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# The Discrimination of the Ethnic Chinese in Indonesia and Perceptions of Nationality

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**THE DISCRIMINATION OF THE ETHNIC CHINESE IN INDONESIA AND  
PERCEPTIONS OF NATIONALITY**

By

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for graduation

From the Departments of

**POLITICS AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS**

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## Table of Contents

Chapter 1.....	1
Chapter 2.....	16
Chapter 3.....	34
Chapter 4.....	52
Bibliography.....	69

## **Chapter 1:**

Though my father's family is ethnically Chinese, they have been living in Indonesia since the early 1900's. When my father was growing up, the Indonesian government forcibly tried to eradicate his Chinese heritage. He was not allowed to speak or learn the Chinese language and was forced to change his last name to an Indonesian one. My brother and I were passed down stories about my grandmother burning Chinese newspapers at her own fireplace for her family's safety. It was a perilous time to be a Chinese Indonesian as their Chinese heritage was threatened and their definitions of nationality muddled.

The tensions between the ethnic Chinese and native Indonesians is a topic that is frequently marginalized in Southeast Asian and Indonesian history. While the ethnic Chinese comprise of only 1.2% of the total population in Indonesia, they dominate the economic sector and generally make up a large part of the economic elite. However, despite the generally high economic status of these Chinese Indonesians, they face discrimination from both the government and the local Indonesians. Furthermore, the ethnic Chinese are never seen as truly Indonesians, even though many of the ethnic Chinese have descendants who have lived in Indonesia for hundreds of years. The ethnic Chinese are treated and scorned as *peranakan*—outsiders—to the *totok*—or the native Indonesians. Because of this attitude that the ethnic Chinese are *peranakan*, authority figures—whether it was the Dutch colonists or the Suharto regime—have exploited this tension by painting the ethnic Chinese as the scapegoat for many of Indonesia's economic problems. The discrimination of the ethnic Chinese Indonesian was most open and visible during the Suharto era of Indonesian history, when government laws forbade

Chinese Indonesians to have their own language schools and when Chinese Indonesians frequently relied on the bribery of gangsters in order to ensure their protection against racial violence from other peranakan Indonesians. While the post-Suharto era has led to a lifting of discriminatory laws against the ethnic Chinese, there is still a long-standing discriminatory bias that the ethnic Chinese must continually face and overcome, not to mention a confusion question of nationality that each and every ethnic Chinese person must struggle to answer.

As mentioned above, the treatment of the ethnic Chinese is a very narrow topic in a Southeast Asian country that is not the strongest player in East Asia or even Southeast Asia. However, the discrimination of the ethnic Chinese minority is a fascinating case study as diaspora populations start to migrate around the world. The ethnic Chinese represent a maligned minority that stands out recent Indonesian history. As technology allows the world to grow more and more interconnected and transnational migration becomes more common, it is important to see the reasons why certain countries discriminate certain ethnic minorities. It is also important to see how this discrimination affects the victimized ethnic minority community. Particularly in a post-Colonial world where many of the world's nations aren't even a century old, it is important to see how centuries long discrimination of an ethnic minority can affect how they view their own nationality. The ethnic Chinese minority in Indonesia is a unique case in that it has a multitude of different reasons behind their oppression, since the ethnic Chinese minority occupied different levels in the social and economic stratopheres. Lastly, the study of the ethnic Chinese minority is important because there is a growing Chinese diaspora all over the world. This Chinese diaspora brings about Chinese immigrants, most of whom are

wealthy and have incredibly strong corporate power and ties such as the more recent ethnic Chinese immigrants to Indonesia, who resettle all over the world. In many cases, these immigrants from the Chinese diaspora are redefining transnational migration. Often times, they decide on where to define their legal citizenship based on economic values and thus leave the social concept of citizenship subject to interpretation. Studying the ethnic Chinese in Indonesia is a smaller case study in the larger issue of the Chinese diaspora today and how they define transnational citizenship.

Since the established literature is mostly political, economic, and social histories of modern Indonesia, my thesis will establish motivations behind the context of the discrimination of the ethnic Chinese in Indonesia with particular attention on how it affects the perception of ethnic Chinese Indonesian's nationality. Most of the times in the established literature, the history, motivations, and consequences behind the discrimination of the ethnic Chinese are briefly summarized or put in as an afterthought. Most of the present day established literature is focused on how the now-allowed Chinese imports are starting to influence Indonesian culture and how post-Suharto regimes have taken steps to at least tolerate the ethnic Chinese population. Since Indonesia is such a new nation, it is important to establish why a key player in its initial start up economy was targeted for racism for so long. My thesis will use the thread of Dutch colonialism and the impact of Western ideologies of democracy and nationalism to explain the reasons behind ethnic Chinese discrimination in Indonesia.

Thus, my thesis question will ask what are the reasons behind the discrimination of the ethnic Chinese and how it affected perception of ethnic Chinese Indonesian nationality. Furthermore, my thesis question will address all the sub-questions that come

with it such as do the roots stem from Dutch colonization or does it go back further than that? How can the ethnic Chinese be discriminated against socially when most of them are in the upper economic strata of the country? Do the native Indonesians consider the ethnic Chinese Indonesian to be proper citizens of Indonesia? Do the ethnic Chinese consider themselves as citizens of Indonesia or China? And how did different ruling regimes affect the perceptions of Chinese Indonesian nationality?

The first most common approach to the discrimination of the ethnic Chinese is the “state-centered [approach] in which political themes and questions of citizenship prevail” (Dielman, Koning, and Post 4). First of all, it is important to define state-centered theory as a theory “which emphasizes the impact of government on civil society, especially via the messages that public programs send to their value to the polity”. Thus, this approach mostly focuses on how the Indonesian government perpetuates and encourages or simmers down the discrimination of the ethnic Chinese. The political themes that would be covered in this state-centered approach is primarily the relation of the ethnic-Chinese as a political economic group. The literature that takes the state-centered approach primarily focus on how most of the ethnic-Chinese consisted of the economic elite and how government leaders would negotiate and try to establish economically mutually beneficial relationships with them, despite setting up government regulations to discriminate their political status in Indonesia. Lastly, the questions of citizenship as an approach is one that usually relies on looking back to say the 1949 Indonesian Constitution and defining what it means to be an Indonesian citizen. The literature tries to define why the ethnic Chinese are seen as “peranakan”, or outsiders, despite some having descendants who have lived in Indonesia for many generations.

