father travel around the Indies, young children learn key geographical facts about the towns and places they visit. This travelogue-type format was supposed to make geographical facts such as the names of places, political and administrative structure, population figures and demography, main commercial products and industries of places more palatable to young minds.

In Situ Zan's geography textbook, lessons were restructured such that students would be able to trace the formal territorial boundaries of the Dutch imperial realm centered undoubtedly at Batavia. Its travelogue-type presentation viewed the geography of empire from the point of view of "home" in Batavia and through the eyes of a young Chinese boy. Guang-ming's circumambulation of the Dutch imperial realm begins in Batavia in West Java. Father and son subsequently move eastwards to Bogor, Bandung, Semarang, Yogyakarta, Solo, Surabaya and Malang in East Java and further east outside of Java to the islands of Bali, Lombok and Timor. They then travel northwards to the Celebes (now Sulawesi), visiting Makassar, and Menando and Gorontalo in North Celebes. At Gorontalo, Guang-ming catches a glimpse of the Moluccas and the island of New Guinea, which Situ Zan described briefly but did not arrange for father and son to visit. From the Celebes, Guang-ming travels by boat to Samarinda, Banjarmasin and Pontianak on Borneo Island (now Kalimantan), then Bangka and Belitung islands before crossing over to Palembang and Jambi on the east coast of Sumatra. Guang-ming's trip around the imperial realm of the Dutch East Indies was side-tracked briefly to Singapore when father and son take a boat from Jambi to Singapore to get to Bengkalis Island, off Sumatra. Situ Zan did not describe Singapore, well known as an important base for Nanyang Chinese, in the textbook. After Guang-ming and his father cross the Straits of Malacca from Singapore, they land in Bengkalis. From Bengkalis, they move on to Bagan Api-Api, Medan, Siantar, Aceh and then southwards along the west coast of Sumatra to Padang and Lampung on the southern end of Sumatra, finally arriving "home" in Batavia. Following the footsteps of little Guang-ming, students trace the geographical boundaries of the Nanyang as the colonial boundary of the Dutch East Indies. Situ Zan's textbook was so exact about instructing students on "Dutch-led Nanyang," he omitted to describe Singapore, which was governed, of course by the British.

Given the prolific nature of Huang Su-feng's works in the late 1930s (see Table 2.1), it seems unthinkable that he had become a forgettable figure in the history of Chinese textbook publication on the Nanyang. Huang Su-feng came from Tongshan County in Jiangsu Province. Details of his educational background are not known but Huang apparently came from the same hometown as Liu Hong-mo,[14] a popular teacher at the Batavian THHK school and a graduate of the National Central University in Nanjing. Huang Su-feng first taught at the THHK school in Tegal in Java. In 1929, at the request of an old friend, a teacher then working at Tegal's THHK school, Huang left for Tegal to help establish a middle school course. It is highly probable that Huang could have been Liu Hong-mo's classmate or schoolmate at the National Central University in Nanjing.

Demonstrating how transborder ties conjoining schools and teachers stretched beyond traditional clan connections, the THHK school at Tegal was one school where university graduates from Nanjing congregated. When Huang made the trip to Tegal in 1929 from Nanjing, it was Liu who sent him off. About a year later in 1930 or 1931, Liu Hong-mo joined Huang Su-feng at Tegal. However, Huang did not live in Tegal for long. In 1933, he made his way back to China, where his publishing activities continued unabated. Huang was especially prolific in the late 1930s and had close contacts with the Commercial Press in Shanghai, which was his main publisher. In 1939, Huang Su-feng was still living in Shanghai, recovering from a bout of illness.

It was in Tegal that Huang Su-feng felt the need to compile additional materials on the Nanyang for his students. Two of his earliest textbooks were compiled and edited from notes that he had prepared for classroom teaching, that is, *Kexue De Nanyang* (Eng.: A Scientific Representation of the Nanyang, henceforth SRN) and *Nantian Le Yuan* (Eng.: Paradise under the Southern Skies), published in 1931 and 1933 respectively. The two textbooks were similar. They covered a wide range of topics and like Situ Zan's textbook, emphasized the transmission of accurate empirical facts and data. Huang packed his textbooks with dates and factual information about the physical environment including geographical location, climate, topographical features, agriculture, flora, natural history and anthropological facts about racial typologies, dress, food, religion, housing and wedding and funeral rituals of different "native groups." Huang Su-feng was even more obsessed than Situ Zan with the accuracy of defining exactly the geographical boundaries of the Nanyang. His textbooks were as explicit, if not more so, as Situ Zan's on the need to order the Nanyang to reflect and conform

Table 2.1 List of textbooks written by Huang Su-feng in the 1930s

A Scientific Representation of Nanyang [SRN]
Paradise under Southern Skies
New National History Textbook for Junior Middle Schools in the Nanyang (4 vols)
Seventeenth-Century Tales of Sea Voyages in the Nanyang Islands
Lovely Nanyang: A Book Written for Children
Textbook for Botany for Junior Primary Schools in the Nanyang
Textbook for National Language for Junior Middle Schools in the Nanyang (6 vols)
Textbook for Hygiene for Upper Primary Schools in the Nanyang (4 vols
Guidebook for Teaching Hygiene for Upper Primary Schools in the Nanyang (4 vols)
Textbook for Natural Science for Upper Primary Schools in the Nanyang (4 vols)
Guidebook for Teaching Natural Science for Upper Primary Schools in the Nanyang (4 vols)
Guidebook for Teaching General Knowledge for Lower Primary Schools in the Nanyang (4 to 8 vols)
New Textbook for Civics for Junior Middle Schools in the Nanyang (2 vols)

Note

I have translated these titles from Chinese. This list is taken from an advertisement published in another history textbook produced by Huang Su-feng. Huang Su-feng (ed.) *Zuixin Nanyang Chuzhong Benguo Lishi* [New National History Textbook for Junior Middle Schools in the Nanyang] (Batavia: Kaiming Bookstore, 1939).

to the boundaries of empire. For instance, the very first chapter of the SRN opened with a discussion of mapping the geography of the Nanyang accurately. Huang Su-feng located the Nanyang as lying "between the continents of Asia and Australia" and "between longitude 95 degrees east to 141 degrees and latitude 11 degrees south to 6 degrees north, most of which falls within the territorial boundary of the Dutch East Indies."[15] To make sure that his textbook was adequate to the demands of exact science, Huang provided a list of alternative names in different languages which were apparently equivalent to the Chinese term for the Nanyang, as if to prove that these translations of Nanyang demonstrated its objective geographical reality:

> Dutch language: Nederlandsch Oost Indie or Insulinde; native people: Indonesia or Nousantara (*sic*); English language: Malay Archipelago or Netherlands East Indies; German language: die Malayischen Archipel or Niederlandisch Ost Indien; French language: l'Archipel Asiatique or les Indes Neerlandaises.

To the Chinese, Huang wrote, the geographical limits of the Nanyang could be defined broadly or narrowly. "The broad definition would include British Malaya, the Philippines, Dutch East Indies, Siam, Myanmar and Vietnam. The narrow definition would include only the Philippines, Malay Peninsula and the Dutch East Indies." Reflecting his familiarity with an interest in the Dutch East Indies, Huang Su-feng adopted only the narrow definition in his textbooks. He then illustrated this geographical mapping of the Nanyang structurally in terms of island groups which he labeled "the Nanyang Islands" and which he translated into English as "the Malay Archipelago."

The Nanyang that emerges from the textbooks written by Situ Zan and Huang Su-feng is emphatically *not* the Nanyang of classical Chinese geographical texts (see Leonard 1984 for a discussion of Nanyang in classical Chinese texts). What they have done is to map the Nanyang by submitting to colonial boundaries and by adopting the conventions of colonial geographical knowledge and practice. Huang, in particular, had described candidly the desirability of colonial knowledge. In his Preface to the SRN, he explained that he was motivated to publish the textbook for two reasons. Turning against a long history of Chinese knowledge on this region, Huang claimed that he was appalled by the ignorance of people in China about the Nanyang. Most, he wrote, regarded the Nanyang as barren land. Second, Huang noted that most writings in Chinese on the Nanyang comprised travel accounts composed on the spur of the moment without real scientific observation and investigation. His collection of essays, on the other hand, reported factual and empirically accurate information, hence the title of his book, the SRN. Huang was so in awe of the expansive nature of colonial knowledge that he wrote excitedly about his discovery in Java of the volumes amounting to tens of thousands in the Dutch, German, English or French languages about scientific investigations on the Nanyang. Huang was profoundly influenced by Alfred Wallace, whom he admired greatly, so much so that his friends named him "China's

Alfred Wallace." His textbooks contained extensive translations of Alfred Wallace's *The Malay Archipelago*. In the SRN, for example, chapter 5 consisted entirely of his translation of Wallace's introductory comments in *The Malay Archipelago* with a special emphasis on the islands between the Asian and Australian continents. Other than Wallace, the SRN also contained extensive citations of Stamford Raffles' *History of Java* as well as statistics and data released by the Dutch colonial government. The Nanyang in these textbooks was produced from a colonial encounter, specifically Situ Zan's and Huang Su-feng's encounter with the practices and edifice of colonial geography when they were working, living and traveling in the region.

Respectful and even admiring of the authority of empire and colonial knowledge, Situ Zan and Huang Su-feng did not simply reorder the Nanyang by replicating colonial knowledge completely in their textbooks. Their geography textbooks featured seemingly empirical geographical facts and trivia on the Nanyang in combination with a historical narrative of Chinese settlement in the region to create an account of how the Chinese had long been settled in the region and had opened up the Nanyang peacefully through sheer grit and hard work. In Situ Zan's textbook, it was suggested that the presence of Chinese communities throughout the Indies enabled Guang-ming and his father to travel seamlessly throughout the Dutch imperial realm. The smoothness of their journeys was, as Guang-ming's father narrates, undergirded by a long history of Chinese migration to and settlement in the Indies, where the Chinese were welcomed because they had helped to develop the region:

> Guang-ming's travels had taken him all over the port-cities of the Dutch East Indies. Everywhere he went, there were overseas Chinese. In factories, mines, companies and shops there were many fellow overseas Chinese which made for a lively scene. And they had lived in hotels managed by overseas Chinese where they ate the same foods as they would at home. This deepened Guang-ming's interest.
>
> His father tells him, "Our fellow overseas Chinese are hardworking, frugal, and trustworthy people. So they are able to earn a living on their own and strive for the better. Look, in any big or small town and even in the villages, there are overseas Chinese working or managing a business and they are welcomed. …
>
> The history of our ancestors' arrival in the south dates from before the Han/Tang dynasties. Until now, we still call ourselves "Tang-people." When they first came, steamships had not been invented. They came in sailing boats and had to fight the torrential waves of the seas. They arrived with great hardship and difficulty. When they finally reached their destination, they had to interact with the barbaric native peoples, or open up new lands on their own for survival. That was an extremely arduous time.

Huang Su-feng's geography textbooks contained a similar, if not near-identical account of how the peaceful and hardworking Chinese had settled in and opened up the Nanyang for long periods of time. He wrote:

> Overseas Chinese in the Nanyang live under the domination of an alien race and cannot depend on the assistance of their nation. Yet they are able to use their own strength to struggle and fight. Much of Nanyang's economy is in the hands of the Chinese. This causes one to feel that without the Chinese, the Nanyang of the old days would not have been opened up and the Nanyang of the future will not be sustainable.

Narratives like these have certainly attracted scholarly criticisms and commentaries – such as those originating from Wang, Duara and Ang – for displaying narrow Sinocentric sentiments. Wang, in particular, notes that in the 1920s, when the Guomindang consolidated its power on the mainland, there was "a flood of books about the *hua-ch'iao* (equivalent to *huaqiao*) and the Nanyang" (Wang 1981: 8). According to Wang, these books feature a particular type of "Chinese colonial history" which argues that the Chinese had helped to open up and develop the Nanyang peacefully. What is significant was the use of the Chinese term for "colonization," that is, "*zhimin*," instead of "migration," that is, "*yimin*," to describe this process. Chinese "colonization" of the Nanyang was portrayed in these books as different from Western colonization but was seen as equally "legitimate, justified and a matter of national pride and, therefore, *hua-ch'iao* should receive both official and public support" (Wang 1981). Wang usefully traces this specific genre of Chinese history writing to Liang Qichao's works on the biographies of Chinese colonists in Southeast Asia, including the likes of Yap Ah Loy in Malaysia, which were first published in 1905. Wang also points to several factors influencing a positive re-evaluation of the concept of "colonization," which was central to this genre of historical writing. While he discusses the rise of Chinese nationalism, politicization of *huaqiao* identity and greater awareness of Chinese intellectuals of the difference between official Western support for colonial expansion and official Chinese condemnation of settlement overseas as important background factors influencing Chinese colonial history, he specifically attributes "open admiration" of Western imperialism and colonial expansion in China to Japanese influences, especially after China was defeated by Japan in 1895 and Chinese reformists began to turn in greater numbers to Japanese writings on the West (Wang 1981: 5). Situ Zan's and Huang Su-feng's Sinocentric accounts of Chinese settlement in the Nanyang belong, therefore, to this genre of Chinese colonial history.

The genre of Chinese colonial history merits closer examination if only to help us discern how an idea of colonization was used to describe Chinese settlement in the Nanyang. As Wang notes, the deliberate use of "colonization" by Chinese writers, which was never precisely defined against "migration," indicates a shift from outright condemnation toward positive affirmation and even desirability of Western imperialism and colonial expansion. However, in setting up a false competition for influence using the idiom of colonization, Chinese writers like Situ and Huang recruited the idea to frame the presence of the Chinese in the Nanyang as offering a counter and allegedly more powerful and effective model of colonization to European colonization of Southeast Asia. In these narratives, European colonizers were positioned as illegitimate outsiders, just as the Dutch

had positioned the Chinese as "Foreign Orientals" in the Indies and encouraged negative images of the Chinese. The Sinocentric account of the Nanyang in the textbooks is an account of Chinese settlement and indeed of Chinese localization in the region, one that acts as oblique critique of the colonizers' hostile conquest of Southeast Asia. In contrast to European power and methods, the textbooks claimed that the Chinese had proven their ability to develop the Nanyang peacefully, which testified ultimately to the superiority of the Chinese nation. Huang wrote:

> It is not that the citizens of China do not know sea-faring. In history, no matter which period, the ability of the Chinese people at sea would not pale in comparison with the Europeans … But China, as a nation-state, is built on the mainland, hence state policy is not oriented toward developments at sea which would have to depend on the strength of the national spirit and independent pioneering. This has been the main reason why during the recent period China's political power in the Nanyang cannot match that of the Europeans. Yet, in actual fact, the achievements of pioneering by the [Chinese] nation have exceeded those of the Europeans. One look at the current situation in the Nanyang would reveal this.

Projection of such Sinocentric sentiments does not arise from nationalistic sentiments alone but must also be understood from within the Chinese encounter with colonialism in Southeast Asia. The nationalistic narratives taught in these textbooks attempted to counter prevailing colonial beliefs on the alienness of the Chinese in Southeast Asia, dissect the fundamentals of colonial domination and educate Chinese communities settled in the region on the immanent qualities of the Chinese nation by teaching the Nanyang as *accurately* and as *scientifically* as possible. When Situ Zan and Huang Su-feng traveled through Southeast Asia in their capacity as professional educators, their textbooks reveal how much they grappled with the desirability and authority of colonial territory and knowledge.

Conclusion

This chapter draws on the lives and works of ordinary educators to demonstrate how nationalistic attachments to the Nanyang were conceived and disseminated in the Dutch East Indies during the pre-World War Two period. As Duara observes with reference to China, nationalistic narratives often find the geo-body of the nation-state itself inadequate for purposes of authenticating the nation. Mobility in the immediate environs of the Dutch East Indies led Chinese teachers like Situ Zan and Huang Su-feng to use the Nanyang to generate an object of identification for Chinese communities settled in the Indies. Yet, the Nanyang diasporic imaginary was not simply a predictable product of Chinese nationalism alone. This chapter argues that the colonial context within which itinerant teachers operated shaped the way they produced knowledge about the Nanyang. In the textbooks examined in this chapter, the Nanyang did not signify an "ungrounded empire"

(Ong and Nonini 1997) of overseas Chinese but constituted a concrete territorial space that could be scientifically delimited and backed by the authority of colonial knowledge. At the same time, textbook writers also attempted to write against colonial knowledge by portraying Chinese presence in the Nanyang as offering a counter-model to European colonization of the region. Textbook production by itinerant Chinese educators based in the Dutch East Indies should therefore be analyzed from the point of view of a regional community that felt the impact of European colonization in Southeast Asia.

Acknowledgments

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Notes

1 See my detailed critique of this issue in Sai (2010).
2 This is in contrast to the development of nationalism under semi-colonial conditions in mainland China. For a discussion of what defines China's semi-colonialism, see Shih (2001).
3 My discussion of Chinese schools in Singapore owes much to Wee's well-researched thesis. Wee is writing against China-centered accounts of the development of Chinese-language education in Singapore. Such perspectives regard developments in Chinese education in Singapore either as the "spill-over" effects of political developments in mainland China or as a function of policies instituted by the British colonial government in Singapore. Wee focuses instead on "local variables," arguing that the development of Chinese education was tied to socio-economic changes experienced by the different Chinese communities in Singapore. See also Wee (2003). Wee's account restores agency to local players and challenges the idea that change was unidirectional. However, it does not offer adequate critique of the influence–effect model underpinning the geography of center and periphery. This account of "the local" supplements rather than dislodges the center.
4 During the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, Chinese-medium schools in Southeast Asia tended to teach literacy in the Chinese script through the particular Chinese dialect popularly used by the resident Chinese community rather than Mandarin Chinese. The bilingual English–Chinese model does not always refer to a bilingual English–*Mandarin* Chinese model. The bilingual model described here refers to instruction in and on English as well as teaching literacy in Chinese through the use of not only Mandarin Chinese but also the different Chinese dialects as languages of instruction.
5 The more traditional term *Xuetang* was later changed to *Xuexiao* after the Chinese Revolution in 1911.
6 Huang was a respected educationist in China and was then vice-president of the Jiangsu Educational Society. He belonged to what Paul Bailey describes as an "educational lobby" that had been active during the early years of the Chinese Republic. These lobbyists came mainly from a gentry background (see Bailey 1990).
7 This account draws from *Yinni Yajiada Zhonghua Zhongxue Chuangban 55 Zhounian Jinian Te Kan, 1939–1994* [Special Commemorative Volume Celebrating Jakarta's Zhonghua Middle School's 55th Year of Foundation, 1939–1994] (Hong Kong: Yinni Yejiada Zhonghua Zhongxue Lügang Xiaoyouhui [Alumni Organization of Jakarta's Zhonghua Middle School in Hong Kong], 1994).

8 Zhang Guo-ji was born in 1894 in a remote village in Hunan Province. He was educated first at the traditional school in the village before switching to a new-style elementary school in a nearby town in 1912. In 1915, he entered a teachers' training school set up by the Hunan provincial government. This was the same school which Mao Zedong attended. In 1918, Mao set up a *Xin Min Xue Hui* (Eng.: New Citizen Association) where Zhang became acquainted with Mao Zedong. According to one biographical account of Zhang Guo-ji, he was very much influenced by Mao and the May Fourth Movement in 1919. See Li Zhuo-hui, *Yingjie Luodishenggen Shida* [Welcoming the Era of Putting Down Roots in Indonesia] (Jakarta: Mandarin Book Store, 2003), pp. 253–69.

9 *Beijialangan Huaxiao Bainian Daqing, Peringatan Satu Abad Sekolah Tionghoa di Pekalongan* [Centennial Celebration of Pekalaongan's THHK], 6 April 2002; *Yinni Yajiada Zhonghua Zhongxue Chuangban 55 Zhounian Jinian Te Kan, 1939–1994* [Special Commemorative Volume Celebrating Jakarta's Zhonghua Middle School's 55th Year of Foundation, 1939–1994].

10 Zhou Bao-heng notes that when he arrived to teach at the *Guangren* School, even though this school was managed by the Cantonese clan group, the teaching staff consisted mainly of people from Shanghai. This included the principal, Zhang Guo-ji. Zhou also claims that many years later when the two of them had resettled in China, Zhang Guo-ji admitted to Zhou that he was already a member of the Chinese Communist Party when he came to teach at the *Guangren* School and had fled Hunan in the late 1920s to evade capture by the warlords. See Zhou Bao-heng, "*Sanshiniandai Bacheng Guangren Xuexiao*" [The *Guangren* School in 1930s Batavia], *Guoji Ribao* [The International Daily], 20 January 2003.

11 This biographical account is drawn from Chen Zhang-ji's son, whose article on his father was published in a commemorative magazine in 1994. Chen Jin-Ming, "*Wo de fuqin Chen Zhang-ji*" [My Father Chen Zhang-ji] in *Yinni Yajiada Zhonghua Zhongxue Chuangban 55 Zhounian Jinian Te Kan, 1939–1994* [Special Commemorative Volume Celebrating Jakarta's Zhonghua Middle School's 55th Year of Foundation, 1939–1994].

12 This biographical account of Situ Zan is compiled from several sources including *Jugang Huaqiao Xuexiao Xiaokan* [School Magazine of the Palembang Overseas Chinese School], 1925; Li Zhuo-hui, *Yingjie Luodishenggen Shida* [Welcoming the Era of Putting Down Roots in Indonesia], pp. 81–84; Wen, Guang-yi (ed.), *Guangdongji Huaqiao Mingren Zhuan* [Biographical Sketches of Famous Cantonese] (Guangdong, PRC: Guangdong Renmin Chubanshe, 1988), pp. 191–204; Wen Guang-yi and Huang Kun-zhang, "Aiguo Huaqiao Jiaoyujia Yu Shehui Huodongjia Situ Zan" [Situ Zan: A Patriotic Overseas Chinese Educator and Social Activist], *Dongnanya Yanjiu Ziliao* (Journal of Southeast Asian Studies Materials), 47, Feb. 1985: 1–12. I am indebted to the late Mr. Situ Meisen, son of Situ Zan, for providing me with some of these materials on his father.

13 I managed to obtain only a copy of the 1931 geography textbook. All citations are from Situ Zan, *Nanyang Heyin Dili Keben* [GNDEI] (Batavia: Drukkeij Tong Ah, 1931). All translations from Chinese are mine.

14 Liu Hong-mo was a mathematics teacher who served at Batavian THHK between 1934 and 1938.

15 All citations are from the SRN. Huang Su-feng, *Kexue De Nanyang* [SRN] (Shanghai: The Commercial Press, 1931). All translations from Chinese are mine.

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3 Chineseness, belonging and cosmopolitan subjectivities in post-Suharto independent films

Charlotte Setijadi

> "Nowadays, Chinese culture can be celebrated openly, and it's so strange because I personally can't relate to those images [of Chineseness]. People seem to have forgotten the experiences of growing up as Chinese in the New Order when you have to hide your identity and felt lost … But what I want to portray is this feeling of fear, isolation and ambiguity … This is something that everyone can relate to, not just the Chinese."
>
> (Edwin, interview, 15 June 2008)

Following the demise of the New Order in 1998, Chinese Indonesians have made a dramatic "reappearance" on Indonesian cinema screens. As a number of scholars (Heryanto 2008; Sen, 2006; Tickell 2009) have observed, if Chinese Indonesians were virtually absent from Indonesian films during the 32 years of Suharto's rule, their renewed cinematic presence in the past decade is hard to miss. Beginning with Niadi Nata's *Ca-bau-kan* (*Courtesan*) in 2002, and Riri Riza's *Gie* in 2005, there have been at least 17 films of various genres made in the recent years that centrally feature ethnic Chinese characters, or have raised issues concerning Chinese Indonesians as their subject matter. A number of these films, such as *Babi Buta Yang Ingin Terbang* (*The Blind Pig Who Wants to Fly*, 2009, to be discussed in this chapter), have gained considerable notoriety on local film circuits, both for the contentious themes that they raised and their successes in international film festivals.

Thus far, the majority of observers have been enthusiastic about these films, praising filmmakers for their boldness in addressing previously taboo issues (see Agustina 2009; Wahyudi 2009). However, Krishna Sen (2006) rightly advocates caution by arguing that while the reappearance of Chinese Indonesians in films is exciting, it does not ensure a radical shift in a politics of representation firmly embedded in Indonesia's cultural and political history. In his analysis of *Ca-bau-kan* and *Gie*, Ariel Heryanto (2008) affirms Sen's observation, arguing that despite attempts by filmmakers to challenge dominant stereotypical conceptions of Chineseness in films, they have largely failed to take the next step and interrogate the dualism of the *pribumi*/non-*pribumi* dichotomy. Although Sen and Heryanto raised an important point by questioning filmmakers' capacity or willingness to deconstruct past ethno-nationalist ideologies through their films, I

sense a general preoccupation with ethnic politics that carries the risk of limiting the ways in which the films can be read or analyzed.

To date, films about Chinese Indonesians have not been analyzed outside of the frameworks of ethnic representation and national belonging. As a result, existing scholarly research on films about Chinese Indonesians tends to focus on whether the films (and their makers) succeed or fail in challenging dominant stereotypes of ethnic Chinese. When viewed from different discursive angles, however, these films can provide scholars with useful information about the kinds of cultural practices and multiple levels of identification that exist among Chinese Indonesians. A narrow focus on representation may also prevent scholars from giving due attention to other creative or thematic aspects of the films that may reveal much about the filmmakers' subjectivities, cinematic influences and aspirations. An alternative analytical approach can help us better understand how films about Chinese Indonesians fit within the broader socio-political contexts of local and transnational cultural flows. Such an impetus is particularly timely given that younger filmmakers have begun making films that portray Chinese Indonesians not just as members of a marginalized ethnic minority, but as individuals whose lives and dreams are very much linked to contemporary trends and anxieties experienced the world over. As these newer films move away from ethno-nationalist themes, older frameworks of analysis will eventually become outdated.

The search for a theoretical paradigm that could provide an alternative to nationalist (or ethno-nationalist, in Indonesia's case) modes of film analysis is not unique to this chapter. In their respective studies of films in Malaysia and Singapore, Gaik Cheng Khoo (2007) and Sophia Harvey (2007) also looked at novel ways of understanding the new generation of independent filmmakers that in Harvey's words possesses more of a "nomadic trajectory" compared to the previous generations. Both Khoo and Harvey argue that old ways of understanding Malaysian or Singaporean films as part of a "national" cinema (cinema as a tool for nation-building) can no longer explain why younger independent filmmakers are trying to break out of ethnic and national identity molds by raising controversial and universalist themes, or by adopting Western experimental cinematography techniques in order to achieve different cinema effects.

I agree with Khoo's and Harvey's assessments, and as such, I propose the use of cosmopolitan theory as an alternative framework of analysis in the study of Chinese Indonesian films and their respective filmmakers. Here, I do not intend to suggest that ethnicity or nationalism should be treated as unproblematic. To adopt such an old ideal of cosmopolitanism (i.e. the irrelevance of ethnic/national boundaries in a worldwide community of human beings) would be ignorant, considering that these recent films do portray local ethnic Chinese politics in relative detail. The kind of cosmopolitan theory that I am proposing here is a much more "grounded" one, whereby local and national belonging is regarded as just as important as allegiance to universal ethics and humanist values, for everyone has specific yet multiple subject positions that are "shaped by particular collectivities that are socially and geographically situated" (Robbins 1998: 3).

As a theoretical approach, grounded cosmopolitanism is inspired by Kwame Anthony Appiah's (1998) concept of "rooted" cosmopolitanism, whereby cosmopolitanism is seen to begin from membership in morally and emotionally significant communities (families, ethnic groups) while espousing notions of tolerance and openness to the world and the Other(s). While Appiah has received criticism for his overemphasis on the liberal individual, there is due acknowledgment in his concept toward the idea that speaking trajectories – however worldly – can always be grounded in specific locales and circumstances. For scholars, the challenge is to recognize how grounded cosmopolitans make interpretations of culture, religion and ethnicity that exist in their immediate environments in order to transcend them and assert wider cosmopolitan values in their works. Equally important is to ask why and under what circumstances these individuals choose to assert their cosmopolitanisms.

Applying this analytical framework to the study of films about Chinese Indonesians would involve deconstructing not only the films' narrative plots or character representations, but also the motivations behind the filmmakers' cosmopolitical aspirations and the state of Indonesia's film industry as a whole. I argue that this concept of grounded cosmopolitanism can provide scholars with the necessary basis to understand shifts in how Chinese Indonesians are represented cinematically at a time when the prerogatives of ethnic and national belonging are inevitably interconnected with global events. Moreover, an analysis of the cosmopolitan dynamics of Indonesia's filmmaking scene can also help scholars understand how local filmmakers appropriate transnational cinematic trends, networks and resources in their filmic portrayals of local phenomena like Chinese Indonesian issues.

Using grounded cosmopolitan theory as a framework of analysis, I examine three recently produced indie films, namely *Babi Buta Yang Ingin Terbang* (2008; *Babi Buta* hereafter) by Edwin, *cin(T)a* (2009) by Sammaria Simanjuntak, and *CINtA* (2009) by Steven Facius Winata, as examples of a new breed of films that attempt to portray Chinese Indonesian characters outside of conventional ethno-nationalist modes of representation. Focusing on the films' central themes as well as on the filmmakers' own accounts, I contend that in these films, the filmmakers' decision to raise subject matters perceived to be more "universal" – such as religion and love in the case of *CINtA* and *cin(T)a*, and fear and anxiety in the case of *Babi Buta* – is motivated by an underlying desire to show that issues to do with Indonesian Chineseness are inter-related with other matters that transcend ethnic and national boundaries. Here, I will show that the filmmakers' cosmopolitan subjectivities as represented in the films are shaped by a number of factors to do with a growing disenchantment toward national politics and the aspiration to participate actively in global cinema scenes. By examining such underlying impulses, I argue that scholars can gain a different perspective on how contemporary Chinese Indonesian films reflect the kinds of trends and anxieties that exist at the societal level.

My analysis will begin with a brief overview of ethnic Chinese presence in pre- and post-Suharto Indonesian films. I will then look at the present generation of young, cosmopolitan independent filmmakers before proceeding to analyze

the three films in focus. I conclude by arguing the need to incorporate cosmopolitan theoretical frameworks alongside ethno-national diagnostics in order to better understand how a new generation of filmmakers conceptualizes and portrays Indonesian Chineseness in all its complexity.

Ethnic Chinese in Indonesian films

The reappearance of ethnic Chinese in post-Suharto Indonesian films is in many ways symbolic of their general return into the public domain after May 1998. Symptomatic of the "erasure" of all things Chinese because of the New Order's assimilation policy, Chinese Indonesians were largely confined behind the screens as producers, financiers and distributors of films for more than three decades. Few became actors and filmmakers, and when they did, many chose to disguise their Chineseness in order to avoid discrimination and secure more work (Sen 2006). This situation was in stark contrast to the pre-independence era, when ethnic Chinese filmmakers, investors, producers and actors played important roles in the establishment and development of Indonesia's film industry from its beginnings in the early 1900s (Biran 2009; Heider 1991; Setijadi and Barker 2010).

Throughout New Order Indonesia, in the rare instances when Chinese Indonesians were the subject matter of films, they were almost always represented within the regime's discourse of assimilation. Some examples include films such as *Mei Lan, Aku Cinta Padamu* (*Mei Lan, I Love You*, 1974) and *Putri Giok* (*Beautiful Giok*, 1980). Both films raise the issue of forbidden love between *pribumi* and ethnic Chinese youths, and in both films, the respective families (particularly the Chinese families) strongly oppose the inter-ethnic relationships until a tragedy strikes (in *Mei Lan*, the Chinese daughter dies during childbirth) that prompts all parties to rethink their stances. In both films, it is the Chinese families who "repent" by regretting their greed, exclusivity and discrimination against the *pribumi* before eventually being integrated into the *pribumi* family by marriage. Ironically however, even after joining a *pribumi* family, the Chinese characters continue – and will always continue – to be regarded as the Chinese Others, which is a narrative that is consistent with the New Order's assimilationist discourse. Such portrayals can be understood, considering that within the severely limited space for creative criticism in New Order Indonesia, there was relatively little that filmmakers could do to challenge dominant ideological discourses on race, class and the state's treatment of marginalized groups in their films. As a result, representations of Chinese Indonesians in the media became predictable, stereotyped and safe. Chinese Indonesian actors were mostly stuck playing comical Chinese characters with heavily accented Indonesian (*pelo*) or corrupt businessmen who exploit the *pribumi* workers.

At the dawn of the post-Suharto era, the general atmosphere of openness and liberalization brought excitement to those within the film industry. Following the commercial success of Rudy Soedjarwo's *Ada Apa Dengan Cinta?* (*What's With Love?*, 2000), the revival of Indonesia's film industry after decades of censorship, creative restraint and over-reliance upon American film imports provided

the impetus needed for local filmmakers to create works that demonstrate this newfound autonomy and creative energy. At a time when Chineseness can finally be spoken about openly, expectations that filmmakers must break old stereotypes and conventions in cinematic representations of Chinese Indonesians are high. Consequently, filmmakers and films that have in one way or another failed to break away from dominant racial discourses or New Order-style stereotypes are criticized for their inability to reinvent or reconstruct the ideas of Chineseness, *pribumi*-ness and nationhood.

Of all the films that have been made about Chinese Indonesians in the post-Suharto era, *Ca-bau-kan* and *Gie* are by far the most analyzed, both in the media and by scholars. *Ca-bau-kan*, a film based on the novel of the same title by Remy Sylado, tells the love story of Tan Peng Liang, an opportunistic and morally compromisable arms trader, and Tinung, a *pribumi* courtesan who becomes Tan's long-suffering mistress. *Gie*, on the other hand, is based on the diary of Soe Hok Gie, a legendary ethnic Chinese nationalist and student activist during the 1960s, whose writings were posthumously published in 1983 as *Catatan Harian Seorang Demonstran* (*The Diary of an Activist*).

In her reading of *Ca-bau-kan*, Sen's analysis is focused almost entirely on the film's portrayal of Chinese characters. In her opinion, the film continues New Order's racism by portraying the ethnic Chinese in a negative light (Sen 2006). Although still critical, Heryanto is much more sympathetic to *Ca-bau-kan*, seeing it as "a sincere, albeit awkward and only partly successful attempt to defy the decades-long stereotyping of Chinese Indonesians" (Heryanto 2008: 80). However, Heryanto is unforgiving of what he views as the film's representation of ethnicity as "something inherently and fatally biological" (Heryanto 2008: 81). The implication of this primordialist stance is that a Chinese could never escape from being what Anthony Reid (Reid and Chirot 1997) describes as "the essential outsiders" in Indonesia. Heryanto also made similar criticisms of *Gie*, particularly for the film's portrayal of Soe Hok Gie's zealous nationalism and anti-communist stance, reinforcing the notion that, in order to be "good Indonesians," Chinese Indonesians need to continually "prove" their ideological cleanliness and allegiance to the Indonesian nation.

Cosmopolitan subjectivities and post-Suharto independent filmmaking

Since the production of both *Ca-bau-kan* and *Gie*, films about Chinese Indonesians have progressed and become much more varied in terms of cinematic style and narrative themes. In the past few years, young, indie filmmakers (Chinese and non-Chinese alike), have been producing films about Chinese Indonesians that highlight the universal commonalities that exist between ethnic Chinese, *pribumi* and human beings in general rather than focusing on the issue of national belonging. This is certainly a change from themes in older films like *Putri Giok* or even the more recent *Ca-bau-kan*. Furthermore, these filmmakers not only experiment with narratives, they also try out different cinema styles in order to conjure up different emotional reactions from the audience. For example,

both *Huang Chen Guang* (2008) by Ifa Isfansyah, and *Trip to the Wound* (2008) by Edwin tell the stories of May 1998 rape victims. However the films' narrative foci are not on the characters' ethnic identities. *Huang Chen Guang* (set in a city that could be Seoul or Hong Kong) is centered on themes of friendship and fleeting human encounters, while *Trip to the Wound* uses the analogical concept of "invisible scars" to highlight the need for human beings to have closure after traumatic events.

In my opinion, there are two sets of factors that may explain this departure from ethno-nationalist themes in recent films – societal factors and factors more explicit to the film industry. Specifically to do with the representation of ethnic Chinese, the reality is that after more than ten years of Chinese rights activism, underlying suspicions and negative preconceptions still exist between many *pribumi* and ethnic Chinese at the everyday level, causing many Chinese Indonesians to feel skeptical and desensitized toward Chinese identity politics. At the same time, as public depictions of Chineseness become increasingly oriented toward Mainland Chinese cultural traditions, many ethnic Chinese youth, particularly those who grew up in *peranakan* families, express the inability to relate to such cultural signifiers (see Hoon 2009). As a result, younger Chinese Indonesians have become disillusioned with the idea of national or cultural belonging and thus feel a high level of ambiguity in regard to their identity as "Chinese" (see Setijadi 2009).

More than a decade after the fall of Suharto, the public's initial enthusiasm toward reform has largely turned into disenchantment with what is seen as the government's inability to bring any "real" structural or ideological change. The past decade has also seen heightened degrees of religious puritanism and polarization in Indonesian society, as evident in recent cases of terrorism by Islamic hard-line groups like the *Front Pembela Islam* (Islamic Defenders' Front, or FPI). In the eyes of many, religious differences have become a greater threat to unity and harmonious coexistence than ethnic or ideological differences. In this scenario, the idea of assuming a more non-committal and cosmopolitan identity of "belonging in the world" becomes much more attractive.

Within the film industry, these societal changes are particularly manifest on the progressive and liberal independent (indie) film scene. In Indonesia, indie filmmaking generally refers to a "Do-It-Yourself" (DIY) style of film production where the entire filmmaking process, including distribution and marketing, is done without funding by a major film studio or the state (see Sharpe 2002; van Heeren 2002). The advent of digital film technologies in the past decade has meant that indie filmmaking is now much easier and cheaper than ever before, making it the perfect platform for new filmmakers to get noticed. Because indie films are not usually subject to censorship and are produced with little or no commercial gain in mind (and for a very specific local and international intellectual urban middle- to upper-class market), indie filmmakers can afford to be more *auteur* and experimental with their works. Radical and "idealist," indie filmmaking is usually pitted against "mainstream" or "commercial" filmmaking, which is heavily criticized for producing revenue-oriented, creatively stagnant and low-quality films, usually from the popular genres of horror and teen romantic comedies (see Anwar 2010; Imanjaya 2010).

While indie films do not usually fare well in the local mainstream markets, in the past decade, a number of indie films such as *Pasir Berbisik* (*Whispering Sands*, 2001), *Koper* (*The Lost Suitcase*, 2006) and *Opera Jawa* (*Requiem for Java*, 2006) have done well on the international film festivals circuit. Because the kinds of themes and cinematic styles presented in these films are often regarded as too "heavy" or complex for local cinema audiences, the production of more experimental indie films particularly relies heavily on foreign funding and international film festivals. So reliant are indie films on international support that it is a well-known fact in the local film industry that many indie films are produced specifically for submission to international film festivals. Consequently, recent indie films have become more cosmopolitan as filmmakers frame local and national issues within greater universalist-humanist themes such as racism, gender discrimination and religious polarization in order to appeal to a wider, international audience. Aesthetically, Indonesian indie filmmakers have also exhibited serious attempts to emulate a pastiche of different international cinematic influences and styles in order to add to their "worldliness" and increase their chances of being selected for the "world cinema" category at festivals. For example, *Kala* was shot in a *film-noir* style that reminds audiences of old Hitchcock thrillers, while another film, *Pertaruhan* (*At Stake*, 2009) has obvious *cinema vérité* influences.

In her study of Malaysian indie films, Khoo argues that the best way to understand the dynamics of indie filmmaking in third-world settings like Indonesia and Malaysia is to frame it within the contexts of globalization, cosmopolitanism and cosmopolitics. According to Khoo, using cosmopolitan theory to analyze independent films would reveal much about the "complex multitude of oppositions and tensions that are constantly operating beneath the surface" that postcolonial, ethno-nationalist frameworks or content analysis alone might not reveal (2007: 231). Moreover, Khoo elaborates the need to politicize indie films in order to connect their presence not only to the state, but also to how local societies are "sutured into global popular culture, capitalist consumption, media and technological networks, and the flows of human creativity, labor, thought and emotion" (2007: 231). With reference to Indonesian indie films, making such connections is only logical, especially, as Bruce Robbins explains, since we live in a globalized world, yet little has been done to "turn invisibly determining and often exploitative connections into conscious and self-critical ones, how far we remain from mastering the sorts of allegiance, ethics, and action that might go with our complex and multiple belonging" (1998: 3, quoted in Khoo 2007: 232).[1]

From this perspective, cosmopolitan subjectivities among Indonesian indie filmmakers (including the three whose works are discussed in this chapter) can be seen as motivated by several dynamics. For one, by making films with cosmopolitan themes, filmmakers get to discuss complex national issues more widely and objectively by "unrooting" and then reframing them as universal problems that are experienced the world over. From this subject position, filmmakers get to simultaneously express their grounded (ethnic, religious, national) and cosmopolitan identities, which makes sense, considering that even the most worldly indie filmmakers are usually intensely patriotic and proud of their local

allegiances.[2] At the same time, such strategies can also be seen as a form of critique of the Indonesian nation's emphasis on differences. As will be discussed later, many filmmakers who produce films about Chinese Indonesians admit to feeling tired of being pigeonholed on the basis of their ethnicities or how they represent Chineseness in their films. Cosmopolitan themes give the filmmakers a way to transcend these rigid categorizations. Lastly, political economy factors must also be taken into consideration, as these indie filmmakers actually need to have a cosmopolitan appeal in order to make it on the international films circuit and continue producing works.

It was against this backdrop that a younger generation of indie filmmakers emerged to create a new category of films about Chinese Indonesians. Directors Edwin, Sammaria Simanjuntak and Steven Facius Winata are all relative newcomers to the film industry, and they have only ever made independent film productions. Edwin and Winata are ethnic Chinese, while Simanjuntak is of the Batak tribe (*suku*) group originally from North Sumatra. Like many other indie filmmakers, these filmmakers come from relatively privileged inner-city middle-class families and grew up watching American and European art films before deciding on becoming film directors themselves. Winata and Edwin (although Edwin never graduated) went to the Jakarta Arts Institute (*Institut Kesenian Jakarta* or IKJ) film school that has produced successful filmmakers like Garin Nugroho, Mira Lesmana, Riri Riza and Nan Achnas, who are now among the prominent figures within the Indonesian film scene's cosmopolitan intellectual elites. Although all three are newcomers to the industry, Edwin in particular has received widespread acclaim for his previous short film productions *A Very Slow Breakfast* (2003) and *Kara, Anak Sebatang Pohon* (*Kara, Daughter of a Tree*, 2004).

All three filmmakers in focus wanted to make films about Chinese Indonesians because of their own experiences of either growing up as Chinese or, in Simanjuntak's case, from other people's experiences of negotiating inter-ethnic and inter-religious relationships. A common theme in their films is the desire to frame the "Chinese Problem" (*Masalah Cina*) from a universalist perspective in order to show that the experiences of being Chinese in Indonesia are actually similar to the experiences of people everywhere. While Edwin chose to explore the rather grim themes of loneliness and isolation, Simanjuntak and Winata attempted to transcend the *pribumi*/Chinese dichotomy by focusing on religious differences instead. As I will argue, each film accomplishes its aim with varying degrees of success. My interest, however, lies in how the filmmakers at least tried to portray the Chinese Indonesian experience outside of the conventional ethno-nationalist framework.

Fear, anxiety, and the Blind Pig Who Wants to Fly

Babi Buta Yang Ingin Terbang (*The Blind Pig Who Wants to Fly*, 2008) is a self-proclaimed "personal" film for Edwin. It was conceived as an idealist project, and Edwin claimed that he never expected to achieve any commercial or mainstream success. In fact, he stated that he had made the film simply for the purposes

of "intellectual masturbation" (quoted in Siahaan 2010), where the focus is on expressing his own opinions, regardless of how the audience might perceive the film. Initially started as a struggling and small production, *Babi Buta* went on to receive international acclaim at Pusan, Rotterdam, Vancouver and Manila International Film festivals. The film won the 2009 FIPRESCI (International Federation of Film Critics) award at the Rotterdam International Film Festival, and Edwin was listed as one of the featured directors at the 2010 Asian Hotshots festival in Berlin. Generally, foreign audiences and critics applaud Edwin's bravery, both in his cinematic experimentation and for bringing to the fore previously unheard stories about Chinese Indonesian lives. In Indonesia, *Babi Buta* was shown only on very limited release and at smaller screenings throughout 2009 and 2010, although the controversial film did raise Edwin's notoriety significantly.

Babi Buta tells the story of identities in flux whereby all the inter-related characters feel anxiety, uncertainty and isolation. Shot in a French *nouvelle vague* style that features abstract, non-linear scenes and timeframes, the film features the parallel lives of seven main characters set mainly in the "Chinese" area of Surabaya (around the Jembatan Merah neighborhood). There is Linda, a timid and confused young ethnic Chinese woman, who, after experiencing bullying during childhood, believes that firecrackers can ward off evil spirits. Linda's long-lost childhood friend is Cahyono, a fair-skinned (presumably Javanese) *pribumi* boy who got bullied as a child for looking like a Chinese. Linda's mother, Verawati (presumably named after Verawati Fadjrin, an actual living ethnic Chinese former national badminton champion), is a former national badminton athlete who quit badminton after an embarrassing incident where, during a match against a player from the People's Republic of China, a *pribumi* child who came to cheer for Indonesia was heard loudly asking his mother, "which one [player] is Indonesian?" Linda's father and Verawati's husband, Halim, is an ethnic Chinese dentist who has big dreams of migrating to America in order to find a better life that is free from discrimination. Since his chances of winning the American "green card" lottery are slim, Halim's next best plan is to convert to Islam, marry a *pribumi* girl and have a *pribumi* son in order to assimilate and erase his Chineseness.

Halim's *pribumi* mistress is Salma, a beautiful Muslim girl who presumably agreed to be with the much older Halim for financial security (it is unclear in the film whether Halim and Salma actually love each other). Salma's biggest dream is to win the *Planet Idol* competition (a satire on *Indonesian Idol*'s immense popularity in Indonesia) and to eventually become a celebrity.[3] Salma is very much aware of Halim's desire to marry her, so she uses this to her advantage by expressing her willingness to marry every time she wants something from Halim. One request in particular – for Halim to use his state official connections to help Salma win *Planet Idol* – eventually puts Halim in a very humiliating and compromised situation at the hands of Helmy and Yahya, two homosexual *pribumi* state officials.

Throughout the film, Edwin relies heavily on symbolisms and satire. There are frequent abstract shots of a tied-up pig struggling to break free (a symbol

of Chinese Indonesians bound by the state) juxtaposed with scenes of Linda trying to eat a firecracker and Verawati making pork wontons, to name a few. Although this filmmaking technique makes the storyline confusing at times, it is obvious from the very beginning that the film's main concern is to expose the ethnic Chinese's marginalized position in Indonesia. Within this general objective, there are a number of main themes that seem to reflect Edwin's personal passions and experiences of growing up as Chinese. One such theme is the desire to disguise one's Chinese appearance in order to fit in.