The state-centered approach relates to my specific thesis question because it answers the question by blaming the government and political structure of Indonesia as the reason behind the ethnic Chinese discrimination. By blaming government structures, the literature puts the blame on certain Indonesian leaders such as the most prominent modern Indonesian leader and former president Suharto, who was in power from 1967-1998. During his rule, Suharto banned all ethnic-based parties and sociopolitical organizations by the time he officially assumed power in 1966 (Suryadinata 506) or closing down all Chinese language schools. Thus, this proves that one of the reasons behind the discrimination of the ethnic Chinese is because the government mandated it to be so. In my thesis, I will dig deeper into the reasons on why Suharto and the Indonesian government put out discriminatory policies against the Chinese, especially when it was also established in the literature that Suharto—much like other Indonesian rulers and government bodies—relied on the wealthy ethnic Chinese economic elite for financial matters. Also, the question of citizenship that is approached in the literature often dates back to the 1947 Constitution, which defines that “the Chinese are citizens (warga negara) of Indonesia—insofar as citizenship signifies membership in the state”. However, despite the citizenship, the ethnic Chinese are not “widely perceived as members of the nation (warga bangsa)”. The literature also approaches the question of citizenship by tracing the roots back to Dutch colonization, which thus establishes a time period of history to look back for this thesis. This literature, particularly the literature written in English, looks back to old Dutch colonial official documents and diaries to determine the status and thoughts of the colonialists on the ethnic Chinese. Thus, this establishes an outsider perspective on the ethnic Chinese.

However, this state-centered approach is not without its flaws, its main one being that this approach does not give the ethnic Chinese any agency in the narrative whatsoever. In the state-centered approach that the literature, the ethnic Chinese are depicted and portrayed as completely powerless, despite the elite economic status they hold. Whenever I examined the state-centered approach, I always found this duality odd and contrasting. However, the previous literature does not even mention the existence of this contrasting duality in which is a rather gaping hole in the logic of determining the amount of agency and political power the ethnic Chinese have.

Furthermore, looking back to the Dutch colonialist works to examine the ethnic Chinese is incredibly flawed because it is using secondhand sources. Often times, these Dutch colonialists are viewing the ethnic Chinese through a very biased lens. In fact, the Dutch colonialists had their own biased agenda against the ethnic Chinese because they saw them as a threat to their consumer market in native Indonesia. Thus, “The Dutch language press in the Indies took up the cause. News papers became, for the most part, vehicles for the broadcasting of anti Chinese propaganda” (38). Thus, the Dutch colonial sources on ethnic Chinese are intrinsically biased because they want the native Indonesians to hold prejudice against the ethnic Chinese. Furthermore, by relying on an outsider perspective to determine the social standing of the ethnic Chinese, this literature ignores the perspectives of the ethnic Chinese themselves who lived in the era of Dutch colonialism. However, Dutch colonial sources still make up a small part on the sector of ethnic Chinese citizenship in Indonesia literature.

Another common approach the established literature has taken in analyzing the discrimination of the ethnic Chinese is the Chinese diaspora method, or viewing the

ethnic Chinese people as a human representative of China and its politics with Indonesia. The Chinese diaspora is the influx of Chinese immigrants that are moving to new places across the world. Most significantly, many of these Chinese immigrants now have a lot of wealth and are able to carryover that wealth into their new residencies. The first wave of the Chinese diaspora consisted of people who either did not have or could transfer their economic status to their new residences. When this generation of Chinese immigrants moved, they had to start over in their new countries from the bottom. They often had to occupy certain sectors of business markets that were considered undesirable. For example, when Chinese immigrants moved to California because of the Gold Rush, many of them were forced to open Laundromats because Laundromats were considered to be “woman’s work” and hence undesirable. Furthermore, because of this low economic status, Chinese immigrants had low social standing in their new countries too. Things are different nowadays. “Today, overseas Chinese are key players in the booming economies of the Asia Pacific region” (Ong 110). In today’s global sphere, high economic status generally brings about a certain amount of upper social status, even if there are plenty of prejudices and biases aimed against non-white people. For example, luxury brands such as Louis Vuitton have to consider the Chinese as a main customer base when marketing their products. Thus, it can be said that many of these new Chinese immigrants of the China diaspora are generally living with much more economic and social privilege compared to previous Chinese immigrants. The study of the Chinese diaspora in the literature of Chinese Indonesians mostly focuses on the modern Chinese immigrants and characterizing them as immigrants that bring a lot of wealth and economic power with them as they immigrated into Indonesia.

The Chinese diaspora is significant to the study of the Chinese Indonesians because it links the Chinese Indonesians to their roots. The focus of the Chinese diaspora in the Chinese Indonesian literature establishes the links that Chinese Indonesians have with China. Many times, this literature looks to the political actions of China as a motive behind the interactions between the Chinese Indonesians and indigenous Indonesians. The study of the Chinese diaspora in the literature of Chinese Indonesians suggests that the political actions of China are undeniably intertwined with the treatment of Chinese Indonesians. For example, if Indonesia is having tense relations with China, the Indonesian government will retaliate by issuing some edict that discriminates Chinese Indonesians and even the common people will develop an anti-Chinese attitude as a result of China and Indonesia's relations. Thus, the study of the Chinese diaspora suggests that China's political status is another motive for ethnic Chinese discrimination in Indonesia.

Furthermore, the study of the Chinese diaspora also suggests that another motive behind the reason for ethnic Chinese discrimination is because of their economic ties to China. "Two major reasons why the economic life of the Chinese in Indonesia constitutes an impediment to their assimilation are, first, the structure of the Indonesian economy and the peculiar place in it that the Chinese have been historically forced to take; and second, the persistence of the economic aspects of Chinese familism, that is, the "exclusiveness" of Chinese enter-prise." (465). Thus, this suggests that the indigenous Indonesians discriminate against the ethnic Chinese in Indonesia out of jealousy. They are jealous of the ethnic Chinese business, wealth, and ties back to China.

However, this mode of study in the established literature is heavily flawed because it uses outdated notions of the definition of citizenship. The Chinese diaspora

viewpoint of the established literature frequently relies on assumptions about the ethnic Chinese in order to make their case. It assumes that the ethnic Chinese are literal metaphors for China. It doesn't consider the social context that Chinese Indonesians lived in Indonesian society compared to the political maneuverings of high ranking, privileged officials in China. Furthermore, this school of theory once again does not ascribe any power to the ethnic Chinese whatsoever. It is another school of thought which denies the Chinese Indonesians agency for their actions. It does not consider the reasons behind why Chinese Indonesians would choose to identify as more Chinese, more Indonesian, or other. The Chinese diaspora school of study in the Chinese Indonesian literature does not allow for the perspectives of Chinese Indonesians to define their own nationality.

First off, the school of Chinese diaspora in the established Chinese literature genuinely does not consider the role of modern powerful, wealthy Chinese family networks. After all, "for many overseas Chinese, there is no obvious continuity between family interests and political loyalty" (Ong 116). Many of these overseas Chinese choose their state of residencies based on economic factors. On the other hand, many other ethnic Chinese had descendants who came to Indonesia generations ago and do not have any economic and social advantage in Indonesian society whatsoever. Thus, many of the ethnic Chinese choose not define their citizenship or face identity crises when considering their citizenship. However, the commonly established literature of the first state-centered approach focuses more on how the indigenous Indonesians define legal citizenship and does not give full consideration in the ways how the Chinese Indonesians respond to the citizenship laws.

The last approach that is used in the literature is “regime change”. Unlike the state-centered and Chinese diaspora approach, this school of approach assigns a more aggressive role to the Chinese Indonesians. While the other two approaches treat the Chinese Indonesians as merely agency-less victims to their circumstances, the regime change approach finds that regime changes can be both “constraining and enabling” (p. 13). In fact, the school of regime change is a reactionary response to the state-centered and Chinese diaspora approaches. This school of thought originated and is mostly perpetuated through the essays that are collected in the book *Chinese Indonesians and Regime Change*. Therefore, it is not nearly as common as the state-centered and Chinese diaspora approaches.

The regime change approach is all about the Chinese Indonesians navigating through the discrimination and political and social stumbling blocks put upon them by society and redefining their identities and political, economic, and social roles in society for themselves. For example in Chapter 8 of *Chinese Indonesians and Regime Change*, the author Peter Pong analyzes how the ethnically Chinese Oei Tem Hang Concern business did business in a pre-World War II Indonesia. Peter Pong notes that the family members of the Oei Tam Hang Concern had radically modern opinions of ethnicity, nationality, and citizenship in that they left it ambiguous. The Oei Tam Hang Concern family was cosmopolitan in every true sense and determined their ethnicity, nationality, and citizenship in terms of economic feasibility over legally defined definitions of ethnicity, nationality, and citizenship. Thus, the regime change approach is a way of studying how the Chinese Indonesians themselves navigate around discrimination by using more cosmopolitan definitions of ethnicity, nationality, and citizenship in order to

navigate and maneuver around political and social stumbling blocks in order to obtain their economic interests.

Since the regime change approach is about empowering Chinese Indonesians, it is understandable that it seems completely at odds with my thesis at first. However, the regime change approach is still related to my thesis in that while it doesn't delve into the reasons that have caused discrimination among Chinese Indonesians, the regime change approach instead implies that there will always be structural reasons behind the discrimination of the Chinese Indonesians. As long as the Chinese Indonesians still have their legally and biologically defined ethnic roots in China, they will always face discrimination. However, the regime change approach school of thought states that these eternal structural reasons behind the discrimination of the Chinese Indonesians do not matter because the Chinese Indonesians have proven and will continue to maneuver their way to fight against this structural racism. Also, another important thing about this regime change approach study is that it defines Chinese Indonesians as "a diverse and socially active group, whose histories and agencies are heterogeneous and locally embedded and cannot be homogenized into a singular framework" (p. 3). The other two studies tend to group Chinese Indonesians in either one or two groups when the truth of the matter is that every single Chinese Indonesian person has their own different story to tell and cannot be categorized so easily. The last important thing about this viewpoint that is relevant to my thesis is the importance of the social and cultural definitions of citizenship. While the legal citizenship status of Chinese Indonesians is under constant question and scrutiny, the Chinese Indonesians can and many do redefine traditional

cultural and social definitions of citizenship into something more cosmopolitan in order to achieve empowerment.

However, there are several aspects of the regime change school of thought that are unable to encompass all the aspects of Chinese Indonesian identity and history. For one thing, how does flexible citizenship apply to Chinese Indonesians who are past first generation? While it is easy for first generations to Chinese Indonesians to claim cosmopolitan definitions of social and cultural citizenship, it is harder for Chinese Indonesians who are of the 1.5, 2nd, 3rd, and further generations to claim this flexible citizenship because they will be more assimilated into Indonesian culture. Especially since there are plenty of Chinese Indonesian family who have lived in Indonesia for generations, flexible citizenship is going to be hard for them to relate to and thus they will be unable to derive the empowerment that first generation Chinese Indonesians do. Furthermore, circumstances in Indonesia—particularly during Suharto's regime—made flexible citizenship a legally unfeasible thing to consider.

Also while empowerment through redefining social and cultural redefining is important, Chinese Indonesians still suffer under systematic racism. Just because there are schools of thought in the literature that assign Chinese Indonesians agency, that doesn't mean that the reasons behind the racism are suddenly eradicated or considered irrelevant. The topic of systematic racism is still very relevant in the Chinese Indonesian narrative and to ignore it or consider it as a simple obstacle that was easily overcome in order to assign agency to the Chinese Indonesians is misguided and false. The regime change school of thought often ignores or disregards how government policies of say the Suharto regime presented insurmountable obstacles against the Chinese Indonesians

being able to learn the Chinese language or so forth. Furthermore, while the regime change school of thought acknowledges the fact that there is a wealth of different Chinese Indonesian experiences, too often it still assumes that Chinese Indonesians are automatically wealthy with its flexible citizenship theory and does not devote enough attention to Chinese Indonesians in a lower socioeconomic class.