In the film, this desire for self-transformation is most obviously illustrated through Halim's botched DIY attempt to "fix" his slanted eyes by using a scalpel to create double eyelid creases. Similarly, realizing that he cannot escape being mistaken as Chinese because of his slanted eyes and fair skin, the adult Cahyono tries to look Japanese (in the film, he is depicted as wearing a Japanese baseball jersey) so that he would at least be identified as an East Asian "Other" (therefore less threatening to *pribumi*) and not as Chinese. In an interview, Edwin revealed that the scenes were inspired by his own family, where, because his sister looks Chinese, Edwin's parents often asked her to stay inside her room whenever visitors came to their house (see Rusdi 2007). Here, Halim and Cahyono are shown to be acutely conscious of how physical features like skin color and eye shape are regarded as markers of Chineseness in Indonesia. As such, both characters try to transcend ethnic categorization by altering their physical appearance, which in itself is not a uniquely Chinese Indonesian strategy to change how one's identity is perceived. However, by including the character Cahyono who is *pribumi* but looks Chinese, the film attempts to problematize the assumed link between the body and conceptions of race. An essential point here is that in *Babi Buta*, Chinese Indonesian (or perceived Chinese Indonesian, in Cahyono's case) characters are portrayed as possessing the very universal desire for self-transformation in order to solve a specifically local problem.

Also featured quite prominently in *Babi Buta* are the issues of human insecurity and manipulation. In particular, the film sheds light onto the unhealthy co-dependent relationship between Chinese Indonesians, the military and the state bureaucracy. Nowhere is this more obvious than in the sordid relationship between Halim, Helmy (representative of the state) and Yahya (representative of the military). The three have an "understanding" of mutual convenience, whereby Helmy and Yahya provide Halim with security and favors in exchange for Halim's willingness to "cooperate" with their (sexual) demands. The agreement culminates in a graphic and difficult to watch sex scene, where in order to get Helmy and Yahya's help in ensuring Salma's victory in *Planet Idol*, Halim agrees to be sodomized by Helmy while simultaneously giving oral sex to Yahya inside his dental practice. Here, the political allegory is clear: the ethnic Chinese are always "doubly screwed" by the state and the military. At the end of the film, Helmy and Yahya are shown to be buying counterfeit military uniforms at a market stall, therefore revealing the two frauds' uniform fetish and exploitation of Halim's vulnerability.

In *Babi Buta*, Edwin portrays the grim realities of Chinese Indonesian lives in quite an explicit yet subtle manner. For instance, Edwin made passing references to the May 1998 riots in scenes such as Cahyono's editing of video footage

from the riots and his subsequent use of the footage as a karaoke film backdrop to Stevie Wonder's *I Just Called to Say I Love You* (a karaoke song Cahyono and Linda gleefully sing toward the end of the film). There is also a reference toward the assimilationist name-changing policy of the late 1960s when Linda's grandfather Bernadus casually reveals to Linda over a game of billiards that his real name was Wie Gian Teik before he was forced to change it to Suwisno Wijanarto. In these scenes, traumatic events in Chinese Indonesian history are treated with casual disregard, as though the characters themselves had come to terms with these painful memories with certain degrees of mental immunity and dissociation. The symbolism here is that trauma and discrimination have become so ingrained in the Chinese Indonesian consciousness that they are regarded as normal aspects of existence. Here, Edwin clearly "grounds" major aspects of *Babi Buta*'s narratives and characters to particular issues that exist at the group, local and national levels. However, despite its local specificity, the film is at the same time ambiguous in its portrayal of places, peoples and events.

Although all the characters in *Babi Buta* are shown to be speaking Indonesian, existing in the present (or near past) and living in a large Indonesian city (the film was shot in Surabaya), the film does not explicitly tell the audience exactly where and when the story is situated, nor is the audience told very much about the characters' backgrounds. For example, apart from the scene at the beginning when Verawati's nationality is questioned while representing Indonesia at a badminton tournament, the audience is only occasionally reminded of the characters' rootedness in Indonesia whenever there is a shot of Verawati from behind, still wearing her badminton jersey with "Indonesia" written on the back. Likewise, although the film depicts Jembatan Merah, a famous Surabayan landmark near the city's Chinatown district, the city's name is never mentioned. This means that unless the audience has prior knowledge of Surabaya, they would not know where exactly the characters are meant to be based. In a similar strain, although in the film the characters are shown to be wearing clothing/uniforms that are known to be specific to Indonesia (e.g. schoolchildren wearing red and white national elementary school uniforms and Helmy wearing safari suits typical of Indonesian government bureaucrats), their actual position, status and histories are not revealed.

This ambiguity seems to be a deliberate strategy by Edwin who shot the film using a soft diffused filter effect that gave scenes a romantic, dreamy and almost nostalgic feel. The idea here is to portray the characters and themes in a timeless and abstract fashion so that even though the film focuses on Chinese Indonesians, all audiences (both local and foreign) can relate to the emotions represented in the film, regardless of their ethnicity. According to Edwin, although it is true that the film essentially tells the story of ethnic Chinese's struggle in Indonesia, also showcased in *Babi Buta* are basic human emotions experienced the world over (interview, 15 June 2008). In between graphic scenes of bullying and symbols of Chineseness in *Babi Buta* are portrayals of isolation, loneliness, alienation and anxiety. Here, a common existential longing for somewhere to belong emerges amidst the characters' fragmented lives and their many bizarre attempts to

achieve fulfillment. From Verawati's search for hope through the words of the TV evangelist who preaches that "everyone is the child of God, regardless of the color of their skin," to Linda's search for her long-lost friend Cahyono and Halim's longing for the idyllic land of America, all the characters seek legitimation and acceptance. From their own local subject positions, each character experiences desires that unite them with the rest of humanity. Edwin explains that, in particular, a universal theme that he wanted to exploit in *Babi Buta* was the concept of latent fear:

> They [all the characters] are all "born" from the longing for that sense of security ... That can happen to anybody, right? It takes form, for example, in us trying to please everybody, by doing whatever it takes ... To me, this film is about the result of chaos.
>
> (Quoted in Rusdi 2007)

Although *Babi Buta* is loosely based on Edwin's own experiences of growing up as Chinese, he attempted to accentuate the more universal-humanist aspects of the film's characters and narrative in order to transcend ethnic boundaries and show the universal face of the Chinese Indonesian "problem."

Viewed holistically, many of *Babi Buta*'s critical messages are lost to the audiences due to Edwin's heavy use of layered analogies. Perhaps nowhere else is this more evident than in Edwin's abstract and repeated use of Stevie Wonder's 1980s hit song *I Just Called to Say I Love You* in different scenes of the film. After a while, the song simply becomes repetitive and perplexing. As much as I agree with Khoo's praise of *Babi Buta* for "demonstrating the complexity of how various characters cope with their ethnic identity and straying thankfully away from the stereotypes that liberal Indonesian filmmakers use" (2010: 18), it has to be said that the film is at times baffling and drawn out. Veronika Kusumaryati, an Indonesian film critic, even went as far as labeling the film as self-indulgent and "a casual stroll through the lunatic asylum." Kusumaryati argues that although *Babi Buta* was inspired by a big idea, it is severely lacking in execution (Kusumaryati 2008). What *Babi Buta* did accomplish, however, was to realize Edwin's personal and cinematic vision of framing Chinese Indonesian issues from an unconventional and humanist angle. This in itself is a major and laudable step for Indonesian films.

"We cannot love each other because we call God by different names": CINtA, cin(T)a, and religious differences that separate

CINtA (2009), a short film by Steven Facius Winata, and *cin(T)a* (2009), a feature-length film by Sammaria Simanjuntak, share nearly identical titles. Both titles are play on the Indonesian words "*cinta*" (meaning "love") and "*cina*" (a derogatory term usually used to refer to an ethnic Chinese in an insulting manner), implying that the films are about love stories that involve ethnic Chinese characters. Both films portray the well-worn theme of inter-ethnic and inter-religious love between a young ethnic Chinese man and a young *pribumi* woman.

Developed and produced independently (and without knowledge) of each other, it was sheer coincidence that *CINtA* and *cin(T)a* were released at almost the same time in mid-2009. Like *Babi Buta*, both films (particularly *CINtA*) have done well in international film festivals, although locally, *cin(T)a* was more widely viewed because it was released on limited screenings in cinemas. I have deliberately chosen to discuss the two films simultaneously as I intend to compare the similarities and differences that exist in the seemingly identical films. As I will demonstrate, although the two filmmakers obviously had very similar ideas, the narrative angles and creative execution of the films are different, particularly in regard to how they portray Indonesian Chineseness.

Set in Bandung in the year 2000, *Cin(T)a* tells the love story of Cina and Annisa, two architectural students from very different backgrounds. Cina is an ambitious, extroverted and intelligent ethnic Chinese student from Medan in North Sumatra who harbors ambitions of some day becoming the Governor of North Sumatra. As a devout (Protestant) Christian who comes from a poor family, Cina has to work in order to supplement his stipend. Annisa, on the other hand, is a beautiful Muslim Javanese *sinetron* (Indonesian TV soap opera) actress who at first appears aloof. Annisa obviously comes from a rich family (she gets dropped off at university by a chauffeured luxury car), although she is deeply unhappy because of her mother's most recent remarriage. Cina and Annisa start their relationship when Cina begins tutoring Annisa and realizes that his earlier negative preconceptions of her were to be wrong.

In Winata's *CINtA*, the main characters of Asu and Siti live in the present-day Glodok area in North Jakarta's Chinatown district. Asu is a pork-noodle stall owner who lives with his elderly father, while Siti is the *hijab*-wearing *pribumi* (likely to be Betawi) daughter of a *Haji*. Asu and his father practice ancestor worship (most likely as part of the *Konghucu* or Confucian religion), although Asu has been secretly learning about Islamic practices such as *Shalat* (prayer) and the *Shahadat* (oath of faith to the Islamic religion). Although it is unclear exactly how long Asu and Siti have been seeing each other, Asu proposes marriage to Siti. However, both know that marriage is impossible unless Asu converts to Islam. Asu's father is furious when he learns about his son's relationship with Siti. He constantly reminds Asu that it was "those [*pribumi*] people who raped and killed your sister," indicating that Asu's sister was raped and killed during the May 1998 riots. Siti, on the other hand, is already promised for marriage to a fellow *pribumi* Muslim man.

There are some obvious parallels between the two films. For instance, anyone with a good knowledge of colloquial Indonesian would know that the main male ethnic Chinese characters in both films have very unusual names. In *CINtA*, Asu's name also means "dog" in low Javanese, while Cina is of course a derogatory term used as an insult toward ethnic Chinese, particularly during the New Order. However, despite some similarities, in terms of character portrayal, representation of Chineseness and cinematic styles, the two films took different angles. In *CINtA*, Winata went for the full *chinoiserie* when portraying Asu's house and surroundings, showing Asu and his father as living in the Chinatown district, where they have an ancestor altar in the house, complete with red lanterns and joss sticks

burning. Asu himself is dressed in "traditional" Chinese peasant dress that makes him look as though he belongs in an old *kung-fu* film. In *cin(T)a*, however, both Cina and Annisa are cosmopolitan urbanites who do not exhibit signs of adherence to any ethnic or cultural traditions. Cina inserts English words and sentences in his speech, sometimes to the extent that he appears pretentious, and is shown to have very modern and nationalistic views about multiculturalism and the world.

The similarities between *CINtA* and *cin(T)a* emerge again toward the end of the films when both couples finally realize the impossibility of their relationships. In *cin(T)a,* the moment of truth comes when multiple church bombings occur on the Christmas Eve of 2000 (the year when the Islamic *Malam Takbiran*, or the last night of fasting before *Eid* celebrations, coincided with Christmas Eve). Cina and Annisa separate, and Annisa goes ahead with an arranged marriage to a wealthy Chinese Muslim businessman. In *CINtA*, upon hearing of Siti's impending marriage, Asu promptly comes over to Siti's house, where he recites the *Shahada* three times only to be rejected by Siti's father, who tells him that "true conversion should come from the heart, not from lust." Although all the main characters exhibit sadness upon their break-ups, one of the most striking features of both *CINtA* and *cin(T)a* is the extent to which both couples are resigned to the inevitability of their doomed love. If in earlier films like *Putri Giok* and *Mei Lan, I Love You*, the forbidden lovers endured great difficulties in order to be together and convince their parents that Chinese and *pribumi* can unite (albeit in assimilation, where the idea is for the ethnic Chinese to eventually become "absorbed" into the *pribumi* family), the couples in *CINtA* and *cin(T)a* show that, unlike ethnicity, class or political ideologies, differences in faiths cannot be reconciled or compromised.[4]

A common theme that can clearly be seen in both *CINtA* and *cin(T)a* is the notion that there are some differences (in this case religion) that are greater than ethnicity or race. By the same token, there are also forces such as love – regardless of the outcome of the relationship – that can transcend physical differences and social stigma. In this regard, like *Babi Buta*, both films try to reframe local Chinese Indonesian issues by highlighting the cosmopolitan nature of their problems. In fact, the universality of the problems can only be experienced at the local and individual levels. In an interview I conducted, Winata explained why he chose to portray the inevitability of Asu and Siti's love:

> The idea of making a film actually came after watching *Ayat-Ayat Cinta* [*The Verses of Love*, 2008] where I thought to myself that in real life, converting your religion for love is not that easy, especially in the current climate. There are so many other factors you have to consider, like family, friends, society, etc. ... That is what I wanted to portray in *CINtA*, that although ethnic difference is a problem, difference in faith is more difficult to negotiate.
>
> (Interview conducted in Indonesian, 21 September 2010, author's translation)

Winata's reference to the "current climate" is important, because a convention that *CINtA* and *cin(T)a* broke away from was the popular belief (at least

in the past) that Chinese Indonesians could better assimilate if they convert to Islam and marry a *pribumi*. The films' move away from this discourse is significant, because it reflects the current atmosphere of religious polarization that is happening, not just in Indonesia but also globally. Perhaps this move is a reaction toward the past failures of ethnic Chinese assimilation through conversion, but at a time of heightened religious tensions, the filmmakers' choice to portray the characters' struggle with this matter can be seen as an attempt to portray Chinese Indonesians as part of a global issue.

Conclusion

I began this chapter with brief overview of how Chinese Indonesians have been represented in films over the years. From what started as ethnic Chinese dominance of the local film industry before independence, to erasure during the New Order and finally a "reappearance" in the post-Suharto era, Chinese Indonesian presence in Indonesian cinema has been reflective of their socio-political position in society. Here, I argued that, if earlier post-Suharto films about Chinese Indonesians such as *Ca-bau-kan* and *Gie* focused on the ethnic group's ideological position within the discourse of Indonesian nationalism, more recent films have increasingly moved away from such modes of representation. As can be seen in the three films that I discussed in this chapter, in recent years, indie films in particular have attempted to portray Chinese Indonesians outside of conventional ethno-nationalist frameworks and within more cosmopolitan representations and themes such as love, faith and fear. I suggested that this change in focus can be attributed to a number of factors to do with the atmosphere of growing disenchantment toward the ideals of the nation-state, as well as the desire to portray Chinese Indonesian issues within larger milieus of global trends and cultural flows. With specific reference to indie filmmakers, giving their films a cosmopolitan edge is also a strategic move, especially considering that the films are intended for travel abroad to international film festivals and to have global audiences.

In my analysis, I did not intend to suggest that the three films I have discussed perfectly represent Chinese Indonesians, or that they are in any way superior to previous films. On the contrary, I acknowledge that there are some serious shortcomings in terms of the films' aesthetics and portrayals of Chineseness. None of them seriously challenges the existing Chinese/*pribumi* dichotomy, and all three films treat ethnicity as a given and unproblematic biological fact. Moreover, for all three films (and this goes for Indonesian indie films in general), there is the issue of market distribution, whereby although the films are watched internationally and among local urban educated middle-upper class audiences, the films are virtually unknown to the wider, "mainstream" market. This issue alone demands further analysis of whether independent films have any real chance of affecting popular public opinions and discourses. However, to analyze these issues would be beyond the scope of this chapter.

As stated at the beginning, my interest lies in how a new generation of filmmakers portray Chinese Indonesian experiences as part of larger universal themes

that go beyond the confines of existing national discourses. The filmmakers whose works I have discussed in this chapter have attempted to do just this, albeit with varying degrees of success. They highlight an important point regarding the need to portray Chinese Indonesians not only as formerly oppressed national subjects, but also as part of a greater community of human beings with multiple belongings and affiliations. Ironically, by presenting a global cosmopolitan perspective, the filmmakers actually also shed some light on what Chineseness means for contemporary Chinese Indonesians at the local level. As the quotation at the beginning of this chapter shows, to Edwin, Chineseness has more to do with feelings of isolation and anxiety than the displays of multicultural harmony and *chinoiserie* at Chinese New Year celebrations. For Winata and Simanjuntak, Chineseness is also linked to religious identity and family loyalties. These are the kinds of complex undercurrents that are usually unheard, and would have gone unnoticed in the films if the analytical focus were placed solely on issues of representation and national belonging.

The case studies and discussions presented in this chapter highlight the need for scholars to enlarge current frameworks of analyses by coupling ethno-national diagnostics with cosmopolitan ones. Doing so does not mean that the local or national become obsolete. Rather, we are merely broadening our perspective in order to better understand what it means to be Chinese Indonesian in an interconnected and globalized world. After all, as Craig Calhoun (2003) reminds us, one can only be cosmopolitan within the specific contexts of the local and national. With regard to the films, although it is far too early to predict whether future films about Chinese Indonesians will follow in the same cosmopolitan trajectory, one can only hope that filmmakers will continue to push the boundaries of ethnic representation. This way, both local and international audiences can enjoy a richer picture of Chinese Indonesian lives.

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Notes

1 See also Craig Calhoun (2003) and Greg Delanty (2006) for more on grounded cosmopolitanism.

2 A concept that I have not explored in this chapter is "cosmopatriotism," which according to Jeroen de Kloet and Edwin Jurriëns (2008) can be understood as a form of "grounded" cosmopolitanism whereby cosmopolitan subjects are simultaneously global, yet still feel the strong need to attach themselves to particular localities. By having both global and local sentiments, cosmopatriots create alternative spaces

where they can ascribe authenticity, find new ways of speaking and assert social mobility. See also Kwame Anthony Appiah (1998) for more on the subject.

3 It is interesting that in *Babi Buta*, Edwin chose the name *Planet Idol* as a satire on *Indonesian Idol*. Edwin may have intended it as a general criticism of the culture of celebrity that exists the world over. If this is the case, then Edwin's use of the word *Planet* can also be read as a reflection of his intention to frame a local issue (i.e. Salma's desire to become an instant national celebrity) within a universal/cosmopolitan context (i.e. the international obsession with stardom).

4 A major constraint that hinders so many inter-faith couples from getting married is the fact that in Indonesia, marriage is only recognized if both parties belong to the same religion. As a result, a conversion must occur prior to the marriage in order to reconcile religious difference. This rule is in accordance with Law No. 1 of 1974 Article 2(1) concerning marriages in Indonesia, whereby "a marriage is legitimate if it has been performed according to the laws of the respective religious beliefs of the parties concerned. All couples who marry in Indonesia must declare a religion. Agnosticism and Atheism are not recognized. The Civil Registry Office (*Kantor Catatan Sipil*) can record marriages of persons of Hindu, Buddhist, Christian-Protestant and Christian-Catholic faiths. Marriage partners must have the same religion, otherwise one partner must make a written declaration of change of religion."

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4 Materializing racial formation

The social lives of confiscated Chinese properties in North Sumatra

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At the intersection of Gandhi Street and Thamrin Street in the city of Medan, journalists and guests have gathered in front of a dilapidated, two-story building at the end of a Monday morning, some taking pictures while others are chitchatting and smoking. The rusted entrance gate to the building remains shut, but the gate's size alone forces a solemn sense of proscription that is reinforced by the protruding bars guarding the windows. On this muggy August morning in 2004, I stand in front of this foreboding building, which is, for the first time, being opened to curious eyes for an hour-long press conference. The building had been the site of incarceration of political prisoners from 1966 to 1978, prisoners who endured torture and starvation while being separated from the nearby intersection and its everyday traffic by only a thin wall.[1]

Walking through the heavy gate with the crowd on that muggy morning, I find myself entering a dark, auditorium-like space. I immediately feel cold. Just as quickly, a clammy mix of moldy, moist and stale air assaults my nose. The crowd falls silent, until someone behind me starts to cough intermittently. I first survey the floor as my eyes gradually adjust to the darkness. Puddles of greasy liquid and random piles of rags and rubbish dot the floor, which is about the size of a basketball court. Upon closer examination, however, this dingy space reveals some remnants of a bygone grandeur. Occupying one end of the auditorium stands a double-tiered stairway, soiled but grand. Facing it at the other end of the auditorium is an elevated structure – a performance stage adorned on each side with several panels inscribed with *pancasila* slogans.[2] To photograph the slogans, I try climbing onto the stage, but am immediately taken aback by what I see through the cracked stage floor: a pool of water that sits below the platform and glitters in an eerie mixture of dark-purple, green and black. Pak Tom, one of the organizers who invited me to this press conference, whispers at my side: "The military filled the space beneath the stage with filthy water and made people stand in it; that's how they forced them to talk! But before 1966," he adds in the same muffled tone, "this was where we saw the best Teochiu opera performances in North Sumatra!"[3]

Known to this day as the Teochiu Huikuan (Mand.: *Chaozhou Huiguan*) among the older generations of Chinese in Medan, this building had been the clubhouse of the North Sumatran Teochiu Association, an organization for people who claim ancestral origin from Teochiu county in eastern Guangdong,

China. From 1966 through 1978, however, the North Sumatran regional military command transformed the building into a detention camp, wherein they incarcerated, interrogated and tortured political prisoners whose backgrounds ranged from communists, Chinese businessmen and student activists to Muslim demonstrators. Many perished. Thus, unlike the Teochiu Huikuan prior to 1966, which harbored a vibrant community life, the post-1966 Teochiu Huikuan functioned as a site of social as well as physical death. And the building remained to many Medanese a symbol of state terrorism long after it was converted into a military dormitory in 1978. After the dormitory was relocated, the building spent many years shuttered and unused, until the military command returned it to a Chinese Indonesian organization, the Medan Teochiu Mutual Aid Charity Foundation, in December 2003. But this rebirth of the building's Chinese identity also came to mean its ultimate destruction. Eight months after this reclamation and a few weeks after the August 2004 press conference, the new owner tore down the building and launched in earnest a construction plan that aimed to deliver a brand-new Teochiu Huikuan housed in a five-story, multi-purpose building.

This chapter illustrates the half-century-long history of property dispossession and reclamation of the ethnic Chinese community in Indonesia. As the opening section showed, the story of a building like the Teochiu Huikuan does not end with its confiscation; institutions and people continue to convert, expropriate, rename and lay claim to the building long after the initial dispossession. The contorted history of the Teochiu Huikuan is also not singular. Rather, it exemplifies the wrenching experiences shared by many Chinese communities all over Indonesia with respect to their communal properties. There were several waves of large-scale, forced dispossessions of Chinese communal properties during the decade between 1957 and 1966. In the first wave, Chinese schools labeled "pro-Taipei/Republic of China" (hereafter ROC) were shut down or "nationalized" under a series of military-administered regulations during 1957–58, and again, in North Sumatra, in a second wave in early 1965. Within only a few months, however, ill fate also befell communities and organizations labeled "pro-Beijing/People's Republic of China" (hereafter PRC). In the wake of the communist purges across Indonesia, tens of thousands of Chinese were forced to relocate and ultimately seek repatriation to China. In Spring 1966, all Chinese-language schools were officially closed, and many of the former Chinese elementary and secondary schools and other community-owned buildings were confiscated and taken over by the regional military command or by Indonesian state schools. Although the occupation was never legalized, meaning that the Chinese legally hold property rights to these buildings, most of the occupations remain until today. The reclamation of the Teochiu Huikuan, in 2004, was thus widely hailed in Medan as a path-breaking accomplishment that later inspired other dreams of reclamation. Upon my inquiry, many organizations expressed an interest in following the example of the Teochiu Huikuan. Discussions about the reviving of X school or the reclamation of a building previously owned by Y organization had become a fixture in Chinese Indonesian social gatherings I attended in Medan. Once symbols of loss and terror, these confiscated properties were now offering the promise of cultural commodification, group enterprise and leadership-building.

The mid-twentieth-century banning of Chinese organizations and schools and the confiscation of their properties mark an important episode in Chinese Indonesian history. Scholarly accounts have provided invaluable contextualization of the process, documenting the social background and its immediate consequences (Mackie 1976; Coppel 1983). These accounts share the understanding that the property confiscations were "anti-Chinese" in nature. My investigation of the property confiscation goes beyond such racism theory and seeks to address the more fundamental question of the relationship between property ownership, ethno-racial formation and social belonging. Filomeno Aguilar (2001) once pointed out the peculiar entanglement between citizenship, inheritance and indigenousness in Indonesia: in short, attributed a foreign and definite place of origin – China – the Chinese are deemed alien to Indonesia and required to prove their citizenship upon every bureaucratic encounter with the state. Since the requirement of proof of citizenship applies to every individual of every generation of Chinese, the citizenship of Chinese Indonesians thus becomes in effect "non-inheritable." Aguilar's argument follows that Chinese wealth is also presumed as non-inheritable, because while affluence among "indigenous" Indonesians is explained as inheritance from earlier generations, the Chinese, on the other hand, are indelibly linked to their first-generation immigrant ancestors in an unbroken chain, who are perceived as escaping poverty from China and whose wealth must have been unscrupulously generated at the expense of the indigenous majority and their land (Aguilar 2001: 520–24). Under such logic, the relationship between Chinese Indonesians and their property possessions can be anything but legitimate.

Aguilar's critical observation reveals a racialized knowledge framework, which identifies the social belongings of Chinese Indonesians and their possessions differently: in brief, while the Chinese are considered politically as belonging to China, their wealth and possessions are nevertheless "indigenous" to Indonesia. Such an insight helps to shed light on the fact that military anti-Chinese campaigns in mid-twentieth-century Indonesia almost always took on the dual-form of expelling alien Chinese while confiscating their properties. It is also a pointed reminder that properties and possessions can be important sites of ethno-racial formation. Indeed, this chapter asks to what extent the confiscated schools and buildings are not simply part of the consequence of anti-Chinese reactions but also as themselves fields of action, where "Chineseness" is produced and contested in Indonesia?

I seek to answer the above question by making two related analytical moves. First, instead of focusing squarely on the initial moment of confiscation and dispossession, I trace the longer contour of confiscation. Such a shift of analytical focus on *time* is complemented by another focus on *material agency*, which allows me to see the confiscated buildings as the literal ground upon which the ethnic Chinese community, while facing discrimination and extortion, has struggled to maintain its precarious position. In this light, these buildings were not lifeless objects being merely acted upon, but were historical agents whose social belonging produced tangible and significant effects. In other words, this chapter follows the "social lives" of these Chinese communal buildings as their owners

grappled with state policies of nationalization and assimilation in Indonesia. It documents the way in which the value and significance of these buildings changed over time and space as they passed through and created different social relationships.

On the notion of the social lives of things, Arjun Appadurai argues that value does not generate exchange, but "[e]conomic exchange creates value. Value is embodied in commodities that are exchanged ... The link between exchange and value is *politics*, construed broadly" (Appadurai 1986: 3). In the current study, the politics under examination is the politics of racial formation, which unavoidably produces "Chineseness" in Indonesia through a mutually constitutive relationship between the state and the Chinese community. As will become clear to the reader, such politics of racialization can operate by way of a "political economy of transaction (*transaksi*)" exemplified in the state confiscation of properties owned by the Chinese community and the subsequent reclamation of these properties. Given the highly unequal positions of power between the Chinese and the state, the only coping mechanism for the Chinese communities against state-engineered dispossession was to buy back from the state (at values determined by the state) the properties which they already held title to. Consequently, this chapter argues, each and every *transaksi* strengthens the trap of racial stereotypes in Indonesia, reinforcing the notion of the Chinese as the nation's wealthy, exploitable, racial "other" on the one hand, and the stereotype of an "indigenous"-dominated state as racist and corrupt on the other.

This chapter seeks to illustrate the above-mentioned politics of racialization by looking at two former Chinese-language schools in Indonesia: the Su Tung Middle School (Mand.: *Sudong Zhongxue*, hereafter the Su Tung) and the Nam Ang School (Mand.: *Nanan Zhongxue*, hereafter the Nam Ang). Both schools are located in Medan, the capital city of North Sumatra. The tortured histories of the Su Tung and the Nam Ang are exemplary here because, while the Su Tung has endured multiple waves of displacements and always managed to retain its administrative independence, the Nam Ang, on the other hand, eventually lost all control of its school buildings in 1994. The juxtaposition of these two schools thus reveals two radically different trajectories of dispossession. And yet, as my case studies will demonstrate, even a relatively successful case such as the Su Tung still produced the politics of racialization by perpetuating the precarious position of the ethnic Chinese and their susceptibility to predatory extortion by the Indonesian state and its agents. Seen together, these two case studies thus illuminate a paradox of ethno-racial integration in Indonesia, which is at the same time a political project (understood as a form of "assimilation to the nation") and a business enterprise (understood as a form of "incorporation to the state"). To the extent that the Chinese attempt at coping with the state demand inadvertently reproduces their own racialization, their "incorporation to the state" ironically pushes the Chinese farther from the project of "assimilation to the nation." As such, these confiscated buildings were important sites of producing Chineseness in Indonesia: much like the "imperial debris" Ann Stoler and others have written about, these buildings, as sites of racial formation, continue to be "epicenters of renewed claims, as history in a spirited voice, as sites that animate

new possibilities, bids for entitlement, and unexpected political projects" (Stoler 2008: 198). To begin telling this story, an account of the Chinese presence in North Sumatra is in order.

North Sumatran Chinese under the shadows of Cold War politics

Founded on a plantation economy involving North Atlantic agribusiness interests and indentured labor from southern China and Java, North Sumatra has been a multi-ethnic mosaic fused with class tension since the last decade of the nineteenth century (Pelzer 1978). The census of 1930 showed that the Chinese then accounted for one third of Medan's population (Sinar 1988: 75). After independence, Malay, Batak and Javanese migrants poured into the city, but the Chinese continued to dominate small-scale industry and the retail sector both in the city and throughout the region. The 1950s also witnessed a phenomenal growth of the Indonesian Communist Party (Ind.: *Parti Komunis Indonesia*, PKI) in North Sumatra. Javanese plantation workers and Batak peasants were the first to join (Stoler 1995; Steedly 1993), but the PKI quickly amassed strong influence over the provincial bureaucracy and the mass media, as well as the youth in the 1960s (Kahin 1999: 244). Meanwhile, the Army fervently competed with the PKI on all grounds from workers' unions and newspapers, to youth groups. In short, by 1965, North Sumatra was a region with a strong PKI support base and a growing military–Moslem alliance waiting to strike back.[4]

Beyond North Sumatra, pro- and anti-communist politics likewise animated Indonesia's domestic politics, which was then characterized by intense politicking between the parties, President Sukarno, and the army. Between the late 1950s and early 1960s, the army and Sukarno forged a relatively stable, if still uneasy, alliance based on a series of martial-law provisions. In the name of quelling domestic rebellions and foreign aggressions, these provisions of war or siege not only invoked patriotism in the name of Sukarno but also gave almost unlimited power to the Army, especially to regional military commands (Crouch 1978). Such states of exception granted local army commanders the authority to overwrite the rule of law, paving the way for forced dispossession of Chinese properties.

Due to their real and imagined overseas connections, the Chinese communities in Indonesia were folded in Cold War politics in much more complicated ways than ordinary Indonesians. Since 1949, the communist-ruled PRC and the ROC, ruled by the Nationalist Party (Mand.: Guomindang, hereafter KMT), in Taiwan had eagerly solicited financial and moral support from Chinese communities all over Southeast Asia. This competition politicized a considerable population of Chinese in Indonesia, who might never have set foot in either Taiwan or China but became avid consumers of imported Chinese news magazines and would fly either the ROC or the PRC flag during the respective national holidays (Heidhues 1988; Twang 1979). In Medan Chinese slang, the "pro-Taipei/ROC" camp is called the "blue buttock" (Hokkien: *lam kacui*) and the "pro-Beijing/PRC" camp the "red buttock" (Hokkien: *ang kacui*), each with its affiliated organizations, schools, newspapers and theatrical troupes.

It is important to bear in mind that the mobilization campaign of the two Chinese states could not have been so successful without some "concerted" efforts on the part of the Indonesian state. In short, many Chinese in Indonesia became politically active after finding themselves increasingly disadvantaged by policies intended to benefit "indigenous" Indonesians at the expense of those categorized as "aliens." Although devised against foreigners without Indonesian citizenship, these policies, in practice, almost always led to bureaucratic discrimination against all Chinese, including those with Indonesian citizenship.[5] As a result, while the two Chinese states competed to mobilize the transnational Chinese communities in Indonesia, the decolonizing Indonesia did just the opposite by increasingly identifying all ethnic Chinese – regardless of their citizenship status and heterogeneous histories in Indonesia – as proxies of Chinese states threatening Indonesia's security and sovereignty.

Consequently, Chinese-language schools as well as the circulation of Chinese texts became sites of intense political struggles. After the establishment of the Inspectorate of Alien Schools in late 1951, the Education Ministry started to regulate the registration of all Chinese schools, while prohibiting political activities on campus. Further steps were taken in 1956 and 1957 to screen teachers and teaching materials (Lee 1995: 146–49). The same period also saw a growing restriction on public circulation of Chinese characters and print materials, including the replacing of "Chinese-sounding" street names in the Chinese neighborhoods in Medan with Indonesian-sounding ones in 1960.[6] It was under this heightened atmosphere, along with a vulnerable and internally volatile Chinese community, that the stage was set for several waves of large-scale, forced dispossession of Chinese communal properties.

1957–1958: from alien schools to private national schools

In 1929, several Medan Chinese community leaders co-founded the Medan United Association of Overseas Chinese Education (Mand.: *Mianlan Huaqiao Jiaoyu Zonghui*, hereafter the Jiao Zong) and put the six existing Chinese elementary schools under one administration.[7] According to a commemorative book published in 1931 by the Jiao Zong, the incorporation not only unified the curriculum of these schools and defrayed their overall operational costs, but also "eased the burden" of the various sponsoring Chinese communities by centralizing all fund-raising activities (Dai 1931). The Jiao Zong also established a middle school and was soon to consolidate all of its schools under the name "Su Tung," which means "the East [coast of] Sumatra." Thus becoming the Su Tung Middle School and Affiliated Elementary Schools (Mand.: *Sudong Zhongxue yu fushu Xiaoxue*), this network of schools quickly developed and became the largest Chinese school in Sumatra (Liu 1939). Aside from its size, the Su Tung was considered the "public" (Mand.: *gongli*) school for the Chinese in Medan, as opposed to other Chinese schools that were founded more on the basis of a specific Chinese dialect, home county or occupational identity.[8] With Mandarin Chinese as the medium of instruction, the establishment of the Jiao Zong and the

Su Tung symbolized a communitarian attempt to broach intra-Chinese divides in North Sumatra.

Alumni and teachers of the Su Tung today continue to emphasize its "*gongli*" character by alluding to the history outlined above. Institutionally, however, the Su Tung went through a series of metamorphoses in the decade after 1957. The first came in November 1957, when state measures to monitor "alien schools" (Ind.: *sekolah asing*) climaxed in the so-called Djuanda Order that streamed Chinese students with Indonesian citizenship (Ind.: *warga negara Indonesia*, WNI) into "national schools" (Ind.: *sekolah nasional*), allowing only students without Indonesian citizenship (Ind.: *warga negara asing*, WNA) to remain in alien schools. In North Sumatra, this policy caused the closure of 80 percent of all Chinese-language schools and a sharp drop in student enrollment. The school administration of the Su Tung coped with the policy by establishing a new national school, while keeping the original Su Tung as an alien school. Named after the Indonesian national hero Sutomo, this new school was officially opened in February 1958, and was under the management of the (also newly founded) Sutomo School Foundation (*Yayasan Peguruan Sutomo*).

The Sutomo School (*Peguruan Sutomo*, hereafter the Sutomo) was a "private national school" (*sekolah nasional swasta*) that used Bahasa Indonesia as its medium of instruction and followed the Indonesian standard curriculum. Upon closer inspection, however, it remained heavily controlled by the Su Tung. Besides being physically located in the original campus of the Su Tung, the Sutomo also had a board of directors whose members consisted largely of those from the Su Tung. Thus, in many ways, the Sutomo was the Su Tung refashioned, after shedding its Chinese curriculum and the part of its student body deemed "alien" in the eyes of the Indonesian state. Not surprisingly, then, the Sutomo remained immensely popular among the Chinese community all over North Sumatra, and further expanded in the early 1960s. The original Su Tung, on the other hand, became a strictly alien school attended only by WNA Chinese students. It was relocated to a newer but smaller campus at Jambi Street as its original campus was now used by the Sutomo.

This accommodation did not last long. In March 1958, the army began to undertake gradual but severe actions against so-called "KMT-related" individuals, schools and organizations on the grounds of Taiwan's complicity in a regional rebellion, a process that sealed the fate of the Su Tung. Soon, a committee established under the Education Ministry for "Assistance in School Occupation" (Ind.: *Panitia Pembantu Penguasaan Sekolah*, or PPS) took over the Su Tung and converted it into a PPS School (hereafter the PPS).[9] Unlike the Sutomo, which was a private national school, the PPS was a "state school" (Ind. *sekolah negeri*) in the sense that it not only adopted the standard national curriculum but also was under direct state management. Thus, by the end of 1958, the old Su Tung had ceased operation and was replaced by two different schools: the Sutomo and the PPS, each with its own separate administration. But by 1964, as the Sutomo continued to expand, the PPS faltered due to dwindling enrollment. Part of the school properties of the PPS were reclaimed by the

Sutomo as the two schools merged again in 1964, while other properties were appropriated by several Chinese individuals who had powerful connections with the local political apparatus.

I take the risk of boring readers with detailed information on the metamorphosis of the Su Tung with a special focus on the status of its school properties because these details reveal something beyond conventional wisdom. Although the 1958 anti-KMT campaign had successfully shut down the old Su Tung school as well as deprived its students of the opportunity to receive a Chinese education and its WNA teachers of their livelihood in Indonesia, the campaign did not take away from the Su Tung many of its properties as commonly understood. This is because, as shown above, the majority of the old Su Tung's properties had either been in the hands of the Sutomo since early 1958, or were retaken by the Sutomo after it merged with the PPS in 1964. Put differently: considered "nationalized" and disassociated from the old Su Tung, the Sutomo was spared, first, from the anti-KMT campaign that struck the Su Tung alien school and, second, from the mismanagement and misappropriation of the state-operated PPS, thus protecting, as it were, the properties and resources it had earlier inherited from the old Su Tung. Ironically, then, what seemed ostensibly a blow to the old Su Tung in 1957–58 had become, in less than a decade, the key to the school's survival under a different name (i.e. as the Sutomo school) and in a different form (i.e. as a private national school).

The same remarkable twist of fate applies to other KMT-labeled schools in Medan, such as the Sam San Middle School (Mand.: *Sanshan Zhongxue*, the present-day W.R. Supratman School), the Hang Kang Middle School (Mand.: *Hanjian Zhongxue*, now called Han Kustari School) and, to a lesser degree, the Nam Ang Middle School (Mand.: *Nanan Zhongxue*, the present-day Husni Thamrin School). In sum, compared to other KMT-labeled organizations, as well as the PRC-labeled schools, for which the takeover meant a complete loss of properties, these KMT-labeled schools were able to remain in control of at least a portion of their properties and thus maintain a sense of continuity against the formidable odds that were stacked against them in the late 1950s. But as we will see in the next section, these schools were not as lucky when the regional military command struck again in 1965.

1965–1968: uprooting and displacing Chinese schools

The months preceding October 1965 in Indonesia witnessed heated political struggles between communist and the anti-communist forces. Backed by President Soekarno, the communist camp was in high spirits, while the anti-Malaysia "Confrontation" campaign gave further momentum to anti-imperialist sentiments as well as renewing the army's privileged position and access to funds (Crouch 1978: 51–88). Under such heightened tension, the military command of North Sumatra ordered in June 1965 the closure of the three most popular "private national schools" in Medan: the Nam Ang School, the Sutomo School and the San Sam School. In other words, having survived the 1958 anti-KMT campaign, these schools were once again under attack – and

morphing into "private national schools" did not help this time. The military ordered the immediate conversion of these "private national schools" to "state schools," hence putting them under the direct management of the Education Ministry. Consequently, the original board of school trustees was forced to completely cede administrative power along with the possession of school buildings and other school-owned properties to the local education bureau. The student body and the teaching staffs were left untouched – but only for a short while. Drastic measures soon followed.

By August 1965, the North Sumatran local military command had implemented a spatial rearrangement of these schools, a measure that successively broadened the effect of the conversion from a matter of administrative takeover to spatial uprooting and displacement for the three school communities. This was done in two separate stages. In the first stage, all high school departments from the three affected schools were physically centralized in one classroom building of the Sutomo School, while the junior-high departments were centralized in the Nam Ang School. During the second stage, which began after the army shut down all PRC-labeled schools in Medan in July 1966, the former Sutomo high school (now converted to the Medan State High No. 7) was further relocated to the campus of the former Chung Wen School (a pro-PRC school) at Timur Street, and the former Sutomo junior school (now converted as the Medan State Junior High No. 12) relocated to the site of the former Nam Ang School. Various school departments from both the Nam Ang and the San Sam were similarly relocated and became uprooted from their original campus as well as being disconnected from other affiliated schools.[10]

In sum, while the conversion of private national schools to state schools entailed an administrative takeover, the physical reshuffling among the converted schools had additional effects. First, it successfully uprooted the student body and teachers from their original campuses. Second, and perhaps even more pertinently, the reshuffling emptied out quite a number of former Chinese school buildings for military perusal. Take for example the Sutomo School. The double displacement –administrative and spatial – had caused the school massive upheaval. Not only had all of its affiliated schools been converted into state schools, they were also geographically isolated from each other. And not only was the Sutomo board of directors excluded from the administration of these converted state schools, but it had also lost control of all school properties, which were now occupied by the state schools converted from the Sutomo or the other closed-down Chinese schools. The only exception was the kindergarten, which was to remain spatially, financially and administratively in the hands of the Sutomo School Foundation. Dispossessed of students, administrative autonomy, school buildings and facilities, save for a couple of classrooms to accommodate a handful of teachers and some hundred kindergarten students, the Sutomo school thus encountered "the worst of its crises since the founding of the Medan United Association of Chinese Education 36 years prior" (Kong n.d.). As we will see in the next section, this history of displacement and dispossession would continue to haunt these schools for many years to come.

New Order: from state schools to development projects, and the settling of "previously alien/Chinese-owned assets"

In September 1968, in a gesture arguably reflecting the growing rapprochement between the New Order regime and KMT-ruled Taiwan, the Indonesian Education Ministry granted permission to the three private national schools in Medan to resume operation. Although school historians enthusiastically dubbed this event the "rebirth" of these Chinese schools (see the unpublished manuscript by Kong Zhizhang referred to in note 8, below), the material and ideological foundations on which these schools operated were in fact far from similar to those in place before 1965. Ideologically, the buzzword that governed state Chinese policy had shifted from nationalization (Ind.: *nasionalisasi*) to assimilation (Ind.: *pembauran*) as the New Order regime consolidated its power. Physically, the classroom buildings of these private national schools remained under the occupation of the Indonesian state schools that had taken them over. The coexistence of the Chinese national schools and the Indonesian state schools under one roof thus turned the school buildings into the literal grounds upon which different claims for rights and entitlements were contested. Under the New Order developmental scheme, moreover, business interests and land prospecting resulted in the haphazard conversion of several "ex-Chinese assets" into shopping centers. But when the state took measures to settle the "problem", what it did achieve was more of a centralization of the conversions rather than countering them. In short, although no longer "Chinese schools" in the strict sense of the term, these schools remained sites of heated political and economic contention.

Upon resuming operation in 1968, all the former Chinese schools faced several challenges. First, they were required to obtain an annual "building use permit" (Ind.: *izin pemakaian gedung*) from the North Sumatran Education Department (hereafter Education Department) in order to run their respective schools in the buildings they legally owned. They also had to devise strategies to spatially coexist with the state schools on the same property. The Nam Ang School, for example, managed to share one classroom building with two state schools by holding its classes in the afternoon, after the state schools finished their daily instruction in the morning.[11] Owning multiple campuses and buildings which it inherited from the Medan United Association of Chinese Education in the 1930s, the Sutomo, by contrast, had more leverage than the Nam Ang in coming up with a different coping strategy. The Sutomo board of directors struck a deal with the Education Department in 1972, under which two of the three state schools that had occupied the main campus of the Sutomo since 1965 were moved to another piece of property prepared for them by the Sutomo.

Such a deal was by no means singular. In his 1983 book on the "History and Problems" of Chinese assimilation in education, Sardjono Sigit noted a "trend" that peaked in 1975 and 1976 to convert the lots or buildings previously owned by ex-Chinese schools into shopping centers and development projects. A New Order government official who once headed the Assimilation in Education and Control of Alien Education Project (Ind.: *Proyek Asimilasi di Bidang Pendidikan dan Pengaturan Pendidikan Asing*), Sigit observed:

> Nearly two decades after the implementation [of the rule of confiscation], on the lots where there used to be Chinese schools now stand luxurious "shopping centers," for which the same excuse was deployed over and over again that "such a location does not suit a school due to its adjacency to commercial activities."
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> (Sigit 1983: 108).

According to Sigit, the above-mentioned attempt to turn the lots or buildings of ex-Chinese schools into shopping centers occurred for a couple of reasons. First there was the "formal/legal reason" (Ind.: *alasan juridis-formal*): while school properties were confiscated and given to the state under military rule, these confiscations were not subsequently legitimized under civil law (Ind.: *diatur kembali menurut perundang-undang tertib sipil*). In other words, the military confiscation gave the state "authority" (Ind.: *penguasan*), not "ownership" (Ind.: *pemilikan*), over a certain building, even though the actual difference between the two terms is yet to be parsed out legally.[12] Accordingly, the differences between "ownership" and "authority" created a legal gray zone where variegated interpretations and practices emerged, subjecting the confiscated properties to the "whims" of local military authorities (Sigit 1983: 114–16). Many properties thus became the private property of persons with strong connections with the local Education Department.

After spelling out the "formal/legal reason," Sigit went on to comment on the reasons given by the officials who granted the conversions of ex-Chinese schools into shopping centers:

> Excuses such as the inappropriateness of the location for educational institutions are often cited for the purpose of moving the school to another location through the means of "exchange" [Dut.: *ruilslag*]. In several places this method worked neatly, and [its result] seemed to have pleased everyone. The school was relocated to a "more appropriate" location, and a new building "more in sync with the development of the city" was erected on the original lot, and everyone involved in the transaction [Ind.: *transaksi*] had his pocket full as the result.
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> (Sigit 1983: 108)

Although extremely vague on the details of these *transaksi*, Sigit's account was nonetheless revealing. It made clear that, if, in 1972, the space swap as a strategy enabled the Sutomo to regain control of most of its main campus, by 1975 it had become the common means through which more and more confiscated properties were released from the grip of the state and embarked on their new lives – or afterlives, as most of these buildings were demolished and rebuilt for commercial use during the economic boom triggered by the high oil prices. Thus, if the confiscations had placed state-sanctioned embargoes on the circulation of these school lots and buildings, the trend of converting them into shopping centers through development projects had certainly undermined the embargoes.[13]

Of critical importance is the way in which the highest authority responded to these cases of *transaksi*. In 1979, the Operational Command for the Restoration of Security and Order (Kopkamtib) – an extra-constitutional body which served as the Suharto regime's major instrument of political control – issued an instruction to reinstate the ban on the circulation of these confiscated properties. It ordered the return of the legal status of the buildings and lots of the ex-Chinese schools to their "status quo" (Ind.: *dikembalikan pada status quo*), defined as that which was "determined by the 1958 rule in the case of the KMT schools or by the 1966 rule in the case of the PRC schools." At the same stroke, the instruction also prohibited further transfer of the usage or the possession of these properties and asked that all parties involved wait for future legal stipulation.[14]

I am not aware of any legal stipulation that came as the result of the aforementioned instruction. But a special inter-departmental team (Ind.: *Tim Interdep*, hereafter Tim) did emerge by 1988 under the Ministry of Internal Affairs with the stated goal of settling the "previously alien/Chinese owned assets" (Ind.: *asset bekas sekolah asing/Cina*). From several "private national schools" in Medan, Tim demanded an astronomical amount of money on the grounds that they had been utilizing these state properties without proper compensation. These "state properties," however, were none other than the school buildings that had belonged previously to these same schools until their 1965 confiscation. Tim ruled that the earlier confiscation had entitled the state to charge these schools a rental fee (plus interest calculated retrospectively since 1968). In other words, the Chinese schools in question were now considered renters of their own properties, and with back-rent due. Taking advantage of a critical juncture when most of the title rights of these school properties would soon require renewal in the early 1990s, Tim further threatened that the Director General of Agrarian Affairs would refuse to grant title renewal to those schools that failed to respond to the Tim's demand in a timely manner.[15]

The Tim offered three ways to re-ascertain the formal legal relation between the confiscated properties and their previous Chinese owners, which was disrupted previously by martial-law-sanctioned confiscations. This they did by offering either the right of lease (ascertained through rent payment), the right of building (ascertained through space exchange) or the termination of a previously existing relation (ascertained by the revocation of the old title and the vacating of the Chinese school of its property). In this light, Tim's work tackled the "formal/legal" aspect of the problem Sigit proposed by bringing the legal status of the properties back under the civil-law order.

But this tackling was incomplete. While demanding the Chinese schools pay in order to re-ascertain their legal relation to the properties in question, the Tim failed to address the more fundamental and perhaps thornier questions about the *current* legal status of the confiscated properties: indeed, just what exactly did the confiscation do to these buildings legally? Who owned what rights to these confiscated properties now, and how? The Tim made no attempt to answer these questions in legal terms. When presented with a claim from a Chinese school of its right over a classroom building, for example, the Tim did nothing but assert matter-of-factly that the Ministry of Internal Affairs had ruled (Ind.:

memutuskan) that this building was a "state asset" (Ind.: *asset negara*). In practice, some of these schools were allowed to settle these issues by paying for the new land and building costs of the new campuses and classrooms (calculated and determined by Tim) to be built to house the state schools that would be vacating the Chinese school sites. Others were not. Judging from the case of the Sutomo, along with several other cases brought to a November 1988 meeting of the Tim's North Sumatran section, it seems no general principle can be established as to why certain schools were granted the opportunity of regaining their buildings through the exchange scheme while other schools were not.

Nor did the Tim help to ascertain the legal status of the confiscated properties that were not listed among the settlements, properties that might already have been misappropriated or were still under military control. In fact, it seems that if the Tim was established to counter the problem of the haphazard conversion of ex-Chinese assets into shopping centers, what it did achieve was at best a centralization of the practice rather than countering it – and in a highly selective way. The Tim targeted the schools/organizations whose property titles were about to expire at the time *and* those who could afford "to settle." And given that many PKI-related properties were also confiscated during 1965–66, the fact that the Tim dealt only with these "previously alien/Chinese-owned assets" was itself an indication of the selective nature of the Tim's work.

In this sense, the settlements of the "previously alien/Chinese-owned assets" were business *transaksi* (recalling Sigit's observation), perhaps even more than they were solutions aimed at normalizing the legal relations between the Chinese and the properties. Both the Sutomo and the San Sam eventually paid their "dues" at differently discounted rates after a long period of negotiation. The Sutomo paid about half of the requested amount and was able to regain possession of its property title from the North Sumatran military command, thanks to the help of a well-connected alumnus. In short, these settlements were extremely lucrative business transactions, conducted within starkly unequal relations of power where the state dictated the terms of the transaction. The Chinese schools could only hope to bargain through what Daniel Lev has called "fixers" and "deal-arrangers" (Lev 1972: 259). In some cases, these fixers were alumni or even those in leadership positions in the schools, who themselves benefited financially from the kind of *transaksi* through which properties were swapped or from the demolition of school buildings to build malls. As such, this privileged minority of the ethnic Chinese community became not victims of these forced dispossessions but, on an individual basis, complicit agents and beneficiaries.

The Nam Ang/Husni Thamrin School: lost in assimilation

My analysis so far demands an evaluation of the Tim. Although the work of the Tim did result in getting some of the properties back into the hands of the original Chinese owners, the settlements of the "previously alien/Chinese-owned assets" in no way provided restitution to the Chinese schools. In fact, what the Tim had demanded suggested the opposite: it acted as if these Chinese

schools were suddenly found guilty of operating as they had been allowed to (i.e. acquiring a use permit on a yearly basis) for 20 years; the state then demanded an exchange or retribution via back-rent due. In the event that the Chinese schools managed to provide legal proof of their title to the property, these titles were simply taken as qualification for the rent-claim or exchange scheme, rather than as a counter-claim to the state's. Most unfortunately, even if the property title did give a school the opportunity to partake in the Tim's *transaksi*, it did not mean that the Tim would necessarily honor the rights such a title legally entails. To the contrary, the authority could order a "second dislocation" of the school, regardless of its legal standing and willingness to cooperate. Such was the fate of the Nam Ang School, whose story provides an exceptionally striking example through which we see a disjunctive juxtaposition of the school effort to gain national recognition through conformity to the state demands, and the simultaneous experience of displacement.

Founded in 1950 by Chinese immigrants from the Lamua region (Mand.: *Nanhua*) in Southern Fujian, the Nam Ang School was a latecomer to the Chinese education scene in Medan, but a formidable one. By the eve of its closure in 1965, the school had already surpassed the Sutomo as the most popular Chinese private national school in Medan, boasting a record student enrollment as well as an army of youthful and energetic teachers recently graduated from top universities in Taiwan.

But no sign of this glorious past suggested itself when I visited the Nam Ang in 2004. Accompanied by Ivana Ong, a Nam Ang graduate from the class of 1994, I saw shabby classrooms in a single-story building with sun-blistered paint. A wooden placard near the entrance gate suggested that these classrooms belonged to the Husni Thamrin School (hereafter the Husni Thamrin). To comply with various state policies, Ivana explained, the Nam Ang had renamed itself three times since 1958, adopting its current name in 1976.[16] Furthermore, the campus Ivana and I visited was not the original campus of the Husni Thamrin; in 1988, the Tim ordered the Husni Thamrin to vacate its old campus by 1990. Having fought for its rights for many years, the school administration finally gave up in the mid-1990s. The administration constructed a new and much smaller and plainer campus, and relocated the Husni Thamrin to its current site. Considering the strategic location of the old campus, Ivana envisioned that it might soon become a shopping center or something along those lines.

In order to further acquaint me with the embittered history of her school, Ivana introduced me to her teacher, Pak Lubis, who had also been a school administrator. Probably in his early fifties, Pak Lubis had a pale complexion and a subtle facial geometry. Upon hearing my inquiry about the legal dispute, he presented me with a stack of documents and promptly granted my request to photocopy them. Chronologically ordered, the documents present a familiar story told through legal battles between the Husni Thamrin and the Medan State High School No. 10 (hereafter State School No. 10), each claiming rightful ownership of the school buildings as well as seeking powerful back-up from bureaucracies at both regional and national levels. In the end, the Husni Thamrin had even proposed to the Education Ministry that the school "buy back" (Ind.: *beli*

memiliki kembali) its school buildings just to maintain the status quo and coexist with State School No. 10. But even that concession was rejected.

What intrigued me the most about Pak Lubis' story, however, lies not in its familiarity but in the way it was presented to me. Having photocopied and studied the documents, I returned to Pak Lubis' office the following week to elicit more details of the story I was able to grasp from the documents. Yet sitting opposite Pak Lubis at his desk in his office for hours on end, all I heard was story after story of how the Husni Thamrin (and Pak Lubis himself) were devout followers of the New Order's assimilation policy. With his characteristically friendly smiles, Pak Lubis responded to almost all of my questions about the property dispute with exactly the same one-liner. "Everything is in the documents," Pak Lubis tirelessly repeated, before going on about the myriad extra-curricular activities supported by the Husni Thamrin as part of its effort to facilitate inter-racial mixing between its Chinese and non-Chinese pupils. Pak Lubis' persistent separation of what he was willing to tell me, and what he had intended for me to read greatly unsettled me. Such a disjuncture between his verbal and textual "performances" seemed unintelligible to me at the time.

It was much later, when I started to work on the materials again and to read them in conjunction with other cases of property dispossession in Medan, that Pak Lubis' face, along with the strange disjuncture I had come to associate with him, suddenly resurfaced. To my great surprise, what had aroused suspicion in me back in 2004 is now perfectly intelligible. I realized that, if there were any disjuncture, it resided not simply in the discrepancy between Pak Lubis' use of words and texts, but also in the discrepancy between the Husni Thamrin's enthusiastic implementation of the New Order's national assimilation policy and the tragedy of being kicked out of its own campus in spite of its tireless attempts to comply with state policy. Indeed, it is the paradoxical juxtaposition of what might be seen as the school's dogged desire for state recognition and its recurring experience of state-administered displacement that one finds most unsettling.

The paradox becomes even more pronounced if we compare the fate of the Husni Thamrin with that of the Sutomo. As shown, the means that Pak Lubis deployed (i.e. legal appeal and implementing the assimilation program) to defend the Husni Thamrin, law- and policy-abiding and assimilationist as they were, had failed to empower the school as one might have expected. Instead, as was evidenced by the Sutomo's successful negotiation with the Tim, money and elite brokers spoke more powerfully than legal channels and "assimilation to the nation." The failure of Pak Lubis to secure his school thus reflected not inconsistency on the part of Pak Lubis but on the part of the New Order regime, or, more precisely, the regime's discrepant practices of ethno-racial integration. On the one hand, publicly avowing that "there will no longer be [a] curtain dividing Indonesian citizens of Chinese descent and (indigenous) Indonesian citizens," the New Order had since the early days of its rule made assimilation a national project.[17] On the other hand, however, the regime and its bureaucracy worked at every level of its governance to do just the opposite, singling out its Chinese-marked citizens and demanding from them proof of citizenship, commissions and fees of various sorts. The case of the Sutomo and other "previously alien/

Chinese-owned assets" were but examples of the many instances of such differentiating practices.

But rather than seeing the above discrepancies as evidence of New Order hypocrisy or lawlessness, I suggest that they be seen more productively as an alternative form of "assimilation," as the channel through which the Chinese were incorporated within the Indonesian state. Understood as "incorporation to the state," this alternative form of "assimilation" integrated the Chinese Indonesians as a necessary part of the political economy of the New Order governance, even though it might further push the Chinese away from their project of "assimilation to the nation." In fact, the two kinds of "assimilation" projects were often at odds with each other, and it was in this sense that the Husni Thamrin had failed to incorporate itself into the state as had the Sutomo, in spite of the fact that the Husni Thamrin had succeeded in taking on assimilation as a national project. Justified as part of the state development project, the conversion of the "ex-Chinese-owned assets" into shopping centers as documented by Sigit could be similarly understood this way – as a form of "incorporation to the state."

Chinese schools as sites of racial formation

Tracking the social lives of confiscated Chinese-Indonesian properties in the North Sumatran city of Medan, this chapter documents a history of property transaction and negotiation between the Chinese communities and the Indonesian state. For those ethnic Chinese we met in the stories recounted above, contending for the rightful ownership of their properties means contending for a legitimate way of claiming communal possessions in, and national belongings to, Indonesia. This chapter finds that these struggles produced complicated results. On the one hand, different coping strategies may produce differed consequences. In the case studies, while the Nam Ang /Husni Thamrin suffered from a series of displacement, the Su Tung /Sutomo reaffirmed the stereotype that the Chinese would pay for whatever is demanded of them. On the other hand, the comparison between the Sutomo and the Husni Thamrin and their different approaches to "assimilation" also reveals something these two schools had in common: their willingness to "assimilate" and to accommodate what was demanded of them. Both schools were highly adaptive and accommodating to the various demands of the state, albeit with drastically different conditions and results. This study understands such willingness and effort to accommodate as part of the Chinese struggle in trying to recapture a sense of legitimate place in Indonesia against waves of mid-twentieth-century dispossession and displacement. But as the case of the Su Tung demonstrates especially well, such practices of repositioning inadvertently created a double bind: the more the school managed to escape from displacement, the more it reproduced its own racialization; because the more it was willing to cooperate, the more it rendered itself the perfect target of bureaucratic abuse and extortion. In the absence of any organizational rights or form of institutional support, the school had no choice but to enact its ascribed Chineseness, that is, to fulfill the demands of the state by handing over exorbitant sums of money, thus fulfilling in turn the stereotypical construction of questionable Chinese affluence.

What seems unchanging, then, is the stereotypical construction of Chineseness and Chinese affluence entangled with the political economy of *transaksi* and assimilation. What the Sutomo did in order to keep the school properties in the 1980s, and the way in which the Medan Teochiu Mutual Aid Charity Foundation reclaimed the Teochiu Huikuan in 2004, repeatedly solidified the stereotype that the Chinese can pay, will pay, and indeed should pay, for everything, including what is legally theirs. As Aguilar has argued, although Chinese individuals do regenerate and pass on their accumulated wealth, as a group the Chinese remain seen and treated as first-generation immigrants, whose questionable wealth is susceptible to plundering, confiscation and other forms of dispossession. In 2004, the Teochiu Chinese had to pool their resources to buy back the Teochiu Huikuan, much like their coolie ancestors' pooling of resources for the original building in 1962. The Teochiu Huikuan could be converted, remodeled, even torn down and rebuilt, but this particular construction of all Chinese Indonesians with morally questionable wealth continues to cast its owners – often with their collaboration – in a problematic relationship to the Indonesian nation.

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Notes

1 A small part of this chapter appeared in "Through a Building Darkly," *Inside Indonesia*, 95 (January 2009).
2 Literally "Five Pillars," *Pancasila* is Indonesia's official state ideology. Formulated by President Soekarno and incorporated into the preamble of Indonesia's 1945 constitution, it was later appropriated by the New Order government, who made it a compulsory part of education curricula in 1978 as well as the guiding principles of all noncommercial, nongovernmental organizations in 1985 (Kahin and Cribb 2004: 311).
3 Names of interlocutors have been changed. Unless in quotation marks, their statements were not recorded verbatim but were reconstructed shortly afterward from contemporaneous notes. The romanization of Chinese names follows the usage adopted by local organizations and people. In this case, the pronunciation is therefore

often in one of the southern Chinese regional languages. Pinyin romanization is used to spell out the Mandarin pronunciation, as well as when information about the local usage is unavailable.

4 For an analysis of North Sumatran regional politics during 1965–68, see Tsai and Kammen (2012).

5 This included pressure for the Indonesianization of their enterprises by partnering with the "indigenous" Indonesians, special taxes on resident aliens, and registration and control of foreign workers. For practices of economic nationalization up until 1955, see Sutter (1959). For measures aimed at controlling the alien Chinese, see Willmott (1961: 70–76); for those aimed at controlling the Chinese with Indonesian citizenship, see Willmott (1961: 77–90).

6 For the marginalization of Chinese-Malay literature in the construction of Indonesian national literature, see Chandra (2006: 146–226).

7 The history of the Su Tung Middle School presented in this section is mainly drawn from the following sources: (1) *Sutungmu Xuexiao Weiyuanhui Linien Zhiyuanbiao* [Chronology of Members of the Sutomo School Committee], an unpublished manuscript compiled and written by Mrs. Jian Gongchen, a teacher who served in the school for more than 40 years; (2) *Sutung Zhongxue De Chuangjian He Fazhang Shilue* [The Founding and Development of the Su Tung High School], an unpublished manuscript written by Mr. Kong Zhizhang, a Su Tung alumnus and once a member of the teaching staff; (3) four recorded interviews with Teacher Iskandar (pseud.). Interviews by author in Medan and California, 20 May 2004, 28 September 2004, 10 March 2006 and 9 April 2008.

8 W.T. Ward, an American missionary, observed in 1915 in Medan that all large Chinese schools also taught the "American language" with "a decided English accent" (Ward 1915).

9 Note that while Mrs. Jian's document dated the formation of the PPS for Su Tung in late 1957, the regulation that stipulated the formation of the PPS did not come out until late 1958 in the form of a Ministry Decision (Sigit 1983: 116–25). For the rationale of the setting up of the PPS, see Sigit (1990: 9–10).

10 For example, while the Nam Ang high school (converted as the Medan State High No. 8) was relocated to one of the Sutomo campuses on Jambi Street, the San Sam high school (converted as the Medan State High No. 9) was moved to the site of the former Jing Jian School – a PRC-labeled school – at Tilak Street.

11 These state schools are the Medan State Middle School No. 10 and the Medan State Elementary School No. 83.

12 It was clearly stated in the 1958 takeover regulation that the head of the local education bureau should "take over" (Ind.: *menguasai*) a certain building of an alien school, in the name of the Education Ministry, "without undermining the absolute right of ownership of that building": reproduced in Sigit (1983: 116–25). In the case of the 1966 confiscation, the confiscation was expressed in terms of "surrendering" (Ind.: *penyerahan*) and "usage" (Ind.: *penggunaan*). See Penguasa Pelaksanaan Dwikora Daerah Sumatra Utara (1966).

13 I also know of an instance in which a confiscated Chinese school became a private school run by a non-Chinese foundation. According to one of the leaders of the organization, whose wife was the principal of the school, he acquired the school from the military soon after 1966. Partnering with a friend, the man bid for the school and won it. The school was still in operation when I visited it in 2004. This case shows that there had long existed an "internal market" (for lack of a better word) for the confiscated properties. I found out much later that the man was a student leader active locally in the 1966 anti-Soekarno demonstrations.

14 This was a letter of instruction (Ind.: *surat edaran*) issued on 11 May 1979, reproduced in Sigit (1983: 108–9).

15 The Basic Agrarian Law (BAL) of 1960 allowed only individual Indonesian nationals to acquire the right of ownership (Ind.: *hak milik*, HM) for fear of the

strong "economic position of foreigners, and corporations in general" (Gautama and Harsono 1972: 39–40). For right of ownership acquired previously under Dutch Law (Dut.: *eigendom*) by a foreigner or an Indonesian national with dual nationality, BAL converted it into the right of use (Ind.: *hak pakai*, HP), which is generally good for 10 years. For *eigendom* acquired previously by an Indonesian corporation, or by an individual Indonesian national who failed to request conversion within the period prescribed by law, BAL converted it to the right of building (Ind.: *hak guna bangunan*, HGB), which is good for 30 years and extendable for up to 20 years. The recipient of HGB is required to pay entry money (Gautama and Harsono 1972: 71–74).

16 The name of the school was changed to Setia in 1958, Jaya Lama in 1970 and finally Husni Thamrin in 1976. The final name change was per the instruction that all Chinese private national schools be named after Indonesian revolutionary heroes.

17 Speech to the nation by acting president General Suharto to the general session of the Gotong Royong parliament on 16 August 1967. Excerpt reproduced and translated in Coppel (1983: 30).

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5 The translocal subject between China and Indonesia

The case of the Pemangkat Chinese of West Kalimantan

Hui Yew-Foong

"Beautiful Pemangkat"
O Pemangkat! [My] second homeland, what a beautiful place.
The Rocky Mouth and Elephant Mountain approach the sea,
And the great ocean stretches out to the horizon …
Generations diligently and bravely pioneered the land and created [our] home.
[When] the Japanese [started a] massacre, the anti-Japanese "Alliance" fought a guerilla war.
O Pemangkat! Two great fires destroyed a beautiful home.
The ancestral country came to save, sending a ship to fetch [us] back to [our] country.
How warm was the embrace of the ancestral country, [as we] started building our homes from scratch.
A reunion half a century later in Shenzhen, [we are] jubilant and our spirits are aroused.
O Pemangkat! My hometown, what a beautiful place.

(Huang Zizhen 2007: 121)[1]

This song, which I have translated, was written by Huang Zizhen, a Chinese from Pemangkat in the province of West Kalimantan, who had left Pemangkat in 1950 for China, his *zuguo* or ancestral country. It is a song that summarizes some of the defining moments of this town, as will become apparent in the course of this chapter. What is also interesting here is the notion of homeland, or *guxiang*. *Guxiang* usually refers to native place, hometown and birthplace. The word suggests a point of origin, a locale which one traces one's roots to, an idiom of identification that precedes one.

But in the opening line of this song, the writer suggests that Pemangkat, his birthplace, where generations of Chinese have worked to make a home, and which he apparently adores, is merely a second homeland. The first homeland, presumably, is *zuguo*, the ancestral country, where his ancestors hailed from, a point of origin prior to the transplantation of his lineage to Pemangkat. It is in this chronological sense that Pemangkat is the second homeland. But how did the first homeland emerge as the primary homeland, and in what sense, such that the Chinese subject became suspended between two homelands and constituted

between two points of origin? And how did the homeland that constituted the primary locus of his sensory experience become a memory and subsequently the subject of odes? This chapter examines the historical vicissitudes that had led to this fragmentation of the Chinese subject, and how the Pemangkat Chinese who left continued to seek to recover a past that remains elusive.

What cannot be overlooked, in terms of the political context of the day, was the profound change in the global ordering of political entities, and how it affected the Chinese subjects of Indonesia. The problem of home and what it implies became more problematic with the end of the Second World War. In China, a civil war ensued, which resulted in the Communists taking over mainland China as the Republicans retreated to Taiwan in 1949, an event that also bifurcated the loyalties of overseas Chinese communities. In the Dutch East Indies, a national revolution (1945–49) eventually led to a sovereign Indonesia. As such, with decolonization, a world system of nation-states emerges, whereby "a man must have a nationality as he must have a nose and two ears" (Gellner 1983: 6), and citizenship becomes salient as an instrument of "social closure" that divides the world's population into "a set of bounded and mutually exclusive citizenries" (Brubaker 1992: 22–23).

Taking the Pemangkat Chinese as an exemplary case, I will examine how rising nationalism (both Indonesian and Chinese) influenced their life trajectories, especially those who were oriented toward Communist China. The chapter then focuses on those who eventually departed for China, either as self-financed returnees in the 1950s or as refugees in 1960. For most of these overseas Chinese (*huaqiao*), their "return" was a symbolic one to an ancestral land (*zuguo*) that they never knew, as most of them were born in West Borneo (later known as West Kalimantan after Indonesia achieved independence). But the Pemangkat that they do know remains an indelible part of their subjectivity, such that decades later, they re-enact their attachment to the place through alumni reunions and/or homecoming trips back to the land of their birth.

Conceptually, this chapter will dwell on the multiple meanings of the notions of "home," "origin" and "return," and how they constitute the translocal subject. While translocal trajectories are sometimes bound up with the nation-state, I argue that the quest for authenticity is at times anchored to locales and memories that relegate the nation-state to the periphery. This chapter, then, explores the emergence of Chinese subjectivities in the interstices between nation-states.

Pemangkat: historical background

The Chinese first arrived in West Borneo in large numbers during the mid-eighteenth century, when they were introduced to the region by Malay rulers to mine the rich gold deposits (Jackson 1970: 20–23). As their numbers grew, the Chinese formed gold-mining cooperatives known as *kongsis*,[2] and these *kongsis* developed into polities that became largely autonomous from the Malay rulers (Heidhues 2003: 51–54). The *kongsis* prospered between the 1790s and 1820s, particularly the alliance of *kongsis* known as Heshun Zongting at Monterado and the Lanfang Kongsi at Mandor (Jackson 1970: 23–24). As the gold veins became depleted and the Dutch began to assert their authority in the province, the *kongsis*

were quashed through wars with the Dutch. The Heshun Zongting and Lanfang Kongsi were crushed in 1854 and 1884 respectively (Heidhues 2003: 85–100, 106–108; Yuan 2000: 231–59).

Thereafter, the Chinese generally shifted to agriculture, trade and commerce for their livelihood (Heidhues 2003: 133–61). In addition to being dominant in trade and industry, what made the Chinese of West Borneo unique in the Netherlands Indies was the extent to which they were also involved in agriculture "as independent small-scale cultivators of coconuts, pepper, rubber and gambier, and as horticulturists in the environs of the large towns" (Cator 1936: 138). By the time of the 1930 census, there were 107,998 Chinese in West Kalimantan, forming 13.2 percent of the provincial population (Cator 1936: 160). Of these, almost four-fifths lived outside the towns, and more than 20,000 were engaged in agriculture and horticulture (Cator 1936: 161–62). In other words, the Chinese of West Borneo were not merely traders, or (petty) bourgeoisie, but also peasants who harvested the fruits of the land through their labor.

Pemangkat was founded in the 1820s at the mouth of the Sambas River (Doty and Pohlmann 1839: 283–84) and it was a predominantly Chinese settlement that acted as a port and rice-production area for the Samtiaokioe Kongsi (Heidhues 2003: 81). Even with the demise of the *kongsis*, Pemangkat remained a key coastal town of note, after Pontianak and Singkawang, registering 2,300 Chinese residents in 1930 (Cator 1936: 160). By the late 1930s, Pemangkat had surpassed Sambas and Singkawang as a port of export, handling 2,000 tons of copra a month (Bakker 1991: 47). Thus, although Pemangkat was in no way a metropolis like modern Shanghai, it was nevertheless a thriving hub for both trade and primary industries in West Borneo.

Pemangkat Chinese and China

But Shanghai, as the metropolis of the pre-war Chinese world, certainly had its appeal, which was not lost on the seaside town of Pemangkat. In 1931, Zhu Nengling, at the age of 19, left Pemangkat without informing anyone. His dream was to pursue further studies, and his destination, Shanghai. With his meager savings, Zhu arrived in Shanghai and began to pursue secondary education, eventually studying at the affiliated middle school of Jinan University. In 1937, Zhu met Lu Aixi, the younger sister of one of his Shanghainese classmates, and fell in love. Lu was then 19 years old, and was training to be a teacher at the Shanghai Girls' Normal School.

Not long after Zhu and Lu met, what became known as the Marco Polo Bridge Incident, which historians widely consider the trigger for the Second Sino-Japanese War, took place on 7 July 1937. On 13 August 1937, the Kuomintang army attacked Japanese marines in Shanghai, leading to the Battle of Shanghai, which lasted more than three months. When news of the war in Shanghai reached Pemangkat, Zhu's father, concerned for the safety of his only son, sent four telegrams to urge him to return home. Under these exceptional circumstances, Zhu and Lu quickly got married on 27 December 1937, and in February 1938, managed to secure passage on a ship and left Shanghai.[3]

To return to Pemangkat was no simple matter in those tumultuous times. Zhu and Lu arrived in Hong Kong on the fifth day of the Chinese New Year to find that the British visa office was closed. The newlyweds thus had to take a train up to Guangzhou, traveling at night to evade the attacks of Japanese bombers, so that they could obtain a visa to travel to the Dutch East Indies via Singapore. The couple finally arrived in Singapore in late February, and it was mid-March before they boarded a vessel for their final destination, Pemangkat.

Traveling in this way was not simply the traversing of undifferentiated geographical terrain – it involved the crossing of political boundaries and negotiation of (colonial) state apparatuses. In this case, the travelers left a Chinese treaty port for a British colony, then re-entered Republican Chinese territory so as to obtain permission from British authorities to travel to a Dutch colony via a British Straits Settlement. Little did they know that just over a decade later, travelers taking the same journey in the opposite direction would be crossing boundaries of quite a different political nature.

While the specific experiences of Zhu and Lu were unique, less exceptional was the movement of people between the Nanyang[4] and China in the years before the Second World War. Sons born overseas would be sent back to China for education, both because of the dearth of Chinese higher education and also as a means of sinicization. However, in these earlier cases, these children would be expected to return to the Nanyang, eventually to take over family concerns and care for the elderly. As Sai describes in her chapter in this volume, educated men from China would travel to the Nanyang and serve as teachers, socializing children in the language and values of their fatherland.[5] Through these continual movements of people across fluid territorial boundaries over the inter-war years, an orientation toward China as homeland, at least in the symbolic sense, was reinforced. At the same time, the notion of *huaqiao* also popularly encompassed the political connotation of patriotic Chinese nationals residing abroad (Wang Gungwu 1981: 118–27). It can be argued, further, that inherent in the discourse of *huaqiao*, literally Chinese sojourners, is already a notion of an originary homeland and the possibility of return. As such, to go to China can be considered a form of return, whether or not one was born in China. It would be a return to a familiar place, the symbolic homeland that represents one's ancestral origin, and increasingly, the cradle of modern Chinese nationalism.

It is no surprise then that the South Seas that Zhu and Lu arrived in was not indifferent to the Second Sino-Japanese War. In Singapore, Tan Kah Kee led the National Salvation Movement in raising funds for China's war chest (Akashi 1970; Pang 1973). Further, on 7 February 1939, the Federation of China Relief Funds of the South Seas issued a clarion call for drivers and mechanics to volunteer for service on the Yunnan–Burma Road (Tan 1994: 142–44). Eventually, 3,192 people answered the call (Chen 2005: 48), and 8 of them were from Pemangkat (Xiaozhen 2004).

Thus, inasmuch as Pemangkat might be geographically remote, the Chinese there were very much in touch with and concerned about what was happening in China. The affective proximity, as suggested earlier, was partly facilitated by people who crossed the physical boundaries. In the immediate pre-war years,

besides Zhu and Lu, there were others from China who became war refugees and found their temporary abode in Pemangkat, some of whom became teachers in local schools. One of them was a certain Guo Tusheng, who, besides teaching, was a talented organizer of recreational activities, such as dance, song and drama performances (Xiaozhen 2004). In 1941, the performance troupe formed by Guo was invited to Singkawang (a larger town about 30 km south of Pemangkat) to participate in a fund-raising performance for the China Relief Fund. The performances were well received, in particular a drama that bespoke the need for Chinese to sacrifice themselves in the anti-Japanese war.

Eventually, Pemangkat did not escape the war or its atrocities. The Japanese Army landed in Pemangkat on 27 January 1942, and very quickly fanned out and elicited the surrender of Dutch forces on 8 March (Heidhues 2003: 198).[6] Under the Japanese, a series of mass arrests were made, beginning in October 1943, on the pretext of rounding up suspects of an anti-Japanese "conspiracy" that extended from Banjarmasin, South Borneo (Heidhues 2003: 203). The detainees included the elite of major towns across ethnic lines, and after the war, it was found that at least 1,500 of them were executed and buried in mass graves at Mandor and Sungai Durian (Maekawa 2002: 153–69; Xu 1947: 9–12). Of the victims, 854 were Chinese, and more than 30 were from Pemangkat (Heidhues 2003: 209; Lü 1990: 84). Meanwhile, the Chinese formed a clandestine resistance force throughout West Borneo known as the West Borneo Anti-Japanese Alliance (Mand.: *Xipoluozhou Fanri Tongmenghui*, hereafter Alliance), which had an estimated membership of 3,600 distributed over 15 branches, of whom about 200 were from the Pemangkat branch (Cai 2000: 149–50). Admittedly, the resistance force was too weak to have an effect during the Japanese Occupation (Hui 2011: 62), but in Pemangkat, it provided an interim security force that maintained order for 20-odd days between the Japanese surrender and the arrival of the Allied Forces (Lü 1990: 83–84; Xiaozhen 2006).

The war, whether the one in China that was remotely apprehended and supported, or the one in West Kalimantan that was intimately experienced, unified local Chinese communities. While these communities had been organized along conventional provincial or clan lines before the war, the encounter with the enemy that victimized the Chinese as an undifferentiated whole galvanized them into acting in their own collective interests. As a result, the demobilized Alliance provided the leadership framework for the post-war formation of Chinese General Associations (Mand.: *Zhonghua Gonghui*, CGAs) throughout West Kalimantan, which became the de facto self-governing bodies of local Chinese communities. The CGAs also coordinated the Education Committees, which spurred the revival of Chinese language education in post-war West Kalimantan (Cai 2000: 165–66). In Pemangkat, the vernacular schools, which were formerly supported by the various language communities such as the Hakkas, Teochews and Hokkiens, were combined and relaunched as the Pemangkat Chinese Elementary School, which taught in Mandarin only.[7] Thus, the war had facilitated an imagination of the Chinese community that transcended Chinese provincial lines.

However, this unity was short-lived, as the Chinese civil war between the Kuomintang (KMT) and Chinese Communist Party (CCP) divided Chinese

communities abroad along politico-ideological lines. In Pemangkat, the Chinese community's preoccupation with Chinese nationalism took on a more pro-PRC bent in general. With the founding of the PRC, 20 different Chinese organizations from the Pemangkat sub-district (Ind.: *Kecamatan Pemangkat*) wired a congratulatory note to Beijing on 1 November 1949. The note conveyed the jubilation of the Pemangkat Chinese on learning of the establishment of the new government led by Mao Zedong. It further expressed confidence that under the leadership of the new government, the *zuguo* (ancestral homeland) would become ever more glorious. The note ended by pledging the deepest support of the patriotic Chinese of Pemangkat. The signatories included representatives from the Pemangkat Chamber of Commerce, CGAs, student unions, youth associations, funeral foundations and sports clubs from the vicinity of Pemangkat.[8] At the same time, the principal of the Chinese Elementary School also changed the flag in the school hall from the Republic of China (ROC) flag to the People's Republic of China (PRC) flag to signify support for the PRC (Xiaozhen 2003).

The popularity of pro-PRC sentiments in Pemangkat was very much associated with the influence and efforts of active individuals in the community who supported "progressive" ideas.[9] Educated people such as Zhu and Lu, who were already exposed to "progressive" political ideas when they were in Shanghai, were to play important roles in the local community. After the war, Zhu was put in charge of general affairs when the CGA was established in 1946. He was also, from 1947 to 1948, principal of the Pemangkat Chinese Elementary School. Lu, who was trained as a teacher in Shanghai, not only taught at the school, but also became deputy chairperson of the Chinese Women's Association and ran its evening literacy classes for women.

With the popular dissemination of the utopian aspirations of the "New China," students, "progressive youth" and *huaqiao* leaders began to desire to return to *zuguo* and "participate in building the fatherland" (Mand.: *canjia zuguo jianshe*). The sense was not one of returning to the impoverished land that their ancestors had left, but that they were returning to participate in the construction of something *new*; they were going to participate in the making of history. And so the return took on a tone of excitement, and evolved into a *chaoliu* – a tide, a current, a flow, a social trend – that captivated the imagination and desires of "progressive Chinese," especially the young. At the same time, the returnees were not simply going to just any "progressive" country; they were *returning* to *zuguo*, the land of their ancestors, in which the deep roots of their genealogical past were entrenched. There was thus, in the rhetoric of "New China," a coupling of the primordial and modern, whereby an ancient nation was liberated to achieve its destiny at the forefront of modern history (Hui 2011: 73–98). One of the returnees, Lü Decai, describes the process of his own return this way:

> [T]he trend of returning to our country began in 1950, and peaked in the years 1952–54. This was an unstoppable trend, penetrating every stratum and corner from cities to villages, and permeating everyone's thinking. From 1951, I was a teacher at my alma mater [Pemangkat Chinese Elementary School], and many of my schoolmates, relatives and friends had already

> returned to the fatherland. Their letters deepened my understanding of the Chinese Communist Party and Socialist China, which hastened my own return. On 5 July 1953, together with more than 200 schoolmates, relatives and friends from Pemangkat (which constituted the third batch of returnees that year), I left the second homeland where four generations [of my family] had sojourned … after traveling for almost half a month, we reached Shenzhen, the doorstep of our country, on 21 July. Accompanied by the welcoming strains of "Anthem to our Fatherland" [Mand.: *Gechang Zuguo*], the moment I stepped onto the earth of my fatherland, it felt like a long-lost son returning to the mother's embrace; emotion welled up into tears that dripped down smiling faces onto the earth of our fatherland.
>
> (Lü 1990: 87–88)

This form of return was different from the return of earlier *huaqiao*, who usually returned to the native place (*xiangxia*) in China from which their ancestors had originated. In the case of these returnees of the 1950s and 1960s, theirs was a *national return*, that is, a return not to a specific native place in China, but a return to China as their nation. That this return was discursively constituted as a national return is evident in the bureaucratic processes involved. One would need to negotiate the Indonesian state bureaucracy, which included making payment for the head tax, renunciation of Indonesian citizenship and affirmation of Chinese citizenship through the courts, application for exit permit from the Immigration Department and, finally, further certification from the police (Lü 1990: 88). Prospective returnees would then need to apply for passports through the local CGA, which would send recommendations and applications on to the Chinese Consulate for consideration. The process involved the renunciation of one nation and the pledging of allegiance to another; it was not merely a private visit to one's ancestral homeland.

By the late 1950s, returnees knew that they were not returning to a prosperous country, and so often took along all sorts of commodities, especially clothing, watches and bicycles.[10] Nevertheless, they remained caught up with the tide of return, regardless of the financial sacrifices, bureaucratic hassles and uncertain future. While the passage of return was accompanied by a poetics of desire for *zuguo*, it was also embedded within the exigencies of the politics of both China and Indonesia.

A fire and refugee returnees

By the later part of the 1950s, Indonesia was growing increasingly hostile to its Chinese minority. The Assaat Movement of 1956 pushed for the use of official policy to level the playing field for indigenous Indonesians through economic discrimination against the Chinese (Coppel 1983: 37). In 1957, a hefty head tax of 1,500 rupiah for each alien family head was announced by the government, and in the same year, foreign-language education became severely restricted as students who were Indonesian citizens had to be transferred to Indonesian-language schools following the national curriculum (Willmott 1961: 73–74).

In 1958, the military banned all (34) Chinese-language newspapers and magazines, later modifying their stand to allow the publication of 11 Chinese newspapers under close military supervision (Willmott 1961: 72–73). But what was considered most devastating to the Chinese was Presidential Decree No.10 (Ind.: *Peraturan Presiden* 10, popularly abbreviated as "PP10") of 1959, which banned alien retail trade outside of provincial and district capitals (Suryadinata 1978: 135). Although what was officially banned was retail trade rather than residence, local military commanders reserved the prerogative to evacuate alien residents from rural areas if they were deemed to be security threats. In fact, this was what happened in some parts of West Java, and in some cases, even Indonesian nationals of Chinese descent were not spared (Somers 1965: 198–214; Mackie 1976: 95). This contributed to the labeling of this historical episode as *paihua* (literally, the purging of Chinese), and the PRC launched an official campaign to call the overseas Chinese back to China (Mozingo 1976: 171–72). The first ships were dispatched to repatriate *nanqiao* (refugee returnees) from Indonesia in early 1960.[11]

In Pemangkat, the morale of the Chinese was at its nadir. Even though Pemangkat was the third largest town in the province (after Pontianak and Singkawang), it was not a district capital and alien retail trade was to be prohibited. This was to affect the majority of the Chinese of Pemangkat because most of them professed to be nationals of the PRC. It was conveyed to me that this caused quite a bit of distress within the Chinese community as Chinese retailers anticipated handing over their businesses to Indonesian nationals for a fraction of the market value. The situation became even more dismal when a fire consumed the town on 2 February 1960, the fifth day of the Chinese New Year, reducing 600 shops and houses to ashes and creating at least 6,000 refugees overnight.

Zhu and Lu were not in Pemangkat when the tragedy struck. They were teachers on the island of Selat Panjang (off Sumatra). Nevertheless, they learned of the fire that had burned down Pemangkat, and that half of their property had been consumed by the flames. Misfortune was to strike them again when, 12 days later, a separate fire ravaged Selat Panjang, burning down the school and rendering them jobless. As victims of a double catastrophe, the couple wanted to return to China as *nanqiao*. Like other *huaqiao* who were oriented toward the PRC, it was their aspiration to return to the *zuguo* anyway, once they had saved enough for the passage. (They had earlier sent their elder children back to China for further studies.) Their refugee status would give them the opportunity to gain free passage to China. The question was whether they should seek repatriation from Selat Panjang or Pemangkat, their hometown. They eventually decided to return to Pemangkat, register themselves as refugees and join the queue to return to China via the repatriation ships sent by the PRC. Zhu and Lu and their family were slated for the sixth batch to leave Pemangkat for China, as they needed time to put their family affairs in order. But as it happened, the fifth batch was the last to leave, and Zhu and Lu were stranded. They had, so to speak, missed the boat.

Someone who did not miss the boat was Bei Zhongmin. He was a teacher with the Pemangkat Chinese Middle School who became a volunteer helper

after the fire. When the "Pemangkat Working Committee to Assist the Government in the Work of Repatriating Overseas Chinese" (Mand.: *Bangjia Xiezhu Zhengfu Qianqiao Gongzuo Weiyuanhui*, hereafter, the Committee) was formed in mid-February to handle registration and the logistics of repatriation on the Pemangkat end, Bei was put in charge of registration. Because of his leadership qualities exhibited during the crisis, Bei was designated Batch Leader for the fourth batch, and led 959 refugee returnees on the rented Norwegian ship *Fu Ying* back to China on 23 April 1960.[12] Between March and July 1960, five batches of *nanqiao* (refugee returnees) from Pemangkat were repatriated to China, most of them victims of the fire.[13] According to Yu Beihe, who was then secretary of the Pemangkat CGA as well as the Committee, the total number of returnees who left via the five shipments was 3,547.[14]

Pemangkat: the second homeland

After four days and three nights, the fourth batch from Pemangkat arrived at Shantou, China, on 27 April. Following a long and difficult journey, they were looking forward to *home*, a nation they could call their own, free from discrimination and given the right to pursue a means of livelihood. But the scorched hills that greeted some of them before landfall was a poor representation of what they had imagined *home* to be. Eventually, most of the fourth batch of refugees were assigned to the Changshan Overseas Chinese Farm (Mand.: *Changshan Huaqiao Nongchang*) in the province of Fujian. Children followed their parents to the farm, while middle-school students went to attend the Jimei Overseas Chinese Preparatory School (Mand.: *Jimei Huaqiao Buxiao*), in preparation for entrance examinations to universities. Those who were skilled, such as drivers and sailors, were assigned to transport and shipping units respectively.

Like the fourth batch, most of the other refugee returnees from Pemangkat were assigned to overseas Chinese farms in the provinces of Guangdong and Fujian. Life on these farms was not at all easy. Besides having to take up the backbreaking work of farming in order to feed themselves, the returnees had to acclimatize to the sub-temperate weather of Southern China. The 1960s were lean years for China, when few had enough to eat or were clothed well enough to keep warm. Many grew nostalgic for West Kalimantan, where, it was said, anything stuck into the ground would grow. When the Cultural Revolution came, these *huaqiao*, deemed to have the taint of foreign relations and considered the children of petty bourgeoisie, were "criticized" (*pipan*) and tortured, becoming outsiders in a nation they had imagined to be their own. Eventually, those who had the means left the farms for the cities, while others applied to leave China in the 1970s for the then British colony of Hong Kong when it became permissible to do so.[15]

As decades passed and Indonesia re-established diplomatic ties with China in 1990, these Pemangkat Chinese began to long for their "second homeland," which they had left in the 1950s and 1960s. Unlike *zuguo*, this "second homeland" is not embedded in the discourse of the nation-state, but, as evident in the song featured at the beginning of this chapter, provokes the affection usually reserved

for one's native place. There are three main ways in which this longing for the "second homeland" takes shape for Pemangkat Chinese who had left. The first takes the form of homecoming trips back to their hometown in West Kalimantan. This is a return to the land of their birth, to revisit old haunts, reunite with family and friends, tend to the graves of their ancestors and report to the local tutelary gods. Bound up in these rituals of return is another complex conception of home, whereby memory, kinship obligations and Chinese cosmology co-mingle in the enunciation of a duty-laden moral return path. Second, these Chinese have begun to write about their "second homeland," inscribing in words a social and iconic topography that defined their memories of this home. Thirdly, they have been forming alumni associations and organizing alumni reunions, through which a past that has been lost becomes re-enacted in the present. These processes are not mutually exclusive, but mutually reinforcing as alienated subjects reproduce apparitions of an elusive home.

In June 2004, I visited Pemangkat with Mr. Chan, a returnee to China from Semparok (a village that is part of the sub-district of Pemangkat) who subsequently made his way to Hong Kong in the 1970s. He was returning to Semparok to visit his sickly mother, but was happy to bring me along and show me the town of Pemangkat. As is the habit in this part of the world, we set out early in the morning to visit acquaintances, before the heat of the day sets in. Then, as the

Figure 5.1 A Catholic convent school in Pemangkat, known among the Chinese as Guniang Tang. Photograph courtesy of author

equatorial sun began to dry up the morning dew, we retraced on foot the landscape of his memories. We visited the various sites of the Pemangkat Chinese Elementary School where he had studied, some no longer around due to the fire, others still standing but dilapidated, or acquired by the military. He also pointed out to me the Guniang Tang, a Catholic convent school that in his youth was considered "reactionary," as well as the CGA. We had noodles with his cousin, who was happy to bring us around in his pick-up truck. We saw, sitting at the foot of Xiangshan (Elephant Mountain), the Dabogong Temple, which is a central feature of any town with a sizeable Chinese population in West Kalimantan. On the side of the temple is a stairway winding a short way up the mountain that leads to the recently refurbished Tianhou Temple. From the Tianhou Temple one gets a panoramic view of the town, as well as the sea, for the Tianhou is supposed to watch over the fishermen out at sea. In this way, we visited landmarks, present and absent, as well as acquaintances and kinsmen that continue to make Pemangkat homely for homecomers.

For Alfred Schuetz (1945: 369), homecomers differ from strangers in that the stranger expects to find himself in an unfamiliar world, whereas the homecomer "expects to return to an environment of which he always had and – so he thinks – still has intimate knowledge." The problem with such an assumption is the "irreversibility of inner time" for the homecoming subject; that is, the homecomer will find a strangeness in his encounter with home because both he and those who await his return have changed (Schuetz 1945: 374–76).

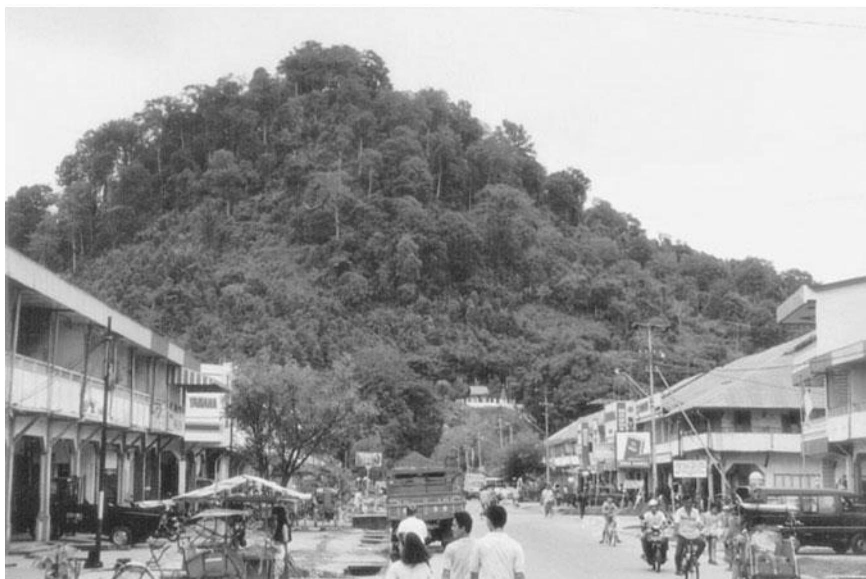

Figure 5.2 Pemangkat street view in the 1990s, with Elephant Mountain in the background. Photograph courtesy of Bei Zhongmin

Figure 5.3 Panoramic view of Pemangkat in 2004, taken from the Tianhou Temple on Elephant Mountain. Photograph courtesy of author

For those who made the pilgrimage trip back to Pemangkat, I do not detect such an impasse, partly because they have made a home somewhere else and did not return to stay, and so are not bothered by the impossibility of return. Yet, every such homecoming trip is also motivated by desire for that which, at the very least, used to be familiar. As such, these homecomers will usually seek out relatives or friends to facilitate their trips, whose hospitality mediates the unfamiliar.