All three methods of approach in the existing Chinese Indonesian literature have merit to them. There is value in taking a state-centered approach, in looking at the Chinese diaspora, and the regime change approach. It's essential to understand the government and political motivations behind the discrimination of the Chinese Indonesians, the way the Chinese diaspora plays into it, and give the Chinese Indonesians some semblance of agency in their own narrative. However, all three of these methods are very narrow and isolated from larger political and historical threads going on in and around the country of Indonesia. They use very narrow definitions of what exactly is considered a "peranakan" Indonesian in the first place, when the very definition of an Indonesian is a vague, broad, and unsatisfactory term. Indonesia is a country with many different communities of people who do not identify with each other. The idea of a peranakan Indonesian is mostly a politically unifying term, since there is nothing unifying about Indonesians apart from the fact that they live in similar areas and share the same history and impacts of Dutch colonialism. It is this legacy of Dutch colonialism that not only binds Indonesia together but also continues to define both Indonesian politics and sociocultural movements that in turn impact Chinese Indonesians. The legacy of colonialism is not emphasized enough in the narrative of Chinese Indonesian discrimination during the Suharto era and beyond, which is especially puzzling

considering the tumultuous relationship that the Dutch and the Chinese Indonesians had back when Indonesia was considered the Dutch Indies. Furthermore, Indonesia is a nation founded on the idea of Western liberal democracy. It's very foundations as a nation are influenced by colonialism.

Thus, my thesis will explore the reasons behind Chinese Indonesian discrimination using all the previous methods established in the literature such as the state-centered approach, the Chinese diaspora approach, the regime change approach along with a broader perspective of Indonesia by focusing on how the legacy of Dutch colonialism seeps into the Indonesian political and sociocultural climate that both relied and shut out the Chinese Indonesians.

I will support my claim by connecting second hand research on Indonesian history, Chinese Indonesian history, and the history of Sino-Indonesian relations. Unfortunately, I am not a fluent native speaker of Indonesian so I will have to make do with English language resources. However, I will also tie in the political happenings of China and the rest of world, since most Chinese Indonesian/Indonesian sources tend to be very insular.

The rest of this thesis project will be organized by discussing different aspects of the treatment of the ethnic Chinese by historical periods. In chapter two, I will focus on the treatment of the ethnic Chinese during the Dutch colonial era. In Chapter three, I will focus on the treatment of the ethnic Chinese from the Japanese occupation to the end of Sukarno's era. In Chapter four, I will focus on the Suharto era. In the conclusion, I will combine all the different schools of thought from the established literature and the new

school of thought in order to examine the Chinese Indonesian narrative and how discrimination impacted the perception of Chinese Indonesian nationality.

This chapter has established the reasoning for this study, as well as explained how I have carried out my research. While I have given a very brief overview of Indonesian history and how it plays into perceptions of the ethnic Chinese, I will elaborate more into it in Chapter Two.

**Chapter 2:**

The status of the Chinese Indonesian population in Indonesian society is an issue that plays a key part into the political and social treatment of the Chinese Indonesians. It is one that has dated back to the era of Dutch colonialism. Before the Dutch colonial era, Chinese Indonesians were actually well integrated into Chinese society. They were regarded as no different than the indigenous Indonesian population. However, the Dutch insisted on creating a divide between the ethnic Chinese from the indigenous Indonesian population, a divide that would have lasting impacts onto the perception of the ethnic Chinese Indonesian population long after Indonesia became its own nation. Thus, the issue of Chinese Indonesian citizenship and identity became an issue that the Dutch colonialists struggled immensely to deal with, given the complications of how the Dutch colonialists viewed the status of Chinese Indonesians and later on the demands from the Chinese government and their attitude toward the Chinese diaspora. During their four hundred year colonial rule, the Dutch either devised or help devised six citizenship laws and four international treaties to muddle the matter of Chinese Indonesian citizenship. It took until August 1st 2006 for Indonesia to pass a citizenship law that no longer separated the national status of the Chinese Indonesians from the *peranakan* or native Indonesians. Because of this confusion over Chinese Indonesian status, classification, and citizenship, the Chinese Indonesians were forcibly put into a separate category from the native Indonesians which caused a tension that continued and continues to linger throughout Indonesian history and politics. As such many Chinese Indonesians no longer identified as “just Indonesian”. In many cases, some Chinese Indonesians did not identify

as Indonesians at all. This chapter will deal with the circumstances that led to the beginning of the confusion of the Chinese Indonesian nationality status, and how the Chinese Indonesian people themselves responded. It will be divided into four sections: 1. The History of Dutch Colonial Rule, 2. The Difference Between Peranakan and Totok Chinese Indonesians, 3. The Issue of Chinese Indonesian Citizenship, and 4. Chinese Indonesian Political Identity and Nationality Identification.

#### I. History of Dutch Colonial Rule

First off, it is important to cover the brief history of Dutch colonial rule in Indonesia in order to emphasize how powerful of an influence it has been and continues to be in the Indonesian political and sociocultural realm. From 1602 to 1942, Indonesia has been under some form of Dutch Colonial Rule. The Dutch discovered the Indonesian islands during the 16th century but it wasn't until 1602 when the Dutch government formed the Dutch East Indies Company to officially carry out colonial rule in Indonesia. While the Dutch East Indies Company wasn't able to gain complete control of the Indonesian spice market, the Dutch East Indies Company did succeed in establishing an overwhelming Dutch presence in Indonesia.

By the 1800's the Dutch East Indies Company grew bankrupt so Holland officially declared Indonesia as an official colonial territory. Like the Dutch East Indies Company, Holland tried to control the spice market of Indonesia. It is also important to note that this era was the age of emerging nationalism in Europe and part of nationalism in Europe included counting and sizing up the amount of colonies each country owned. Indonesia, with its seemingly endless supply of spices, exotic tropical fruits, and large

indigenous population, was considered a crown jewel in terms of resources and colonialist pride. However, the spread of nationalism as both theory and social movements proved to be both the impetus and the weakening of Dutch colonial rule. As the ideas of nationalism spread with the rise of books and technology and thus privileged, upper class Indonesians studying abroad in Holland had access to education and the knowledge of political theories, the Dutch found themselves having trouble suppressing nationalist Indonesian political movements and political parties in the early 1900's. Now, the rebellions had ideological justification behind them and thus more traction. Eventually, the stronghold for Dutch colonialism was weakened so that Japan could easily swipe Indonesia from Dutch hands for a brief colonial rule during 1942-1945. After the end of World War II, Indonesia was granted it's own rule and freedom from Dutch colonial and like many other colonial territories granted freedom to form their own countries during that period—it struggled to shape it's own national identity.

## II. The Difference between Peranakan and Totok Chinese Indonesians

As for the status quo of the Chinese Indonesians, they remained at a privileged but still oppressed shaky position until the early 1900's. First off, it is important to mention that there were two main categories of Chinese Indonesians. There was the Totok Chinese Indonesians, who had been living in Indonesia for generations, and the Peranakan Chinese Indonesians, who had recently immigrated to Indonesia from China. “During 1811 to 1816, one soldier estimated there were about 100,00 Chinese in Java and Madura” (Wilmott). While “Totoks and Peranakans alike were considered as undesirable aliens by many people, even by government officials and regulations intended for

foreigners were often applied to citizens of Chinese descent” (Wilmot 79), the Totok and Peranakan Chinese populations heavily differed from one another.

While the first recorded Chinese immigrants into Indonesian were refugees from the Mongol forces of the Kublai Khan and later the Chinese Muslim traders of Cheng He, The Peranakan Chinese Indonesian population were primarily rooted from the Hokkien region of China. These Hokkien Peranakan Chinese Indonesians had generally lived in Indonesia for centuries and had been relatively well integrated with the rest of Indonesian society. These Peranakan Chinese Indonesians generally were farmers, laborers, and artists though there was growing monopoly of Peranakan Chinese money lending and business networks. Frequently Peranakan Chinese men married native Indonesian women because of the shortage of Peranakan Chinese women. Thus, a good number of the Peranakan Chinese Indonesians identified purely as ethnically Indonesian and did not connect with their Hokkien roots and language. These initial Peranakan Chinese Indonesians could be considered well integrated with the indigenous Indonesians and Indonesian society.

There are several key differences between the Peranakan Chinese and the Totok Chinese. One of the key differences is the sheer amount of Totok Chinese versus the number of Peranakan Chinese Indonesians. It is said that the total number of Chinese Indonesians increased from 277,000 in 1900 to 582,000 in 1930. What caused this relative uptick in the Chinese Indonesian population? Immigration. Thus, we must look back to the country of China for that in order to understand the Totok Chinese Indonesian migration patterns and why they chose to Indonesia in the first place.

Looking at China's history, it is no coincidence that the increased number of Chinese Indonesian immigrants coincides with the China's Century of Humiliation. The Century of Humiliation was a time period when China found itself under the increasing influence of European colonialists, just as the Manchu-led, prosperous Ming Dynasty was steadily losing its once powerful stronghold on China. One of the most important events of this Century of Humiliation are the Opium Wars, in which the results led to humiliating concessions from the Chinese that included unequal treaties, a constant stream of unstoppable supply of opium that was causing massive health problems among its citizens, and the concession of lands such as giving Hong Kong to the British for a hundred years. While it was used to foreign invaders from other Asian countries such as the Manchus or the Mongolians, China had managed to stay relatively impervious to any sort of Western influence until now. Beforehand, China had considered itself the center of power in the world essentially. During this Century of Humiliation, China suffered from the humiliation of the knowledge and proof that there were other countries out there in the world that had better technology and stronger power than the Chinese. This Century of Humiliation also was the impetus for many nationalistic movements in order to reclaim pride in Chinese nationality, which would also have repercussions would later in turn affect the Chinese diaspora abroad.

This Century of Humiliation is also the reason for the huge numbers of the Chinese Diaspora in the 19th and early 20th centuries. Many of the Chinese people who could get out of what was increasingly becoming a colonized, opium-wrecked country simply did. Like many first generation immigrants, the Chinese diaspora were more likely to identify as Chinese and try to keep their nationalistic heritage. This also applied

to the Chinese diaspora in Indonesia. Thus, this 19th century Chinese diaspora in Indonesia were more likely to identify and classify themselves as Chinese as opposed to the Chinese Indonesians who had ancestors that been living in Indonesia for centuries. Furthermore these recent Chinese immigrants were usually full-blooded Chinese as opposed to the Peranakan Chinese Indonesians, many of whom were mixed. Thus, there was a clear cultural divide between the Peranakan Chinese Indonesians and these new totok, first-generation immigrant Chinese Indonesian population.

Furthermore, it is important to note that many of the Chinese Indonesians who immigrated in the 19th century diaspora were upper class, wealthy, and privileged. After all, the Totok Chinese Indonesians had to have the resources in order to immigrate out of China. Thus, the Totok Chinese Indonesians that immigrated were often wealthy, privileged, and had good business connections. This did not escape the notice of the Dutch colonialists.

The Dutch Colonialists were confused as to how to classify the Chinese Indonesian population. They regarded the Chinese Indonesian population as separate and better than the indigenous Indonesians but they still regarded the Chinese Indonesian population as lesser than Europeans. Thus, the Chinese Indonesian population occupied a strange, middle ground position in the social caste system. Thus, the Dutch colonialists ensured to isolate the Chinese Indonesian population as a separate social class in their colonies, and this isolation led to distrust and hate of the Chinese Indonesian population by the other people living in the Dutch East Indies. It didn't matter to them if the Chinese Indonesians were Peranakan or Totok. "Totoks and Pernakans alike were considered as

undesirable aliens by many people, even by government officials and regulations intended for foreigners were often applied to citizens of Chinese descent” (Wilmot 79).