While the kinsmen and friends visited may differ with different returnees, the iconic landscape remains quite invariable. Through the photographs or videos made by these homecomers, one is introduced to the distinctive features of Pemangkat – the schools that are no more, the markets, the streets, the temples and geological features such as Xiangshan – all of which conjure up a topographical template that is embedded in a distant but familiar past. These visual records do not capture memory in the usual sense. They are not merely photographs or videos made to capture the memory of a homecoming trip, but images captured in lieu of a past whose image can no longer be recovered. Thus, in reference to these visual records, homecomers narrate not just the experience of the homecoming trip, but, more pertinently, the past associated with the place. Every image stands in lieu of a memory, an apparition of the past that nevertheless leaves a trace in the present. Significantly, it is this topography that becomes the main subject of prose, poems and songs as Pemangkat Chinese seek to retain a past that is gently slipping away.

While the town of Pemangkat, having been ravaged by two different fires,[16] has changed significantly over the years, the geological landscape has remained unchanged and so tends to evoke the memories and inspire the pens of homecomers. One iconic landmark that does not fail to be the subject of poems is Xiangshan, the Elephant Mountain, at the foot of which the town sprawls. In "The Song of the Elephant Mountain," Liu Youdan (2007: 131) writes:

> The Elephant Mountain is singing
> Calling out to the Rocky Mouth and Lion's Ball on the other side ... [17]
> The Elephant Mountain is singing
> Singing for the unity and friendship of [our] alumni

Here, we get a sense of the geological nodes that make up the topographical imagination of the homecomers. In another poem, "At the Foot of the Elephant Mountain, the Wandering Son Reveals His True Feelings," Liu (2007: 134) writes:

> And now, the Elephant Mountain remains, and the scenery is unchanged,
> except that [our] schoolhouse is no more.
> People have left and the schoolhouse leaves no trace,
> Not even an inch of debris, or a sliver of broken tile.
> Only fallen branches and untended weed are seen everywhere.
> In place of the schoolhouse is a stretch of desolation.
> Where is the schoolhouse? Where are the familiar faces?
> At the foot of Elephant Mountain, the wandering son paces in anguish.

In this poem, the towering presence of Elephant Mountain is contrasted with the absence, not only of the schoolhouse of a bygone era, but also the faces and social life that revolved around the school. The trace of the past is seen in the absence, an absence accentuated by the presence of an unchanging geological landscape. In the face of such jarring absence, there are no reference points left for the camera lens and the pen except the iconic fixtures of the landscape.

The sensory experiences of the past that feed memories are not limited to the visual; they include the aural as well. Lü Decai (2007: 121) writes in "The Sound of Waves":

> Near the Equator, a coastal town,
> at the foot of Elephant Mountain, shops and houses
> the land of our birth.
> At the foot of Elephant Mountain,
> The echo of students reading,
> the school where we sought knowledge.
> From Rocky Mouth the resounding waves send echoes to the north,
> memories linger, half a century has passed,
> heads have turned white. Memories linger,
> the resounding waves of Rocky Mouth remain the same!
> The resounding waves remain the same!![18]

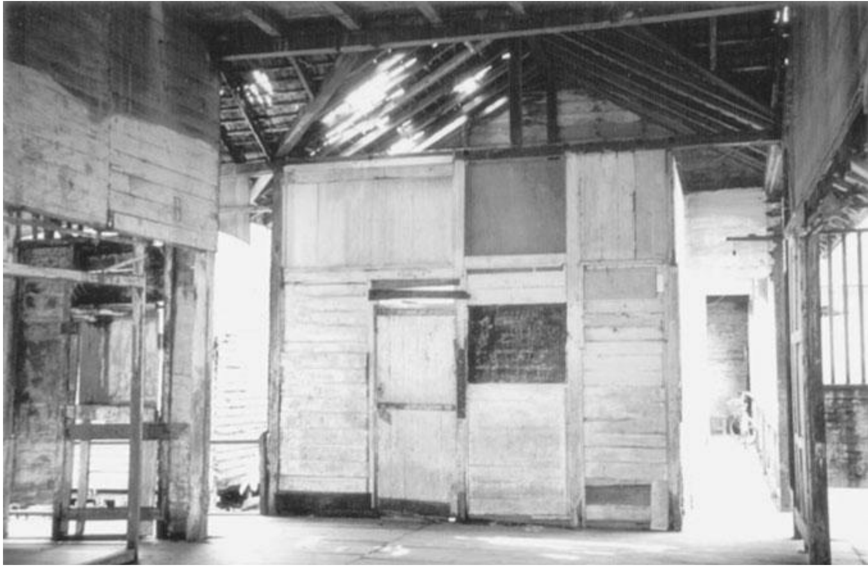

Figure 5.4 The dilapidated schoolhouse in 1994, which is now no more. Photograph courtesy of Bei Zhongmin

Here, desire for the sense of homeliness as embedded in the past, represented by the "echo of students reading," that is, an aural experience that could not be retrieved, is displaced onto another aural experience that has more permanence. In other words, desire for the lost social-aural experience of school life, associated with the excitement of Chinese nationalistic sentiments that inspired the first return, calls forth meaning in the natural soundscape of the "resounding waves of Rocky Mouth," because this is the only aural experience that remains.

Lü Decai, who returned to China in 1953, was one of the earliest advocates for reunions for Pemangkat school alumni. From the summer of 1998, he initiated the organization of a reunion for his elementary school class, which was the third batch of students to graduate from the Pemangkat Chinese Elementary School in 1949. Eventually, 13 out of 25 living classmates turned up for the reunion in Shenzhen in 2000, from 6 to 11 May. Eight came from various parts of China, three from Hong Kong and two from Indonesia.[19] The theme of the reunion was "[To Sing] the Same Song," but in the course of the one-week reunion, they sang many of the other songs that they used to sing in Pemangkat. Under Lü's initiative, the former classmates recalled their seating arrangement in class more than 50 years back, as if they were returning to the class of their childhood. Lü also drew a detailed map of Pemangkat as he recalled it, down to minute details such as the name of every shop-house. (He was known to bring this map out at subsequent gatherings of fellow travelers from Pemangkat to fill in details that he could not recall, drawing, as it were,

on the collective memory of his compatriots.) As such, these reunions constitute an imaginary return to a historical experience, an experience that is relived in the company of fellow alumni.

Lü was to organize two more reunions for the Pemangkat Chinese Elementary and Middle Schools alumni during his lifetime. Both were held in Shenzhen, in 2002 and 2004 respectively, attracting around 1,500 alumni scattered throughout the world (Wu 2010: 113). At the same time, alumni associations of the Pemangkat Chinese schools were being formed, in Pemangkat, Jakarta and Hong Kong. These are not exactly native-place associations, but as alumni associations, seek to recuperate not just the experience of a place, but of a certain experience embedded in history.

Coda

In a sense, the Pemangkat Chinese that I have discussed in this chapter were already translocal before they left for China. They were translocal in the sense that they were located within the cultural and political orbit of China. Thus, with the rise of nationalism in the post-war years, it was not unexpected that they should gravitate toward China, since they already imagined themselves to be part of the Chinese nation. And through their identification with the Chinese nation, China became, for them, not just a homeland embedded in their genealogical past, but their *primary* homeland. And so the place that, hitherto, had been the locus of their everyday existence, became enunciated as their "second homeland," and thereby a *secondary* homeland, because it cannot be placed within the discourse of the modern nation-state. Yet, the nation that these overseas Chinese returnees embraced did not offer the same intimacy as the homeland of their first sensory experiences. This is why the images, sounds and experiences of Pemangkat continue to echo through the memories of those who have left. Many of these subsequently returned to Pemangkat for short trips, only to find that the Pemangkat they knew was tethered to the past. For them, the past is not a foreign country, but it is a country they cannot return to. As the spirit of the era that constituted their subjectivity slips away, only the iconic landscape remains as a vestige of homeliness. These are captured, in terms of visual and aural images, through photos and videos, and given flesh through the written word and narratives, to recapture the sense of community that Pemangkat used to evoke.

Thus, for these translocal Chinese subjects of Pemangkat, they are translocated between different homes (China and Pemangkat) embedded in different senses (nation and native place) and times (high nationalism and post-Cold War), which in turn gives different meanings to their paths of return. But in spite of following these paths of return, these translocal subjects could not appropriate their destinations as homes. Ultimately, going home is an impossibility for them. What remains for them, then, is the taking of images, or the penning down of their experiences just as they did in their classrooms decades ago.

Notes

1 Written for an alumni reunion in Shenzhen in 2002.
2 Wang Tai Peng (1979: 104) defines *kongsi* as "a form of open government, based on an enlarged partnership and brotherhood … [a] new political organization [that] provided a foundation for the social and economic life of the overseas Chinese." See also Wang Tai Peng (1994).
3 The biographical accounts of Zhu Nengling and Lu Aixi presented in this chapter are drawn from (1) oral history interviews that I conducted with them in June 2004 and (2) an unpublished account of their lives narrated by Lu Aixi and recorded by Wu Qihui in March 2006 entitled "My Narrative."
4 Nanyang, or the South Seas, is a Chinese geographical concept that approximates what is known as maritime Southeast Asia today.
5 For an extended examination of the cross-border trajectories of Chinese-language educators in the South Seas, see Sai (2006: 270–85).
6 With additional information from interview with Lü Decai in June 2004, Shenzhen.
7 The history of these developments is gleaned from various interviews and also Xiaozhen (2003).
8 "Congratulatory Note to the Beijing Central People's Government from the Chinese of Pemangkat," photocopy from personal collection of Huang Zizhen, Guangxi, China.
9 Being "progressive" (*jinbu*) is associated with the Chinese Communist Party and opposed to "reactionary" or *fandong*, used to describe the Kuomintang.
10 Those who could afford it brought more than one watch or bicycle, because these imported commodities could always be exchanged for daily necessities in a Communist China that was closed to the Western world.
11 Huang Xiaojian (2005: 51) suggests that the PRC started sending out repatriation ships to Indonesia in February 1960, and that the first batch of 4 ships repatriated more than 2,100 refugees.
12 Interview, 16 September 2005, Jakarta.
13 Some of the refugees who had already made arrangements to return before the fire paid for their own passage via Jakarta. There were also about a hundred non-refugees who, because of their poverty, were given the passage back to China.
14 Interview, 9 July 2004, Jakarta.
15 It is estimated that about 200,000 returnees from Indonesia left for Hong Kong. For a description and analysis of this phenomenon, see Godley and Coppel (1990).
16 The first fire, which took place in 1960, has already been discussed earlier in this chapter. In 1965, another fire erupted and swept through the town, leaving much of it in ruins.
17 These refer to geological features at the mouth of the Sambas River.
18 This verse, first written for the Pemangkat Middle and Elementary Schools reunion of 2002, was published posthumously, after Lü Decai passed away in 2006. Teacher Lü was the first to teach me about Pemangkat, and this chapter is dedicated to him.
19 Besides these, 36 other alumni have also attended the reunion as guests.

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6 The Chinese of Karimun

Citizenship and belonging at Indonesia's margins

Lenore Lyons and Michele Ford

Like many parts of Riau Islands Province (Kepri), the island of Karimun has a much higher proportion of Chinese than most other areas of Indonesia. In 1930, the Chinese – the majority of them newcomers – represented more than one third of the total population in Karimun and Bintan (Ng 1976: 19–20).[1] By the year 2000 over 85 percent of Chinese living in the islands were born in the province (Ananta *et al.* 2008: 35). Many in the community can now trace their roots back three or four generations. At the same time, however, the location of the islands directly south of Singapore (see Figure 6.1) has meant that they continue to have opportunities for frequent contact with family and business associates across the Straits.

These ongoing social and economic ties, and the maintenance of Chinese cultural and linguistic practices, could be interpreted as evidence of the Chinese population's lack of engagement with Indonesia's modern nation-building project and by association of their foreignness. However, Chinese identities (and loyalties) are not always scaled in ethno-nationalist terms. In this chapter, we examine the ways in which Chinese living in the Riau Islands think about themselves as being both Chinese *and* Indonesian. We begin with a brief overview of the history of the Chinese in the Riau Islands and a discussion of the impact that the 2006 Citizenship Law has had on Chinese living in the towns and villages of Karimun. We then turn our attention to the links between identity and cultural practice and the attitudes of Karimun Chinese to Singapore. In doing so, we seek to draw attention to the social dynamics of ethnicity and class in Indonesia's periphery, and how they differ from those at the center.

We argue that the localized expression of Chinese Indonesian identity in Karimun suggests a need to move beyond a focus on integration versus assimilation to an analysis of how identity and belonging are tied to a sense of place.[2] As this chapter shows, in making sense of their position in Indonesia's periphery, Karimun's Chinese community makes reference to a series of binaries – native-born versus foreign-born; center (Jakarta) versus periphery (Riau Islands); islanders versus newcomers; and Indonesian versus Singaporean/Malaysian – that serve to structure their accounts of identity and belonging. These binaries are constantly negotiated through interconnected processes of resistance to assimilation and acculturation to a Karimun "way of life."

The Chinese in the Riau Islands

The earliest Chinese residents in the Riau Islands were Teochius, who were brought to Bintan between 1734 and 1740 to open up gambier plantations.[3] By 1784 there were an estimated 10,000 Chinese pepper and gambier planters on Bintan (Trocki 1979: 20). Over time, more Teochius arrived from mainland Sumatra to work as rubber planters and in coconut plantations. The islands also played a key role in cross-straits trade. By the 1780s:

> Riau had leaped to prosperity on the basis of the expanded junk trade from Southern China, the settlement of Chinese pepper and gambier planters, and the growth of trade in the archipelago. The locally settled Chinese merchants also carried on a thriving trade with "smugglers" who carried Bangka's tin to Riau … Likewise, the Chinese "kongsi" settlements in the interior of western Borneo, which had opened gold mines at Montrado and other sites on the Kapuas River were other markets which received British opium via Riau.
>
> (Trocki 1999: 55)

When Riau was abandoned by the sultanate in 1784, large numbers of Malays and Bugis left the islands but the Chinese chose to remain (Trocki 1979: 30). During this period, which Trocki (1979: 32) describes as a "period of virtual independence," the Chinese developed their own institutions of political and economic control such as Chinese secret societies and revenue farms. By 1825, there were over 13,000 Chinese settled on five different rivers in Bintan, living under a "purely Chinese power structure," centered in Tanjung Pinang and Senggarang (Trocki 1979: 32). When the Dutch returned to take possession of the islands in the early 1800s, they found that they were able to exercise very little control over Chinese affairs.

At the turn of the twentieth century, Chinese-owned sawmills provided another employment opportunity for Chinese immigrants. For the next few decades, most Chinese were rural wage laborers employed on plantations, in tin mines and in timber or fuel camps, supplying wood and charcoal to the growing market in Singapore. Hokkien migrants arrived in the islands in greater numbers in the early part of the twentieth century and began to dominate in trade with Singapore and Malaya through a complicated network of distribution and collection.[4] Hokkien Chinese gradually replaced the Teochius as economic leaders in Tanjung Pinang, but Teochius continued to dominate numerically and economically in Karimun. Hokkien *totok* business interests expanded further during the Japanese Occupation (1942–45) and the ensuing revolutionary period (1945–49), when they began to dominate trade between Singapore and the Riau Islands. This form of trade (which the Dutch regarded as smuggling) gave rise to a new breed of Chinese businessmen and displaced the pre-war Chinese elite.

Chinese import–export organizations (*lianhao*), particularly those based in Singapore, played a pivotal role in confronting the Dutch and sustaining trade with Republican areas.[5] As time went by, the Republic became more

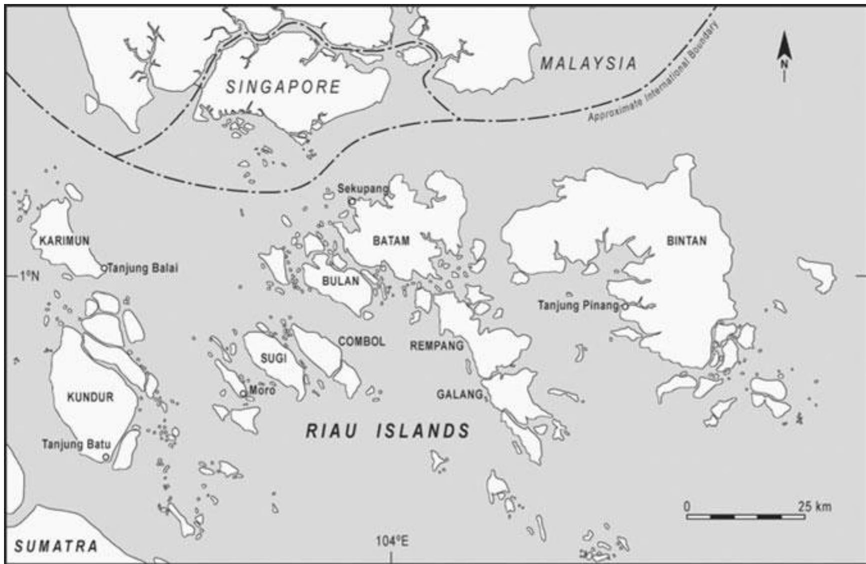

Figure 6.1 Singapore and the Riau Islands.

and more reliant on these smuggling networks. This has led Twang (1998: 196) to argue that "Paradoxically, it was the *totok* – the least assimilated of the Chinese – who were in a far better position to contribute economically to the Indonesian revolution through smuggling." By November 1947, however, blockades brought an end to the golden age of smuggling, and 90 percent of trade ended up back in the hands of Dutch firms. Chinese businessmen began to sell off their boats and foreign trade was normalized through a Dutch-introduced banking system developed to control foreign exchange (Twang 1998: 234–35). The islands remained under Dutch control, not becoming part of the Republic until 1949.

In the immediate post-Independence years, many Chinese traders struggled to make a living, as the majority of small-scale merchants had little capital to invest and were severely affected by fluctuations in commodity prices. As in most other parts of Indonesia, the Riau Islands Chinese were able to reach an accommodation with the authorities when rural trading by non-citizen Chinese was banned under Presidential Decree No. 10/1959. Indeed, according to Mackie (1976: 96–97), while the ban was applied in the nearby islands of Bangka and Belitung, in Riau – which he describes as "a Navy-controlled area, very close to Singapore" – "the authorities admitted that implementation would be difficult." It nevertheless appears to have had an effect on small traders in rural areas of Bintan. In Tanjung Uban, a small town in the north of Bintan, many Hailamese and Hakka store owners left and returned to Singapore (Ng 1976: 41). Those who remained were able to continue their businesses through wives or children who were Indonesian citizens.[6]

The older generation of Chinese businessmen suffered further significant losses when free trade was cut between Singapore, Indonesia and Malaya with Confrontation, in part because the banking sector was heavily dependent on money markets in Singapore and Malaya. During this period, Hokkien merchants were replaced by a "new group of adventurous businessmen" (Ng 1976: 51), whose chances of success were dependent on their initial capital and access to local military authorities, whose patronage was essential in order to cross the border. Although a number of Chinese made their fortunes during this period by acquiring permits to run monopolies for certain goods (e.g. cloves or copra), a large number of Chinese-owned businesses closed down and many Chinese left Indonesia in search of new lives across the Straits.

Despite these setbacks, trade in the Riau Islands continued to be dominated by the Chinese merchants who imported goods from Singapore and distributed them to Java and Sumatra through Batak and Chinese vendors from Medan. As evidence of the significance of the Chinese involvement in trade, Esmara (1975: 29) claims that in the 1970s, "A Chinese businessman's handwritten note in Chinese characters may carry as much weight as a government bank cheque anywhere in Riau." However, not all Chinese in the islands were involved in trade. Many continued to work on smallholdings on remote islands in the archipelago, and Teochiu smallholders and workers who migrated to Bintan from smaller islands filled the vacuum left by earlier waves of departures in the wake of Confrontation (Ng 1976: 42). Many of these new arrivals eked out a living in Tanjung Uban, but the lack of local employment forced younger Chinese to find work as sailors on international vessels or as construction workers, cooks and laundresses (Ng 1976: 46).

Since the 1970s, the economic position of the Chinese population in the Riau Islands has shifted in line with changing demographic patterns, growing urbanization and new employment opportunities associated with multinational industrial investment. From a numerically large proportion of the population in the early part of the twentieth century, the relative size of the Chinese population in the Riau Islands as a whole has gradually declined as a consequence of growing levels of in-migration from other parts of Indonesia.[7] While almost 80 percent of Chinese lived in rural areas in the 1970s (Ng 1976: 25), Chinese now account for more than 11 percent of urban dwellers and just 5.38 percent of the rural population (Ananta *et al.* 2008).[8] There is now considerable variation in the concentration of the Chinese population in the islands, reflecting differences in migration patterns of non-Chinese Indonesian migrants. On Karimun, at the time of the 2000 census, the Chinese accounted for a relatively high 13.8 percent of the population (Ananta *et al.* 2008: 38).

Identity and cultural practice

While there is growing scholarly recognition of the heterogeneity of Indonesia's Chinese populations, it is widely believed that cultural expressions of Chineseness were completely banned under the New Order (Hoon 2008: 53). Amongst the regulations that are said to have eradicated public expressions of Chinese culture

was the prohibition on public celebrations of Chinese religious and cultural festivals in 1967, and the declaration that Confucianism was not a recognized religion in 1979 (Hoon 2008: 42–43). Under the Suharto regime, the use of the Chinese language in public places was strongly discouraged, and printed material in Chinese characters was deemed a prohibited import. Hoon (2008: 53) claims that the "limited documentation of ethnic Chinese agency in preserving and maintaining Chinese language and culture during the New Order era" resulted from this ban on public displays of Chinese culture and tradition rather than from an absence of practice.

However, pressure upon Chinese to limit public displays of language and culture was far greater in Java than in Chinese strongholds like West Kalimantan, North Sumatra and the Riau Islands. Indeed, in the Riau Islands, there was little impetus for the Chinese community to modify their behavior under the New Order, and so islanders did not feel the need to resort to practicing culture and language "secretly" (Hoon 2008: 53), as they did in many other parts of Indonesia. These differences imply community support in the outer islands, but also relative tolerance on the part of the state. We have argued elsewhere that state practices in the Riau borderlands are neither omnipresent nor monolithic, but rather constitute a structural response to the intersection between national and local regimes (Ford and Lyons 2011). Local officials, keenly aware of the flaws (and limited reach) of national legal frameworks, frequently respond to "illegal" acts by turning a blind eye or actively intervening in cases where they deem the national law to be "wrong" for local circumstances.

The strength of linguistic and cultural practices in the islands is reflected in the ways in which individuals refer to themselves. While recent arrivals describe themselves as "Cina" or "Chinese" or "Tionghoa" when asked to describe their ethnicity (*suku*), locally born Chinese normally identify with their dialect-based ethnic group instead (e.g. Hokkien, Hakka, etc.). In fact, it is not uncommon for Chinese in the islands to speak their own and sometimes several other dialects as well as Mandarin. When asked to compare life in the islands and Jakarta, Elenawati, a 40-year-old florist, observed:

> It's easier to be Chinese in Balai [Tanjung Balai Karimun]. There are more Chinese here, so if I want to speak Teochiu or whatever language it's okay. The Chinese in Jakarta are all practically the same. They all speak Indonesian.

Similarly, Sutoyo noted that he speaks Hokkien freely in Karimun, but always speaks Indonesian when he visits Java. This was so, he said, because "Here we can use our languages and are not afraid to do so but there they speak Indonesian. There we feel that we should be a little prudent."

The fact that today several Chinese languages are widely spoken in the islands can be explained by the large percentage of Chinese in some communities, along with their lack of schooling, which has affected their fluency in Indonesian. However, it also reflects the presence of large numbers of Chinese-speaking tourists and businesspeople from Singapore and Malaysia, who converse with

local Chinese in Mandarin, Hokkien or Teochiu. The Riau Islands' location in the borderlands has also long provided access to Mandarin radio and television programming from Singapore and Malaysia. As noted by Sutoyo, a 41-year-old hotelier from Tanjung Balai Karimun, growing up in the 1970s and 1980s, he and his friends usually watched the Mandarin channels and, as a consequence, could converse quite easily in Mandarin with Chinese visitors.

While middle- and upper-class Chinese in Java were able to preserve language by watching satellite TV in the 1980s (Hoon 2008: 56), the widespread presence of televisions in the islands – where television ownership has long been widespread due in large part to the flourishing smuggling industry (Ford and Lyons 2012) – meant that working-class Chinese families were also able to access foreign broadcasts in the 1970s and 1980s.[9] Riau Islanders were watching television broadcasts from Singapore in the 1970s, before television was available in Sumatra.[10] Even after Indonesian channels became available, Karimun residents had access only to poor-quality broadcasts of TVRI prior to the 1990s, but could easily pick up a range of channels from Singapore. Ah An, a 40-year-old car salesman in Karimun, claimed that, even today, middle-aged and older Chinese prefer watching Mandarin-language broadcasts from Singapore. Moreover, as Faucher notes in her study of young Indonesians living in Tanjung Pinang, while many non-Chinese islanders find Singapore and Malaysian channels boring and have difficulty understanding the Malay broadcasts, young Chinese eagerly consume Chinese popular culture (see Faucher 2007: 456 n.16).

Architectural and cultural markers of Chineseness in the islands were also left largely untouched by the Suharto regime. The Chinese have a strong visible presence in urban centers and villages throughout the islands. Public symbols of Chinese culture include large temples as well as joss stick prayer offerings in Chinese-owned shops and homes. Even more remarkable, perhaps, than the ongoing expression of these symbols of Chinese culture is the fact that locally these practices are not viewed as the exclusive domain of the Chinese. Traveling on an inter-island ferry service in 2004, we observed Malay crew offering joss paper to the sea goddess on departure from the Batam ferry terminal to Karimun. On another trip, a Malay captain, who had completed the pilgrimage to Mecca, happily posed for a photograph in his wheelhouse in front of joss sticks, prayer fruit and a *bagua* (eight-sided *feng shui* mirror).

It is common knowledge also that Malays pray at the old Chinese temple at Senggarang on the island of Bintan for good luck when they gamble, since gambling is forbidden in Islam. In the 1970s and 1980s it was common for Malays and long-term immigrants to attend Chinese New Year celebrations, where the children received *ampau* (Hokkien: red-packet; *hongbao* in Mandarin). Muslims also sometimes distributed green *ampau* at Idul Fitri. These kinds of cultural exchanges have decreased in more recent decades as a result of newer waves of migration and the increasing religiosity of some Muslims, particularly in Batam and even Tanjung Pinang. But in Karimun and more remote island communities they remain a striking feature of everyday life. Ah Chan, a 42-year-old shopkeeper, described life in Meral, a small village in Karimun, as one based on strong family-like connections between Malays and Chinese, "We're like

family. If it's Lebaran, we take *lontong* [steamed rice cake] to their houses, if it's [Chinese] New Year, they bring us drinks."

Economic and social integration

Local people of all ethnic backgrounds in Karimun attribute the preservation of temples, tolerance toward public burning of joss paper and the widespread use of Chinese languages in public to strong inter-ethnic bonds between the Chinese and Malays. The majority of our respondents saw no contradiction between their public and private expressions of Chineseness and being Indonesian. For them, identity was not a zero-sum game. Becoming more like a Jakartan Chinese by losing one's knowledge of Chinese language and culture (i.e. assimilating) would not make them Indonesian – something that is both a fact of birthplace and is reinforced through a commitment to the nation as demonstrated by the ties one forges in the community through schooling, employment, community and kinship ties. These community ties extend beyond the current generation and are reflected in the struggles, hard work and sacrifice experienced by all Riau Islanders, regardless of ethnicity.

Almost all the Chinese we spoke to described the relationship between the Chinese and the Malays as peaceful and based on mutual cooperation. Harmonious inter-ethnic relations are not only said to be characteristic of the workplace and schools. Erni – who was born in Jakarta of Chinese parents from West Kalimantan and moved to Karimun in 2000 with her Tanjung Pinang Chinese husband – attributed the lack of discrimination against the Chinese to intermarriage between the Chinese and Malays, and to strong inter-communal relations:

> That's why staying in Karimun is so safe … for the Chinese there is no fear or fanaticism that is excessive. If there is, it's probably because of ethnic groups from outside the Islands … we don't need to talk about which ones … but from the Malays which make up the biggest ethnic group and the Javanese there are no problems. We're like brother and sister.

The ability of the Chinese in Karimun to integrate in this way is the product of a number of inter-connected factors. One crucial factor that mitigates ethnic tension is the absence of clear class divisions between the Chinese and other communities in Karimun. There remains a great deal of class differentiation amongst the Chinese population. In addition to their established presence as shop-keepers, hoteliers and restaurateurs, it is not uncommon to see Chinese working as garbage collectors, hawkers or market stallholders. The diverse class locations of the Chinese living in Karimun (and other parts of the Riau Islands) sets this community apart from Chinese living in other parts of Indonesia, particularly Java, where their occupations, wealth and education mark them as different from the broader population. The Malays and others whom we spoke with were well aware that some Chinese in their communities experienced severe economic hardship and live in impoverished circumstances. In the face of such apparent

need, it was difficult to assert a simplistic claim that all Chinese were wealthy, a common allegation made against Chinese living elsewhere.

Where class gaps do exist between Chinese and non-Chinese islanders, these are not always a source of community division. A number of wealthier informants, including Sutoyo, attributed the lack of tension to the solid foundation established between Chinese and Malays on the basis of their employment relationships – the Chinese as business owners and the Malays as employees. Ah An argued:

> In Jakarta, there are lots of [non-Chinese] newcomers, but here the population is well established. If they wanted to start a mass movement against the Chinese, they'd think long and hard. Pretty much all of them have a Chinese boss.

Elsewhere in Indonesia, ethnically specific employment relationships have been a great source of tension between Chinese business owners and non-Chinese employees, in part because of perceptions that Chinese employers engage in discriminatory hiring and promotion practices. Although this is true to some extent in Karimun, the small size of Chinese-owned businesses, the dearth of alternative employment opportunities and the cultural familiarity between Chinese and non-Chinese go a long way in mediating such perceptions. Ah Chai, a 54-year-old from Tanjung Balai Karimun, also attributed peaceful inter-ethnic relations to the employment relationships that existed between Malays and Chinese:

> Well, one thing is that there is a relationship between workers and their bosses. As you know, most Chinese people hire Chinese. But here lots of workers in Chinese companies are not Chinese. They need each other. They have an employment relationship. So the entrepreneur needs labor, and some of those who work for him are Chinese and some aren't. They need each other. This creates a relationship. Besides that, school kids mix. There aren't schools especially for Chinese or Indonesians, they're all mixed. So from when they are small they're already learning to mix with each other. And also the sports fields. There aren't sports fields just for Chinese or for Indonesians. No. They all play sport together happily. And on the field they talk to each other and exchange opinions. Also, for example, the Chinese Association. If we do social work, we don't just help Chinese – we help anyone in need for free. For example if we offer to help with birth certificates, we help everyone. We don't differentiate.

A second significant factor is the length of time that the Chinese have been present in the islands. Our non-Chinese respondents openly acknowledged that the Chinese had been in Karimun for a "long time" as evidenced by their temples, villages and cemeteries.[11] As Long (2009: 135) notes in his study of Tanjung Pinang, Chinese traders are rarely painted as villains. Instead, his informants noted, "the Chinese had always traded in Tanjung Pinang." The villains were

in fact the more recently arrived Minangkabau, who dominated the first wave of migration in the 1950s. Indeed, it is commonplace for Malays, Chinese and other long-term residents to assert their legitimacy as "old timers" in the face of more recent arrivals. It is these recent arrivals – rather than the Chinese – who are often the subject of criticism for their inability to integrate, and their lack of understanding of the Riau Islands "way of life."

Citizenship and belonging

A key part of the discourse of the "Chinese Problem" is the commonly held view that Chinese Indonesians are transients (*penumpang*) who are not committed to Indonesia (Hoon 2008: 137–42; 60–62). As Ah An observed:

> Whenever something goes wrong, the Chinese cop it first. If houses get burnt, it's the houses of the Chinese that go first. If someone wants to bash people up, it's the Chinese who get bashed up first. They think we are just *numpang* (staying here without contributing) even though we are *asli* [indigenous, of this place] – we're Indonesian citizens. There's no way I'm going back to the PRC. But the Indonesians don't see it that way. To them, Chinese are not Indonesians. But we think we're pure Indonesians. 100 percent *asli*. We live and die in Indonesia. We're buried here, not in China. But they think otherwise.

As Ah An's comments suggest, the sense that Chinese are not truly *of* Indonesia is certainly present in Karimun. Yet Chinese from elsewhere understand the qualitative difference in the expression of that sentiment. For example, Erni contrasted her experience in the islands to life in Jakarta as follows:

> In Jakarta we get called *amoi* ... or "Hey slanty-eyes ... look, a Chinese" like that. But here it's as if we are welcome. The Chinese here feel that although there are some differences with the other ethnic groups this is their home ... they feel patriotic ... that's why the Chinese here can speak such good Malay. They can build lives here without that ever-pervasive fear that one day they might have to leave ... it's not like that. They know that they were born here and that the people here have never tried to hurt them. I've experienced Jakarta and Karimun, so I know how it feels.

To understand what it means to be both "Chinese" and "Indonesian" in Karimun, it is thus important to consider the historical importance of citizenship status. At the time of Independence, most Chinese in the islands were classified as being foreign. Article 26 of the 1945 Constitution distinguishes between "native-born [*asli*] Indonesians" and persons of other nationality who are legalized by statute as being citizens. The 1946 Citizenship Act and the 1949 Round Table Agreement were based on *jus soli* principle and the so-called "passive system": *peranakan* Chinese who had been Dutch subjects and who did not reject Indonesian citizenship were regarded as dual nationals of China and Indonesia.

In 1958 a new Citizenship Act was introduced based on an "active system" by which Indonesian citizens of Chinese descent would lose their status as citizens if they failed to make an official declaration to reject Chinese citizenship. The Act created two main categories of Chinese: the *Warga Negara Indonesia* (or Indonesian citizens, WNI) and the *Warga Negara Asing* (or foreign citizens, WNA). Foreign Chinese could only become Indonesian citizens through naturalization, a costly and complex process.

As numerous scholars have observed, the term "Indonesian citizen" (WNI) was, however, generally understood to mean a person of foreign (Chinese) origin and therefore not indigenous (*asli*). According to Coppel (2009: 241):

> The logical consequence of this constitutional dichotomy is that the native-born are *ipso facto* Indonesian citizens, whereas persons of other nationality need to take further steps to qualify for Indonesian citizenship, steps which themselves depend on the terms of citizenship legislation passed by the Indonesian parliament.

In other words, the "practical operation of the citizenship regime is quite different from its formal appearance" (Lindsey 2005: 48). Under the New Order, citizens were officially categorized into two groups: *pribumi* (native) and non-*pribumi* (commonly understood as ethnic Chinese). It has been widely documented that provisions related to obtaining an Indonesian Citizenship Certificate (Surat Bukti Kewarganegaraan Republik Indonesia, SBKRI) were generally understood as applying only to citizens of Chinese descent and these in turn have become associated with deep-seated and ongoing discrimination against Chinese.[12] For example, Budi, who owns a motorcycle repair shop outside Tanjung Balai Karimun, complained that Chinese had been required to show their SBKRI whenever they wanted to organize a birth certificate, an identity card or a passport.

It was not until 1 August 2006, when the new Citizenship Law (Law No.12/2006) came into effect, that this discriminatory structure was revoked. Section 2 of the new law repealed the wording of Article 26 of the Constitution and clarified the meaning of "native-born [*asli*] Indonesians" as "those who became Indonesian citizens at the time of their birth and have not voluntarily accepted any other citizenship" (Coppel 2009: 241). For the Chinese living in Karimun, changes to the citizenship law in 2006 provided a strong affirmation of their natural home in the islands.[13] As Sutoyo commented, "we are much happier because of the law. The law used to restrict the rights of our ethnic group … we used to be second-class citizens but now we are the same. We feel the difference."

Effendi, Chair of the Chinese Association (Paguyuban Sosial Marga Tionghoa Indonesia) in Tanjung Balai Karimun at the time of the introduction of the new Citizenship Law, felt that it was a major step toward formal recognition of the Chinese community as legitimate members of the Indonesian community. His successor, Budi, explained that the biggest change he had witnessed since the introduction of the new law was the removal of administrative discrimination by lower levels of the bureaucracy. This was because the changes to the Citizenship Law provided the Chinese with a clear legal foundation from which to challenge

government officials who insisted that they provide SBKRI. For example, when Effendi – a solicitor – heard that immigration officials continued to ask for SBKRI even after the 2006 Citizenship Law was introduced, he met with the Head of Immigration, who acted immediately on the information. As a result, Chinese are no longer asked for SBKRI when they apply for passports. Effendi described this response as a sign of the strong bonds that exist between locally born officials and Chinese in the islands, noting that Malay officials in local government were much more sympathetic than central authorities because they grew up with and went to school with Chinese.

Responses to 1998

The positive accounts that our respondents gave of their life in Karimun paint a somewhat utopic vision of inter-ethnic relations, as do stories of local state officials who chose not to enforce national laws prohibiting public expressions of Chinese culture. These accounts clearly overlook the extent to which the Chinese are subject to everyday discrimination in their dealings with local bureaucracies. In the Islands, as elsewhere, the requirement to pay "fees" or apply for "permits" for routine matters are examples of ways in which the Chinese are treated differently from other islanders. Casual anti-Chinese sentiment is also an everyday occurrence throughout the islands. Non-Chinese sometimes accuse the Chinese of setting themselves apart from other islanders through their perceived superior wealth, their religion, their consumption of pork (which can effectively segregate coffee shops and restaurants), the existence of relatively demographically homogenous "Chinatown" areas and their use of Chinese language in public. However, these views coexist alongside statements that not all Chinese are wealthy, that islander-born Chinese are more integrated into the local community and respectful of Islam and Malay *adat*, and that in contrast to the Chinese, it is the new migrants from other parts of Indonesia who are less integrated into Riau-Islander lifestyles.

It is perhaps not surprising, given this balance, that the ethnic tension that has characterized some other parts of Indonesia is far less pronounced in the islands – a fact evident in local responses to the anti-Chinese violence immediately after Suharto's resignation in May 1998. The Karimun Chinese became increasingly concerned for a time about the possibility of racially motivated violence sparked by perceptions that they did not belong. However, in large part, this sense of unease emerged from the general history of violence against the Chinese in Indonesia rather than from personal experience.

The islanders' concern was exacerbated by the mass exodus from Jakarta that accompanied the violence of 1998. It has been widely reported that in the aftermath of the riots in Jakarta, large numbers of Chinese from Java and other parts of Indonesia fled to the islands, particularly Batam, from where they intended to take refuge in Singapore. Hiteong, a 42-year-old restaurateur who lives in Karimun but owns a large restaurant in Batam, observed that many of the Chinese who flew to Batam in the wake of the 1998 riots sold their cars at low prices at Sukarno-Hatta airport before leaving, and on their arrival in Batam, bought ferry

tickets to Singapore. Others stayed in the Islands on "stand-by," ready to leave if the violence spread. Some local Chinese also sent family, primarily women and children, to the safety of Singapore as a precautionary measure. As Sutoyo recalled:

> People were worried here. That was about as much of an issue we had … there were no riots here. There were issues outside Karimun. In Batam a riot was going to break out … but it didn't happen in Karimun … we were just worried.

As Sutoyo's comments suggest, the anti-Chinese violence that characterized the end of the Suharto regime was never replicated in the Riau Islands. In fact, in many cases, the events of that year revealed that the opposite was true. According to the guardian of the Banyan Tree Temple in Senggarang on Bintan, for example, Malays stood beside their Chinese neighbors in nightly vigils in the uncertain months of 1998. Recalling this period almost a decade later, our informants inevitably compared their lives in Karimun with those of the Chinese in Jakarta and elsewhere in Java, claiming that the Chinese living elsewhere had faced overt discrimination and violence because they were not integrated into their local communities.

I wouldn't want to live there

The exodus of wealthy Chinese in 1998 is widely viewed in Indonesia as confirmation of the strength of ethnic ties (Singapore is viewed as a Chinese country) over nationalism, and as a triumph of self-interest over loyalty. However, the accounts of our respondents challenge these assumptions about the sentiments of Chinese Indonesians. The majority of our interviewees expressed a strong sense of Indonesian nationalism and emphasized the differences between themselves and their Singaporean and/or Malaysian counterparts, whom they described in national rather than ethnic terms.

Compared to most other parts of Indonesia, where daily engagements with Chinese from other parts of the region are not commonplace, Chinese in the Riau Islands have a much stronger sense of their particular place in the Chinese diaspora. For Ah Chai, the difference is intimately linked with Chinese involvement in the struggle for Independence. To leave the Indonesian nation would be to forget the struggles of his ancestors and their contemporaries who had fought for their place as Indonesian citizens:

> We need to remember our history. The struggle of our ancestors, who shed blood – so much blood – for this country … The land of *tumpah darah* [bloodshed] is different from human land. If it's *tanah tumpah darah* it can't be negotiated.

However, the majority of our respondents couched their responses not in terms of a love of the nation (although some expressed that sentiment), but in terms

of acculturation to a superior way of life. When talking about the benefits of Indonesian citizenship, they typically highlighted the quality of life they experienced over and above the advantages of living in economically prosperous Singapore. Our Karimun informants exhibited a deep knowledge about life in Singapore, including the positive and negative dimensions of an authoritarian state that delivers economic benefits and the rule of law. Despite the obvious financial incentives of living in a developed country, everyone we spoke to expressed a strong distaste for the regulations that govern everyday life in Singapore. As Erni said:

> I've also heard that just being a citizen of Singapore isn't that nice. I mean in terms of discipline … I couldn't live the way that I do here … It'd be stressful. There'd be too many adaptations that would have to be made … I would be trapped. I'm scared that I wouldn't be able to do it because the law is so well enforced … You need to be trained from when we are small.

These difficulties that life in Singapore posed were felt keenly by Riau Islander Chinese, particularly working-class Chinese, who recognized their potentially marginal status in Singapore's technologically advanced economy. Ah An argued that while manual laborers struggled to make a living in Singapore, in Indonesia everyone eats well:

> Singapore just has the good name. If you ask taxi drivers about their situation they are really angry. Being Singaporean means nothing if every day they face huge risks. If they don't work they don't eat. In Indonesia you eat even if you don't have work.

According to Hui Hui, a 23-year-old shop attendant who was born in Karimun:

> On the positive side, it'd be safe, and the government would be good. But on the negative side, it's hard to make a living. You have to work for 12 hours a day. Sure, the wages are high, but it's exhausting. Here it's relaxed. Everything is easy. The problem here is that experiences are really limited and the government is crap.

Ahong, a 26-year-old with primary school education, who sells fried snacks by the side of a road, was also worried about the economic hardship he would face:

> No way. Life is hard there, and business is not good. I would choose not to go with Singapore. I'm better off in Indonesia.

More striking, however, was the fact that those who were comparatively well off had little interest in living in Singapore. Aleng, who owns a mechanical and electrical spare-parts shop and frequently travels to Singapore, argued that he could afford a better quality of life in Karimun because it was cheaper and because his low level of formal education was irrelevant. He worried that if he

became Singaporean he would have to live a much less comfortable lifestyle – a sentiment echoed by many other wealthy informants.

Wealthy Chinese like Aleng and Sutoyo could have moved to Singapore during the New Order period, or even since. Instead, they have made a conscious choice to remain in Indonesia. While they are aware that their ethnicity accords them particular advantages when dealing with Singaporeans, they are also very aware that if they moved to Singapore they could not compete. Perhaps even more significantly, many well-established Chinese scoff at the lifestyles of their Singaporean relatives, not only eschewing the "rat race" of the global city-state in favor of the more leisurely pace of life in the islands but also affirming their commitment to the Indonesian nation.

Conclusion

In the post-1998 period, renewed emphasis has been placed on the question of Chinese loyalties to the Indonesian nation. Purdey (2003) argues that in the aftermath of anti-Chinese violence, a contested debate cast in terms of the politics of *asimilasi* (assimilation) and *integrasi* (integration) has resurfaced, drawing upon similar debates in the late 1950s and 1960s. She notes that while the character of the debate has changed because now almost all ethnic Chinese are Indonesian citizens (and share the experience of common suffering under the New Order and post-New Order regimes), alternatives to *asimilasi–integrasi* have been slow to emerge (Purdey 2003: 422–23).

In the Islands, the position of the Chinese has historically been very much one of integration rather than assimilation. Like Chinese in other parts of Indonesia, those living in Karimun have faced discrimination and the threat of violence for many generations. In many respects, however, life in the Riau Islands is very different from life in other parts of Indonesia. The Chinese in Karimun form a significant minority which has established a strong sense of community built on the public expression of Chinese culture and languages. For the Karimun Chinese, integration (as opposed to assimilation) is a measure of the breadth and depth of their relationships with non-Chinese islanders as employers, friends and members of the broader community, demonstrated through the ability to participate in community events and religious festivals.

However, as our account attests, such integration has been accompanied by acculturation to a particular "islander" way of life. The Riau Islands are commonly viewed as a space set apart from the rules and regulations that govern other parts of Indonesia, particularly Java.[14] For Chinese of all social strata, there are enormous benefits to living in the Islands. The pace of life, the cost of living and the easy access to quality education and health care in nearby Singapore and Malaysia ensure that most Chinese feel a strong sense a place and belonging, and so the prospect of leaving Indonesia is therefore not particularly appealing. To be Chinese in Indonesia may have its drawbacks, but it is more preferable to being a Singaporean citizen.

For the Chinese living in Karimun, then, the sense of being Chinese Indonesians is intimately linked to a strong sense of place. As Riau Islanders,

they claim to share a way of life and an outlook that is distinct from those of Indonesians living elsewhere. This way of life is closely tied to a strong sense of identity and belonging expressed in the view that "it's different here". That difference is measured by the strength of interpersonal ties between Chinese and Malays, long-term public acceptance of expressions of Chinese culture and language and the lack of ethnic violence targeting the Chinese. It is articulated through a constant process of comparison: *asli* versus foreign-born; Jakarta/Java versus Karimun/the Riau Islands; islanders versus newcomers; and Indonesians versus Singaporeans/Malaysians. These binaries structure everyday accounts of identity and belonging and produce a distinctly localized sense of being both Chinese and Indonesian.

Notes

1 Less than 30 percent were born in the islands. This was markedly different from other parts of the archipelago: in 1930s Java, 79% of the Chinese were locally born and in the Outer Provinces as a whole the figure was 48% (Ng 1976: 21–22). Van der Putten (2001: 178) notes that Tanjung Pinang was established as a Chinese town, something that worried the Dutch Resident, who in 1863 expressed his concern that the predominance of the Chinese was preventing the few Malays that lived in the town from establishing a foothold.

2 The research on which this chapter is based was funded by an Australian Research Council (ARC) Discovery Project grant "In the Shadow of Singapore: The Limits of Transnationalism in Insular Riau" (DP0557368). The bulk of the fieldwork was conducted in Karimun by Michele Ford in 2006 and 2008. We would like to thank Wayne Palmer, who conducted follow-up interviews on our behalf in 2010.

3 Although the Riau Islands have been home to a large Chinese population for over two centuries, there has been little scholarly research on the diverse Chinese communities who call the islands home. While some studies of the region make reference to early forms of social organization among merchants, plantation owners and coolies, and the relationship between Chinese settlers and the indigenous polity (Trocki 1979; Andaya and Andaya 1982; Somers Heidhues 1992, 1996), there are no detailed ethnographic or historical accounts of the diverse Chinese communities who have lived there. One of the few sociological studies of this community is a Nanyang University research paper by Ng Chin-keong (1976), who conducted research in the town of Tanjung Pinang on Bintan Island in the early 1970s. Ng's study does not describe the Chinese community in Karimun, but it provides an important backdrop against which to understand the position of the Chinese in the islands as a whole.

4 As tin and gambier production declined in the 1930s, the loss of employment was partially redressed by bauxite mining in Bintan, with significant numbers of Hakka Chinese arriving in the islands when mining first began in 1935 (Ng 1976: 38).

5 There are estimates that between 1 January 1946 and 31 July 1947, $290 million worth of goods were smuggled from republican-controlled areas to Malaya/Singapore. Of this, native rubber accounted for $202.3 million or 70 percent, while estate produce accounted for only $87.7 million (Twang 1998: 200).

6 Ng (1976: 52) argues, however, that for many of these traders, economic uncertainty rather than government regulations affected their businesses, with many closing down in the early years of Independence.

7 Much of this in-migration has been a spontaneous response to the Indonesia-Malaysia-Singapore Growth Triangle. It is also important to note that statistics on ethnic composition are influenced by the fact that many islanders of mixed ancestry prefer to claim Malay ethnicity.

8 The 2000 census shows that 76 percent of the population of the province lives in urban areas.
9 Sobary (1987: 9) estimates that by 1985 there was one television set per family in Tanjung Pinang.
10 In his study of 1970s Tanjung Pinang, Ng found that while older people preferred Mandarin serials, younger people liked to watch Western shows with Malay subtitles (Ng 1976: 73).
11 Our work resonates with Long's (2009) work in Tanjung Pinang, which reveals the commonplace appearance of "Chinese ghosts" in Malay accounts of individuals who have been afflicted by supernatural phenomena. The appearance of Chinese ghosts is said to be linked to the presence of old, over-grown Chinese cemeteries.
12 For a discussion of this and related issues, see Ford and Purdey (2009).
13 In the 1930s, the Chinese population of the Riau Islands had been mostly migrants, but by the 1970s the majority were Indonesian citizens.
14 This unique way of life is typically invoked by Riau Islanders to explain the harmonious nature of inter-ethnic relations between the Chinese and Malays, as well as local attitudes toward a range of "illegal but licit" practices such as smuggling and "illegal" migration (Ford and Lyons 2012).

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7 The spirit-mediums of Singkawang

Performing "peoplehood"

Margaret Chan

Introduction

Capgomeh (Mand.: *shi wu ming*) is the fifteenth day of the first lunar month which marks the close of Chinese New Year, known as *Imlek* in Indonesia. On this day, hundreds of spirit-mediums parade through the town of Singkawang in West Kalimantan. The procession represents an army of spirit-warriors who have come together to exorcise demons that may bring misfortune to the community in the new year. The spirit battle is enacted in a theatre of ritual violence that annually draws thousands of spectators to Singkawang town (see for example, *Pontianak Post Online* 2010a). Since 2008, the *Capgomeh* parade in Singkawang (henceforth abbreviated as *Capgomeh*) has been recognized in the official "Visit Indonesia" calendar, lending national significance to the event.

The ostentation of *Capgomeh* has made it a target for Malay ire rooted in resentment against the intrusion of the Chinese into the political life of the region. In December 2007, a Chinese Indonesian, Hasan Karman (Bong Sau Fam or Mand.: Huang Shao Fan), was sworn in as Singkawang's mayor. The following month, another Chinese Indonesian, Christiandy Sanjaya, was appointed provincial vice-governor of West Kalimantan. In 2008, the Malays of neighboring Pontianak protested, ostensibly against the use of Chinese characters in the *Imlek* decorations put up by Karman in his official residence. The action resulted in the banning of spirit-medium parades through the streets of Pontianak from 2008 to 2012 (see, for example, *Gatra News* 2012). I have discussed the political situation elsewhere (Chan 2009). This chapter analyzes *Capgomeh* as a performance of Indonesian peoplehood by the Chinese in Singkawang.

I propose *Capgomeh* as a performance of "peoplehood." "Peoplehood" in this instance, is a statement of "locale-ness,"[1] and should be distinguished from representations of what might be termed "Indonesian essences." Thus, the gods of *Capgomeh* do not include national heroes such as Diponegoro or Kartini but are Dayak, Malay and Chinese earth gods – local tutelary spirits. However, what *Capgomeh* references is not the personalities and spirits of the individual gods per se. Instead, *Capgomeh* puts on show a united army of gods deriving from the *tiga tiang* (or "three pillars") of West Kalimantan society, that is, the three main ethnic groups – Dayak, Malay and Chinese – in West Kalimantan. I propose that the *Capgomeh* performance situates the Chinese as brethren of the "natives"

(Ind.: *pribumi*), who are therefore rooted and entitled to be part of the "peoplehood" of West Kalimantan.

The empirical evidence for this study was gathered from my participation-observation of *Capgomeh* in February 2008 and from a second field trip to Singkawang in June–July 2009 to visit temple and homes. Gans underlines the importance of ethnographic fieldwork and intensive interviews in the investigation of symbolic religiosity, because he notes that public symbols can have different signification for different people in the private practice of their religion (Gans 1994: 586 and 588). In this regard I filled my days in Singkawang with crowded itineraries of temple and home visits, having managed to obtain excellent access to the field through a close relationship that I had developed with the organizing committee of *Capgomeh* in Singkawang. I interviewed respected spirit-mediums and temple elders and community leaders including Hasan Karman, mayor of Singkawang. I also discovered that the Singkawang people had a habit of pasting photographs and certificates on their walls. This source provided valuable information in the almost total absence of textual records on the subject.

The private practice of religion and the public displays of *Capgomeh* are examined for meaning using the methodology of performance studies. Erving Goffman (Goffman 1959) was the first to argue for a dramaturgical perspective on social behavior. He proposed that people performed their social roles before others. In the early 1970s, anthropologist Victor Turner wrote of daily living as a kind of theatre, and of rituals as social dramas (Turner 1988: 75–76). Turner partnered with theatre practitioner and theorist Richard Schechner to develop a methodology that enabled the reading of the social dramas of life using the theories and vocabulary of theatre studies (see Schechner 2007: 16–19). The fruit of their collaboration is performance studies, and I have used this lens to read the lived enactments of *Capgomeh* Singkawang as a statement of peoplehood.

Definitions of religious terms can be nebulous for we cannot point decisively to empirically observable entities. Thus my explanation of terminology is not about pinpointing lexical meaning but is about taking consistent positions for the sake of clarity. The word "gods" is used to designate supernatural beings that are the objects of worship. Despite Elliott's (Elliott 1990: 28) worry about overtones of Western theology, this term is widely used in discussions of Chinese religion. The word "spirit" is used here to refer to an animating supernatural force, as in "spirit-medium," both for its etymological sense as well as because of established usage. Malevolent supernatural beings, the objects of exorcism, are designated as "demons" in this chapter.

Some important local terms used in this chapter need to be clarified. These include "*latok kong*" (Mand.: *la zhuo gong*, henceforth abbreviated as *latok*), which is the Singkawang term for "earth god." "*Latok*" derives from the Malay "*datuk*" meaning "grandfather." Incidentally, "*kong*" also signifies "grandfather" in Chinese (Cheu 1992: 383; Cheu 1996–97: 8–9). The double honorific signifies a god, specifically, an indigenous earth god. In Singkawang, the spirit-medium is referred to as "*tatung*." None whom I asked had bothered to trace the origin of

the word "*tatung*" but I offer an educated guess that it derives from "*tiao tong*" meaning "to jump or dance as a spirit-medium."

Among Chinese from southern China, spirit-mediums are called "*tangki*" (Mand.: *tongji*), which is generally translated as "divining child." DeBernardi's alternative proposal that the term is derived from the Min dialect for "shaman" with an etymological link to the idea of "dance" (DeBernardi 2006: 11) is useful. Chinese popular religion is essentially performance-oriented (Chan 2006: 75–105) and rituals often feature sacred choreographies, which is one reason the spirit-medium performance is described as "dancing" (Mand.: *tiao*). "*Tiao*" can also mean "jump," because possession has been described as the spirit jumping into the body of the medium.

The spectacle of the Capgomeh parade in Singkawang

Among southern Chinese popular religious processions performed in Southeast Asia, *Capgomeh* Singkawang is the second largest after the annual Thai vegetarian festival of Phuket, where it is estimated that as many as 1,500 spirit-mediums participate in processions that take place over nine days, usually in the month of October. The Singkawang parade stages an army of gods on the march. The records of the Panitia Perayanaan Imlek, the Chinese New Year festival organizing committee of *Capgomeh*, show that in 2008, 498 *tatungs* registered for the parade. In 2009, there were 592, and in 2010, which was nationally designated as "Visit West Kalimantan" year, there were 666 spirit-mediums (Nusantio 2010). In 2011, this number was 635 *tatungs* (Nusantio 2011). For 2012, there were 761 registered participants.[2]

In Singkawang on 21 February 2008, I watched the *Capgomeh* parade from a grandstand of plank and canvas that had been set up in front of the old Kota Indah cinema on the town's main street of Diponegoro Road. From early morning the spirit-mediums had begun to assemble at Kridasana Stadium on Kridasana Road, and at 8 a.m. they set out for the town center. Past Diponegoro Road, they marched on to Budi Utomo Street, thence to Hasan Saad Road, Saman Bujang Road, Kempol Mahmud Street, Jalan Niaga Street, ending at Sejahtera Road at around 11 a.m. Lio Kuniarwan, the head of the *Capgomeh* organizing committee for 2011, told me in a 2011 interview in Singapore that the morning hours were chosen less for a sense of the sacred than for practical reasons: Singkawang sits close to the equator and it can get swelteringly hot by noon.

For Hasan Karman, it was his inaugural parade as mayor of Singkawang in 2008, since he had just been sworn into office in December 2007. Karman looked resplendent in a golden high-collared Chinese tunic closed by frog buttons as he greeted VIP guests including West Kalimantan Governor Cornelis M.H. and Puan Maharani, daughter of Megawati Sukarnoputri, former President of Indonesia. Thousands of spectators had gathered on the road before the grandstand. A path had been cut through them, but not by police or traffic wardens. People just seemed to know where to stand. Into this path entered the parade of *tatungs*. Some marched on foot, but most were carried on palanquins borne upon the shoulders of teams of 10 to 50 supporters. There appeared to be no spiritual

hierarchical difference between the two. Some *tatungs* explained their lack of palanquins as a result of insufficient funds. They lacked resources to pay for the construction of palanquins and could not pay supporters to carry them. The palanquins served the useful theatrical purpose of floats that allowed the *tatungs* to perform in clear view of the crowds.

The sedan chairs were made of wooden planks with knife edges or nail beds for seats and armrests that terminated in halberd blades. The *tatungs* performed acts of invulnerability upon their portable thrones. Some stood tall, pressing their bare feet upon the halberds. Others balanced on their stomachs upon a knife blade protruding from the back of their palanquins. Many had metal skewers and ornate rods thrust through their cheeks. Some were pierced with tree branches, and I saw one spirit-medium with an electric stand fan passed through his cheek. Yet another danced with heavy cans of soft drinks hanging by threads sewn into the flesh of his cheeks and torso.

Bands of musicians clashed cymbals and banged on drums and gongs. Dragon and lion dancers joined in the procession. Unique to *Capgomeh* Singkawang were the *jailangkung* troupes on parade. A *jailangkung* is an ordinary vegetable basket dressed with a shirt. When prayed over, it is believed that the *jailangkung* becomes spirit-possessed so that it self-automates to answer questions, writing with a pen pushed into the basket-weave. In the *Capgomeh* parade, the *jailangkungs*, held either by a single spirit-channeler (a medium who acts as a conduit for the spirit to possess the basket) or by sashes between two people, swung and bobbed wildly, dragging those who held them hither and thither. Fifteen *jailangkung* groups featured in *Capgomeh* 2008, 16 in 2009 (Panitia Perayanaan Imlek 2008 and 2009), 46 in 2010 (Nusantio 2010) and 28 in 2011 (Nusantio 2011). Twenty-eight *jailangkungs* had registered for 2012.[3]

The *Capgomeh* parade was noisy, colorful and martial, typical of the demon-exorcising tours that are a hallmark of Chinese spirit-medium worship. The tradition has a venerable ancestry extending back to the *nuo* exorcism of the proto-Chinese Xia Dynasty. By the Zhou Dynasty, *nuo* was institutionalized as a state ritual led by an exorcist who brandished weapons around in a wild manner (Tian 2003/2004: 344–45). The contemporary southern Chinese spirit-medium, including the *tatung*, is a warrior exorcist in this tradition (Chan 2006: 106–13).

My research interest is in spirit-medium cults, and for more than 10 years I have observed many spirit-medium processions in China, Taiwan and Southeast Asia. Acts of ritual violence are intrinsic to such processions. While the blood sacrifice of puppies (see below) performed at *Capgomeh* presented arresting sights, what engaged me was the staging of multi-ethnic earth gods joined in united purpose. Most spirit-medium possessions in Chinese popular religion feature popular gods of the Daoist pantheon such as *Guangong*, who is the famous red-faced god of war, or *Nezha*, who is the commander of the central army of celestial spirit soldiers. However, at *Capgomeh* in Singkawang in 2008, instead of seeing the familiar Chinese gods, I encountered Dayak, Malay and Chinese *latoks*. This was highly unusual.[4] To be sure, *Guangong* and other spirit luminaries were at the parade (I met a *Guangong* medium in Singkawang in 2009), but the overwhelming image presented was of a multiethnic united army

among whom individual gods did not stand out. Adding to the impression that this was a gathering of anonymous gods rather than principal deities was the conspicuous absence of effigies carried in procession. By staging an army of *latoks* drawn from the three ethnic pillars of West Kalimantan, the Chinese in Singkawang had used *Capgomeh* to signify themselves as not simply "Chinese" but also brethren of the Dayak and Malays, rooted and entitled to be part of the "peoplehood" of West Kalimantan.

The Chinese of Singkawang: religion and worldview

Singkawang used to be the administrative center of the Sambas district but it had achieved regional autonomy in 2001. At 504 km^2 in area and with a population of 222,821 in 2010 (*Pemerintah Kota Singkawang* 2010), the town is the second largest in West Kalimantan, after the provincial capital of Pontianak. Singkawang is the epicentre of a region that has been named the "Chinese Districts," both for the large number of Chinese in the local population and for the persistence of the practice of Chinese traditions in the area (Heidhues 2003: 11). An official report released in 2006 lists population figures by religious affiliation and contains these statistics: 50 percent Muslims, 36 percent Buddhists, 12 percent Christians. The rest were "Hindus" and "others" (Pemerintah Kota Singkawang 2008[5]). This data points to a Chinese population of at least 36 percent. Interestingly, Mayor Hasan Karman in an email to me on 19 June 2008 noted that he personally believed that the Chinese formed about 60 percent of the town population. Although he did not substantiate this claim, he did repeat it in a press interview (*Republika Online* 2009).

The Chinese came to West Borneo from the eighteenth century onwards to mine for gold. They came by sea to Singkawang before moving inland into areas including Monterado and Bengkayang (see Yuan 2000 and Heidhues 2003 for the history of the Chinese in Singkawang). When the Chinese came to West Kalimantan, they brought with them the practice of Chinese spirit-medium worship. Both Yuan (2000) and Heidhues (2003) relate how spirit-mediums were consulted in all major decisions including military action. Yuan noted that the Chinese society of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Borneo cannot be understood without an appreciation of the centrality of religion in the community (Yuan 2000: 33). Heidhues describes Chinese popular religion as the social cement of local Chinese society, for "religion was as much about this world as the next, and gods, mediums, and processions could be expressions of state and individual power as much as were armies, judicial procedures, or administrative structures" (Heidhues 2003: 59).

The fact that religion continues to play a critical role within Singkawang's Chinese community up to the present is borne out in the reputation the town enjoys as "the town of a thousand temples." In 2010, there were 267 Chinese houses of worship compared to 22 Buddhist temples, 191 mosques and Muslim prayer houses and 94 churches (Pemerintah Kota Singkawang 2010). Spirit-medium parades have long been a part of the local culture, attested to from the 1960s and 1970s in text and in photographs. There is also documentary evidence

of Chinese festivals, including spirit-medium parades celebrated in Singkawang during the New Order period. From 1999, with the beginning of the presidency of Abdurrahman Wahid, spirit-mediums began to gather more openly, and the present tradition of a procession through the Singkawang town center began in 2002 (for a fuller account of *Capgomeh* in Singkawang including photographs, see Chan 2009).

Reformasi in Indonesia brought about a renaissance of Chinese cultural pride. In the euphoria of the election of the first Chinese Indonesian mayor, wealthy Chinese Singkawang citizens contributed funds toward the staging of *Capgomeh* 2008.Sitting next to me on the grandstand in 2008 was a businessman who was born in Singkawang but who now lives in Jakarta. He belonged to a group of local-born Singkawang Chinese who had made good in the nation's capital and who now returned to give back to their hometown. "Look," he said to me, "Lanfang is reborn." The Lanfang Kongsi is one of the three eighteenth-century mining confederations in West Kalimantan whose organizational hold over their members was such that they have been described as "republics" (Yuan 2000: 57–102; Heidhues 2003: 55). However, this businessman was probably not referring to the historical Lanfang Kongsi but rather the idea of a Chinese-led community in West Kalimantan, since Lanfang Kongsi was not located in the region of Singkawang. But it is the best-known confederation and the only one with a published history (Heidhues 1996: 169).[6] Once again in 2008, as 300 years ago, religion provided the social glue of Singkawang Chinese society, bringing together economics, politics and administration. This time, however, there was a crucial difference. Whereas the Chinese confederations of the eighteenth century were founded as kernels of Chinese unity against the hostile "Others," in the *Capgomeh* of the twenty-first century, the presentation was one of Dayak-Malay-Chinese brotherhood.

I have described spirit-medium worship as a "living palimpsest of the religious yearnings of a Chinese people" (Chan 2006:10). Spirit-medium worship is living ritual theater. There is no written canon. It is improvisational and situational, with spirit-mediums performing in response to the needs of their congregation. I visited Singkawang temples and home shrines to learn how *tatungs* presented themselves to devotees. It was clear that even away from public parades, the *tatungs* consistently maintained the belief in themselves as mediums for Dayak, Malay and Chinese *latoks*. In the following sections, I turn to look at the spirit-mediums and their representation of multi-ethnic gods.

The earth gods of Singkawang

Earth gods are tutelary gods of localities and are often depicted as indigenous characters. For example, *Ong Dia* (Grandfather of the Earth) is the Vietnamese earth god who wears a Cham-style scarf (Thien 2003: 116–20). The Chams are people of the ancient kingdom of Champa (for a history of Champa, see Vickery 2009: 45–60). In Malaysia and Singapore, earth gods are known as *Datuk Kong* and spirit-mediums don the Malay sarong to represent them (see images in DeBernardi 2006: 8, 183 and 188). The worship of earth gods is ancient and

is found universally in Chinese communities (see, for example, Chamberlayne 1966; Wolf 1974: 134–45). When land is used in some way, for example for construction or to plant or mine, an altar, mostly in the form of a humble shrine, or even just a pile stones, is set up on the site so that the local earth god may be prayed to for permission to exploit the land and for protection (Zheng 2004: 67).

The vast majority of Singkawang spirit-mediums are of Chinese descent. They are members of one or both of two spirit-medium associations in Singkawang – the *Majelis Tao Indonesia* and the *Tridharma* association. In 2009 interviews, Chet Ket Khiong (Mand.: Cai Guo Qiang), who was the head of the *Majelis Tao Indonesia*, told me that on his register of 700 spirit-mediums, 7 were Malay and 20 were Dayak. Bong Wui Khong (Mand.: Huang Wei Kang), who was head of the second spirit-medium association, the *Tridharma* group, said that among 400 members, 3 were Malay and around 10 were Dayak. Yet in the *Capgomeh* 2008 parade, it appeared that the *tatungs* believed that they were mediums for Dayak, Malay and Chinese *latoks*. They portrayed this belief through what Gans calls "symbolic ethnicity" (Gans 1979 and 1994), using cultural markers of costumes, props and ritual behavior. Such emblems may be theatrical aids, but crucial to this analysis is a theological principle that in Chinese spirit-medium worship ritual is theater, and theater is ritual (Chan 2006). Entranced spirit-mediums perform being gods using costumes, props and gestures, and while they are acting out their roles, it is held by believers that they are the veritable gods incarnate.

Dayak gods

At *Capgomeh* 2008, the Dayak spirit-mediums were distinctive for their costumes of embroidered or decorated vests, representing the traditional *baju burung* (literally, "bird garment") worn over trousers covered by embroidered or decorated aprons that represented the traditional *sirat* or *cawat* (*sirat* or *cawat* are the Iban and Malay terms, respectively, for the traditional loincloth which features an embroidered apron at the front – see Steinmayer 1991.) The Dayak mediums wore headbands or helmets decorated with hornbill or pheasant feathers, or leaves of *daun juang* (*Cordyline fruticosa*) (Figure 7.1). These brown- and red-streaked leaves were to be seen on all palanquins bearing Dayak spirit-mediums. Sheaves of *burai pinang* (the inflorescence of the *Areca catechu*) were also placed on altars to Dayak *latoks* or were carried by supporters accompanying Dayak *tatungs*. Zahorka (2007: 128–29) notes that these are two of the eight obligatory plant species used in shamanic healing rituals among the Benuaq Ohookng people of East Kalimantan. The Malay term *daun juang* might be given as the "struggle leaf" but this is only a literal translation. A popular name, the fire leaf plant, describes the dark–brown- and red-streaked leaves. The *pinang* palm or areca palm is sometimes (wrongly) known as the betel nut palm for the areca nut is chewed with betel leaf. These two plants are sacred to the Dayaks and their use in *Capgomeh* reaffirmed the authenticity of possession by Dayak spirits – a claim which was also made by performances of blood sacrifices.

Some *tatungs* bit off the heads of chickens to drink the blood from the struggling birds. For instance, two spirit-mediums, one an ethnic Dayak introduced to

Figure 7.1 A medium symbolizes his possession by a Dayak spirit using the markers of costume; a decorated vest, an apron and a feathered helmet. Photograph by Margaret Chan

me by name, and another a Chinese but possessed by a Dayak spirit, cut off the head of black puppies[7] and drank the blood. These acts, performed in full view of spectators, sent powerful signals of ethnicity. Several informants explained to me that Dayak spirits get energized from drinking blood. However, the popular belief that blood sacrifice is intrinsic to Dayak culture (see, for example, Schiller and Garang 2002: 251) was rejected by John Bamba, the Director of Institute of Dayakologi, who said that not all Dayak tribes have traditions involving blood sacrifice (Bamba, Pontianak, 22 February 2008).[8]

Hioe Tjin Kion (Mand.: Hu Jin Qiang)[9] is the medium for *Latok Sungkung*. Sungkung in Seluas, West Kalimantan, has been named "the navel of Borneo" and is the mythological ancestral home of the Bidayuhs, the people from the highlands (Staal 1940: 56). Staal, a nineteenth-century Jesuit missionary, in his report on Borneo and the Dayaks, related a local story that traced the fierce and warlike Sungkung Dayak to descendants of an early Chinese immigrant who had married Dayak women (Staal 1940: 56). Hioe, who was aged 55 in 2009, described Sungkung as a place of mystery and magic where the spirit-healers could walk upon trees. Hioe became a medium at the age of 17 and is the fourth generation of the Hioe family of spirit-mediums. Personifying *Latok Sungkung*, Hioe travels about Singkawang capturing demons which he imprisons in ceramic bowls, one cupped upon the other, and also in a large Chinese jar set in the compound of his temple on Said Harun Road. This jar is opened just once a year, when a chicken and a black dog must be sacrificed.

In a small temple in the compound of a shop-house on Ali Anyang Road, I was introduced to the spirit-basket god *Wang Kong Kong* (Mand.: Huang Gong Gong) by his channeler, Bhong Ci Thung (Mand.: Wang Zhi Xing). Bhong, aged 30 in 2009, is a medium for the Dayak *Latok Iban Pulau Gabung*. Every *Capgomeh*, Bhong leads a contingent of spirit-mediums all dressed in Dayak costumes. The spirit-basket *Wang Kong Kong* also joins in the parade, riding upon his own miniature palanquin which, like those of human mediums, is set with knives. Bhong told me that before setting out on a *Capgomeh* parade a chicken has to be sacrificed to *Wang Kong Kong*. The bird would be decapitated and *Wang Kong Kong* would sup on its blood by pecking at the neck with the pen inserted into the weave of the basket.

Malay gods

As with all spirit-mediums at *Capgomeh*, the Malay spirit-mediums distinguished themselves by their costumes. However, they were not dressed in anything that might have resembled the Malay sarong and cap. Instead, they wore vests over trousers with sashes tied crisscross over their chest, wrapped about the arms, and tied as bandanas on their foreheads. Many of the headbands bore writing in curvy scrawls and dots that resembled Arabic script (Figure 7.2).

Muslims are prohibited from getting involved in *Capgomeh*. For example in 2008, Ahmadi Muhammad, the head of the *Majelis Ulama Indonesia* (Council of Muftis) in the municipality of Sambas, reminded all Muslims that it is forbidden for them to become spirit-mediums, or to carry spirit-medium sedan chairs, or

Figure 7.2 A medium signals that he is possessed by a Malay spirit by wearing a bandana marked with “Arabic” writing. Photograph by Margaret Chan

even to enter a Chinese temple (*Pontianak Post*, 21 February 2008: 24; see also a report in *Harianberkat* [Daily Blessings], 1 February 2010). In Singkawang in July 2009, I met and interviewed a Malay medium who told me that the Front Pembela Islam (FPI) [The Islamic Defenders Front] had attacked him that year to warn him against taking part in *Capgomeh*. Perhaps Muslim sensitivity is behind the Chinese spirit-mediums' avoidance of an overt symbol such as costume to signal Malay ethnicity. Instead the spirit-mediums depended on inconspicuous Arabic-like writing on headbands, and it appears that the ability to write this script is the defining mark of possession by a Malay spirit.

I met Ji Su Jiu (Mand.: Yu Ciyou) at a small temple which was set in the front hall of his home, a terrace house in the Jam Thang (Mand.: Yan Ting) Salt District on the outskirts of Singkawang. Ah Jiu, who was in his twenties (in 2008), had been first possessed in 2005. Ah Jiu did not know the name of this spirit but believed it to be Malay, for when entranced, Ah Jiu said that he could write "Arabic" script, a skill he professed not to possess ordinarily. When we met on 19 February 2008, Ah Jiu showed me a sample of this flowing calligraphy written in gold paint on a large black fan. Ah Jiu must not have set his heart on being a medium, for when I visited the temple in the Salt District again in July 2009, I found that he had left to find work in Jakarta. Only the fan remained, the writing upon it now faded. When I showed a photograph of Ah Jiu's fan to people who could read Arabic, they could not make out any words. This seemed to be the case with all of the images of writings of Malay *tatungs* and *jailangkungs*. Their script was illegible.

Yet the Chinese take the "Arabic writings" of the Malay spirit-mediums seriously. On the morning of 4 July 2009, I watched a *jailangkung* possessed by *Latok Pak Gani* write in such a script. Wielded by two Chinese men, the spirit-basket scrawled upon a strip of white paper with a brush dipped in black ink. This was a medicinal talisman which was to be burnt so that the ashes could be mixed with water to be drunk by the patient at the *Maghrib* (Muslim evening prayers) hour. In a small shrine to *Latok Pak Gani* in front of the temple in Natuna village, there is a picture of a handsome old man dressed all in white and wearing the white skull-cap of a *haji* (a Muslim who has performed the pilgrimage to Mecca). With the help of his channeler, Li Qiu Quan, aged 42 (in 2009), *Latok Pak Gani* told his story, writing in Indonesian through his spirit-basket. Apparently, *Pak Gani* had been born in Surabaya in the nineteenth century. He came to West Kalimantan and became an ascetic on Serasan Island. In death, *Latok Pak Gani* had returned through his *jailangkung* to help people with medical consultations.

Chinese gods

On 1 July 2009, I consulted with Ma Guohui, then aged 61, at his temple on Kalimantan Road. Ma wielded a *jailangkung* moved by the spirit of his younger brother, Ma Zenghui. Upon his death, Ma Zenghui had become a warrior god with the somewhat generic name of *Wu Sheng Jiang Jun* (Martial and Holy General). In fact most of the names of the Chinese spirits I met through their human mediums and their spirit-baskets had generic names such as *Zhi Gao*

Da Wang (Exalted and Supreme Highness), *Ling Shan Tong Zi* (Mountain Spirit Child) and *Niao Xiu Cai* (Bird Scholar). These generic names testify to their being *latoks* rather than established gods of the Daoist pantheon.

Lie Teck Poh (Mand.: Li De Bao), the father of Li Qiu Quan of the *Latok Pak Gani jailangkung*, was the medium of Fam Sai Fu (Mand.: Fan Shi Fu), a *latok* who had apparently once lived on Mount Pasi in Singkawang. Fam's story is not likely to be told because Old Lie, now in his sixties, is mute from a stroke. No one, including Lie's son, knows anything more, and only a photograph on the temple wall shows how when Fam's spirit possessed Old Lie, the medium would strip down to shorts and cover his body with black paint. This habit must have made Lie in his incarnation as Fam a distinctive figure on the Singkawang spirit-medium scene, for from viewing *Capgomeh* 2008 and video images of the parades of 2007, 2009, 2010, 2011 and 2012, it is clear that the vast majority of the Chinese *tatungs* signified the Chinese ethnicity of their possessing spirits by dressing up in Ming dynasty-style costumes as popularly depicted in Chinese films and opera. Some wear the pajama-like uniforms of foot soldiers comprising tunics over trousers (Figure 7.3). Others dress up as generals in costumes featuring circular metal plates sewn on to give the appearance of amour (Figure 7.4). Even the *jailangkung* spirit-baskets wear the shirts of foot soldiers (Figure 7.5). In parade, the costumed spirit-mediums and spirit-baskets present a striking image of a united army of Dayak, Malay and Chinese *latoks*, a performance that narrates a mythic history of brotherhood.

Reading Capgomeh as performance of identity

A population, writes Lie, is different from a people. The first is an aggregate, an analytical category, whereas the second is an experiential entity (Lie 2004: 41). A people is a group that shares an internal conviction of their identity. "Peoplehood" is a self-reflexive construction, a primal definition that provides a repository of deep truths of subjectivity and individuality which we feel about ourselves (Lie 2004: 1). Lie writes of a modern peoplehood born out of the making of the modern state. A new civic rule has replaced old absolutist systems under kings or religious authorities. Nationalism has become the new rallying point, one so potent as to have aroused millions to go to war and their deaths for the sake of their nation (Lie 2004: 98). But the true achievement of nation-building is the integration of citizens into a polity sharing an inclusionary identity, thereby transforming "people in itself (population) to people for itself (peoplehood)" (Lie 2004: 99). This order depends upon a notion of commonality, and state institutions such as education, judiciary, military and welfare are pressed to the purpose. However, writes Lie, the nation as a cultural whole is a chimera for cultural integration can never be complete: "peoplehood identity and racism develop hand in hand" (Lie 2004: 169).

Smith's definition of the nation encompasses the ideas set out by Lie: "a named human population with shared myths and memories occupying an historic territory or homeland, and possessing a common public culture, a single unified economy and common legal rights and duties" (Smith 1996: 581). As with Lie,

Figure 7.3 A medium dressed in the Ming-style uniform of a foot soldier. Photograph by Margaret Chan

Figure 7.4 A medium dressed in the Ming-style armor of a general as portrayed on the Chinese opera stage. Photograph by Margaret Chan

Figure 7.5 A *jailangkung* dressed in the Ming-style uniform of a foot soldier. Note the flags worn at the back, a traditional device of the Chinese opera stage to signal the military companies under the command of the soldier. Photograph by Margaret Chan

Smith points out that ruptures inevitably arise. The ideological principles of a unitary identity, the very ties that seek to dissolve differences, can engender contestation. A sense of a shared solidarity may give rise to a drive to purify a community of alien elements (Smith 1996: 581). The modern state is an artificial creation drawn up along territorial lines. This is an indiscriminate inclusionary categorization. All insiders are awarded systematic advantages. But inclusion will give rise to exclusion as insiders seek out, in order to exclude, the outsiders from within. The challenge finds expressions in the gaps of peoplehood. One such separation is that of uneven ethno-history.

Ethnicity, writes Smith, is the sense of collective belonging to a community based on common myths of origin and shared memories associated with an historic homeland (Smith 1996: 583). In these terms we might place the Chinese Indonesians on the side of civic nationalism, with claims to rights as citizens by virtue of the fact that they were born in Indonesia and grew up in Indonesia. But this represents only the territorial claims of nation, and a gulf separates the Chinese from the native *pribumi*. In Lie's terms, the modern peoplehood of nationalism is "thin" compared to kinship and local identities, which provide "thick," concrete and cogent narratives of identity (Lie 2004: 9–10). In a world where power stems from culture, writes Smith, the culturally peripheral and politically unprivileged communities will embark on strategies that would allow them to approach the center. One potent idea would be to claim affiliation to a

mythical, shared golden age (Smith 1996: 581–86). This then is the narrative of *Capgomeh*. It constitutes a claim that the Dayak, Malay and Chinese ancestral spirits of Singkawang form a united fraternity, situating the Chinese Indonesians in Singkawang as the brethren of the native *pribumi*. The Chinese Indonesians are, therefore, rooted and entitled to be part of the peoplehood of West Kalimantan.

Gans writes that acculturation and assimilation do not consist of a straight-line dissolution of ethnic groups into one homogenous whole aligned with a host society. Rather, it is a bumpy process of continual innovative ethnic adaptation to a new society (Gans 1992). Cheu reads the worship of earth gods in Penang as an internal defense mechanism of the Chinese against unconditional submission to ideologies of "Malay nationalism" (Cheu 1992: 381). In this instance, the Malay *keramat* (saint) spirit is co-opted as a Chinese *Datuk Kong* in a multilateral acculturative strategy that makes Malay ideas "Chinese" and Chinese ideas "Malay." This has allowed Malaysian Chinese to negotiate Malaysianization while keeping intact markers of their Chinese ethnicity (Cheu 1992 and 1996–97).

Datuk Kong worship in Singapore and Malaysia depends on personal one-to-one consultations with possessed spirit-mediums (Cheu 1992: 390–95; DeBernardi 2006: 175–200). In terms of scale, this strategy of adaptation through acculturation may be described as a micro-invention against which *Capgomeh* Singkawang may be described as a "macro-invention." This is a term Gans uses to describe the deliberate invention of whole new ethnic patterns or the careful reconstruction of old ones never experienced personally (Gans 1994: 579–80). Blood sacrifices, Arabic-like writing and Ming-style costumes represent cultural symbols pulled out of the original cultural moorings, "to become stand-ins" (Gans, 1979: 9). These appropriated emblems enable the Singkawang Chinese to "Indonesianize" on their own terms and to parade a new peoplehood to a large audience, especially because the *Capgomeh* parade has become a touristic commodity securing for the festival national and international attention.

The Capgomeh tale: concretizing peoplehood

In an interview in Singkawang on 20 February 2008, Mayor Karman told me that he saw *Capgomeh* as an equivalent of *Tomatina*, the annual tomato battle which brings international fame and tourists to the small town of Buñol, Spain. Research indicates that ethnic tourism, where spectators come to gawk at exotic peoples, can generate ways of concretizing ethnicity (van den Berghe and Keyes 1984). The stories that locals tell tourists about themselves eventually become truths of identity. Picard (Picard 1990), for example, argues that cultural tourism has contributed to a Balinese brand image that has become an identity marker which characterizes the Balinese not only to outsiders but also to the Balinese themselves. In the same way, can *Capgomeh* allow Chinese Indonesians of Singkawang to perform a peoplehood both to themselves and to other Indonesians as well? The situation of the dragon column might supply answers.

In 2008, a column emblazoned with a handsome dragon sculpture was erected in the town center, at the Kepol Mahmud–Niaga road junction. Today, this column has become a symbol of inter-ethnic conflict. The Malays led by the

FPI want the column destroyed. They are opposed by the Chinese and Dayak. In the *Pontianak Post Online* report on a 2010 rally organized by the Persatuan Pemuda Tionghoa (Association of Chinese Youth or the PPT) and the Persatuan Pemuda Dayak (Association of Dayak Youth or the PPD), Noreseng Yosep, a Dayak, was quoted as saying that the dragon is an important religious symbol of the Dayak; that the Dayaks want to live in peaceful ethnic harmony; that the history of Borneo has shown that the Dayak, Malay and Chinese have long lived together in peace, so that groups who wish to destroy this harmony should not be allowed in Singkawang (*Pontianak Post Online* 2010b, my translation). Had the spectacular rehearsing of the myth of ethnic brotherhood helped shape Noreseng's point of view?

The growing success of *Capgomeh* Singkawang can be as much attributed to post-New Order religious fervor as to cash disbursements by the parade organizing committee. In 2008, this was up to 2.5 million rupiah (about US$270 at 2012 rates) per spirit-medium team which carried a palanquin. Donor fatigue, political jostling, Malay animosity are just some of the forces that pose real challenges to the future success of *Capgomeh*. Perhaps the parade on its present scale will not survive if Indonesian Chinese Mayor Hasan Karman is no longer in office, but the fragility of the situation cannot detract from the reading of *Capgomeh* as a performance of identity.

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Notes

1 This term was suggested to me by Mary Somers Heidhues (email correspondence dated 22 April 2011) to distinguish more clearly between "peoplehood" as a statement of belonging to a locality in Indonesia, and what might be conceived of as an essence of "Indonesian-ness."

2 This information comes from *United Singkawang*, a website that has close access to the community leaders of Singkawang. I do have the list of *tatung* registered for 2012, but this did not come from an official source. The registration numbers exceed 900, but there were many instances of double counting.

3 From a list of registered participants for Capgomeh 2012 given to me by my informant Ardian Cangianto, but I am unable to confirm if this was the official list.

4 This view was shared by my travel companions. I had gone to Singkawang with five members of the Taoism-Singapore Forum, a group dedicated to the investigation of Chinese culture and religion. Ardian Cangianto, founder of the *Budaya Tionghoa*

(Chinese Culture) website, had also joined us. All of my friends are familiar with Daoist rituals, and all remarked upon the overwhelming representation of local gods in the parade.

5 I accessed this website in May 2008. Since then, the website has been updated and no longer provides population statistics by religious affiliation.

6 There are Internet websites describing brief histories of the *Lanfang* confederation, such as that on Indonesian Wikipedia (2011) and Sintaonet.com (2006). An Indonesian-language version of Mary Heidhues' 2003 history of West Kalimantan was also published in 2008.

7 The black-dog sacrifice may be a Chinese cultural practice. Yuan (Yuan 2000: 64) reports on a nineteenth-century account of Chinese miners in West Kalimantan sacrificing black dogs. The blood of black dogs, along with menstrual blood, is regarded as an antidote against spells and curses (Chu 1980: 39). However, several Singkawang informants told me that the drinking of the blood of sacrificed animals was demanded by Dayak spirits. The Dayak spirits were energized by drinking blood, they explained. Hui (Hui 2011: 134) reports that in the 1966–67 Indonesian military *demonstrasi* action against the Chinese in the interior of West Kalimantan, Dayaks who attacked Chinese bit off the heads of chickens and drank the blood.

8 In an article, "Unity or Diversity," on the Kobus Foundation website, Bamba (n.d.) wrote that terms such as "headhunters," "cannibalism," "blood drinkers" were instances of sensationalist media language that promoted false perceptions and misunderstanding.

9 This ethnography identifies the interviewees by their personal names and the locations of their temple because my informants are community leaders who want their work to be acknowledged. My interviewees are people who engage in office or practice their religion publicly. The mediums operate out of temples that are open to all. Only where my informants have asked for confidentiality have personal names been avoided.

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8 "By race, I am Chinese; and by grace, I am Christian"

Negotiating Chineseness and Christianity in Indonesia

Chang-Yau Hoon

> Uniting Chinese culture with Christian faith may be likened to an enterprise which seeks to reconcile two opposing forces. The reason is simple, for an ethnic Chinese who holds on to his/her customs and traditions, Christianity is but a "Westerner's religion." In this "Westerner's religion," culture – in particular, Chinese customs that highly respect ancestor worship – does not appear to be highly valued. To many Christians, Chinese culture may be perceived as nothing more than incoherent and irrational myths that are impossible to reason. Such a conflict between Chineseness and Christianity has been ongoing for centuries.
>
> (Berlian 2008: 164, my translation).

Are Chineseness and Christianity[1] truly incompatible as suggested above? Do they represent a "clash of civilizations" as Huntington (1993) famously hypothesized? What accounts for the conflicts between Chinese culture and Christian faith? How have Chinese Christian churches negotiated their religious and cultural identity?

In the article entitled "Faith and Chinese Culture" from which the quotation that opens this chapter comes, Chinese Indonesian Evangelist Willy Berlian writes, "by Race, I am Chinese; and by Grace, I am Christian." As highlighted by Berlian, underlying the assumption of the "age-old" tension between Chineseness and Christianity is a more salient and complex debate regarding the relationship between culture and religion. Although discussed *ad nauseam* by philosophers, theologians and scholars, such a debate between culture and religion remains highly relevant in today's context (see, for example, Keane 2007; Roy 2010). A key element of Christian conversion is the separation of the sacred from the profane. This is manifest in the clean break from the pagan past when Christianity was made the state religion of Rome in the fourth century (Jasper 2003). The "anti-pagan" movement was replicated in the sixteenth and seventeenth century during the Reformation, when the Protestants sought to purge "idolatrous" traditions of magic, exorcism, divination, witchcraft, religious charms and even Catholic practices of worship of the saints and the Virgin Mary (Yang 2005). As an exclusive and absolutist religion, Christianity is wary of syncretism, which it sees as a threat to and a compromise of the faith.[2] However, in the Chinese tradition, there is a lack of intrinsic differentiation between culture

and religion, making syncretism of practices the norm (see Yao and Zhao 2010; Goossaert and Palmer 2011). Consequently, Huntington (1993) and Kuo (2010) have referred to the confrontation between Confucianism and Christianity as a "clash of civilizations."

To find a "meeting point" between Christianity and Chineseness, Evangelist Berlian (2008) attempts to reconcile several practices of Chinese customs with Christian teachings through a creative reinterpretation and contextualization of the two. He highlights the commonalities between several Christian and Chinese festivals, and carefully distinguishes elements within Chinese customs that he considers as part of Chinese culture and tradition from those which he views as religious practices and rituals. Through a laborious differentiation of the profane and secular from the sacred and religious, Berlian is able to offer advice to his readers on which Chinese customs to observe and practice, and which to discard. Having clarified such a distinction, he concludes with this proclamation: "by race, I am Chinese, and by grace, I am Christian" to show that it is possible to be both Chinese and Christian at the same time.

The relationship between culture and religion is at once complex and convoluted. Prefixes have been added to the term "culture" when discussed in relation to religion: for example, the term "deculturate" is used when religion eradicates "pagan" culture; "acculturate" is used when religion adapts to the mainstream culture; and "inculturate" is used when religion tries to establish itself at the center of a given culture (Roy 2010: 33).[3] Berlian's statement of being "Chinese by race and Christian by grace" highlights a discursive possibility where "race" (or culture) and religion can coexist as long as they remain separate and distinct. It is easy to read Berlian's statement as exemplary of the acknowledgment of multiple identities inspired by the postmodern fad. However, such a reading does not capture the power differences between the two identities, among other things. The fact that Berlian has defined which Chinese customs are to be discontinued and which to keep shows that religious identity takes precedence over culture. However, Roy's exposition shows that a total separation between culture and religion is fallacious (Roy 2010). The course of deculturation, acculturation or inculturation that occurs when religion meets culture is not an end in itself but reflects an ongoing process of negotiation. And it is with such a process of negotiation which this chapter is concerned.

To address the negotiation between Chineseness and Christianity in Indonesia, it is necessary to first discuss the early encounters between Confucianism and Christianity in Imperial China[4] and explore the Chinese concept of "religion" (or lack thereof). The underlying idea permeating this chapter is the obstacle that remains for any conversion to Christianity, associated mainly with one's need to remain both Chinese and Christian at the same time. Such an obstacle is not confined to a particular, localized region, but rather appears to be a transnational one. This is especially so when many long-standing elements of Chinese culture, which are deeply rooted in Confucian traditions, continue to claim relevance in the definition of global Chineseness. The obstacle remains insurmountable due to the difficulties associated with breaking free from traditional customs and rituals, and hence the discussion of China provides us with the background

to enter into a foray in search of the negotiations that are present in Indonesia today. Moreover, the study of any Christian community should not be undertaken in isolation, as "no Christian community is purely local in nature" (Keane 2007: 40). Hence, examples from the experience of diasporic Chinese Christian communities will be discussed in the earlier part of this chapter to further illustrate the universal characteristics present in the negotiation.

The examination of Chinese Christianity in Indonesia entails a discussion of "Chineseness" – ethnicity, identity, language and cultural resources – in relation to nationalism in Indonesia and state ethnic policies. The dual identity of being Chinese and Christian is more problematic in Indonesia than elsewhere because both Chineseness and Christianity historically epitomize "foreignness." Occupying less than 2 and 9 percent of the population respectively, ethnic Chinese and Christians are both minorities in one of the largest Muslim countries in the world (Suryadinata *et al.* 2003). The background understanding of the Chinese Indonesian minority as a marginalized group among the Muslim majority and their inclination to convert to Christianity set the fundamental landscape to investigate this negotiation. Beyond the negotiation between culture (Chineseness) and religion (Christianity), the study of identity politics in postcolonial Indonesia also involves the new-found national identity of Indonesianness. As such, the later part of this chapter will examine the agency reflected in the different strategies taken by Chinese churches in Indonesia in negotiating and articulating their multiple identities. The chapter ends with a case study on the contestations in the celebration of Chinese New Year (*Imlek*) among Chinese Christians in Indonesia to reiterate and exemplify the continuous nature of the negotiation between culture and religion.

The "foreignness" of Christianity in Imperial China

Anti-Christian movements in Imperial China can be more accurately described as anti-foreign and anti-imperialist. In Qing Dynasty China, Christianity was condemned as a "foreign teaching/religion" (*yangjiao*) that embodied Western doctrines controlled by foreign authorities. The sardonic phrase, "one more Christian, one less Chinese" was frequently used to mock Chinese Christian converts to imply that they are "traitors to the nation" (Yang 1999: 53). Yang argues that, for most Chinese in the early twentieth century, "Christianity and Chineseness became incompatible, both culturally and politically" (1999: 53). The nature of such conflict can be understood as twofold: cultural on one hand, and political on the other. The former is related to the perceived incompatibility between Christianity and Chinese beliefs (such as Confucianism) and ritual practices (such as ancestor worship), which will be discussed in the next section. The latter has to be read in the historical context when Christianity was associated with, and seen as, a tool of Western imperialism.

The Jesuit missionaries who first came to China in the late sixteenth century were largely acculturated – they participated in local customs, learned the Chinese language and respected Confucian rituals. The Emperor Kangxi found such an accommodationist version of Catholicism acceptable and declared

the religion an "orthodox teaching" in 1693. However, the Franciscans and Dominicans who came later strongly objected to the Jesuit practice of accommodation to Chinese customs and saw it as "a weak and unchristian compromise with 'heathenism'" (Moffett 2007: 121). In the early eighteenth century, Rome took issue with the Jesuits' loyalty to Confucian rituals, which it saw as a religious practice comparable to paganism. The pope subsequently instructed Chinese Catholics to break away from such rituals. Emperor Yongzheng, the successor to Kangxi, was offended by such an assertion of power by a foreign religious authority over his subjects. Consequently, in 1724, the emperor banned Christianity and condemned the religion as a "heterodox teaching" (*xiejiao* – the term which is also used by the current Chinese Communist Party to outlaw the Falun Gung) (Madsen 2000: 272).