The main tactic the Dutch colonialists used to keep the Chinese Indonesian population separate from the other people living in the Dutch East Colonies was to emphasize the foreignness of Chinese Indonesians. “The Dutch encouraged each racial group to maintain their dress and customs. Unless the permit was obtained, the wearing of Western dress for non-Europeans (Chinese) and the cutting off of the pigtail was prohibited” (Wilmot 3). By enforcing a visual separation, the Dutch colonialists made sure to reinforce the notion that Chinese Indonesians are separate from the indigenous Indonesian population long after their rule by enforcing coded visual barriers. This visual separation made a strong impact into the perception of the Chinese Indonesian population by the native Indonesians, and show up as stereotypes that are still used today in modern Indonesian pop culture and media.

The other major reason the Chinese Indonesian was thought of as separate from the indigenous Indonesian population was because they tended to be better off financially than the indigenous Indonesian population. This is because the ethnic Chinese tended to dominate many of the businesses in Indonesian society, up to the point of being overrepresented in comparison to the actual numbers of Chinese Indonesians living around. “Chinese shopkeepers, traders, and usurers remained the main source of credit for the Indonesian people, in spite of their unconscionably high rates of interest. This meant that the average Chinese was far better off than the average Indonesian, and that there was a conspicuous number of very wealth Chinese, in contrast to the very few wealthy Indonesians. Furthermore, the advantageous economic position of the Chinese

was accompanied by superiority attitudes and social exclusiveness” (Wilmot 11). The Chinese Indonesian moneylender soon grew to be a popular stereotype that many indigenous Indonesians saw as the representative of the Chinese Indonesian population as a whole. This image of the Chinese Indonesian moneylender was hated among the indigenous Indonesians because many of the indigenous Indonesians believed that these Chinese Indonesian moneylenders were ripping them off with overpriced rates of interest. Thus, the indigenous Indonesian population felt that they were trapped in this non-advantageous position with the ethnic Chinese Indonesian population. They felt that they were being economically exploited but because of the poverty of the indigenous Indonesian population and the domination of the Chinese Indonesian in the moneylending and credit business, the native indigenous Indonesian population felt that they were trapped in this endless cycle of poverty. Thus, resentment against the indigenous Indonesian population grew against the ethnic Chinese. The ethnic Chinese Indonesian population were regarded as money-hungry, conniving, untrustworthy, and in some plain cases evil and subhuman among the resentful indigenous Indonesian population who were forced to rely on these Chinese Indonesian moneylenders. This resentment towards Chinese Indonesian moneylenders played a huge part into the negative perception of the Chinese Indonesian population as a whole and lasted long after the rule of the Dutch colonists ended.

Meanwhile, the Dutch themselves found themselves threatened by the increased economic dominance of Chinese Indonesian businesses and implemented policies in the early 1900’s to hurt Chinese Indonesian businesses and in turn helped perpetuate negative stereotypes of the Chinese Indonesian population so that the Dutch could maintain their

economic stronghold. They introduced “the Dutch Ethical policy at the beginning of the century [which] included a number of measures clearly intended to protect the indigenous population against the Chinese; to the local Chinese, these measures seemed devised to promote the advancement of the native population at their expense” (Suryadinata 66). This Dutch Ethical Policy consisted of “the Dutch government establish[ing] a “monopoly of pawnshops throughout the Indies, and to establish agricultural credit banks to provide loans to farmers at more reasonable rates than those which the private money-lenders, chiefly Chinese, had claimed” (Wilmot 3). Thus, by lowering the prices of the interest rates, the Dutch was trying to win the favor of the indigenous Indonesian population by employing “the enemy of my enemy is my friend” strategy, in regards to moneylending practices. By employing this tactic, the Dutch successfully pitted the indigenous Indonesian population against both the Chinese Indonesian moneylenders and the Chinese Indonesian population themselves, while the Dutch was able to gain more economic profits from the business of indigenous Indonesians. The Chinese Indonesians were used as a scapegoat, essentially. Furthermore, this Dutch Ethical policy helped perpetuate the perception that the Dutch were reasonable and rational when governing the Dutch East Indies while the Chinese Indonesian moneylenders and thus indirectly entire Chinese Indonesian population were greedy, immoral, and obsessed with money at all costs—even in the face of humanity. Thus, the Dutch Ethical Policy helped further cement the hate against the Chinese Indonesian population.

Thus, the Chinese Indonesians developed a reputation of sticking amongst themselves, which like many stereotypes became one that was self-actualized by their circumstances. Since they were regarded with distrust and contempt by both the Dutch

and indigenous Indonesian population, most of the Chinese Indonesian population went out of their ways to isolate and separate themselves from both the indigenous Indonesian and Dutch populations. The Chinese Indonesians occupied this strange place in Indonesian society where they were relatively upper middle class on an economic level but low on the social caste system. In the eyes of the Dutch colonialists, Chinese Indonesians were considered to be still above the actual indigenous population themselves because they had the ability to pose an economic threat against Dutch businesses in the first place. Either way, the Chinese Indonesian population was considered to be “othered”. This other status led to many debates concerning the citizenship status of the Chinese Indonesian population.