Nevertheless, in the nineteenth century, official restrictions against Christianity were lifted due to pressure from the Western imperialists. Christian missionaries once again returned to the Middle Kingdom, but were now accompanied by gunboats and a different attitude. In contrast to the acculturated Jesuits who came in the seventeenth century, missionaries who arrived with the colonizers in the nineteenth century came with a civilizing mission to deculturate and inculturate, and were involved in "shaking and tearing up the Confucian world order" (Young 1983: 126). With the rise of nationalism in China, Christianity was seen as "spiritual poison" colluding with opium used by the insidious West to intoxicate and defeat the Chinese nation. In this regard, Christianity was conflated with foreign intrusion and dominance.

The Chinese concept of "religion"

There is generally a lack of a term for "religion" in Chinese culture. An examination of the etymology of the term "*zong jiao*" ("religion", lit. teachings of the clan lineage) in modern Chinese reveals that the term only came into existence in China in the late nineteenth century (Yang 1999: 47; Yang 2005; Lu *et al.* 2008). The second character "*jiao*," commonly used to refer to major world religions such as *jidu jiao* (Christianity), *fo jiao* (Buddhism), *hui or yisilan jiao* (Islam) and *dao jiao* (Taoism), was historically used to mean "teachings" rather than religion. The Chinese popular folk practices of "*san jiao*" (Three Teachings) encompass Buddhism, Taoism and Confucianism. Hence, Ninian Smart objected to the Western assumption that three "religions" existed in China and insisted that the *sanjiao* are but three parts of a "single functioning system" (cited in Yao 1996: 35; see also Yao and Zhao 2010).

Syncretism of practices in *san jiao* means that it is fluid in its organization, non-institutional, has no clearly demarcated doctrinal boundary or membership restriction and is non-monotheistic – unlike the Abrahamic traditions – as multiple deities can be worshipped in one temple (Kuah-Pearce 2009). With such pluralism in Chinese belief, Yang (1999) argues that it is orthopraxy (correct practice) such as filial piety and ancestor worship, rather than orthodoxy (correct belief or doctrines), that has maintained cultural unity among the Chinese people. In other words, traditional rituals and cultural symbols are essential to

the definition of Chineseness. As an organized religion with clear institutional structure, doctrines and membership requirements, Christianity not only differs from Chinese beliefs in form, but also in substance.

This brings us to the discussion of the first character in the term "*zong jiao*" (religion). The word "*zong*" (clan lineage) reminds us of the importance of the clan in Chinese psyche and tradition. It has been claimed that the clan is the "basic social organization of Confucian China" (Smith 2005: 203; see also Yang 2005; Yao and Zhao 2010). Smith further explains:

> The clan is a visible entity, it is rooted in history, and certain objects represent this history, such as ancestral tablets, a clan temple, ancestral graves, and a clan genealogy. These tangible entities embody transcendent values ... The system provided the individual with a sense of identity and a system of values.
>
> (Smith 2005: 196)

However, Western missionaries, such as the Dominicans and Franciscans in dynastic China, regarded ancestor worship and traditional marriage, burial and grave sweeping ceremonies as "heathenish-idolatrous" or "pagan" practices and preached against them. In fact, the colonial project of Christian mission involved cultural uprooting and estrangement for Christians in the colonized world. In order to become Christians, non-Western believers "had to abandon their culture and their customs and become Westerners" (Frederiks 2009: 9). Kane remarks that "if the missionaries had been able to find a functional substitute for ancestor worship, the number of [Chinese] Christian converts would doubtless have been greater than it was" (1978: 128). Yet, the Eurocentric definition of religion, coupled with the culturally exclusive, morally absolutist and uncompromising stance of the missionaries, had prevented a deeper and more sophisticated interaction between Confucianism and Christianity.

The controversial debate on whether Confucianism is a religion or tradition, philosophy or orthodox teaching began only after Christianity came to China (for details of the debate, see Young 1983; Yao 1996; Kuo 2005; Moffett 2007; Kuo 2010).[5] Confucianism has been the pervasive ideology of the Chinese state since the Tang Dynasty and has become the guiding philosophy of Chinese life (Kuah-Pearce 2009: 26). It is commonly accepted that Confucianism is the cornerstone of Chinese civilization, although such romanticism often assumes that Confucianism is monolithic and overlooks the various evolutionary reinterpretation and manifestations of Confucianism in Chinese history. Western missionaries tended to catalog culture under "beliefs, superstitions and rites" and it was "from the outside" that Chinese customs and Confucian rituals were defined as a religion (Roy 2010: 32). In fact, there is no clear distinction between philosophy, politics and religion in Chinese tradition. It has further been maintained that "to the ancient Chinese, the religious point of view was not so different from the philosophical or political point of view that it had to be named by a different term" (Yao 1996: 35). The introduction of the Western/modern concept of "religion" and the encounter with Christianity have compelled the Chinese to

unpack and redefine Chineseness, Confucianism, customs and culture, as well as to differentiate religious rituals from secular traditions. As a result, there was an indigenization of Christianity in China, which took the form of sinicization to purge the "foreign" and "imperialist" association with the religion (for details, see Fallman 2008; Goossaert and Palmer 2011; Lim 2012).

To avoid the pitfalls of syncretism, Chinese converts had to make a clear break from the aspects of the clan system and customary rituals such as ancestral rites which were seen as idolatry. However, such rituals are often intertwined with their identity and membership in society. Till the present day, the need to break free from these customs remains an insurmountable obstacle for the Chinese to accept Christianity. For instance, in the case of rural Taiwan, Chao (2006) argues that Christianity is seen as a foreign religion and a violation of Chinese cultural norms. This is because the faith prohibits the filial duty of ancestor worship and the participation in temple festivals and donations, which are considered duties of all villagers. Such exclusion forces Chinese Christians to organize themselves in new communities and structures based on their faith.

Yet, Chinese Christians have embraced the values and certain aspects of Confucian philosophy they consider as secular and as part of their cultural heritage. Chao argues that these Chinese churches are able to "retain cherished Confucian values about family and ascetic ethics and still incorporate Christianity's teaching on the supernatural" (2006: 195). Sociologists have also noted that Confucian social values such as success, hard work, thrift and delayed gratification fit in comfortably with what Weber (1992) describes as the "Protestant ethic" or "this-worldly asceticism" (Yang 1999; Bays 2003; Hall 2006).[6] In fact, in Yang's comprehensive study on Chinese Christians in America, he tactfully documents the ways in which Chinese Christians regard Confucian values as "valuable complements for life in contemporary American society" (1999: 147). Chinese Christians in the USA have attempted to integrate Confucianism into Christianity and to revitalize Confucianism through Christianity. They see Confucian moral values as compatible with conservative evangelical Christianity and consider the values helpful in offering solutions to the vices and challenges of the modern secular world (Yang 1999). In this regard, the Chinese church in the USA has become an institution in which these moral values can be maintained and through which they can be passed on to the younger generation. In contemporary China, Chinese Christians strive to "sinicize" their faith by adopting Chinese cultural elements in the practice of their faith in order to "correct the traditional negative impression of 'one more Christian, one less Chinese'" (Zhou 2006: 198). Hence, even though the marriage between Chineseness and Christianity is far from perfect, the result of such an ongoing negotiation can only mean that the label "Chinese Christian" is no longer a misnomer.

Debating Chineseness and Christianity in colonial Indonesia

As in the case of dynastic China, Christianity was seen by Chinese in the Dutch East Indies as a Dutch religion and converting to Christianity was equivalent to ceasing to be Chinese. Being a "Dutch" religion, Christianity occupied a higher

status in the colonial social, economic and political hierarchy, which unwittingly reinforced its foreignness. However, Nagata (2005: 113) points out that some *peranakan* Chinese strategically converted to Christianity for political and social positioning:

> A small fraction, however, who consider themselves "Chinese by race, but Dutch by law" engaged in a familiar custom of emulating their rulers and converting to Christianity, a move seen as a statement of acculturation, trying to "be Dutch," reflected in the popular phrase for conversion, *masuk Belanda* ("to become Dutch").[7]

It is not clear whether the converts became true believers of the faith and whether they were ostracized by the Chinese community as a result of such conversion. But it is clear that the missionaries demanded from the converts a clear break with their past practices.

Heated debates emerged between Christians and Confucians in the Indies in the early years of the twentieth century concerning what constituted "Chineseness" and whether Confucianism was a "true religion." This occurred during the period of the Confucian revival movement and the spread of pan-Chinese nationalism to the Indies in the late nineteenth century. The Dutch Protestant missionaries, like their counterparts in China, were obdurate in drawing a line between the sacred and the profane, and in making sure that the line was not crossed.[8] They debated on which Chinese customs a Chinese Christian could retain and which must be abandoned as heathenish. They also dismissed traditional Chinese rituals as superstitions and denied that Confucianism constituted a religion (Coppel 2002).

A controversy broke out between the Malay-language mission newspaper, *Bentara Hindia*, and the Malay-language weekly which disseminated Confucian teachings, *Li Po*. From 1902 to 1904, Chinese Christians and Confucianists carried out debates about Christianity and Confucianism in the newspapers. Having studied the content of the debate, Coppel concludes that "in general, the Christian position was more absolutist and authoritarian, the Confucianist position more relativist and open" (2002: 306). Ironically, partly in reaction to the criticisms of the Christians and to the need for "religious rationalization," the Confucians institutionalized Confucianism into an organized religion with godhead, prophet, scriptures, creeds and rituals (Coppel 2002). Also interesting to note is how the Confucian church subsequently "Christianized Confucianism" (Kuo 2010) by borrowing aspects of Christian liturgy into its own rituals, such as the provision of a Confucian priest to preach a sermon and lead the congregation in prayer in a weekly Sunday service (see Coppel 2002: chapter 15).[9]

The debate between Christian and non-Christian Chinese continued in the 1920s through to the 1930s, except that by then they had a new player, the Sam Kauw Hwee – an organization of Chinese folk religion that fused together Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism (similar to the *sanjiao* in China discussed earlier). Many Indies Chinese perceived Christian evangelism as a threat to their ethnic and cultural identity. The Sam Kauw Hwee and the Kong Kauw Hwee

(Confucian Religion Society) equated Chineseness with Chinese religion and an adherence to Confucianism, and saw those who converted to Christianity as abandoning their Chinese identity. To counter such perception, Chinese Christians began to establish their own ethnic church. According to Setiabudi (1995), the Chinese church had to try to erase the "foreignness" of Christianity in the eyes of the Indies Chinese by indigenizing Christianity, and by "relativizing Chineseness" from its religious essence. Although the Chinese Christian church inherited its doctrines from Dutch missionaries, it had become independent from the Dutch mission (discussed below). The aim was to prove that Christianity was not a "Dutch religion" and that to be Chinese, one need not necessarily adhere to Chinese religions or Confucianism.

Transnational links with China

The challenges faced by the Chinese church in the Indies in reconciling Chinese culture with Christianity were greatly relieved with the visits of John Sung in 1939. Born in Putien in Southern China, John Sung was the son of a Methodist minister. Sung became a Christian evangelist and revivalist upon his return to China after obtaining a PhD in science in the United States (see Lyall 2004). As an American-trained scientist, Sung chose to go against the tide by wearing a Chinese gown instead of a Western suit throughout his ministry in China. Dying in 1944, at the relatively young age of 42, Sung was not only commemorated as one of the greatest evangelists of China but also a pioneer in contextualizing and indigenizing the Christian faith in China (Lim 2012). Setiabudi argues that, "Sung represented strongly the fusion between what was Christian and what was Chinese, so that he was able to help many nominal Chinese Christians to overcome the felt foreignness of Christianity and to cross that 'Chinese' obstacle to baptism at that time" (1995: 68).

John Sung made several epic mission journeys to Southeast Asia in the 1930s, where he converted thousands of Chinese and trained many Chinese Christians to be evangelists (Wijaya 2002: 81). Sung's visits to Southeast Asia also highlighted the early regional and global nature of exchanges among Chinese Christians. As Wong and Ngu (2010) argue, "The southeastern Chinese seaboard and the archipelagic world of Southeast Asia was a shared and unified mission site." In the Dutch Indies, the faith of many nominal Chinese believers was rekindled and thousands of non-believers were baptized and converted to Christianity at Sung's revival meetings. His meetings were so popular among the Indies Chinese that they would close their shops to attend the meetings even during weekdays. As Lim notes, "It is quite a sight in Surabaya to see rows and rows of [Chinese-owned] shops closed with a notice: 'Closed for the week – Mission Campaign'" (2012: 222). Unsurprisingly, a Dutch missionary in Central Java who witnessed Sung's campaign wrote in 1949 that "Chinese churches in Java are still alive today only through the blessing of the revival brought by Dr Sung" (cited in Lyall 2004: 232).

Another example of the transnational exchanges of Chinese Christianity between China and the Indies is the founding of the Bond Kristen Tionghoa

(BKT, lit. Chinese Christian Union) in 1926. The BKT aimed to unite all Chinese churches in the Dutch colony regardless of their denominations, doctrines and backgrounds. It also encouraged Chinese churches in the Indies to break away from Western missions. The establishment of the BKT was inspired by the National Christian Council of China in the Republic of China, founded in 1922, which advocated similar objectives. One of the core members of the Bond Kristen Tionghoa was a body of Chinese churches established by the Dutch and Chinese missionaries in the early 1900s called the Tiong Hoa Kie Tok Kauw Hwee (THKTKH, Hokkien for Chinese Christian Church). Some congregations within the THKTKH were very much China-oriented. For example, the THKTKH in Mangga Besar "neither felt that it was a Dutch church, nor an Indonesian church. But this church felt emotional ties with churches in China" (Kurnia and Hale 1999: 40).

In 1939, due to disagreements and incompatibility with the influence of the Dutch mission in the THKTKH, the Mangga Besar and a few other congregations broke away from THKTKH and founded the Chung Hua Chi Tu Chiao Hui (CHCTCH, the Mandarin version of THKTKH), and aligned themselves more closely to the churches in China. The CHCTCH was commonly known as the "Nationalist Chinese Church" because of its anti-Dutch, anti-missionary and pro-China sentiment (Hartono 1999: 25). Chinese churches in colonial Indonesia such as the CHCTCH had tried to erase the foreignness of Christianity by indigenizing Christianity. However, at that time "indigenization" for these churches was not Indonesianization but sinicization, as they looked to China for inspiration. The issue of the indigenization (read: Indonesianization) of other Chinese churches into the new nation state of Indonesia post-1949 will be discussed in the next section.

Negotiating ethnic, religious and national identities in post-colonial Indonesia

Christianity was commonly associated with modernity in post-colonial Indonesia due to its legacy of being a "Dutch" religion, which represented ties with the modern, global world (Kipp 1996; Aragon 2000; Keane 2007). As followers of this so-called "Dutch religion," Indonesian Christians were obliged to prove that they were part of the new nation-state and that they were loyal citizens. Indeed, they had proven their citizenship and belonging convincingly. For instance, during the struggle for independence, the Christians had joined their fellow Indonesians in fighting against the Dutch. They were also active in political participation in independent Indonesia, evident in the establishment of Parkindo (Partai Kristen Indonesia, the Indonesian Christian Party) and in their rejection of the Jakarta Charter, which had a preference for *syari'ah* law (Titaley 2008). In a move toward Indonesianization of the church, indigenous church leaders took over the leadership from their Dutch counterparts after independence. Although the Constitution and the national ideology of Pancasila gave Christians equal citizenship rights, occupying the position of a minority in a Muslim majority state meant that the "authenticity" of Christians as Indonesians was often subject to question. For

instance, Kipp (2000) notes Benedict Anderson's observations in the mid-1960s that Javanese Christians were regarded as something less than Javanese.

Chinese Christians found themselves in the same predicament and were not spared from such suspicion. In fact, they were doubly marginalized in the new nation-state as they embodied an ethnic and a religious identity historically marked as "foreign." Many Chinese fell victim to various discriminatory policies implemented by the Sukarno government under the pretext of Indonesianization (read: indigenization) of the economy. Previously labeled as "Foreign Orientals" by the Dutch administration, the Chinese were still perceived to be aliens even though many of them had opted for Indonesian citizenship. In order to prove their loyalty to Indonesia, some Chinese churches made a conscious decision to assimilate and to Indonesianize, while others subtly retained their ethnic identity and carefully navigated the new political terrain.

One important Chinese church that assimilated during the 1950s was Gereja Kristen Indonesia (GKI or Indonesian Christian Church). The church today has more than 260, 000 members with more than 220 congregations across Indonesia. GKI is the result of the union of three major Chinese churches (THKTKH) in West, Central and East Java in 1956 (Hartono 1999). As discussed earlier, Chinese-oriented congregations left THKTKH and formed CHCTCH in 1939. The remaining THKTKH churches were "from the beginning orientated to the Dutch East Indies and later Indonesia, and never considered mainland China as their centre" (Hartono 1999: 26). Such identity orientation accounts for why it pursued the path of assimilation. GKI became involved in nation-building when it became a member of the National Council of Churches in Indonesia (DGI, now PGI, Communion of Churches in Indonesia), which aimed to unite all churches into one Christian Church in Indonesia.

It is significant to note that Gereja Kristen Indonesia (Indonesian Christian Church) changed its name from THKTKH (Chinese Christian Church) in the 1950s after a long and complex process of deliberation. This name change signified a "change in orientation and a transformation in identity" of the church (Setiabudi 1995: 94). As the church comprised mainly *peranakan* Chinese members who had become Indonesian citizens and used Indonesian as their lingua franca, it was appropriate for the church to identify with the newly born nation. This was exemplified in the dropping of the word "Tionghoa" (Chinese) in its new name, while other ethnic churches still used ethnic names (e.g. the Batak, Sundanese, Minahasa churches). It has also been argued that GKI needed to prove their "Indonesianness" more than the other Indonesian churches of native descent, because of the requirement that Indonesian citizens of Chinese descent produce a certificate (SKBRI) to prove their citizenship while native Indonesians do not have to do so (Setiabudi 1995: 140).

Unlike other Indonesian churches such as Gereja Protestant *di* Indonesia bagian Barat (GPIB or the Protestant Church *in* Western Indonesia) or Gereja Pentekosta *di* Indonesia (GPdI or the Pentecostal Church *in* Indonesia), GKI did not adopt the preposition "*di*" (or "in") in its name. It should be noted that "the choice of GKI without '*di*' is not to be read as a statement that Indonesian Christians of Chinese descent are more Indonesian. It is to the contrary: they are

not foreign to Indonesia, even when considered as foreign by some" (Setiabudi 1995: 140). Hence, the name GKI is an emblem to show that it is an Indonesian church, not just a church in Indonesia. The change of name also brought about psychological readjustment to the church in terms of its openness to members of different ethnic origins (Hartono 1999; Kurnia and Hale 1999). For instance, while congregations of GKI in urban areas are predominantly Chinese, it is not uncommon to find non-Chinese-dominated GKI congregations in rural areas.

Shortly after Suharto took power in 1966, his so-called "New Order" government implemented a military-backed Assimilation Program to systematically suppress all expressions of Chinese identity. The Suharto administration actively promoted religious affiliation in order to prevent the re-emergence of communism. Consequently, Christianity experienced a boom during the New Order period, with mass conversion of ethnic Chinese (Nagata 2005; Andaya 2009).[10] Many Chinese considered the best protection against persecution was to join an officially recognized religion such as Christianity, as it did not have the stigma of being Chinese. Moreover, for the Chinese minority who were subjected to forced assimilation and oppression of their culture, Christianity offered a new identity. It has been observed that the ethnic Chinese converted to this global religion as "a purposeful strategy to turn away from the nation state in order to embrace a larger global frame of reference" (Koning 2009: 126). Koning (2009) further argues that Christianity was able to redress the suppressed expressions of Chineseness and empower the ethnic Chinese to participate in the "politics of the Lord" since they had little access to practical politics within New Order Indonesia.

However, Chinese Indonesians who converted to Christianity were still seen as "Westernized" by some members of their community. The critics rekindled the controversy of Christian conversion as an abandonment of Chineseness and Confucian values. The common assumptions were that Christians were un-Chinese and the church was an emblem of Westernization. It was commonly perceived that only Buddhist and Chinese temples had played a role in preserving Chineseness, which had always been under the threat of erasure during the New Order. This assumption may have some truth in it, as Singgih observes:

> This is a strange coincidence, that many ethnic Chinese Protestants oppressed Chinese culture. To them, Chinese Christians have to replace pagan Chinese culture with Western culture, which they see as a product of Christianity. In many Chinese congregations in Indonesia, no other culture except Western culture was allowed. The situation has changed since Chinese culture was free from oppression [in 1998]. Now Chinese New Year is a national holiday, some Chinese congregations have started organizing Chinese New Year services.
>
> (Singgih 2009: 97, my translation)

At the same time, it cannot be generalized that Chinese churches had not exercised agency in preserving Chinese identity during the New Order. While many Chinese churches changed their name into Indonesian-sounding ones in the late

1950s, not all of them followed the footsteps of GKI to assimilate. Some Chinese churches continued to retain their Chinese identity and viewed themselves as an ethnic church in Indonesia. These churches maintained their Chineseness through teaching Mandarin in Sunday school, delivering bilingual sermons in Indonesian and Mandarin, and maintaining transnational ties with Chinese churches in Taiwan, Singapore and Malaysia. These churches thus imagined themselves into a transnational, global network of Chinese churches and continued to nourish and renew their Chineseness. Even so, Chinese churches usually kept a very low profile in terms of ethnic identity. Nevertheless, the ethnicity of the church could hardly be concealed due to the class visibility of the Chinese Christians, who occupy a significant segment within the entrepreneurial class of society (Kipp 1996; Andaya 2009).

The Chinese-language ministries in Chinese churches paid a heavy price for assimilation. The closing of Chinese schools, organizations, presses and media resulted in the younger generation's inability to read and speak Chinese. Consequently, congregations for Chinese or even bilingual worship services dwindled, as young people preferred to attend Indonesian services. Chinese services were mostly attended by the older generation who were nostalgic about the past. Furthermore, the lack of Mandarin-speaking talent also led to the problem of church leadership succession. It became challenging to find replacement for older generation Chinese-speaking pastors and church leaders.

The grim outlook for Chineseness began to change after the fall of Suharto in 1998. Many schools started offering Mandarin, and there has been a renewed interest in Chinese language and culture across Indonesia (Hoon 2008). The fruit of such resurgence can be seen in some Chinese churches in the form of celebration of Chinese New Year (discussed below) and the frequent presentations of Chinese songs and performances by their young members. However, it is important to emphasize that not all Chinese churches celebrate this renaissance. For example, an executive committee member of Gereja Kristen Indonesia asserts, "GKI did not participate in the euphoria of the resurgence of Chineseness because of our commitment to Indonesianization. The process to Indonesianize is continuous; there is no turning back, no resinicization" (personal communication, 15 June 2009).

Christianity and Imlek

The contested nature of the interpretation of tradition versus religious rituals can be exemplified in the celebration of Chinese New Year, a festival regarded as pivotal for most Chinese. Chinese New Year, known as "*Imlek*" in Indonesia, is a contentious festival. The public celebration of *Imlek* was prohibited during the Suharto regime under Presidential Decree No. 14/1967, which repressed any manifestation of Chinese beliefs, customs and traditions and prohibited the public celebration of Chinese religious and cultural festivals, such as *Imlek* and the lion and dragon dance. It is obvious that this decree conflated the cultural and religious practices of *Imlek* celebration. The discriminatory regulation was annulled under President Abdurrahman Wahid's administration (1999–2001).

In 2002, President Megawati declared *Imlek* a national holiday, beginning in the year 2003. *Imlek* is unique in Indonesia, where Confucianism has become an institutionalized religion. The adherents of the Confucian religion claim *Imlek* as their sacred day to commemorate the birth of Confucius, just as Christians celebrate Christmas to remember the birth of Jesus Christ. Nevertheless, most Chinese Indonesians celebrate it as a cultural and ethnic festival (Hoon 2009).

Setiabudi notes that in 1960 a *peranakan* Chinese church in Bandung prohibited the celebration of *Imlek* because they thought the celebration was redundant for Chinese Christians and regarded their "real" New Year as 1 January. Another report states that it was common to find Chinese Christians during the New Order declaring that, "we are already Christians, [so we] don't celebrate *Imlek*" (*Indonesia Media Online* 2001, my translation). However, such negative sentiments about *Imlek* changed after 1998. For instance, a Chinese Indonesian pastor claimed that in the past the church had misunderstood Chinese traditions and mistaken *Imlek* as an act of worship. He argues that "now the Christian church should take advantage of *Imlek* [as an opportunity] to spread the Gospel" (*Indonesia Media Online* 2001, my translation). Indeed, many Chinese Christian churches now celebrate *Imlek* by organizing thanksgiving worship services on the first day of Chinese New Year (cf. Chiou's chapter in this volume).

The lifting of the official prohibition on *Imlek* witnessed an explosive rise in visitors to Chinese temples to honor their ancestors during the festival. This was not limited to followers of Chinese religions. Some Chinese Christians have inconspicuously observed the traditional customs of filial piety and ancestor worship as part of their cultural heritage, despite the church's disapproval (Wijaya 2002; Hermawan 2007). For instance, David Lie, a Chinese Christian who visited a Chinese temple during *Imlek* states, "*Imlek* is part of our culture and identity; it is a chance for us to remind ourselves and our children of where we came from" (*Jakarta Post* 2009). To him, *Imlek* is a cultural celebration and does not contradict his religion as a Christian. As he further asserts, "I am a devout Christian who goes to church on Sundays. But does that deny me the right to respect my ancestors and preserve their culture? I don't think so." The church is unlikely to agree with him, as it considers Christians' participation in Chinese rituals as religious syncretism.[11] However, in the reality of everyday life, many non-Western Christians adopt a "survival strategy by living in two worlds at the same time: The Western world of the church, the school etc. and the world of their own culture at home" (Frederiks 2009: 9).

As discussed earlier, Chinese churches have desperately tried to differentiate the cultural and religious elements in Chinese customs and traditions. While the celebration of *Imlek* is permitted by the Chinese church as a cultural festival, paying respect to ancestors in a Chinese temple is not. The Rev. Markus Tan, an evangelical pastor in Jakarta, published a book entitled *Imlek dan Alkitab* (*Imlek* and the Bible) to challenge Chinese folk traditions observed during *Imlek* celebration and called for a return to the "tradition of God's kingdom on earth" (Tan 2008, my translation). The author was concerned that Chinese Christians would "return" to their practice of religious syncretism when celebrating *Imlek*, especially if they were to participate in Chinese rituals and practices associated

with the festival, such as the temple visit mentioned above. In the final chapter of Tan's book, he states that "those of us who have believed are new creations in Christ" (Tan 2008: 193, my translation). To be a *new* creation suggests that Chinese Christians should abandon *old* practices, namely those folk rituals practiced during *Imlek*.

The Catholics, on the other hand, are more accommodating toward such Chinese customs and traditions.[12] It has been suggested that "the Catholic Church recognizes cultural differences, legitimises rather than denigrates them and responds to them by creating mechanisms of accommodation or coexistence, for example by co-opting 'other' practices, symbols and rituals" (Eves 2007: 104). Furthermore, ancestral rites are still commonly practiced among Chinese Catholics in Indonesia (see Hartono 1996: 54–55; Wijaya 2002: 64).[13] For instance, after 1998 *Imlek* was reportedly celebrated at a Sunday mass in a Catholic church in Jakarta with performances of Chinese songs and dances. The church was decorated in the lucky color red from its carpet to its candles, including the priests' robes. In another city, Pastor William Chang of Pontianak Catholic Cathedral attempted to relate seven symbols of *Imlek* to the teaching of Jesus in his sermon during a Chinese New Year mass. The relevant "traditions" that the priest identified included the cleansing of self – symbolized by the wearing of new clothes during *Imlek*; Holy Communion – symbolized by the family feast during Chinese New Year eve; respect to elders; good deeds in the form of giving alms – symbolized by the giving of monetary gifts of *angpao*; casting out of devils – symbolized by firecrackers; salvation – symbolized by the color of the mandarin fruit; and thanksgiving (*Kompas* 2008, my translation).

In Berlian's quest to find a "meeting point" between Christianity and Chinese culture, mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, he attempts to reconcile the Chinese lunar calendar with the Western calendar and relates five Chinese traditional festivals to Christian traditions and festivals. For instance, he reconciled: (1) *Imlek* with God's creation and renewal, further arguing that the Chinese spring festival is celebrated with a spirit of renewal, and so Christians should celebrate *Imlek* with a focus on a renewal of faith and family ties; (2) Grave-Sweeping Day (*Qing Ming*) with Easter. According to him, Christians should use this day to reflect on the tradition of filial piety and be reminded of the inter-relational reconciliation between God and humans that Easter symbolizes; (3) the Dragon Boat Festival with the feast of Pentecost; (4) the Mid-autumn Festival with the Jewish Feast of Tabernacles; and (5) the Winter Solstice Festival (*Dong Zhi*) with Christmas Day. Regardless of whether the attempts of the Catholic priest and protestant pastor to reconcile Chinese festivals with Christian traditions are theologically sound, they exemplify the fact that the negotiation between Chineseness and Christianity is a continual process that is far from completion.

Conclusion

This chapter has made a tentative exploration of the complex and continuous negotiations between Chineseness and Christianity. The discussions of the early encounters of Christianity in China exemplify that the nature of the

conflict between Chineseness and Christianity was primarily centered upon politics and culture. The former was related to the perceived "foreignness" of Christianity, commonly associated with an imperialist agenda and colonialism, while the latter involved a foray into the convoluted relationship between religion and culture. The introduction of Christianity along with the Western/modern concept of "religion" to China had compelled the Chinese to unpack and redefine Confucianism, customs and culture, as well as to differentiate religious rituals from secular traditions. This is best illustrated in the extensive debates between the Confucians and the Christians in both China and the Dutch East Indies.

The lack of any intrinsic difference between culture and religion in the Chinese context provoked an anxiety for a religion such as Christianity which is built on the dichotomy between the sacred and the profane. This Eurocentric binary was eventually internalized by non-Western Christians, including Chinese Christians. To avoid falling into much-feared religious syncretism, Chinese Christians rejected religious symbols and rituals in Chinese culture but retained those traditions and practices that they perceive as secular. Such a task requires one's creative reinterpretation and contextualization of the subject matter and depends on who has the power to define. However, a clean break from the past is never easy, let alone neat, as many Chinese traditions and customs are intertwined with one's identity and membership in society.

The case study of Indonesia demonstrates the different positions and strategies that Chinese churches have taken in negotiating their multiple identities in different phases of Indonesian history. In order to erase the "foreignness" of Christianity, some Chinese churches severed ties with the Dutch missions; they either indigenized or sinicized their faith. By establishing an ethnic church, Chinese Christians tried to relativize Chineseness in a bid to separate the concept of "Chineseness" – Chinese ethnicity and culture – from Chinese religion and customs. All these were carried out with the objective of proving that Christianity is not a "Dutch religion" and that it is unnecessary to adhere to Chinese religions or Confucianism for one to be Chinese. Following Indonesia's independence, the quandary of identity for Chinese Christians underwent a major shift. The negotiation was no longer limited to Chineseness and Christianity; it further involved the interplay between Chinese Christianity and Indonesianness. Some Chinese churches decided to assimilate and to Indonesianize by erasing their ethnic character and opening themselves up to non-Chinese members. Others, however, had discreetly exercised their agency to retain their Chineseness.

The post-Suharto renaissance of Chinese identity has witnessed a move toward resinicization in some Chinese churches. The lifting of the ban on *Imlek* celebration has allowed Chinese Christians to rediscover their cultural heritage. Nonetheless, the contested nature of *Imlek* shows the need for Chinese Christians to continuously negotiate, reinterpret and contextualize their faith and culture. Far from being a destination, the phrase "by race, I am Chinese; and by grace, I am Christian" reflects an ongoing journey, a journey of discovery and balance, as one seeks to move between culture, tradition, race, and religion. The balance between the interplay of these forces remains a delicate one to strike, particularly so in the context of present-day Indonesia.

Notes

1 Unless otherwise stated, "Christianity" in this chapter refers to Protestantism.

2 Syncretism can be defined as "the excessive intermingling of a culture's non-Christian elements with the Christian message" (Noll 2009: 25). However, Christianity's guardedness against syncretism is ironic, as the religion has inevitably been involved in syncretism over time. For example, some of the modern celebrations of Christian festivals such as Christmas and Easter are based on Christian incorporation of pagan traditions.

3 In the last two decades, the Catholic Church has emphasized inculturation, which Pope John Paul II described as "the intimate transformation of authentic cultural values through their integration in Christianity and the insertion of Christianity in the various human cultures" (cited in Koh 2006:188). Koh further defines inculturation as a dialogical process that involves the incarnation of Christian values into a specific culture, and the introduction of various cultural values and practices into the faith community, so that a more universal and faithful expression of the gospel can be achieved (Koh 2006:188). This definition is different from Roy's usage of the term, which this chapter refers to (Roy 2010).

4 For discussions of reconciliation between Chinese culture and Christianity in post-dynastic China, see Fallman (2008) and Goossaert and Palmer (2011).

5 Kuo (2005 and 2010) documents the Chinese reformer Kang Youwei's defunct plan to institutionalize Confucianism as a state religion and to establish the "Confucian Church" in China in the early twentieth century. Interestingly, these ideas were inspired by Christianity (see also note 9, below).

6 However, what constitutes "this-worldly asceticism" can be contested depending on denominational and theological interpretation. For instance, Andaya (2009) and Koning (2009) observe that Chinese Indonesians are attracted to Pentecostal-charismatic movements because of the prosperity theology preached in the church, which, in a nutshell, suggests that Christians should prosper in their career and business. Spending and conspicuous consumption is seen as an outward affirmation of such prosperity. However, a Chinese Indonesian Christian scholar who subscribes to the Calvinist Reformed theology argues that "this-worldly Protestant asceticism acts vigorously against the spontaneous enjoyment of possessions; it restricts consumption, especially of luxuries. A good Calvinist does not aim at riches. It is the process that matters, therefore riches are merely a by-product" (Hermawan 2007: 590).

7 Among other reasons, Hartono notes that many Chinese in the Indies converted to Christianity for its association with the prestige and respect that Western culture commanded (1996: 45–46).

8 Referring to the missionary activities among the non-Chinese in the Dutch East Indies, Schröter (2011: 11) observes that Dutch missionaries were not only suspicious of the customary laws (*adat*) of the indigenous but often tried to eradicate them altogether, particularly those elements they defined as religious.

9 It has to be noted that the institutionalization of Confucianism into an organized religion was initiated by Kang Youwei and his disciples, who were pushing for social reform in late Qing China. They borrowed elements of Christianity to rationalize Confucianism in order to make it into a state religion. While the reform was unsuccessful in China, it found fertile ground in the Indies among the *peranakan* Chinese who founded the Tiong Hoa Hui Koan, the first Chinese organization in the Dutch Indies (see Duara 2005; Kuo 2005; Goossaert and Palmer 2011).

10 Suryadinata argues that "it is a public secret that since the 1965 coup, many Chinese have converted to Christianity to escape persecution. The number of Chinese Christians has increased although there is no official figure on that. Nevertheless, the overall Christian population in Indonesia has increased. For instance, the 1971 Census showed that 7.4 percent of the Indonesian people were Christians but the 2000

Census showed that the number had increased to 8.9 percent. This increase may be due to the conversion of ethnic Chinese to Christianity" (2005: 89).

11 It has to be noted that the fear of syncretism is not peculiar to Chinese Christians. As traditions of syncretism in Hinduism, Buddhism and Islam are found in Indonesia, many indigenous Christian churches also caution against such practices in their congregations (see Singgih 2009).

12 It is beyond the scope of this chapter to discuss the negotiations of identities in Indonesia's Catholic churches. Readers can refer to Boelaars (2005) for details of such negotiations.

13 Hartono notes the stark contrast in the attitude between Catholics and the Protestants toward Chinese culture and practices during the Dutch colonial period. He describes the approach of the Catholic Church as "flexible" (*luwes*) as it tolerated ancestral rites. In contrast, Dutch Protestant missionaries often forced Chinese converts to remove their ancestral altar and leave their traditional practices behind after they became Christians (1996: 54–55).

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9 Expressing Chineseness, marketing Islam

The hybrid performance of Chinese Muslim preachers

Wai-Weng Hew

Chinese Muslim preachers have gained a surprisingly high profile in post-1998 Indonesia. Preachers such as Anton Medan, Koko Liem and Tan Mei Hwa are popular, not only among Chinese converts, but also with non-Chinese Muslim Indonesians. They appear regularly on religious television programs and hold public talks that attract large crowds. There are two important circumstances that explain the recent rise of Chinese preachers: the return of Chinese culture to the Indonesian public space since the collapse of the New Order regime, and the popularity of Muslim celebrity preachers in general.

Tapping into the rising consumer culture, many successful preachers in contemporary Indonesia have become media celebrities, skilled at tailoring their messages and fashioning their appearances to a media audience. Chinese preachers appear to have a special marketing pull, because of their ethnicity and their status as converts. Their Chinese appearance stands out as an exotic trademark in the crowded preaching market. In addition, most Indonesians are born into the Muslim faith, so the personal biographies of converts arouse curiosity, especially when the converts are Chinese. Some Muslims are concerned with what they see as a process of "Christianization" in Indonesia, and so they view the conversion of Chinese Indonesians – a community that is almost 40 percent Christian – to Islam as a welcome phenomenon.[1] At the same time, many Muslims think that having experienced the spiritual journey toward piety, these "converts-turned-preachers" can provide a persuasive role model for non-practicing Muslims.

Many Chinese Muslim preachers are aware of their distinctive qualities and thus they strategically use their differences to augment their popularity. Yet, Chinese preachers are not a singular entity. Their preaching takes varying forms and they each have a different message, reflecting their varying socio-economic backgrounds, cultural outlooks, conversion experiences and religious education. Some of them utilize their Chineseness to distinguish themselves from other preachers; some emphasize the theological differences between their former religion (in most cases, Christianity) and Islam; some share their life experience of transforming from an "immoral" person to a good Muslim; and others discuss the rationality of Islam in public life. It can be argued that Chinese preachers are as diverse as Indonesian Islam itself.

By highlighting five case studies of popular Chinese Muslim preachers, this chapter will examine how Chinese culture and Islamic knowledge are "learned"

by the preachers, "reproduced" in their preaching and then "consumed" by the audience. Finally, by positioning Chineseness and Islam as "symbolic commodities" (Bolin 2002; Muzakki 2007), I will examine issues related to identity consumption, ethnic interaction and religious pluralism in contemporary Indonesia.[2] As demonstrated by the preaching of some Chinese Muslims, I argue that the commodification of identities has paradoxical outcomes – the diversity of appearances does not always mean a plurality of discourses. As I will argue, Chinese preachers may promote the universality of Islam, yet some of their religious messages can be conservative; they may cross ethnic boundaries, but reinforce ethnic stereotypes at the same time.

Consumption, performance and identity

In recent decades, the increase in consumer culture and the spread of new media have made an enormous impact on consumption practices and identity expressions in Indonesia and elsewhere. As argued by Storey (1999), cultural consumption provides us with a script for identity performance, and is perhaps the most visible way we perform our sense of self. Meanwhile, Friedman (1994) suggests that through examining the practice of cultural consumption and production, we can gain some insight into the relations between local structures of desire and identity, as well as the political and economic contexts that enable or constrain such practices.

As Ditchev (2006) points out, twenty-first-century nationalism is different from its earlier incarnations: it is not necessarily linked to solidarity or belonging, but to appearances and emblems. Referring to the trends of nationalism in Bulgaria, he coins the term "lifestyle nationalism" to refer to the growing expression of national identity by using simple and clear-cut emblems in the age of global consumer culture. In many cases, one does not live the identity, but possesses it. The same trends can also be observed in the expression of ethnic and religious identities in contemporary societies. For example, we may use "lifestyle Islam" and "lifestyle Chineseness" to describe the rise of identity consumption in Indonesia today. As reflected in some of the preachers I discuss later, sporting an "Islamic appearance" is more important than "substance" in the preaching market, while the adoption of cultural symbols seems more important than fluency in Mandarin or Chinese dialects in showcasing their Chinese identities. In other words, their identity expression is more or less a performance.

Furthermore, cultural symbols and religious appearances have emblematic exchange values that can generate financial incentives. In Indonesia, in the last decade, there has been a growing Islamic consumerism, especially among urban middle-class Muslims, as reflected by the mushrooming of various religious-themed products and services, such as Islamic banking, tourism and fashion. At the same time, since the collapse of the New Order regime, Chineseness has been absorbed into the market and become a part of urban lifestyle (Budianta 2007: 174). For example, during Chinese New Year, lion dance performances and red lantern decorations can be found in many shopping centers (Hoon 2009). To a certain extent, both Islam and Chineseness can be seen as "symbolic

commodities" (Bolin 2002; Muzakki 2007) that attract the attention of consumers and generate profits for vendors.

Religious consumerism does not weaken, but transforms religious faith and practice (Miller 2004). As elsewhere, the commodification of Islam in Indonesia is producing a spectrum of Islamic expressions that is more diverse and subject to rapid changes. As Fealy (2008) proposes, given that markets need to appeal to the widest possible audience by using pluralist messages, Islamic consumerism does not undermine the moderate nature of Indonesian Islam. Similarly, referring to the popularity of the Islamic-themed Indonesian film *Ayat-ayat Cinta* (The Verses of Love), Heryanto (2010) suggests that "pop Islam" is hybrid in substance and style, and offers an attractive image of Indonesian Islam. Located in these broader contexts, this chapter examines whether Chinese Muslim preachers promote greater diversity of Islamic expression and discourse in Indonesia.

Converts-turned-preachers: a new force in Indonesian Islamic markets

In contemporary Indonesia, Islamic preaching is not only a medium for transmitting Islamic knowledge to the public, but also a means of accumulating wealth and improving social status (Fealy 2008; Muzakki 2007). To establish popularity, the *dai* (Muslim preacher) today not only has to manage Islamic knowledge, but also needs to equip himself or herself with entrepreneurial and communicative skills, as well as a media-friendly appearance. Drawing upon the success of popular preachers such as Abdullah Gymnastiar (Aa Gym) and Jefri Al-Buchori (Uje), Chinese Muslim preachers are not "passive consumers" in the Indonesian Islamic market. They are creative in carving out a niche by performing their Chinese identity and narrating their personal conversion testimonies to win adherents.

Many Chinese preachers are aware of their unique position: they are "a part of an ethnic minority, but also a part of a majority Muslim *ummah*." Some use their uniqueness to establish their preaching careers. For example, Tan Mei Hwa and Koko Liem are two interesting figures, as they use their Chinese names in their preaching. Koko Liem also wears traditional Chinese clothing when preaching. They use Chinese cultural symbols not only to prove that Chineseness and Islam are compatible, but also as an "authentic selling point" that differentiates them from other preachers, who are non-Chinese and mostly Muslims by birth. Cognizant that there are few Chinese Muslims, they have deliberately used their Chinese names and dress to attract the attention of local Muslims who are curious about the stories and experiences of converts.

As mentioned earlier, "Christianization" amongst Muslims has been a major source of anxiety for some Islamic organizations and leaders, particularly because of the possibility of non-practicing Muslims converting to Christianity through inter-religious marriages and attendance at Christian schools. Therefore, the conversion of Chinese (especially those who were Christians) to Islam is welcomed as a means of countering this widely held fear. Indeed, the circulation of stories about conversion to Islam has constituted an integral part of

the Islamic preaching agenda. Most Islamic magazines, for instance, contain a section describing the experiences of converts.

Some Muslim activists view the spiritual journey of Chinese Muslims as a role model for non-practicing "indigenous" Muslim Indonesians. This is illustrated in a conversation I had with a Javanese Muslim during my field research:

> There are a lot of identity-card Muslims among indigenous Indonesians. They do not go to the mosque for Friday prayer or fast during Ramadan. Yet, our Chinese converts are different. They choose to become Muslim and learn their religion seriously. We should be ashamed, because we are born Muslims and learned about our religion for years, yet we do not practice it properly. Therefore, Chinese *dai* should play an important role in the *dakwah* movement.
>
> (Field note, 10 January 2008).[3]

Felix Siaw, a young activist in Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia (HTI), told me that he is frequently invited to lead Islamic study sessions (*pengajian*) organized by HTI at various locations, because the organizers think that a pious Muslim convert can set a good example for the born-Muslim. Siaw asserts, "Although my knowledge of Islam is probably not as deep as others, many Muslims are more interested to listen to me than to other Muslims because I am the only Chinese and a new convert to HTI" (interview, Felix Siaw, 10 January 2008). His experience is shared by many other Chinese *ustaz* (religious teachers) and *dai* (preachers), who revealed that their Chineseness and their status as converts have contributed to the popularity of their preaching. In the rest of this chapter, I examine five high-profile Chinese converts-turned-preachers in contemporary Indonesia.

Tan Mei Hwa: singing, dancing, preaching

Tan Mei Hwa or Ida Astuti, born in 1968, is both a preacher and a performer. Her Chinese identity and entertaining preaching style have made her one of the most popular preachers in Surabaya, East Java. She has speaking engagements nearly every day, not only in East Java, but also in other provinces. During Ramadan, she hosts a religious program on the biggest local television station in East Java, JTV. She is also known as *Bu Nyai* Tan Mei Hwa – "*nyai*" being a prestigious title for a female religious scholar in the Javanese tradition.[4]

Always dressed in fashionable and colorful Muslim attire with a *jilbab* (headscarf), her easily digested religious messages and down-to-earth preaching style are welcomed by many ordinary Muslims, especially women and girls. She intersperses her message with singing, plenty of jokes and sometimes even dancing. As described by a journalist, she conveys her speech in "Surabaya" style, by using many Javanese words and speaking in a direct manner: interactive, blunt and entertaining at the same time (Roosilawati 2008). She also makes extensive use of "social talk" (*bahasa gaul*), the slang used by Indonesian youth to interact with her audiences.

What makes her most striking, however, is her expression of Chineseness. First, although she is not a fluent Mandarin speaker, she often sprinkles a little Mandarin in her talk. Second, she always highlights the role of Chinese Muslims in promoting early Islamization in Java. Third, she tries to present a positive image of Chinese Indonesians to the Muslim crowd by saying that not all Chinese are rich or exclusive. Fourth, she uses her Chinese name, Tan Mei Hwa, in order to differentiate herself from other preachers who have Islamic or Indonesian names. Indeed, "Tan Mei Hwa" in some ways has been an exotic hallmark for her preaching.

Trained in law, Tan Mei Hwa worked in multi-level marketing before she became a full-time preacher. Like many Chinese Indonesians around her age who live in Java, she speaks fluent Indonesian and Javanese, yet has only mastered a few Mandarin and Hokkien phrases. She converted to Islam when she was 18 due to the influence of her Muslim friends and her marriage to a Javanese man. She learnt about Islam from her husband, Muslim friends and through reading about the religion. Her lack of formal Islamic education did not become an obstacle for her in the preaching market. She is not only a successful preacher, but also the director of Az Zahra, a religious training and consultation institute and has an interest in developing MSQ – Management Spiritual Quotient, mimicking the popular Ary Ginanjar's Emotional Spiritual Quotient (ESQ).[5] Besides religious texts, she reads many books related to management, leadership and philosophy, so she can convey Islamic messages connected to everyday practice, such as time management, human interaction and work ethics (interview, Tan Mei Hwa, 23 November 2010).

To appeal to a broader audience, Tan Mei Hwa avoids theological debates and controversial subjects in her preaching. Although she occasionally employs Arabic citations from Islamic normative sources, she emphasizes the universal values of Islam and their application in everyday life. She rarely talks about her conversion experience and her former religion, which was Chinese traditional belief. She emphasizes that her preaching is not only for Muslims, but also for non-Muslims, as she states, "Islam is religion that is a blessing for all [*rahmatan lil 'alamin*]." She does not intend to convert other Chinese to Islam, because she says religious conversion is a personal choice. Although she has given talks at political campaigns during elections, she refuses to affiliate with any political party or religious organization. She stresses that as a preacher, it is important for her to be neutral, so that her messages will be accepted by all Muslims. In short, the image of Islam she tries to portray is "simple, inclusive and fun."

Like other celebrity preachers, Tan Mei Hwa is an astute entrepreneur who tailors her preaching style and messages to audiences carefully and creatively. I first met her in 2008 at a fast-breaking function during Ramadan in Surabaya. The event was also part of a gubernatorial election campaign. As such the candidate for deputy governor of East Java, Saifullah Yusuf, known also as Gus Ipul, was also present. Contradicting her claim to be politically neutral, Tan Mei Hwa urged the audience to vote for Gus Ipul and his running mate. Apart from that, she did not talk much about other political issues and focused on other themes, such as Islamic solidarity and poverty eradication. When I asked one of the

organizers why they had invited Tan Mei Hwa, he responded, "Because she is popular. Her message is simple and her style entertaining. She can attract a large audience, especially female" (field note, 24 September 2008).

Indeed, with her singing, flamboyant gestures and occasional dancing, she can hold her audience's attention for a full hour and a half of preaching. During the fast-breaking function, she was dressed in fashionable pink. Besides reciting *shalawat* (Islamic blessings), she sang the popular "*Surga Mu*" (Your Heaven), a religious-themed pop-rock song by the band UNGU. She asked her audience to sing along and most of them did. She joked, too, drawing on stories from her ethnicity and personal experience. For example, she said, "I am a Chinese. How come my Javanese is more fluent than my Chinese?" and "Although I have slanted eyes [*mata sipit*], I have a broad viewpoint" (field note, 24 September 2008). She often repeats similar stylized performances at other public talks. Yet, she also changes her preaching persona and content according to the audience, aim and location. When conducting a monthly Islamic study session with Muslim women in a Muhammadiyah mosque near her house, she avoids singing and dancing because modernist Muslims forbid these activities to be carried out in their mosques. In the session, she usually gives a brief speech, followed by an interactive question-and-answer session. She also conducts smaller *zikir* (Islamic mystical chanting) sessions every Sunday at her house and occasionally offers training that combines the skills of business management and religious spirituality.

I described earlier how Tan Mei Hwa uses her Chineseness to attract her audience, and here I discuss how she builds up her credentials as a Chinese preacher by referring to religious texts. In a public talk in connection with *halal-bihalal* (mutual forgiving event) in Surabaya in 2008, she urged the crowd, mostly consisting of non-Chinese Muslims, to acknowledge and respect difference. She began her talk by stating that she converted to Islam because she was interested in the concept of "*rahmatan lil 'alamin*" in Islamic teachings. Later, she recounted a short conversation between two Muslim girls in which one had refused to go to a *pengajian* (Islamic study session) because it was being led by a Chinese preacher. She then cited Qur'anic texts and told her audience:[6]

> I was born as Tan Mei Hwa. Can I choose not to be a Chinese? Is it a sin to be Chinese? There is no Qur'anic text that obliges someone to be an ethnic Chinese or not. God creates us in different shapes and colors. Some have slanted eyes, and some have broader eyes. Some have darker skin, and some have fairer skin. We are all brother and sisters. We should respect each other.
> (Field note, 16 October 2008)

Most of the audience applauded her, as a sign of support. She continued her talk by referring to a *Hadith* (accounts of the words of Prophet Muhammad): "Prophet Muhammad urges us Muslims to seek knowledge even as far as China. Since there are many ethnic Chinese in Indonesia, we are lucky enough that we can learn from them without travelling to mainland China" (field note, 16 October 2008). She has used such messages to help promote a better image of Chinese

Indonesians and bolster her credentials as a preacher. To show that Chinese preachers are not new, she traces the origin of Indonesian Islam to Cheng Ho and the *Walisongo* (nine saints who are mythologized as having spread Islam in Java).[7] Quoting former Nahdlatul Ulama leader Abdurrahman Wahid, she claims that some of the revered *Walisongo* were of Chinese descent.[8]

However, Tan Mei Hwa's preaching is not without controversy. Among the more controversial aspects of her preaching are her singing and dancing. Some ultra-conservative Muslims argue that it is unacceptable for women to sing and perform in public because the female voice is *aurat* (a part of the body that should be covered in public). She disagrees and argues that such a "hardline" (*keras*) view is not shared by a majority of Indonesian Muslims. She defended herself by saying that "As long as I wear Islamic clothing, practice an Islamic lifestyle and spread the message of Islam, what's wrong with a female becoming a preacher?" Furthermore, she continued, "Most of my audiences are female." She also explained why she chooses to wear a colorful dress when preaching, "I want to portray Islam as a beautiful religion, and an attractive appearance is very important" (interview, Tan Mei Hwa, 23 November 2008). Yet, this does not mean that she takes a progressive stand on gender issues. As I observed, in an Islamic study session, she once told her female audience that "women are not suited to become leaders because they are emotional" and "women should put family first and career second" (field note, 23 November 2008). Such statements, however, have to be put into context, because she was addressing a more socially conservative crowd in a Muhammadiyah mosque. Furthermore, in 2008, she was invited to speak for the East Java gubernatorial election campaigns of Soekarwo and Saifullah Yusuf (both males), and one of their challengers was female.[9] This may explain why she told her audience that "women are not suited to become leaders."

Koko Liem: Chinese package, Islamic message

> An *ustaz* [religious teacher], but he has narrow eyes, yellow skin and always wears Chinese attire. He is known as Koko Liem. Originating from a Chinese Buddhist family in Dumai, Sumatra, he converted to Islam because he believes that the religion has universal and tolerant teachings.

This is how the young Chinese preacher Koko Liem was introduced on television in Indonesia. Indeed, a Chinese name, Chinese appearance and convert background are the three main characteristics that make Koko Liem stand out. Born in 1979, as Liem Hai Thai, Koko Liem adopted a Muslim name, Muhammad Usman Ansori, when he converted to Islam. However, he prefers to be addressed as Koko Liem when he preaches, because it feels more "down to earth." It also differentiates him from other preachers. Koko means "brother" in the Hokkien dialect, while Liem is his Chinese surname.

Besides his name, Koko Liem's other preaching hallmark is his traditional Chinese clothing with a Chinese skull-cap.[10] He wears this outfit because it

looks interesting and is different from what other preachers wear. As he told me, "Preachers don't have to wear a *jubah* with turban, or a *baju koko* with *peci*. I am a Chinese preacher. That is why I dress in Chinese clothing" (interview, Koko Liem, 26 April 2008).[11] He explained that it was a preaching strategy to show that Islam is a universal religion compatible with Chinese cultural traditions. To further illustrate the close relationship between Islam and Chineseness, he added that *baju koko*– a popular Muslim form of male clothing in Indonesia – has its origin in China and is modified from traditional Chinese costumes. He also pointed out that Islamic teachings share many similarities with Confucian values, such as respect for elders, modesty and cooperation.

Like Tan Mei Hwa, Koko Liem's use of his Chinese name and clothing is a preaching strategy, which does not reflect his daily cultural practice. He can speak only a little Hokkien, while he is fluent in Arabic and Indonesian, and is married to a Javanese woman. His minimal knowledge of Chinese language and culture leaves him with few ways of presenting his Chinese identity to the public. In other words, he can only capitalize on his name and appearance to authenticate his Chineseness to attract media attention.

In contrast to Tan Mei Hwa, Koko Liem is well trained in Islamic studies. Since primary school, he has been interested in Islamic teachings, and had followed various religious events, which led him to finally convert to Islam when he was 14. His conversion was rejected by his father, which then made him choose to leave home and move to Java. There he was trained in an NU *pesantren* (Islamic boarding school), and continued his Islamic studies in a teaching institute of Qur'anic knowledge (PTIQ, Institut Perguruan Tinggi Ilmu Al-Qur'an). He is best known for his ability to memorize all the verses in the Qur'an.

Koko Liem has incorporated episodes from his biography into his preaching. He blends his conversion experience and stories about his struggles in learning about Islam with recitations of Qur'anic texts, as well as knowledge about Islam and other religions. Indeed, these are some of the key themes of his preaching. He thinks that a Chinese convert who understands Islam is likely to be respected by local Muslims. Therefore, his sharing of his story and religious experience is a form of *dakwah*, to remind ordinary Muslims to observe Islam. He told me that the common response from his audiences is, "He is a convert, but his religious knowledge is greater than ours. He can lecture on religion. He can memorize the Qur'an. But what can we do?" (interview, Koko Liem, 26 April 2008).

Like other celebrity preachers, Koko Liem is "media savvy." Besides his charming appearance, he has good communication skills and, like Tan Mei Hwa, he engages in "social talk" (*bahasa gaul*). He was one of the finalists on *Mimbar Dai*, a reality show on TPI (Television Pendidikan Indonesiaor; Indonesian Education Television) in which one of the competitors was awarded the title of "best preacher." Since then, his preaching career has become more successful. Now, not only does he host several religious programs on various television channels, he is also involved in acting and advertising. He has acted as a *kiai* (religious scholar) in a religious *sinetron* (serial drama) – *Kiamat Sudah Dekat 3* ("The Judgment Day is Coming 3").

He is one of the most creative Chinese preachers, whose Islamic business career goes beyond public preaching to include *umroh* and *haj* pilgrimage travel, a religious SMS service and a religious school for new converts. He has a personal website (www.kokoliem.com) featuring reports and video clips of his public preaching engagements, as well as stories of new converts, consultation services and Islamic articles. He is affiliated with the UJE Centre, owned by a popular celebrity preacher, Jefri al-Buchori, best known as Uje. Koko Liem holds monthly Islamic study sessions for new converts and occasionally speaks at the popular "I like Monday" Islamic study sessions at the UJE Centre. Indeed, Koko Liem's preaching and marketing strategies are generally in line with his associate, Jefri al-Buchori, who is a multi-media artist and preacher.

In his latest SMS religious-themed service, *Lampion Hati* (A Lantern for the Heart), which offers Islamic-based advice, teaching and ring tones to subscribers, Koko Liem combined Chinese cultural symbols with Islamic messages to attract customers. Against a red background decorated with pictures of Chinese lanterns and the silhouette of a mosque, Koko Liem features in a posture of prayer, wearing green (the color of Islam) traditional Chinese clothing. The advertisement for his SMS service declares his goal to "illuminate your heart and faith with Islamic advice" (*Terangi Hati dan Imanmu dengan tausiyah-tausiyah Islami*). Also included in his SMS services are guidance for new converts, tips for Islamic family harmony and suggestions for Islamic match-making. This combination of Chinese cultural symbols and Islamic messages gives Koko Liem his uniqueness and makes him especially popular among Muslim Indonesians.

However, his creative preaching does not always lead him to a more progressive or critical understanding of religious and social issues. Like many other celebrity preachers in contemporary Indonesia, Koko Liem tends to embrace a socially conservative Islam, albeit with a light touch (Howell 2008: 59). For example, he has written an article arguing that Muslim youths should not celebrate Valentine's Day because Valentine's Day is a Christian festival, which is not compatible with Islamic lifestyle, and it promotes free sex, which is prohibited in Islamic teaching (Koko Liem 2009).

Irena Handono: from church activist to Islamic preacher

Not all Chinese preachers present a television-friendly face and use their Chineseness. Irena Handono, or Han Hoo Lie, born 1954, a former student at Atmajaya Catholic University in Jakarta, was a church activist and nun before she converted to Islam in 1983. Unlike Tan Mei Hwa and Koko Liem, Irena Handono does not position herself as a "Chinese" preacher. Although some of her Muslim admirers know about her Chinese identity, her distinguishing feature as a preacher is her background as a Catholic nun.

Despite sharing a similar profile to Tan Mei Hwa as a Chinese female convert-turned-preacher, the style and contents of Irena Handono's preaching are very different from Tan's. She eschews much of the entertainment-focused approach and concentrates instead on smaller-scale preaching tours and

Islamic activism. She is active in numerous Islamic organizations, most of which are conservatively inclined, including Forum for the Anti Pornography and Porno-Action Movement (FORGAPP, Forum Gerakan Anti Pornografi dan Pornoaksi). She also established the Irena Centre to educate Muslims and prevent apostasy.

Whenever she preaches, Irena emphasizes her experience of conversion to Islam. She makes lengthy and detailed theological comparisons between Christianity and Islam, which always end up demonstrating Islam's superiority. According to Irena, Islam is the only true religion recognized by God, and the Christian concept of the "trinity" is false. She has given a few presentations, themed *Bongkar Kristian* (Exposing Christianity), which focused on "weaknesses" in Christianity. She has also written two books – *Menyingkap Fitnah dan Teror* (Unveil the Slander and Terror) and *Islam Dihujat* (Blasphemed Islam) – to challenge stereotypical negative Western images of Islam and reveal the constant threat of Christian missionaries. To some extent, her *dakwah* is not focused on converting non-Muslims to Islam, but preventing Muslims from converting to Christianity.

Like other *sharia*-minded Muslim preachers, Irena often criticizes non-practicing Muslims for not using the Qur'an to guide every aspect of their lives. She supports the implementation of the controversial Anti-Pornography Bill to regulate the morality of Muslim Indonesians and proposes stern action to prevent apostasy among Muslims. She also attacks prominent Muslims who have promoted pluralistic ideas, such as the well-known religious scholar Syafii Maarif, who suggested that not only Muslims, but also Christians and Jews have a place in heaven. Her messages draw criticism from Christians and moderate Muslim leaders. They worry that her effort to rid Christianity of "weaknesses" after finding the "Islamic truth" will worsen inter-religious relationships in Indonesia. Some Chinese Muslim leaders also disassociate themselves from her and criticize the content of her sermons. For them, conversion is a personal choice, and it is not appropriate for a Muslim convert to criticize publicly his or her former religion. However, hardline Muslim groups, especially those worried about the threat of "Christianization," welcome her talks. Islamic magazines and newspapers such as *Sabili* and *Republika* also interview Irena frequently.[12]

In short, Chinese ethnicity is not crucial for Irena Handoko's life or preaching career. Her conversion experience and the psycho-religious elements of her religious transformation have a larger impact on her preaching style and content. To some extent, the next example, Syafii Antonio, shares the same trajectory, where religious experience is more crucial than ethnicity as a guide to daily life and preaching.

Syafii Antonio: promoting an Islamic economy

Muhammad Syafii Antonio (Nio Gwan Chung), born in 1967, is one of the most respected Chinese Muslim intellectuals and a leading figure in the promotion of an Islamic economy in Indonesia. Since the 1990s, using the Malaysian model, he

has been helping to build an Islamic banking system in Indonesia. Today, he is a member of the board of directors and *sharia* advisor for various banks and financial institutions. He is also one of the leaders in Yayasan Karim Oei (a Chinese convert foundation).

Born into a Confucian family, Syafii first converted to Christianity in primary school and later to Islam when he was 17. He emphasized that he had based his conversion on rational consideration after studiously comparing the merits of different religions before determining that Islam was the best for him. After converting to Islam, he studied Arabic in an NU *pesantren* and attended Muhammadiyah High School at the same time. He continued his undergraduate studies at the University of Jordan (Islamic law) and took his master's degree at the International Islamic University, Malaysia (Islamic economy), before completing his PhD on Islamic economic and banking systems at the University of Melbourne, Australia.

Syafii Antonio started to preach in public at a very young age when he was still studying at an Islamic boarding school. He was asked to replace his religious teacher to talk in a *pengajian* when his teacher fell ill. Since then, he has gained popularity among Muslim audiences through his excellent religious knowledge, convincing public speaking, Chinese look and convert status. Not only is he invited to give public sermons, he has also hosted religious programs on radio and television. However, his *dakwah* approach changed after he completed his postgraduate studies, and is different from other Chinese preachers. He is less active in public preaching now, and focuses on developing an Islamic economy through business, seminars and education.

As of 2010, Syafii Antonio is the Chairman of the Takzia College of Islamic Economy and the founder of the Andalusia Islamic Centre, as well as being the author of several books on Islamic economics. In his latest book, *Muhammad SAW: The Super Leader, Super Manage*r (Antonio 2007), he argues that the Prophet Muhammad was not only a religious leader, but also a successful businessman. He suggests, therefore, that Muslims should not confine their faith to religious rituals and practices, but also engage in Islamic banking, business, insurance and other economic matters. According to him, an Islamic economy is the solution to the three problems faced by Indonesian Muslims – poverty, backwardness and poor morals.

Syafii Antonio's strong religious education, high academic achievement and remarkable business success make him well respected among both Chinese and non-Chinese Muslims. He maintains good relationships with all major Muslim groups in Indonesia, in an attempt to maximize his efforts in promoting an Islamic economy. For him, an Islamic economy is not exclusively for Muslims, because non-Muslims can also invest in an Islamic market or consume Islamic products. However, this inclusiveness does not mean that he is completely liberal. As he said:

> I agree with the MUI fatwa that Muslims should not wish "Merry Christmas" to Christians. This does not mean I am exclusive or anti-Christian. I have many non-Muslim friends. I just want to protect my faith. If I say "Merry

> Christmas," it means I accept the birth of Jesus as the son of God or the trinity concept in Christianity. This contradicts my belief in *tauhid* [the oneness of God].
>
> (Interview, Syafii Antonio, 11 January 2009)

Married to a woman from Padang, Syafii Antonio does not speak any Chinese or practice Chinese culture in his daily life. Focusing on the rationality of Islamic teaching, he hardly uses any cultural symbols in his preaching. Instead of using Chinese architectural design, he has adopted a Moorish style for the mosque in his Andalusia Islamic Centre. Some of his friends did not know he is Chinese, until he used his Chinese name in his latest book. Like other Chinese preachers, he acknowledges that being Chinese is a "surplus marketing point" (interview, Syafii Antonio, 11 January 2009). However, he suggests that Chinese Muslim preachers should go beyond the performance of their Chineseness and place more emphasis on helping to improve the socio-economic situation of Indonesian Muslims.

Anton Medan: from gangster to preacher

Anton Medan, or Tan Kok Liong, born in 1957, is a popular *dakwah* figure. He is also a controversial character, not because he is Chinese, but because earlier in life he was a *preman*, or gangster. His involvement in robbery, drugs and illegal gambling led him to spend 18 years in prison. After converting to Islam in 1992 and adopting an Islamic name, Muhammad Ramadan Effendi, he started his preaching career among prisoners and prostitutes, before becoming popular with a wider public and on television. His personal transformation from an immoral hoodlum to a pious preacher is his preaching hallmark.

Since 1996, he has been conducting workshops training former prisoners and gangsters to become skilled workers with religious knowledge. In 2005, he also established an Islamic boarding school, Pondok Pesantren Terpadu At-Taibin, in Bogor that promotes entrepreneurship alongside religious education, and where Chinese language and business skills are compulsory subjects. In the compound of the boarding school, there is a Chinese-style mosque, Masjid Tan Kok Liong, which resembles in its architectural design a traditional Chinese palace. Anton Medan says that this building is part of an effort to preach Islam to Chinese Indonesians, and to promote "*pembauran*" (intermingling) between Chinese and non-Chinese Indonesians. He does not see a contradiction between being a Muslim and being Chinese, and claims that he has the strength of both, or as he put it, "*Akal Cina, Hati Muslim.*" "Akal Cina" means literally "Chinese mind," by which he means having a business orientation. "Hati Muslim" means "Muslim heart," which refers to an emphasis on spirituality and morality. He explained: "A good Muslim is a Muslim who not only can open the holy text, but is also able to conduct business."

Contrasting himself with other Chinese preachers, such as Koko Liem, he said, "I do not preach for money. I do not rely on preaching to make ends meet and I am free to say anything on my mind." Indeed, preaching is not the main

source of Anton's income, as he also runs various business ventures ranging from garment manufacturing to banner printing. For Anton, the demonstration of economic achievements and success is an important element of his *dakwah*. First, with sufficient funds, he can build religious schools and preach for free to marginalized groups, such as prisoners and prostitutes. Second, he can prove to non-Muslims that "the backwardness of Indonesian Muslims is not caused by Islam" (interview, Anton Medan, 7 November 2008).

Despite religious differences, Anton Medan, who speaks fluent Hokkien and a little Mandarin, maintains good relationships with many non-Muslim Chinese. He sees himself as a bridge between ethnic Chinese and Muslim Indonesians. He is occasionally involved in inter-faith activities and helps some non-Muslim Chinese solve their conflicts with Islamic leaders. Indeed, during my visit to his boarding school, a couple of Chinese women from Medan were asking for his help in dealing with some Muslim leaders who opposed the building of a Chinese temple in Medan, Sumatra (field note, 9 January 2009). Anton Medan also told me that he supports the idea of having a casino in Indonesia, under the strict condition that it is for non-Muslims only, for two reasons – to reduce illegal gambling and to boost Indonesia's economy.

However, such viewpoints do not necessarily mean that he is a Muslim with a liberal bent and a critical mindset. Instead, the media have sometimes highlighted Anton Medan's conservative side. For example, his visits to the families of convicted Bali bombers Amrozi and Imam Samudra before the two men were executed for terrorism were widely reported in the national press. I had the opportunity of following him to visit Amrozi's family in Lamongan, East Java. Despite the short stay, he was warmly welcomed by Amrozi's family members and friends. He told me that he met Amrozi and Samudra when he preached in jails. He said, "Many Muslim leaders are afraid of visiting their families. But as Muslims, what is wrong with sending condolences? This does not mean I support their terror attacks" (interview, Anton Medan, 7 November 2008).

Anton also claims to be an advisor to the Islamic Defenders' Front (FPI, Front Pembela Islam), a hardliner organization. He expressed regret that the FPI chief, Rizieq Shihab was sentenced to two years' imprisonment for his involvement in the MONAS incident, which involved a clash between the FPI and an alliance of organizations that supported religious freedom.[13] In 2008, in an Islamic study session in Cirebon to celebrate the Islamic New Year, Anton openly criticized the well-known liberal-minded NU leader, Maman Imanulhaq, who was a speaker at the same event. He blamed Maman Imanulhaq for supporting religious freedom and urged him to repent (*tobat*). He even suggested the audience disperse and boycott Maman Imanulhaq's speech (Wahid Institute 2009: 1). During the 2009 elections, he endorsed the struggle for an Islamic state and associated himself with the Crescent Star Party (PBB, Partai Bulan Bintang), an Islamic party.

It can be argued that as a reformed criminal with little religious education background, his affiliation with conservative Islamic organizations is a way of legitimizing his Islamic identity among the broader Muslim community. By proclaiming conservative Islamic viewpoints and criticizing progressive

Muslims, Anton Medan is trying to prove his sincerity as a pious Muslim and demonstrate his credentials as a preacher. However, as reflected by his involvement in inter-faith activities, Anton Medan also has his inclusive and tolerant side. His complex and situational religious attitude is not exceptional, but shared by many Muslims, especially Chinese converts.[14] The next section will locate the popularity of Chinese preachers in the broader discussion of ethnic interaction and religious pluralism in Indonesia.

From taboo to commodity: celebrating inclusive Chineseness?

During the long years of Suharto's New Order regime, Chinese culture was taboo. The government even banned the Mandarin translation of the Qur'an. However, in contemporary democratizing Indonesia, Chinese culture has become a marketable commodity, as the country faces both globalization and demands for internal cultural diversity (Budianta 2007). Chinese lion and dragon dances have become fashionable entertainment, oriental appearance is desirable in Indonesian serial dramas and Mandarin courses have sprung up in many cities. Interestingly, Chineseness is not only consumed by ethnic Chinese, but also by non-Chinese. For example, about 80 percent of the members of lion dance groups in Surabaya are either Javanese or Madurese (field notes, 12 September 2008), and Taiwanese popular culture (such as the popular drama serial *Meteor Garden*) has become a fad among non-Chinese youth (Ida 2008).

The popularity of Chinese Muslim preachers among non-Chinese Muslims is a further illustration of this appeal. Today, Chinese preachers are desirable and are recognized by many non-Chinese Muslims. In fact, the congregations of Chinese preachers are mostly non-Chinese, given the small number of Chinese Muslims in Indonesia. Not only receiving religious messages and spiritual advice, many non-Chinese Muslims are in certain ways also "consuming" the preachers' Chinese appearance and cultural symbols, stories of conversion and entertaining preaching styles.

The new celebrity status of Chinese preachers may help to improve the image of Chinese Indonesians among the broader Indonesian population. It may demonstrate that Chinese and Muslim Indonesians need not be mutually exclusive. When hundreds of Javanese Muslims listen to the sermon of a Chinese preacher, they are crossing ethnic boundaries in some sense. At the same time, Chinese identity is also given a more complex representation – Chinese Indonesians are not just "economic animals," but can also be religious teachers.[15] Some of the preachers also use Islamic texts to promote cultural diversity and inter-ethnic tolerance.

Chinese Indonesians are often accused of being "exclusive" and refusing to mix. These feelings have traditionally been strongest in devout Muslim circles, and in Muslim organizations – right back to the early years of the twentieth century, when Sarekat Islam (Islamic Union) was set up to campaign against the influence of Chinese businesses (Azya 1994; Mackie 2008: 191). Now, not only moderate Muslim organizations (such as NU and Muhammadiyah), but also conservative groups (like the FPI and the Prosperous Justice Party, PKS) are

enthusiastic about recruiting Chinese Muslims, both as members and leaders. They do so to prove that they endorse "multiculturalism," and to put the Chinese converts on a pedestal as models of devout behavior to non-practicing Muslims.

However, as Hoon (2009) observes, the increase in consumption of Chinese culture by non-Chinese should not be naively read as full acceptance of ethnic Chinese. It would be too simplistic to suggest that the popularity of Chinese preachers among non-Chinese Muslims can lead to the erosion of ethnic boundaries and suspicions. On the contrary, the use of Chinese cultural symbols in Chinese Muslims' preaching may reinforce ethnic stereotyping and the distinction between "Chinese" and "indigenous" Indonesians as something that cannot be totally erased.

As indicated by Heryanto (2004 and 2008), the symbolic celebration of Chineseness in post-1998 Indonesia carries a strong tendency to "essentialize" Chineseness as a set of fixed characteristics and traditions which does not reflect the complex realities of life for many Chinese Indonesians. Indeed, many of the Chinese preachers I have encountered have little or no Chinese-language ability and do not practice Chinese culture in their daily lives. Yet, they use visible markers of Chinese identity to attract media attention. This takes the form of wearing certain types of dress, using Chinese names, building Chinese-style mosques, emphasizing the role of Cheng Ho and so on. These acts then become the markers by which Chineseness is reified among non-Chinese audiences. In doing so, I argue that a Chinese stereotype, albeit not necessarily a negative one, is reconsolidated.

Yet, cultural essentialism does not always necessarily imply social exclusivity (Kahn 2006: 166). Indeed, together with the recognition of Chinese-style mosques, such as the Cheng Hoo Mosque in Surabaya, the popularity of Chinese preachers is another example which suggests that the celebration of Chinese cultural expression does not equate to the promotion of social exclusivity. As I have argued elsewhere (Hew 2011a), although the Surabaya Cheng Hoo Mosque was built in a Chinese style and managed by Chinese Muslims, it is a cosmopolitan socio-religious space where both Muslims and non-Muslims from different ethnic groups can get together. In fact, most of the mosque's congregation are non-Chinese Muslims, while many Chinese converts attend mosques close to where they live. We may call it "inclusive Chineseness," in which the practice of Chinese culture is no longer a sign of ethnic exclusivity, but rather a common heritage shared by all Indonesians. Besides, not all Chinese Muslim preachers utilize Chinese cultural symbols for their preaching. For Irena Handoko and Syafii Antonio, who respectively focus on Islam–Christian religious comparison and Islamic economy, their Chinese identities do not constitute a crucial element in their religious careers.

From converts to preachers: pluralizing the Islamic market?

During the fasting month, topics such as "Why I chose Islam" become popular. Stories of religious conversion are a staple for Chinese Muslim preachers. Although *dakwah* activities tend to be dominated by preachers of indigenous

or Arabic descent, it can be argued that Chinese Muslim preachers add an element of plurality to the Indonesian Islamic market. There is added diversity because the ethnic identity of the preachers makes them distinctive. In addition, Chinese Muslim preachers can appeal to Chinese who are not yet Muslims. As such *dakwah*, for Chinese Muslim preachers, has two aims. Internally, it aims to make a nominal Muslim a better Muslim. Externally, it tries to spread Islamic messages to non-Muslims with the hope that they will convert to Islam.

For many Chinese Muslim preachers, propagating Islam to non-Muslim Chinese is not an easy task. Instead of converting Chinese to Islam, most of them focus on "preaching through example" to eliminate negative ethnic Chinese perceptions of Islam. Like the celebrations of Chinese New Year in mosques and churches discussed in Chiou's and Hoon's chapters in this volume, their performances of Chinese identities show that Islamic teaching is not contradictory to Chinese culture. At the same time, their achievements in religious business prove that Islam should not be identified with backwardness. Indeed, their messages to non-Muslim Chinese are clear and simple – Islam is universal not just for native Indonesians. It is a modern and tolerant, rather than a backward and radical religion.

Chinese Muslim preachers are living testimonies to the universality of Islam's message. They also offer an attractive, alternative image of Islam in Indonesia. Chinese Muslims use not only Arabic names and Indonesian names, but also Chinese names. Chinese Muslim preachers wear not only *peci* with *baju koko*, or long robe with turban, but also Chinese clothing with skull-cap. To a certain extent, this hybrid form of Islamic expression is an antidote to an increasing puritanism that is hostile to local cultural traditions. It also shows that rising Islamic religiosity does not necessarily undermine cultural and ethnic diversity in Indonesia.

Most Chinese Muslim preachers are influenced by Islamic thoughts and organizations in broader Indonesian Muslim society. Conversion experience, religious education, social participation and local settings vary the impact of such Islamic influence. However, many Chinese Muslim preachers play down their affiliation to any particular Islamic group in public so that they can reach out to wider Muslim crowds. For example, Anton Medan argues that he tries to combine the characteristics of different religious groups in order to be a better Muslim. He put it this way: "I will get lessons on interpersonal relationships from NU, structural organizational skills from Muhammadiyah and the purer understanding of Islam from PERSIS [Persatuan Islam; Islamic Association]" (interview, Anton Medan, 7 November 2008).

Yet, the use of cultural symbols and the attempt to approach broader audiences do not lead Chinese preachers to contribute greater diversity to Islamic discourses. As shown in the preceding case studies, the preaching of Chinese Muslims takes varying forms, and conveys different messages. However, these plural forms of preaching strategies do not necessarily contribute to a more critical understanding of Islam. Instead of challenging some widely held conservative viewpoints, many preachers choose to conform to them to avoid controversy. In other words, Chinese Muslim preachers may diversify the appearance of

preaching – simply because they look Chinese – but they do not necessarily add greater pluralism to the substance of religious belief and practice.

Indeed, many Chinese Muslim preachers are rather conservative with regards to religious and social matters, especially when preaching in public.[16] Irena Handono is one extreme case. Her constant criticism of Christianity not only alarms non-Muslims, but also alienates her from moderate Muslim audiences. Meanwhile, Anton Medan has shown his support for the implementation of *sharia* in Indonesia. Other Chinese Muslim preachers avoid controversial issues, and focus on how best to apply Islamic values in daily life. They are moderate and tolerant in their preaching, yet sometimes restrict themselves to certain orthodox interpretations of Islamic teaching. Like other celebrity preachers, many Chinese preachers tend to embrace "a socially conservative Islam, albeit with a light touch" and do not "provide the tools for critical thinking and nuanced religious interpretation" (Howell 2008: 59). For example, Syafii Antonio, Tan Mei Hwa and Koko Liem respectively once told their audiences that "Muslims should avoid wishing 'Merry Christmas' to their Christian friends," that "women are not suited to become leaders" and that "Muslims cannot celebrate Valentine's Day." For converts, subscribing to a rather conservative understanding of Islam is not surprising, as this is a way of proving the sincerity of one's conversion and demonstrating one's credentials as a preacher.

The paradox of hybrid performance

The diverse styles and content of Chinese Muslims' preaching make comprehensive analysis almost impossible. With no intention to simplify such complex realities, this chapter concludes with several general points regarding the identity consumption and performance of Chinese Muslim preachers in Indonesia today. First, there is little correlation between the "commodified" identity performances in public and the everyday practiced identities of the preachers. In other words, they may "sell Chineseness, but do not live Chineseness." As I have illustrated, three of the five preachers discussed in this essay, Tan Mei Hwa, Koko Liem and Anton Medan, consciously use both their Chineseness and Islamic identity to attract audiences. The combination of Chinese and Islamic elements in preaching can be seen as a form of "hybrid performance." Such intentional mixing does not necessarily reflect the preachers' everyday living identities.[17]

In order to establish their preaching credentials, some Chinese preachers choose to present themselves as "more Muslim than other Muslim Indonesians," and "more Chinese than non-Muslim Chinese Indonesians." Instead of performing who they are, they perform to create a public persona. For example, Koko Liem, who frequently does not observe Chinese culture in his daily life, wears Chinese traditional attire during preaching to signal his Chineseness. Likewise, Tan Mei Hwa, who does not usually wear Islamic attire, puts on an Islamic headscarf when she is preaching. In other words, Chinese clothing authenticates Koko Liem's Chinese identity and Islamic dress gives Tan Mei Hwa religious credibility. Indeed, they are learning to appear as "authentic Chinese" and "pious Muslims." This search for authenticity often leads to the

essentialization of Chinese cultural identity and the subscription to an uncritical understanding of Islam.

Nevertheless, the hybrid performance of Chinese preachers contributes moderately to promoting an inclusive image of Islam and Chineseness in Indonesia. It makes Islamic appearances more colorful and brings the presumably incompatible elements of Islam and Chineseness together. Although Chinese Muslim preachers do not generate critical understandings of Islam, they diversify the cultural expression of Islam creatively and promote the universality of Islam in a subtle way. The extensive use of Chinese markers by some preachers may have "essentialized" Chineseness. Yet such "essentialisms" help to improve the image of the ethnic Chinese in the eyes of the larger Indonesian populace through promoting the notion that Chinese Indonesians can and have embraced the religion of the dominant majority. Moreover, most Chinese Muslim preachers' preach to non-Chinese Muslims. To some extent, the popularity of the Chinese Muslim preachers is a fine example of the celebration of inclusive Chinese cultural expression in contemporary Indonesia, in which "essentialistic Chineseness" does not necessarily imply social exclusivity. Instead it has become part of the "Pop Islam" industry that many Indonesians consume.

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Notes

1 "Christianization" is a term that generally refers both to Christian efforts to convert Muslims and the alleged growing influence of Christianity in Muslim-majority Indonesia. Some Muslim groups use it as a justification for mass mobilization and vigilante attacks. For more discussion of "Christianization" in Indonesia, see International Crisis Group 2010.

2 Two clarifications need to be made here. First, my use of the term "marketing" in this chapter is not intended as a value judgment of preachers, nor do I seek to downplay the presence of genuine religious or cultural motivations among them. Rather my aim is to examine the relationship between preaching, marketing and identity. Second, I do not overlook the existence of Chinese Muslim preachers during the New Order period, but they were less visible. Many of them downplayed their Chineseness, as the public expression of Chinese identity was not allowed during the Suharto regime.

3 The expression "identity-card Muslims," or "Islam KTP" (*Kartu Tanda Penduduk*), is commonly used to refer to non-practicing Muslims in Indonesia. All Indonesian citizens have to state their religion on an identity card, yet not all of those who identify themselves as Muslims practice Islam in daily life, especially in Java.

4 *Nyai* is also a term of reference and address for the concubine of a European in colonial period.

5 ESQ is an Islamic corporate management and motivational service, focusing on improving one's general and professional success through spiritual awareness and commitment.

6 The Qur'anic verse she quoted is from Chapter Al-Hujurat (49:13). The verse can be translated as "People, We created you all from a single man and a single woman, and made you into races and tribes so that you should recognize one another. In God's eyes, the most honoured of you are ones most mindful of Him: God is all knowing, all aware" (Abdel Haleem 2004).

7 Cheng Ho is a Hokkien pronunciation for Zheng He (as pronounced in Mandarin). Given that most Chinese in Java are Hokkien, Cheng Ho is more commonly used to refer to the prominent Chinese Muslim admiral. Cheng Ho is often spelt with one "o." However, the mosque in Surabaya is called "Masjid Muhammad Cheng Hoo" (Muhammad Cheng Hoo Mosque), spelt with two "o"s. In this chapter, I use "Cheng Ho" to refer to the Chinese Muslim figure, while "Cheng Hoo Mosque" refers to the Chinese-style mosque in Surabaya. Recently, despite being highly contested, there is a growth of historical re-articulation to support the role of Cheng Ho in the early Islamization in Indonesia.

8 Walisongo refers to the nine saints mythologized as the first persons to spread Islam in Java. On several occasions, former NU leader and Indonesian President Abdurrahman Wahid or Gus Dur has openly stated that he has Chinese blood and that some of the *Walisongo* were of Chinese descent. He claims that he is a descendant of Tan Kim Han or Sheik Abdul al-Shini Qodir, a Chinese Muslim who helped Raden Patah seize power from the Majapahit kingdom and founded the Islamic Kingdom of Demak (Al-Qurtuby 2003: 125).

9 In 2008, there were two pairs of candidates for the second round of the East Java gubernatorial election. The first duo was Soekarwo–Saifullah Yusuf, supported by the Democrat Party (PD) and the National Mandate Party (PAN), while the second pair was Khofifah Parawansa–Mudjiono, supported by the United Development Party (PPP) and the Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle (PDIP). Tan Mei Hwa was invited by the Soekarwo team to speak at their election campaign. Khofifah is a female leader in NU and was a minister in Abdurrahman Wahid's cabinet. The Soekarwo team won the gubernatorial election.

10 The Chinese clothing which Koko Liem always wears is the *Tangzhuang,* or Tang suit. *Tangzhuang* refers to a Chinese jacket, the origins of which can be traced to the end of the Qing Dynasty (1644–1911). It evolved from *Magua*, a type of Manchurian clothing, which was, in turn, adopted by the Han Chinese during the Qing Dynasty. Today, the *Tangzhuang* is one of the main formal clothing options for Chinese men on many occasions. At the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation summit in Shanghai, China in November 2001, the host presented the silk *Tangzhuang* jacket as the Chinese traditional national costume. Since then, some Chinese overseas have also worn the *Tangzhuang*, either as a fashion statement or for cultural expression.

11 *Jubah* is a long flowing robe, identical to Arabic garments. *Peci* is a rimless cap and *baju koko* a collarless shirt, one of the most common clothing styles of male Indonesian Muslims. Some Indonesians have suggested that the *koko* shirt has Chinese roots. According to historian JJ Rizal, such collarless long- or short-sleeved shirts were modified from a *tui-khim* shirt, which was commonly worn by male Chinese in Indonesia until the early twentieth century (Isnaeni 2010).

12 Most of the interviews have been uploaded on Irena's personal blog, http://irena-handono.blogspot.com. For example, in December 2008, Sabili published an interview with Irena Handono entitled "*Kenapa Pada Diam*" (Why Keep Quiet), emphasizing Irena's concern with the rise of Christian missionaries in Indonesia and the lack of efforts by Muslim leaders to counter such a trend.

13 The MONAS incident was an FPI attack on members of the National Alliance for Freedom of Religion and Faith (AKKBB, Aliansi Kebangsaan Untuk Kebebasan Beragama dan Berkeyakinan), who rallied at the National Monument, MONAS, in June 2008. AKKBB is a progressive social and religious coalition that promotes religious freedom and sympathizes with *Ahmadiyah*, a controversial Muslim sect.

Meanwhile, FPI urged the Indonesian government to crack down on *Ahmadiyah* activities, considered deviant, according to FPI.

14 For a detailed discussion of the diverse religiosity and flexible piety of Chinese converts in contemporary Indonesia, see one of the chapters in my PhD thesis (Hew 2011b).

15 Some Chinese preachers, such as Anton Medan and Syafii Antonio, are also entrepreneurs. However, in this chapter, I do not emphasize their business success and marketing skills as part of "Chineseness." I understand that "Chineseness" can evoke images of "rich and successful businessmen" for many Indonesians. Yet, Chinese Muslims are not the pioneers or leaders in religious entrepreneurship in Indonesia. Many non-Chinese Muslim preachers are also successful entrepreneurs, such as Aa Gym and Uje.

16 I am aware that the convenient dichotomy of "conservative/progressive Islam" is highly problematic and inadequate to capture the complexity of Muslim religiosity in contemporary societies. In this chapter, I use such terms not to judge the religiosity of the preachers, but to describe their attitudes on certain social and religious issues. By stating that a preacher holds certain "conservative" viewpoints, it does not necessarily mean that I see him or her as a "conservative" preacher. Indeed, a preacher can have "conservative" views on one issue, but take a "progressive" stand on another matter.

17 I understand that we should not overstate the differences between public identity performances and everyday living identities, as they are sometimes overlapping and mutual influencing. We need more detailed and lengthy research to observe how significant are the influences of public identity manifestations of Chinese Muslim preachers on their everyday practices.

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10 A controversy surrounding Chinese Indonesian Muslims' practice of *Imlek Salat* in Central Java

Syuan-yuan Chiou

Introduction

The fall of Suharto saw Indonesia experiencing a paradigm shift in its political atmosphere, with the lifting of many repressive policies. Two important observations can be made. First, the collapse of the Suharto regime brought about the empowerment of Chinese Indonesians. The increasing public visibility of such an empowerment is most evident through efforts by various NGOs, ethnic organizations, Chinese media (Dawis 2009) and religious groups in promoting human rights issues, as well as the proliferation of Chinese education (Sai 2010) and diverse discourses of Chineseness (Hoon 2008). Second, in addition to the above-mentioned channels applied by Chinese Indonesians, religion has been, and still is, one of the most interesting ways used by Chinese Indonesians to preserve and represent their Chineseness. For instance, Kwee Tek Hoay (1896–1951), a famous *peranakan* writer and intellectual, considered *Sam Kauw* (Ind.: *Tridharma*; Eng.: the Three Religions) as a suitable way to preserve Chinese traditions (Suryadinata 1993: 40–57).

At the same time, the post-Suharto era has also witnessed a significant Islamic revival which manifests itself as a new mode of public Islam. New Islamic spiritual messages are preached by celebrity preachers through television *dakwah*. This new tendency has resulted in religious markets in which Islamic messages and Islamic lifestyle are promoted as religious commodities, produced, circulated and consumed to satisfy Muslims' need for a new form of religious piety. Indeed, Islamic spiritual and moral teachings have become commodities that acquire new modes of religious piety (Howell 2008). Fealy and White describe these manifestations of Islamic religiosity in Indonesia as acts of "expressing Islam" (Fealy and White 2008). The increasing public visibility of Islamic fashion has engendered an important aspect of public Islam (Hasan 2009). Such a tendency in public Islam is not confined to the suffusion of Islamic lifestyle, but also facilitates Muslims' political subjectivity, contributing to embodied political engagement. As Nilüfer Gole observes:

> New faces of Muslim actors using both secular and religious idiom are appearing in public life; the terms of public debate are being transformed by the eruption of religious issues … new spaces, markets, and the media

> are opening up in response to the rising demands of recently formed Muslim middle classes. Islam carves out a public space of its own as new Islamic language styles, corporeal rituals, and spatial practices emerge and blend into public life.
>
> (Gole 2002: 173)

These two recent phenomena – the empowerment of Chinese Indonesians and Islamic revival amongst the indigenous Muslim majority – have merged as "confluences of Chineseness and Islam" (Chiou 2011), best reflected through the increasing public visibility of Chinese Indonesian Muslims during the post-Suharto era. Chinese Indonesian Muslims now appear more willing to showcase their ethnic identity. This raises an obvious question: while it seems "natural" that Chinese Indonesians will appeal to ostensibly "Chinese" religions such as Buddhism to represent and preserve their ethnic identity, how do Chinese Indonesian Muslims use Islam – a religion long regarded as the religion of the indigenous majority and "alien" to most Chinese – to assert their Chineseness?

Many Chinese Indonesian Muslims today are new converts who are neither Chinese Muslim immigrants nor descendants of Chinese Muslims whose origins can be closely traced to contemporary China (Lombard and Salmon 1993, Tan 2000; The 1993). The first Chinese Muslim organization in Indonesia was established in the 1930s. After independence, the Association of Indonesian Chinese Muslims (Ind.: Persatuan Islam Tionghoa Indonesia, PITI) was established in 1961 with the aim of preaching Islam to Chinese Indonesians (Oei 1982). In order not to appear an exclusive organization, PITI kept a low profile during the New Order period and invited indigenous army generals to be its board members. The conversion to Islam by Chinese Indonesians is a minor but significant phenomenon that has been observed in Indonesia since the 1980s. A more organized *dakwah* was inaugurated in the 1980s by Junus Jahja, who aimed to encourage the assimilation of the ethnic Chinese by way of conversion to Islam. However, the end of the New Order has opened a new era for Chinese Indonesian Muslims, who instead showed their ethnic identity by organizing religious activities for the Muslim public.

It may be observed that Chinese Indonesian Muslims generate their "Islamic Chineseness" in two main ways.[1] The first is the use of historical arguments to locate the historical legacy of Chinese Muslims in the macro-historical narrative of Islamization in Java. This is done by linking the histories of Chinese Muslims in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, Zheng He's voyage to Nusantara and his Muslim identity as evidences to argue their contributions to the spread of Islam. Much has been debated about whether Chinese Muslims and their descendants played an important role in facilitating the early Islamization of Java (Kumar 1987). Initially conceived as a controversial historiography of Indonesian Islam in 1960s, this issue was readdressed during the post-New Order period, serving as a means to link the ethnic Chinese minority with the Indonesian majority (al-Qurtuby 2003; Chiou 2010).

Second, Chinese Indonesian Muslims initiate and practice Islam in an embodied and concrete manner. They build mosques in distinctively "Chinese" styles (Chiou 2007). They also perform the Islamic popular music, *nashid*, with

Mandarin Chinese lyrics and dress in Chinese mandarin jackets. Most interestingly, they have initiated a new ritual discourse on Islamic worship by relating Islamic rituals with Chinese notions of healthcare[2] and have used *salat* as a public ritual to celebrate Chinese New Year, which is known locally in Indonesia as *Imlek*. The performance of *salat* as part of the festivities during Chinese New Year is referred to as *Imlek Salat*.

Salat is a very structured Islamic prayer in terms of ritual acts and regulation (Mahmood 2005: 123). It has four requirements: "(1) an intention to dedicate the prayer to God; (2) a prescribed sequence of gestures and words; (3) a physical condition of purity; and (4) proper attire." Though there are some differences among the various traditions of legal schools, basically the practice of *salat* contains formal components, which are divided into ablution (Ind.: *wudu*) and a number of prayer cycles (Ind.: *rakaat*). The ablution is absolutely required before performing the formal prayer. When performing ablution, practitioners have to sequentially wash or wipe parts of their bodies, including their heads, ears, mouths, noses and certain limbs. The prayer cycle consists of four postures and acts: standing, bowing (Ind.: *ruku*), prostration (Ind.: *sujud*) and sitting (Ind.: *duduk*). In the five daily prayers, various numbers of prayer cycles are required at different occasions. The times of prayer cycles in *Imlek Salat* are the same as those for the normal *salat*, but with a new purpose – as a thanksgiving prayer to God with the coming of Chinese New Year. This has become one of the main causes of public debate.