### III. The Issue of Legal Chinese Indonesian Citizenship

Defining Chinese Indonesian citizenship grew to be a long, tumultuous process, particularly as the Chinese government started to claim citizenship of the Chinese diaspora. At first, The Dutch issued “The East Indian Government Act of 1854 defined the status of Chinese born in the Indies in two ways. On the one hand, Article 109 put them on a level with the indigenous population in legal and administrative matters, in contrast to the privileged position of Europeans. On the other hand, an article limiting government service to Dutch citizens referred to the existing Dutch law for a definition of citizenship. According to the civil law of the time, all persons born in the Netherlands or its colonies of domiciled parents were considered Dutch citizens, including persons of Chinese descent. This meant that the Indies Chinese, and Indonesians as well, could claim all the prerogatives of Dutch citizenship while abroad, even though they were

specifically excluded from them while in the colony.” (Wilmot 13). Thus, the Dutch defined Chinese Indonesians as a part of their colony, just like the indigenous Indonesian population. At the time the law was passed, the Chinese government allowed Chinese Indonesians to be classified as Dutch, in exchange for a more beneficial trade agreement with Holland. However, the Dutch ran into trouble as China grew to become more nationalist in the 1900’s and started claiming the Chinese Indonesians, as with the rest of the Chinese diaspora, as Chinese citizens. A Chinese “law, which was issue on March 28, 1909, claimed as a Chinese citizen every legal or extra-legal child of a Chinese father or mother, regardless of birthplace” (Wilmot 14), despite the fact China had previously conceded citizenship to Dutch over peranakan Chinese for trading rights. The reason for this was because there were many different nationalist movements that were fostering in China over the time. As mentioned earlier, the early 1900s was the middle period of China’s Century of Humiliation. With the spread of nationalism and the Century of Humiliation, the educated, upper class Chinese who had studied abroad in Europe absorbed political theories and established nationalist groups such as the KMT in order to regain Chinese national sovereignty. In 1909, the Qing dynasty was on its very last legs and the law was passed as a desperate measure to establish ethnic Chinese unity. Thus, “when a Peranakan Chinese decided to visit China,” they were “issue[d] a passport by the Dutch authorities, who, although careful not to recognize any Chinese jurisdiction over him, did suggest that he should obtain clearance from Chinese authorities.” (Wilmot 17) Because the amount of power China had was in limbo, the Dutch didn’t want to outright cut off relations from China. However, the Dutch still wanted to keep control over the Chinese Indonesians. So as a response to this measure, the Dutch issued a new

Citizenship Act 2.296 on February 10 1910 declaring that “all persons born in the Indies of parents domiciled there were Dutch subjects even if not Dutch citizens” (Wilmot 15) as retaliation. While this claims the status of Chinese Indonesians still as Dutch subjects, the Dutch still did not make any further moves to try to claim Chinese Indonesian citizens when they were abroad in China itself. The status of Chinese Indonesian citizens was one that was more assumed than defined. This ambiguity continued into the 20th century. In May 1945, China and Netherlands came up with a trade agreement that skated over the issues of citizenship of Chinese Indonesians’ nationality.

#### IV. Chinese Indonesian Political Activity and National Identity

Given the confusion of Chinese Indonesian citizenship, the changing status in perception of Chinese Indonesian socioeconomic status in Indonesian society, and the spread of nationalist movements, it was inevitable that some Chinese Indonesians started to play a part in Indonesian politics and formed Chinese Indonesian political groups. It particularly helped that as a whole, the Chinese Indonesians were at least moderately well-to-do and thus could afford education. In fact, education played a huge part in shaping Chinese Indonesian political activity and cultural identity.

The Chinese Indonesian community has and still places a huge emphasis on education for their children. While it can be argued that this emphasis on education had its roots in the tradition of taking national examinations in order to qualify for government positions, the Chinese Indonesian community viewed education as an essential, important part of their children’s lives. However, Chinese Indonesians were not allowed to put their children in the same schools with the indigenous Indonesian

population. Thus, Chinese Indonesians started to establish their own schools for their children. The first Chinese school was established in 1792 but Chinese schools began to gain popularity in 1800's. "In 1899, there were 2017 such schools in Java (and Murdra) with 4452 students and 152 students in the Outer Islands with 2170 students" (Surayadinata 3). It is no coincidence that this rise in the establishment of Chinese schools paralleled with the influx of Totok Chinese Indonesians immigrating to Indonesia. As mentioned before, the Totok Chinese Indonesians tended to be more upper class and thus more educated than the previous peranakan Chinese Indonesian immigrants. There were also a number of intellectual families that fled China during the chaos and thus made up a certain percentage of the Chinese diaspora, hence the emphasis on education.

Chinese Indonesian education soon became the centers for Chinese Indonesian political activity, particularly as the pan-Chinese movement grew across Indonesia and other Southeast Asian regions with significant Chinese diaspora populations. The first Chinese Indonesian political party, the Tiong Hoa Hwee Koan (THHK), was established in 1900. The THHK was established as a Confucious group that attempted to teach and spread Chinese culture among the Chinese diaspora. Essentially, it had many similar principles to other pan-Chinese nationalist groups at the time. The first THHK school opened in 1901 and gained immense popularity amongst both the Peranakan and Totok Chinese Indonesians, which caused the Dutch to start establishing their own schools for Chinese Indonesians in an attempt to curb the pan-Chinese movement. However, the Dutch used the establishment of Dutch-mandated schools to further establish the socioeconomic standing of Chinese Indonesians as a separate category from the Dutch

and the indigenous Indonesian population. “Consistent to the racial hierarchy above, three types of elementary schools were established by the Dutch: the European Elementary school, the Dutch-Chinese school and the Dutch-Native school. The school fees were charged according to the hierarchy and admission was limited to students of the particular racial community. Due to the desire of the Chinese for a European education for its social stature, the Dutch-Chinese school used Dutch as its language of instruction and was classified as western elementary education, to which the European School Regulation applied” (Hoon 2). These Dutch Chinese schools were basically considered to be more “Western” and better staffed and cared for than the Dutch schools for the indigenous Indonesian population, up to the point that the Dutch Chinese schools were almost as good as the schools for the Dutch students themselves. “The stiff fees, the exclusion of non-paying pupils, a faculty composed entirely of expensive European teachers, a curriculum nearly identical to that of European schools, Dutch as the language of instruction, the admission requirements which effectively limited the pupils to a minority of Chinese *peranakans*: all this made the Dutch-Chinese school an education institution for the more affluent. From its establishment in 1908 it was never accessible to more than about ten percent of all Chinese children (Govaars 2005: 94). Thus, the establishment of the Dutch schooling system helped solidify the idea that the Chinese Indonesians were a sort of “model minority” in the Dutch East Indies. It reinforced the notion in the Dutch’s eyes that the Chinese Indonesians were above the indigenous Indonesian population and almost as advanced as the Dutch themselves. It also helped reinforce the Chinese Indonesian upper middle class status level. However, both the Dutch and THHK schools only provided basic education for Chinese Indonesians. “There