This chapter examines the controversy surrounding *Imlek Salat* in Yogyakarta. When the former Indonesian president Megawati Soekarnoputri announced in 2002 that *Imlek* would be a public holiday of Indonesia starting from 2003, the Yogyakarta branch of PITI[3] began to hold their *Imlek* celebrations in a famous local mosque at Yogyakarta from 2003 onwards. Before the Yogyakarta PITI organized the celebration in 2003, some Muslim organizations expressed their doubts and opposition and this led to public debate on this practice. They were concerned that *Imlek* is a religious festival of *Khongkauw* (Ind.: *Agama Khonghucu*; Eng.: Confucian religion) and wondered why Chinese Indonesian Muslims would still want to celebrate *Imlek* even after their conversion to Islam. Because of this, the Yogyakarta PITI held two seminars inviting university scholars and experts in Islamic law to clarify that *Imlek* is a cultural tradition which sets itself apart from Chinese religions, and that celebrating *Imlek* in a mosque would not violate Islamic law. If *Imlek* has become a national holiday in Indonesia, why does the Chinese Indonesian Muslims' celebration of *Imlek* continue to touch a nerve? In 2007, a fatwa was issued by a local religious teacher, who denounced *Imlek* as a *Khongkauw* (Eng,: Confucianist) religious festival, and maintained that this ritual performance should be prohibited. He also strongly suggested that *Imlek* decorations should not be used by Muslims and that Chinese Indonesian Muslims should wholeheartedly embrace Islam instead of performing an Islamic ritual with Chinese characteristics.

First, this chapter will highlight how the politics of hybridity remains a key concept to the understanding of *Imlek Salat*. Such a concept would allow a closer examination of how Chinese Indonesian Muslims articulate Islamic worship

and borrow the majority's religious ritual performance as a form of intentional hybrid "Islamic Chineseness." Second, it will review the politics of *Imlek* in Indonesia and the controversies of *Imlek Salat*. Third, it will ask why *Imlek*, a Chinese ethnic and cultural festival, appears so easily confused with a religious festival of Indonesian Confucianism. This chapter argues that much of the confusion surrounding *Imlek* and Chinese customs may be attributed to three main factors: the Suharto government's assimilation policy, the indigenous Muslim majority and the ethnic Chinese's appropriation of Confucianism as a religion. Fourth, the chapter will address the question of how Islam may be articulated by ethnic Chinese Muslims as a strategy of self-empowerment. It will suggest that a "double religious pluralism," in the state's religious policy and in public reasoning of Islamic law, has allowed ethnic Chinese Muslims a greater involvement in Muslim politics.

Articulating religion in creating Islamic Chineseness as intentional hybridity

The increasing public visibility of Chinese Indonesian Muslims has raised some questions. Chinese Indonesian Muslims have neither ancient Islamic traditions clearly inherited from the legacies of Chinese Muslims five centuries ago nor direct linkages with the Chinese-speaking Muslims of China. This in turn leads to further questions. Which Chinese traditions are selectively adopted by Chinese Indonesian Muslims to assert their Chineseness? How do they represent a Muslim culture that is in line with Chinese traditions and Indonesian Islam? What are the consequences when their public expressions of ethnic identity are exposed to the Muslim public of Indonesia?

After examining the representations of Chineseness in Indonesian media, Hoon concludes that Chinese Indonesian identity has been "uncritically and simplistically [represented] as homogenous utopian entities" (Hoon 2006: 155) by both the majority population and Chinese Indonesian minority themselves.[4] He highlights that the constructions of Chinese Indonesian minority culture "are not necessarily external but can also be from within the minority" (Hoon 2006: 157). This self-representation has even been formulated as one of the strategies of various Chinese Indonesian organizations in competing as the authoritative/authentic representation of Chinese culture. As Hoon argues:

> [L]eaders of resurgent Chinese organizations play an important role in defining what "Chineseness" means in Indonesia. Even though in reality "Chineseness" is highly contested and diverse, certain power holders within the "Chinese community" who have a variety of agendas – for instance, to stress ethnic solidarity, advocate a return to "roots" and primordialism, claim authenticity and promote resinicization – can represent it as an unchanging and static or primordial entity. When this occurs, only a particular version of Chinese culture and ethnicity is displayed as representative of all "Chineseness" within the framework of multiculturalism.
>
> (Hoon 2006: 157)

However, by acknowledging the power relationships and diversity of representing Chineseness, Hoon has shed light on the possible creative hybridity in Chinese identity, which allows various cultural confluences to merge and coexist. Thus he addresses more dynamic and optimistic views on creative hybrid Chineseness:

> [A]fter a process of negotiation in maintaining their own culture and becoming "Indonesian", a new culture is created. This new culture suggests the recognition of the transformative process of Chinese ethnicity into a creative, adaptive, hybridized *Chinese Indonesian* identity. Such hybridity does not mean a harmonious syncretism of two cultures or two worlds, i.e. Chinese and Indonesian; but is a process of complex negotiation and identification that intersects with forces of globalization, modernization, 'resinicization', primordialism and localization.
>
> (Hoon 2008: 25)

Hoon has provided a dialectical approach to conceptualizing hybrid Chineseness among Chinese Indonesians. However, the hybridity highlighted by Hoon tends to be neutral; and we need to consider some implications of cultural resistance. When exploring *Imlek Salat*, one needs to understand how the ethnic Chinese articulate Islam to empower themselves. The performance of *Imlek Salat* is not a gradual cultural adaptation. Rather, it appears to be an "intentional hybridity" (Bakhtin 1981: 360), which Pnina Werbner illuminates as "the conflation or transgression of culturally constructed categories" (Werbner 2001: 137), in contrast to "organic hybridity," which is a continuous, gradual and organic cultural mixture. Werbner explains that the transgressions implicated in hybridity are "potential tools of resistance which upturn taken-for-granted hierarchies, play dangerously on the boundary and can thus become a source of a offence … minorities often draw on culture strategically to fight for recognition and against discrimination" (Werbner 2001: 138).

However, if *Imlek Salat* is that kind of intentional hybridity, would we consider ethnic Chinese Muslims as playing a religious game that deprecates its cultural authenticity and religious sincerity? Religion can work as an articulated mechanism to mobilize socio-political movements. Stuart Hall (1986: 53–54) argues that religion "exists historically in a particular formation, anchored very directly in relation to a number of different forces. Nevertheless, it has no necessary, intrinsic, trans-historical belongingness. Its meaning – political and ideological – comes precisely from its position within a formation. It comes with what else it is articulated … religion can be articulated in more than one way" and "in particular social formation, where religion has become the valorized ideological domain, the domain into which all the different cultural stands are obligated to enter, no political movement in that society can become popular without negotiating the religious terrain." James Clifford further emphasizes that Hall's articulation "offers a non-reductive way to think about cultural transformation and the apparent coming and going of 'traditional' forms" (Clifford 2001: 478). Therefore, "to see such chains of equivalence (which must always downplay or silence salient differences) as articulated phenomena is not to view them as

inauthentic or 'merely' political, invented, or opportunistic" (Clifford 2001: 478) or to examine who has the authenticity/legitimacy to represent his/her traditions. Instead, Clifford argues that "articulation … evokes a deeper sense of the 'political' – productive processes of consensus, exclusion, alliance, and antagonism that are inherent in the transformative life of all society" (Clifford 2001: 473).

Similarly, in her observation of a tribe in Sulawesi, Tania Murray Li argues that instead of scrutinizing the authenticity of articulated traditions by a minority, it is more important to explore how such traditions are historically embedded and utilized by the minority as cultural resources against the threat of their surrounding majority:

> A group's self-identification as tribal or indigenous is not natural or inevitable, but neither is it simply invented, adopted, or imposed. It is, rather, a positioning which draws upon historically sedimented practices, landscapes, and repertoires of meaning, and emerges through particular patterns of engagement and struggle. The conjunctures at which (some) people come to identify themselves as indigenous, realigning the way they connect to the nation, the government, and their own, unique tribal place, are the contingent products of agency and the cultural and political work of articulation.
> (Li 2000: 151)

The ethnic status of Chinese Indonesians during the New Order era is constantly juxtaposed against the "indigenous" (Ind.: *asli*) Indonesians. Nonetheless, the status of Chinese Indonesian Muslims as an ethnic minority is very similar to that of the tribal people described above, as their religious performances are easily scrutinized by the indigenous majority. Therefore, instead of simply identifying *Imlek Salat* as an inauthentic invented ritual performance or festival tradition, I emphasize its historical embeddedness.

In light of the controversy surrounding *Imlek Salat*, this chapter suggests that non-traditional Chinese religious resources such as Islam can be re-articulated or motivated by the ethnic Chinese minority, which may serve to bridge cultural differences with the Muslim *pribumi* (Chiou 2007). However, by "applying" or "borrowing" the performance of Islamic worship, the hybridity of *Imlek Salat* runs the risk of transgressing established Islamic conventions. This is similar to Chinese conversion to Islam, which arguably transgresses racial and religious boundaries, causing *pribumi* Muslims to doubt whether it is in any way sincere (Chiou 2009). On the other hand, *Imlek Salat* also changes the conventional ways that *Imlek* is celebrated in Indonesia, which raises the question of its authenticity from the point of view of the larger Chinese community as different Chinese communities compete for the legitimacy as to who best represents Chineseness in Indonesia.

Origin and debates of Imlek Salat

On 13 February 2003, a Chinese Indonesian member of parliament for DIY Yogyakarta (Yogyakarta Special Region), Budi Setyagraha (alias Huang Ren Cong),

who was also the chairperson of Yogyakarta PITI (1984–2003), organized a celebration of *Imlek* at Syuhada mosque,[5] one of the most famous old mosques in Yogyakarta. On that day, there were around 100 Chinese Indonesian Muslims gathered on the second floor of Syuhada mosque, performing *salat* and prayer (Ind.: *do'a*) to express their thanks to God.

The head of the Indonesian Council of Religious Scholars (Ind.: MUI, Majelis Ulama Indonesia) of Daerah Istimewa Yogyakarta, KH Thoha Abdurahman, was invited to attend the *Imlek* celebration. In his lecture, he reminded people not to make the celebration a cause for confrontation. In his opinion *Imlek* is a cultural tradition rather than the commemoration of Confucius' birthday. Similarly, another invited speaker, anthropologist Syafri Sairin of Gadjah Mada University, spoke in similar terms, referring to *Imlek* as a Chinese cultural (rather than religious) tradition. He explained that Confucianism is a philosophy and that even Korean Christians embrace Confucianism. He discouraged identifying Chineseness with Confucianism. The meeting began with the reading of the Quran, followed by lectures, and ended with performing *salat* through two ritual cycles. Some of the participants wore traditional red Chinese costumes. A banner with Chinese characters proclaiming "Happy Chinese New Year 2555" (Ind.: *Selamat Tahun Baru Imlek* 2555) was also hung inside the prayer hall. The whole thing was carried out without a hitch.

Although the Yogyakarta PITI had sought permission from the provincial MUI (Ind.: Majelis Ulama Indonesia; Eng.: Indonesian Ulama Council) before the celebration,[6] there was some opposition to the *Imlek* celebration in a mosque. The head of the Executive Board of the Indonesian Holy Warrior Assembly (Ind,: Lajnah Tanfidziyah Majelis Mujahidin), Irfan S. Awwas, asked that the activity be cancelled because he believed that a mixed activity such as this would increase misunderstanding among the followers of Islam and *Khongkauw*. The head of PP *Muhammadiyah*, Achmad Syafii Maarif, thought that if the idea of celebrating *Imlek* in the mosque has caused controversy, it was better not to hold it.[7] In an interview with me, a leader of Yogyakarta PITI, Budi Setyagraha, mentioned that he was aware of the controversies surrounding *Imlek* celebration even though *Imlek* has become a national holiday. "We [Chinese] are guests," he said, "so we should not celebrate *Imlek* too exaggeratedly and should be careful not to cause conflicts because it is more important to sustain the government's good will. If unfortunately ethnic conflicts happen again, then the policy may have to be changed again." However, he still insisted that Chinese Muslims should organize their own *Imlek Salat*.[8]

The celebration of *Imlek* by Chinese Indonesian Muslims in a mosque has led to much argument over whether this was in conflict with Islamic law. In order to respond to critics and address some misunderstandings, Setyagraha organized a seminar at Gajah Mada University (UGM) on 15 October 2003, inviting two university professors and an expert on Islamic law. They explained that *Imlek* is a traditional Chinese calendrical festival which has nothing to do with religious festivals, so the *Imlek* celebration held by Muslims is not against Islamic law.

The seminar was combined with an initiation ceremony to nominate new leaders for Yogyakarta PITI. Budi Setyagraha's was succeeded by his wife, Lie Sioe Fen, as chairperson. The general chairperson of PITI and several leaders

of local PITI branches had also been invited to the seminar. Due to concerns over a possible interruption, several policemen were sitting inside the lecture hall. Nonetheless, the seminar ran smoothly, except when some members of the audience voiced their suspicions of the *Imlek* celebration. Among the three guest speakers who were responsible for illuminating the character of *Imlek* from the perspective of anthropology, Chinese philosophy and Islamic law, the two professors of UGM seemed to avoid the crux of the controversy and failed to clarify why *Imlek* is related with *Khongkauw*. However, the other speaker, Malik Madaniy, a lecturer at the State Islamic University and an official member of MUI, clearly defended the view that *Imlek* is not a religious festival and so its celebration by Chinese Indonesian Muslims does not go against Islamic law.[9]

Madaniy added that Islam is known to be a peaceful, tolerant, accommodative religion, which respects differences and treats the whole of creation equally (Madaniy 2004: 5). Islam prohibits forcing people to convert to any religion. Madaniy also reminded the audience that Islamic law accepts proper customs (Ind.: *adat kebiasaan yang benar*), and noted that when preaching Islam during the early Islamization of Java, the saints took a tolerant and accommodative view of local cultures and infused them with Islamic values rather than trying to oppose or destroy them. He explained that the traditional Chinese calendar had been used for hundreds of years before the Christian era. The first well-established official traditional Chinese calendar (Ind.: *Imlek*) was implemented by the Emperor Wu (156 BC–87 BC) of the Han Dynasty (202 BC–AD 220), who decided to take Confucius' birth year as the beginning year in his traditional Chinese calendar in 84 BC. Because of that, for instance, the year AD 2003 is given as "Tahun *Imlek* 2554" (551 + 2003 = 2554).[10]

Then he explained that *Imlek* is not necessarily a part of *Khongkauw*. At the outset, Confucianism was promoted as a philosophy; it was made into Confucian Religion only during a later period. Whether Confucianism is a matter of ethics, philosophy or religion, *Imlek* had been celebrated according to the Chinese calendrical tradition before the birth of Confucius. Thus while *Khongkauw* adopted *Imlek* as a part of their ritual practices, it does not mean that *Imlek* exclusively belongs to their religion. What needed to be observed, as he suggested, was that the Yogyakarta PITI wanted to avoid the religious meanings exclusively imposed on *Imlek* by *Khongkauw*. In contrast, the Yogyakarta PITI wanted to recover *Imlek* as an ethnic and cultural festival and to infuse Islamic characteristics into their cultural tradition. Madaniy further stressed:

> That is why there is no hindrance for the Chinese Indonesian Muslim community to express thanksgiving for the coming of New Year by performing *salat* and praying according to the religious teaching of Islam. Moreover it can be considered as an additional media of *dakwah*.
>
> (Madaniy 2004)

Finally he concluded that wherever Chinese Indonesian Muslims want to celebrate *Imlek*, whether in a mosque or prayer house (Ind.: *mushollah*), it should be not a problem because a mosque is open to all Muslims without exception.

After the three lectures, there was a question-and-answer session.[11] Among the audience, a university student commented that since Chinese Indonesian Muslims had chosen to embrace Islam, he did not see why they still wanted to celebrate Chinese New Year. Then he raised doubts about whether Chinese Indonesian Muslims should be allowed to celebrate Chinese New Year. He added: "by allowing them to celebrate *Imlek*, are we [the non-Chinese Muslim majority] allowing them to 'recover' their original ethnicity?" Another question was asked by a local religious teacher, who focused on the legal problem of whether the *Imlek* celebration is against Islamic law. He believed that *Imlek* celebration should be considered from perspectives of faith and religious obligation. Islam should not mix with other religious faiths, unless *Imlek* is an *adat* and has nothing to do with religious faith and obligation. If so, then *Imlek* celebration is not a problem for Islam. In contrast, if *Imlek* is a part of non-Islamic religious faith or obligation, then it should not be mixed with Islam.

Yet another member of the audience questioned why Chinese Indonesians still wanted to celebrate *Imlek* in light of the fact that Muslims should embrace Islam wholeheartedly (Ind.: *masuklah Islam secara kaffah*), because he viewed Islam as a religion requiring Muslims to embrace it comprehensively. For this reason, it does not matter why *Imlek* is celebrated by Chinese Indonesian Muslims. If the reason for supporting this is because *Imlek* is simply a cultural product, then this fact is likely to support the point that Muslims can celebrate *Imlek* with the adherents of *Konghucu*, and this may in turn lead to an association of Islam with *Khongkauw*. For instance, if Muslims want to celebrate Christmas Day, and Christians want to join *salat* and *idul fitri* or *idul adha*, this is not religious tolerance but, rather, an intervention to be actively involved in another religion. Similarly, Muslims are not allowed to participate in religious observance along with members of other religions because they have their own religious rituals. However, he emphasized that it does not mean that Muslims are not tolerant, just that they respect the religious beliefs of each person.

Another participant questioned why adherents of *Khongkauw* were not invited to the seminar. Had the controversies surrounding *Imlek* been explained by one of them, it would be more persuasive for people to believe that *Imlek* is not a religious festival of *Khongkauw*. Since there were no adherents of *Konghucu* among the speakers, despite the defense of *Imlek* from various perspectives, the discussions in the seminar lacked persuasion and conviction. If those speakers did not have sufficient knowledge on *Imlek* and *Khongkauw*, how could people trust them?[12] Thus one member of the audience suggested that it was better to stop *Imlek* celebrations until all the doubts were clarified, otherwise more problems might arise. A moderate opinion expressed was that if *Imlek* is a part of Chinese culture and later imbued with Islamic culture, this does not pose any challenges; but if *Imlek* is promoted to be associated with one of the fundamental obligations of Islamic faith,[13] its meaning has been changed. Yet another member of the audience asked if celebrating *Imlek* in Islamic style allowed Chinese Indonesian Muslims to go back to their original cultural tradition. It appears that celebrating *Imlek* in a mosque in China may seem fine, but the same may not be said for Indonesia.

This seminar might not have convinced those who remained suspicious of *Imlek* as a religious festival of *Khongkauw*. The Yogyakarta PITI decided to continue to celebrate *Imlek* in the same mosque but it also held a second seminar on 30 January 2004.[14] Like their first *Imlek* celebration, the audience gathered on the upper floor of the mosque and performed *salat* first, but one thing was different from the first celebration: after completing the *Salat Imlek*, participants moved to an assembly hall on the ground floor, joining a seminar. During that day, red lanterns were displayed on the entrance to the first floor of the prayer hall, denoting the festive atmosphere of Chinese New Year. In the seminar, a guest speaker invited from the UGM, Heddy Shri Ahimsa-Putra, reminded the audience that he wanted to explain the meaning of Chinese Indonesian Muslims' *Imlek* celebration in Yogyakarta from the perspective of cultural anthropology instead of Islamic law. In addition to repeating some general points about *Imlek* as a traditional cultural festival, he highlighted some interesting observations on the significance of *Salat Imlek* in which Chinese Indonesian Muslims performed *salat* and prayer in the mosque in order to express gratitude and praying for God's blessing.

In his view, many festive symbols, such as the color red, dragon and lion dances, Chinese temples, incense burning, steamed rice cake (Ind.: *kue ranjang*), are not used by Chinese Indonesian Muslims in the *Imlek* celebration; instead, Chinese Indonesian Muslims perform *salat* in their ceremony. By comparing a recent development of performing the *Yasinan* ritual[15] for celebrating the Islamic New Year in the country regions of Yogyakarta, Ahimsa-Putra argued that *salat* is performed for various goals on different occasions for Muslims to express their devotion and thanks to God; it is possible to view the cultural meaning of *Imlek Salat* in the same manner. So, if *salat* can be practiced for various goals, why can't Chinese Indonesian Muslims celebrate their New Year by performing *salat*? Making the comparison with the recent development of the *Yasinan* ritual performed during Islamic New Year in villages of Yogyakarta, Ahimsa-Putra thought that *Yasinan* is a form of invented tradition, but the Prophet did not prohibit some local customs which are not against the principle of Islam. We may then ask, why can't Chinese Indonesian Muslims celebrate their own New Year based on their own traditional calendar? Like the *Yasinan* ritual in which Muslims recite *surat Yasin* and *doa* and pray for blessings from God for the coming Islamic New Year, Chinese Indonesian Muslims in the *Imlek* celebration also perform *salat* and recite *doa*.

Ahimsa-Putra (2004: 6–8) thinks that *Salat Imlek* may be likened to acculturation, in which various cultural symbols mix together, contributing to mutual understanding among different ethnic groups and Muslims, facilitating cultural and social integration. In other words, *Imlek Salat* may encourage some Muslims, who have little sympathy for Chinese Indonesians, to be more concerned about this ethnic minority. *Imlek Salat* can also be a means of *dakwah* to attract Chinese Indonesians who want to convert to Islam, and even become a cultural property in the collective memory of ethnic Chinese and other Indonesians who are not of Chinese descent. He appeals to Chinese Indonesian Muslims not only to celebrate *Imlek* by performing *salat* in mosques but also in their homes and with their families.

The *Imlek* celebration of Chinese Indonesian Muslims has formed a particular culture of Chinese Indonesian Islam, which may be distinguished from cultures of Javanese Islam, Chinese Indonesian Christianity and Chinese Indonesian Buddhism (Ahimsa-Putra 2004: 8–9). In *Imlek* celebration, Chinese Indonesian Muslims make efforts to "preserve memory about Chinese culture with an expression of Chineseness … on the other hand, the *Imlek* celebration performed by Chinese Indonesian Muslims is different from what was performed by their ancestors in the past" (Ahimsa-Putra 2004: 9). Furthermore, this new ritual practice has created a cultural change because "Chinese Indonesian Muslims' conceptions about the human world and place are different from those of their ancestors" (Ahimsa-Putra 2004: 9). Such views are "firmly linked with Islamic symbols that have not been articulated with Chinese cultural symbols at all. It has produced a complex symbol connecting symbols of Chineseness and Islam which may not have been shaped very clearly, but it is very possible for it to be realized" (Ahimsa-Putra 2004: 10).

Ahimsa-Putra then suggests an approach to deconstructing the *Imlek* symbol. He proposes that PITI members can consider how to annex Javanese cultural codes to *Imlek* decorations. For instance, Javanese foods may be prepared instead of Chinese cuisine and Javanese clothing may be donned instead of traditional Chinese costumes for *Imlek*. Further, it is suggested that *Imlek* celebrations move away from using the color red to adopting green as a representative color and "*Gong Xi Fa Cai*" may be written with Javanese characters instead. However, Ahimsa-Putra may have arrived at his conclusion too quickly. In the celebration, the Yogyakarta PITI arranged a particular performance in which a man dressed up as a traditional god of wealth and distributed *angpau* (Eng.: cash gift) to the young unmarried audience. The organizer also prepared a food package for all participants. The package included oranges and steamed cake, which represent Chinese symbols of good fortune.

After the two seminars, no significant controversy surrounding the *Imlek* celebration of Yogyakarta PITI was stirred. However, this does not mean that all voices of suspicion and opposition have been reassured. In 2007, a fatwa entitled "Imlek is an Unbeliever's [Ind.: *kafir*] Religious Festival [and is] Simply Not a Tradition: A Prohibition on Participating in the Celebration," was issued by Ustadz Muhammad Shiddiq al-Jawi (al-Jawi 2007).[16] This was a clear sign of strong opposition to the *Imlek* celebration of Yogyakarta PITI. In the fatwa, questions were asked about whether Chinese Indonesian Muslims are allowed to celebrate *Imlek*, and whether it is correct for Chinese Indonesian Muslims to claim *Imlek* as a tradition rather than a part of religious teachings. Al-Jawi disagrees with Budi Setyagraha's idea, referring to a book (Winarso 2001) introducing religious festivals of *Khongkauw*. He confirms that *Imlek* is a religious festival of *Agama Khonghucu* rather than a standard Chinese cultural tradition.[17] Al-Jawi refers to the preface of this book, which argues that it is a mistake to understand *Imlek* as a Chinese tradition, independent of religion. Winarso (2001) cites some classical Confucian texts which describe the transcendence of the Heavens and the importance of offering worship to the Heavens at the "beginning [of] spring" and that *Imlek* has religious meanings of awe and faith for

adherents of *Agama Khonghucu*. This argument is used by al-Jawi to buttress his point. Since *Imlek* is a part of *Agama Khonghucu* rather than a tradition, it is prohibited for Chinese Indonesian Muslims to participate in the celebration of *Imlek*. Even though the criterion to judge whether Muslims can celebrate *Imlek* is whether *Imlek* is a tradition or not, this does not imply that Muslims can accept all traditions. If this controversy was about whether *Imlek* is a religious teaching or tradition, it would only lead to further confusion. For instance, casual sex in Western Christian society has become a common practice, even though it is an immoral deed and is not a part of Christian teaching, which prohibits adultery. Can Muslims accept casual sex simply because it is a common practice rather than part of Christian religion? In this context, the fatwa may indirectly scorn the idea of defending *Imlek* as a tradition.

Al-Jawi extends his judgment to the festival of *Imlek* as a form of religious prohibition to Muslims. According to the Quran and the *Sunnah*, Muslims are not allowed to participate in non-Islamic religious activities, including *Imlek* and its associated ritual practices, including even offering the "*Gong Xi Fa Cai*" greeting to the Chinese. It is also prohibited to decorate houses and offices with Chinese-style lanterns or dragon images and other red-colored decorations. Performances for celebrating *Imlek* such as a live band, Mandarin karaoke and cooking demonstrations are also not allowed. The idea of prohibiting Muslims from participating in non-Islamic religious activities also extends to other religious activities including Christmas Day, Buddha's Birthday and Easter. Finally, the fatwa makes a stipulation for Chinese Indonesian Muslims:

> We wish that you enter deeply into Islam and to embrace Islam wholeheartedly [*kaffah*]. Please do not – hopefully Allah kindly confers his blessing on all of you – follow the footsteps of Satan; that is, you have converted to Islam but still retain other non-Islamic religious teaching which you embraced and practiced before, such as celebrating Chinese New Year.

In fact, a fatwa requiring Muslims not to attend Christmas celebrations was issued by the MUI in 1981 (Mudzhar 1993, 1996), but in al-Jawi's case he concludes that the cultural exhibitions and entertainments organized during *Imlek* are religious activities, so Muslims should not be attending such celebrations. This view also reflects his personal hostility to Chinese Indonesian popular culture.

The debates surrounding the *Imlek* celebration of Yogyakarta PITI from 2003 to 2007 necessarily entail several questions. Since *Imlek* has been legalized as a public holiday, why does *Imlek* celebration still generate so much controversy? How and why is *Imlek* considered to be a religious festival of *Khongkauw* and why has the Chinese calendar led to so much confusion?

Confused knowledge of the Chinese calendar and Imlek

Why do such debates on whether *Imlek* is an ethno-cultural or religious festival happen in Indonesia, where Chinese New Year is counted from the birth year of Confucius?[18] There are four factors which link people's perceptions of *Imlek* with

Chinese religions, in particular *Khongkauw*. First, before the Soeharto government prohibited Chinese Indonesians openly practicing Chinese religions and customs, including celebrating *Imlek*, Chinese New Year was celebrated across ethnic boundaries and thus many non-Chinese had participated in the festival ever since the Dutch colonial period. While there was no particular mention of *Imlek*, the official definitions and repressive regulations placed upon Chinese religions and customs have withdrawn *Imlek* celebrations from the public sphere and caused Chinese Indonesians to be less familiar with their festival traditions. The official definitions have led to the confusion surrounding *Imlek*, as it is often thought to be ambiguous in nature or seen as a part of Chinese religion. Second, during Chinese New Year, Chinese Indonesians frequently visit temples as well as participate in ancestral worship to ask for blessings for the coming year. Third, the self-constitution of *Khongkauw* is a response to the repressive policies relating to the Chinese minority, particularly religious policies. *Khongkauw*'s claim of *Imlek* as its religious festival has formulated a popular perception of *Imlek* as a religious festival. Fourth, confusion related to the Chinese calendar has led to an association of *Imlek* with *Khongkauw*.

On 6 December 1967, Soeharto issued a Presidential Instruction (No. 14/1967) concerning "Chinese religion, beliefs, and traditional customs in Indonesia which focus on the country of their ancestors, and which in their manifestation can give rise to inappropriate [Ind.: *kurang wajar*] psychological, mental, and moral influence on Indonesian citizens and so form an obstacle to the process of assimilation, need to be regulated and have their functions placed in proportion."[19] Therefore, the Instruction ruled that with regard to the "Chinese practices of observance which possess aspects of cultural affinity focusing on the country of their ancestors, their performance must take place internally within the family of an individual." It required that the celebration be performed "in a way which is not conspicuous [Ind.: *menyolok*] in public, rather they should be done within the family environment" (Coppel 2002: 34–35). In 1980, a joint decision issued by the Minister of Religious Affairs, the Minister of Internal Affairs and the Attorney General further illuminated what the Presidential Instruction meant by "Chinese practices of observance which possess aspects of cultural affinity originating from the country of their ancestors":

> [A]ll those forms of activity such as the realization [Ind.: *perwujuddan*] and the internalization [Ind.: *penghayatan*] of beliefs, religiosity [Ind.: *kerokhanian*] and spirituality [Ind.: *kejieaan*] which have Chinese characteristics [Ind.: *ke-Cinaan*]. Such activities can take the form of procession, celebration of religious festivals, a dragon [Ind.: *liong*] performance, a lion dance [Ind.: *tari singa*] and other similar forms.[20]

Although these instructions neither directly focused on *Imlek* nor discussed the character of *Imlek*, they resulted in profound repression of the public expression of Chinese culture, including Chinese religions, customs and *Imlek* celebration. In other words, *Imlek* was associated with a vague but inclusive category of "Chinese religion, beliefs, and traditional customs."

Since the mid-1960s, there has been a policy of trying to convert all Chinese temples (Ind.: *klengteng*) to Buddhist temples (Ind.: *vihara*) in order to move away from the Chinese elements in Chinese temples. Many Chinese *klengteng* changed their names to *vihara* under the organizational banner of Buddhist associations, but this does not mean that all Chinese elements of worship and deities inside the temples have completely become Indonesianized. Instead, many *klengteng* only nominally changed their titles to Buddhist *vihara* to preserve their religious traditions. Thus the government may find that *Imlek* is still celebrated in "Buddhist temples." In January 1991, the Minister of Religious Affairs appealed to Buddhists not to celebrate *Imlek* in Buddhist temples because *Imlek* is not a Buddhist religious festival (Suryadinata 1997: 172). Two years later in 1993, the WALUBI (Ind.: Perwakilan Umat Buddha Indonesia; Eng.: Indonesia Buddhist Council) issued a letter supporting the policy of the Ministry of Religious Affairs and appealing to Buddhists not to celebrate *Imlek* (Perhimpunan Indonesia-Tionghoa 2007).

Although the celebration of Imlek had retreated to Buddhist temples; it still was not able to avoid the government's purge. *Imlek* was never considered as a Buddhist religious festival. In 1996, the Governor of Jakarta made an appeal in which he repeated the government's regulation and added that "Chinese New Year is not a Buddhist religious festival, but a festival of Chinese tradition or culture."[21] Interestingly, the Governor of Jakarta showed that he was worried that the date of *Imlek* is very close to Lebaran. Many Chinese Indonesians may close their shops and this may cause inconvenience if one needs to shop in preparation for the Islamic holiday. In light of the continued targeting of *Imlek* since the early New Order period, it appears that both the government and even Chinese Indonesians have tried to trace the *Imlek* as a target of religious activities, including *Khongkauw* – an indigenous religion established at the beginning of the twentieth century.

From the debates, it is evident that the use of the Confucian calendar for calculating *Imlek* and the *Khongkauw*'s claim on *Imlek* as its religious festival are two important factors which serve as causes for concern. According to Claudine Salmon (2005), taking Confucius' birthday as the beginning of the calendar has been a practice in Surabaya since 1880. The widespread use of the Confucian calendar is also found in documents of the archives of the Chinese Council (Ind.: *Kong Koan*) of Batavia around the end of the nineteenth century.[22]

The application of the Confucian calendar is facilitated by the development of *Khongkauw* in Indonesia. It was influenced by a Confucian revival movement championed by a famous high-ranking officer of the Qing Dynasty (1644–1912), K'ang Yu-wei (1858–1927).[23] At the beginning of the twentieth century, the THHK (Tiong Hoa Hwee Koan; The Chinese Association) was also influenced by the Confucian revival movement in China, taking Confucianism as an ideology to reform Chinese customs which had been mixed with indigenous customs. Although the Confucian revival movement of THHK was unsuccessful, it left two legacies, the use of the Confucian calendar as a way of determining Chinese New Year and the development of *Khongkauw*.[24]

During the New Order period, *Khongkauw* adapted itself to the model of the official discourse on religion (Ind.: *Agama*) by emphasizing the features of religion in "constituting a way of life for its adherents, teaching belief in the existence of One Super God, having a holy book [Ind.: *kitab suci*], and being led by a prophet [Ind.: *nabi*]" (Abalahin 2005: 121). According to the policy requiring each religion to have its own council, *Khongkauw* organized a Madjelis Tinggi Agama Konghutju (MATAKIN; Eng.: Supreme Council of the Confucian Religion in Indonesia) in 1967, taking the concept "*Tien*" (Eng.: Heaven) as denoting the existence of One Supreme God, acknowledging nine Confucian classics (Eng.: the Four Books and the Five Classics) as the holy books,[25] issuing Eight Principles of the Faith (Ind.: *Rukun Iman*) as a kind of "*fiqh*," organizing a three-level hierarchy of clergy, creating ritual performances for important occasions such as wedding ceremonies and establishing religious festivals, such as marking *Imlek* as Confucius' birthday.[26]

After Suharto stepped down, MATAKIN continued its campaign to be recognized as the sixth official religion. It also promoted *Imlek* as a public holiday and invited presidents Abdurrahman Wahid, Megawati Sukarnoputri and Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono to join the *Imlek* celebration. In 2000, Wahid's lifting of Presidential Instruction No. 14/1967 delivered a message that the government had no need to identify any state-recognized religion. MATAKIN has strived to "recover" the former status of *Khongkauw* as "state recognized," a status which they had lost since 1979. Moreover, it is believed that the status of *Imlek* as a public holiday is one of MATAKIN's contributions to the Chinese Indonesian community. Although Megawati's Presidential Instruction permitting *Imlek* as a public holiday was based on the consideration of *Imlek* as a Chinese cultural festival, many still believe that an important factor behind the government's decision was the consideration of *Imlek* as a religious festival of *Khongkauw* because there was no other ethnic cultural festival officially recognized as a public holiday. The involvement of the three presidents was politically significant because it reveals a multicultural spirit in religious policy that aims to treat all religions in Indonesia equally. The construction of *Khongkauw* in the mode of *agama* and the promotion of *Imlek* as its religious holiday have thus given people reasons to believe that *Imlek* is a religious festival of *Khongkauw*. This is why some Muslims oppose *Salat Imlek*. On the other hand, other Chinese Indonesians who are not adherents of *Khongkauw* feel unhappy because they think that MATAKIN should not appropriate *Imlek* as their own religious festival (Perhimpunan Indonesia-Tionghoa 2007).

To put matters in historical perspective, it must be stated that the numbering system used in Indonesia to calculate *Imlek* is indeed an "invented tradition" of the nineteenth century which was later appropriated by Confucianists to redefine Confucianism as religion. It has no obvious links with the traditional calendar enforced by Emperor Wu of the Han Dynasty. Emperor Wu's contribution to the formulation of Chinese calendar is that he united the diverse and inaccurate calendar systems of that time. The numbering of years in the dynastic Chinese calendar is associated with the formal name of the era and with an emperor's regal title. The Chinese emperor can use several names to label his era but the

beginning of each new era restarts the numbering of the year back to year one. In other words, the Chinese dynastic calendar did not use a numbering style like the Gregorian calendar which is numbered conventionally from the birth year of Jesus. It is likely that Chinese Indonesians have adopted the Confucian calendar which was invented by the ethnic Chinese in Surabaya and Batavia at the end of the nineteenth century. This creative invented tradition has inadvertently contributed to confusion about the connections between the Confucian calendar, *Imlek* and Confucius.

Double religious pluralism and transgressions of festival politics

Yogyakarta PITI's and MATAKIN's methods of relating religion to *Imlek* appear similar but they are in fact based on two modalities of religious pluralism. The first modality of religious pluralism is compelled by the state's religious policy based on an exclusive definition of *agama* that "equally recognizes and treats" five religions during the New Order era. The MATAKIN has applied itself to an ideal model of *agama* through which *Imlek* was appropriated as their most important religious festival. During the New Order era, by claiming this official religious pluralism, the state takes a pseudo-neutral position as a moderator that allows various debates between Christianity and Islam, since it is done under the legal protection of the Constitution of Indonesia, which considers religious faith as a civil obligation (Mujiburrahman 2006). In spite of such an exclusive definition of *agama*, it leaves an ambiguous space named as *budaya* (Eng.: cultures) and *adat* (Eng.: customs), which allows other unrecognized traditional religious practices to be implemented (Woodward 2011). Madaniy's and Ahimsa-Putra's tolerant explanations have indicated the second modality of religious pluralism in tolerant traditions of Indonesian Islam. This leaves more ambiguous space for Muslims to argue and explain various performances of Muslim rites, but Islamic law still insists on sustaining some principles associated with the Islamic faith.

Therefore, *salat*, as a principle of religious worship in Islam in the five pillars, does not allow any improper changes (Ind.: *bida*) to fit the needs of any Muslim communities (Bowen 1989). The Yogyakarta PITI is embedded in an *adat/budaya* space,[27] by performing *Imlek Salat*, a lightly invented Muslim ritual, to demonstrate their cultural citizenship. However, their performance of *Imlek Salat* displays a hybridity of resistance which simultaneously involves both Muslim politics and festival politics. It comes as no surprise then that the Muslim majority's suspicions are aroused in relation to the sincerity of Chinese Muslim conversions.

In the debates on Chinese Indonesian Muslims' *Imlek* celebration in Yogyakarta, Chinese Indonesian Muslims and adherents of *Khongkauw* do not meet together on the same occasion, but their conflicting points of view on *Imlek* are shown by Chinese Indonesian Muslims' *Salat Imlek* and the suspicions aroused in other Indonesian Muslims. Consistent with the argument of Hoon (2009), the conflicted appropriations of *Imlek* caused by the MATAKIN and the Yogyakarta PITI have shown potential competition for the legitimacy of representing Chinese cultural

traditions among Chinese Indonesian communities. Although there is no real opposition between the two religious organizations, the conflicting interpretations of *Imlek* still occur because the MATAKIN's official definition of *Imlek* has been so influential for the Indonesian public and leads people to regard *Imlek* as a religious festival. Such definition excludes the legitimacy of the invention of *Imlek Salat* by Chinese Muslims.

In the wave of Chinese cultural revival, people consider the new development as a sign that Indonesia is creating a civil society where a new discourse of multiculturalism, different from the well-known motto "*Bhineka Tunggal Ika*," is being created. In spite of significant rejoicing at the liberal atmosphere, some Chinese Indonesians do not feel completely optimistic about the reopening of social and cultural space for the ethnic Chinese minority, because some still view it as a political trick for getting election votes or worry that it may cause potential jealousy leading to ethnic conflicts and eventually the cancellation of the public holiday (Hoon 2009). Celebrating *Imlek* is still contested in related ethnic politics and encounters oppositions from the indigenous majority (Chan 2009).

Conclusion

At the center of the debates surrounding *Imlek* lie two main parties – the Chinese Muslims and the indigenous Muslims; it is by no means easy to determine which party's view is the better one to adopt. It is even harder to determine who is at fault for generating the many controversies involved. The Chinese Muslims face the majority's hostility, in which they are completely Othered by the majority's unilateral vicious criticism. This is because Muslims raise objections to some aspects of *Imlek* celebration which are based on *Khongkauw*'s religious ideas, a locally invented Chinese Indonesian religion and the indigenous invention of knowledge pertaining to the Chinese calendar. As an ethnic religious minority, Chinese Indonesian Muslims have to face even more severe criticism when their ritual invention takes place in a Muslim majority society which is intolerant of syncretistic ritual practices in Islam. On the other hand, taking into account the confusion surrounding the Chinese calendar shared by Muslims, whether they are pro-*Imlek* or otherwise, it appears that while a dynamic hybrid cultural tradition such as the knowledge of *Imlek* has been so influential, people still take it for granted and use it subconsciously. The controversies and complications surrounding the celebration of *Imlek* in Yogyakarta are due in no small part to the web of intricate and complex relations among *Imlek*, *Khongkauw* and *Imlek Salat*. *Imlek*'s origin and authenticity remains a hotly contested topic with thin demarcations between culture and religion.

Notes

1 However, for new Chinese converts, especially those who married indigenous Muslims and live in Muslim-majority areas, it may be natural for them to associate with Muslim grassroots society rather than the local Chinese community.

2 In relation to this, Hembing Wijayakusuma (1940–2011) is an important example. He was a doctor of Chinese medicine and a famous figure amongst Chinese

Indonesian Muslims. He produced several healthcare publications, written especially for Muslims, dealing with how to enhance mental and physical well-being through performing Islamic rituals. Wijayakusuma applied his knowledge of Chinese medicine and physiology to Islamic rituals and practices, suggesting that Muslims can improve their health through ritual fasting during Ramadan and through performing *salat* and personal prayer (*do'a*). The idea of relating Islamic rituals to healthcare is not totally new. However, Wijayakusuma made two interesting innovations in his books. First, he introduced ideas of *qi* (vital energy) and the meridian system in the practice of *salat* and regarded performing *salat* as similar to doing acupuncture massage and practicing gymnastics. Second, using ideas about mental and physical health, he expanded the ritual effect of *salat* to build self-discipline and to organize the Muslim community.

3 PITI's headquarters is located in Jakarta and its many local branches are autonomous in terms of administration and finance. The Yogyakarta branch of PITI was established in 1978. For its short history and development, see Perdana's interesting work (2008).

4 For instance, popular stereotypes of Chinese include them having slanted eyes and being stingy and materialistic (Hoon 2006: 156).

5 The Syuhada mosque is the most important "reformist" mosque of Yogyakarta.

6 There are two news items about how Yogyakarta PITI applied for and got permission from the MUI; see Sinar Harapan (2003) and Nusantara (2003).

7 For the first *Imlek* celebration, see Nugroho (2003).

8 Setyagraha's decision to organize a ceremony that might have caused tension may be related his experience of racial discrimination. Between 1999 and 2001, he bought land from a Javanese. But when he applied for landownership, his application was rejected by the local government's land office. The land office referred to a discriminative law based on his ethnic background, and he was not allowed to own the land. Finally he submitted his case to the Supreme Court, which rejected his appeal. See Susanto (2008: 140–42).

9 The Yogyakarta branch of PITI took M. Malik Madaniy's demonstration as a supporting statement and, later, this demonstration was published in the journal *Komunitas*, an official magazine of the East Java branch of PITI at Surabaya at the beginning of 2004.

10 Madaniy's explanation of why Chinese New Year is calculated from Confucius' birth year (551 BC) is commonly accepted in Indonesia, but this common belief is not correct. It is neither supported in Chinese history nor does it explain why the "Confucian calendar" is used only in Indonesia. Later I discuss how the origin of the Confucian calendar goes back only to around the end of the nineteenth century, why this calendar is still used in Indonesia and how its influence makes people relate *Imlek* easily to a *Khongkauw* religious festival.

11 The discussion is summarized from my sound recording in the seminar.

12 This person may not know that one of the three speakers, Lasiyo, is an expert, researching *Khongkauw* for his PhD; see Lasiyo (1992).

13 It questions whether *Imlek* can be celebrated by performing *salat*.

14 In addition to my field observation, there are two news items on this event; see GudegNet (2004a,b).

15 *Yasinan* is a religious meeting and gathering for reciting the *sura Yasin*, which people believe may grant them more blessings or merits than reciting other suras. However, we may question whether the comparison of the performance of *Yasinan* in Islamic New Year with the *Salat Imlek* of Chinese Indonesian Muslims is really suitable to defend the latter. Although *Yasinan* is accepted according to traditionalist Muslims such as Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), it is still controversial, because some religious teachers argue that *Yasinan*, like other Muslim rituals such as *manakiban* (Eng.: reciting prayer and poetry in reminiscence of an *iman*) and *tahlilan* (Eng.: gathering to pray for the dead), is *bidah* (Eng.: improper innovation) that should be prohibited.

16 Al-Jawi is also a leading activist of Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia, a radical Islamist movement.
17 See Winarso (2001). The book is prefaced by the General Chairman of *Khongkauw*, Hs. Tjhie Tjay Ing.
18 According to Yen Ching-hwang (1986), Malaysian Chinese promoted the use of the Confucian calendar at the end of the nineteenth century, but nowadays Chinese New Year is not counted from Confucius' birth year in Malaysia.
19 The English translation of the Presidential Instruction is from Coppel (2002: 34–35).
20 See Coppel's translation (2002: 38).
21 The original official document is from *Surat Seruan Nomor 04 Tahun 1996 tertanggal 14 Februari 1996*; I refer to Coppel's case study (2002: 213–26).
22 It was "a semi-autonomous organization, in which from the eighteenth until the twentieth century the local elites of Batavia's Chinese community joined hands to supervise and coordinate social and religious matters" (Blusse and Chen 2003: 1).
23 K'ang had a radical agenda, suggesting that the Qing emperor should adopt Confucianism as a state religion through which the Confucian Religion could become a powerful collective force like the Catholic Church in the West to motivate the whole of China in its struggle to become a powerful and wealthy country. In his proposal of political reformation, K'ang reinterprets the image of Confucius as a prophet whose thinking represents the holy idea of the Heavens. By doing so, the Qing emperor works like the pope, the Confucian classics become holy books for religious teaching disseminated through the Confucian seminary system and Confucian clergy, Confucian temples are established everywhere functioning as churches and the traditional Chinese calendar system and Chinese era-naming system are adapted to the Confucian calendar. K'ang's movement finally failed, but the influence of the Confucian revival movement survived in Southeast Asia, and its legacy has lasted in Indonesia (Hsiao 1959).
24 For the development of *Khongkauw*, see Abalahin (2005), Coppel (2002: 228–333) and Suryadinata (1978).
25 The MATAKIN even translates the nine classics as Confucian "Old" and "New" Testaments (Abalahin 2005: 129).
26 *Khongkauw* presenting itself as a model of *agama* for obtaining the status of a state-recognized religion is not a unique case. Catholicism, Islam and Protestantism are the first three religions recognized by the Indonesian government. In order to achieve this status as a state-recognized religion, Buddhism and Hinduism also reformed themselves to suit this model of *agama*; see Brown (1987), Ramstedt (2004), Schiller (1996) and Suryadinata (1997).
27 Indonesia's religious policy identifies six state-authorized *agama* (Eng.: religion) based on a monotheistic model that pushes away many popular religious practices and faiths associated with *adat* (Eng.: custom), *budaya* (Eng.: culture) and *kepercayaan* (Eng.: beliefs). On the other hand, there has been a tolerant but sometimes controversial space of Islamic law in Indonesia to debate whether some Islamic *ibada* (Eng.: obligation of worship) is *bida* (Eng.: improper invention). See Beatty (1999), Kipp and Rogers (1987), Muhaimin (1995), Syam (2005) and Woodward (2010: 28–67). Mark Woodward has provided a very stimulating discussion of this issue.

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