was no advanced or tertiary education for Chinese medium school graduates in pre-war Indonesia. Those who wanted to further their studies had to go to China, unless they knew sufficient English to attend universities in Hong Kong or Western countries” (Surayadinata 19). As a result of this higher socioeconomic status of most of the Chinese Indonesians, some of the richest Chinese Indonesians were able to study abroad in Holland. By being able to study abroad in Holland, these Chinese Indonesians gained an education privilege that other Chinese Indonesians and indigenous Indonesians were not able to have. They learned about the ideas of democracy, nationalism, communism, and other Western political theories of the time. Many of these Chinese Indonesians came back to Indonesia and brought back these ideas with them. In some cases, the Chinese Indonesians returned with a false sense of equivalency with the Dutch colonialists and looked down upon other Chinese Indonesians and indigenous Indonesians who did not have the privilege to study abroad in Holland. Other Chinese Indonesians believed that it was necessary for Indonesia to become more Western in order to gain respect and have any semblance of political power in the global sphere—they were Assimilationists. And lastly, a few of the Chinese Indonesians helped establish Chinese Indonesian political organizations that represented Chinese Indonesian interests. Overall, like with most non-Western nationalist political leaders, there were upper class Chinese Indonesians who studied abroad in Europe, absorbed the political culture and theories, and brought it back to their countries of birth. Thus, the upper class of the Chinese Indonesians helped establish a political presence in the Dutch East Indonesians during the 20th century.

In fact, Chinese Indonesians found many issues to protest against during the 20th century era of the Dutch East Indies. In addition to the issue of Chinese Indonesian

schools and the Dutch Ethical Policy, there was other Chinese Indonesian “grievances were none-the-less keenly felt. They were confined by law to the well-defined Chinese quarter in each town or city, and could not trade in the countryside or travel to another locality without requesting a pass from the authorities on each occasion” (Wilmot 2). These areas became infamously known as Chinese ghettos, similar to the Chinatowns all over the world or the Jewish ghettos of Middle Eastern Europe. These Chinese ghettos set the foundation to the areas that eventually became the Chinatowns that Chinese Indonesians lived in, long after the Dutch Colonial Rule ended. These Chinese ghettos also made it easier to target Chinese Indonesians for racial violence, such as the 1918 Kudus Tua incident where many Chinese were killed and their houses were burned down. Thus, the Chinese Indonesians had many political issues to fight for if they chose to.

However, the majority of Chinese Indonesians were not very political during this time. As far as political leanings went, “Chinese Indonesians during this time were divided into three groups: 1). “Passivists: comprising the majority of the Chinese community, is largely made up of shopkeepers, petty traders, and employees of various factories and businesses. Most of these people are apolitical: they believe that it is not wise to get mixed up in politics, 2). Participationists: formal and informal leaders of the Indonesian Chinese community, most newspaper editor and correspondents, a large section of the more well-to-do businessmen, and a representation from other groups as well, and 3). Assimilationists. “Those who attended Dutch or Indonesian language schools. They believed that Chinese community must endeavor to merge itself into the society and culture of the majority of Indonesian citizens as rapidly as possible.” Thus, the remaining politically active Chinese Indonesians primarily participated through

THHK efforts and focused their efforts on spreading Confucianism and the ideals of the pan-Chinese movement in order to help modernize the others in the Chinese Indonesian community whether through the THHK schools or later THHK newspapers. However, there were some Chinese Indonesian nationalists, primarily those who read the sympathizing *Sin Po*—a Chinese-sympathizing nationalist newspaper. These Chinese Indonesian nationalists later formed the *Chang Hwa Hi* as the first peranakan Chinese nationalist group.

However, the Chinese Indonesians as a whole tried to separate themselves from Indonesian Nationalist groups. The Chinese Indonesians separated themselves from the *Sarekat Islam*, the second most powerful political party at the time, due to conflicts of religion—a religious conflict that would later continue to play out during the twentieth century. The Chinese Indonesians also separated themselves from the “*Indische Sociaal-Democratisch Vereeniging*, which tried to draw the political movements in the Indies into the orbit of the international communist movement because the peranakan Chinese did not want to be associated with Communist uprisings because they saw Communist uprisings as “the desire for revenge, killing, and looting” (Surayadinata 47). So overall, the Chinese Indonesian community stayed out of nationalist movements and politics during the first this first half of the twentieth century and the minority that were politically active tended to separate themselves from Indonesian nationalist movements. Thus, the Chinese Indonesian community developed a reputation for being cliqueish, aloof, and a people to be feared among others. Also, resentments from their refusal to take a more Indonesian national movements would come back to later haunt the Chinese Indonesian community.

As for how the Chinese Indonesian community identified itself, there was a clear divide between the Totoks and Perankans still. However, the rule of the Dutch had divided a wedge between the Chinese Indonesian community and the indigenous Indonesian community, a wedge that was getting harder to separate. It was through Dutch rule that the Chinese Indonesian community was building up to become a scapegoat for the indigenous Indonesian community. And due to the growing rise of the pan-Chinese movement and how both the Dutch and indigenous Indonesian population treated the Chinese Indonesians, many of them started to identify more simply as Chinese, a trend that would continue towards the later twentieth century.

#### Conclusion:

Before the Dutch colonized Indonesia, there was no difference in perception between Chinese Indonesians and the indigenous Indonesian population. The Dutch took care to separate the Chinese Indonesians and make them a sort of model minority that led the indigenous Indonesian population to resent the Chinese Indonesians. In the meantime, many new Chinese Indonesian immigrants—totoks—arrived in Indonesia during this time period and came with established business capital and relationships. Thus, the Chinese Indonesian population was already set up to become an economically privileged class compared to the Chinese Indonesians.

**Chapter 3:**

While the rule of the Dutch may have been provided the basis towards discrimination towards the Chinese Indonesians, the years between Japanese occupation to the end of Sukarno's regime intensified the negative sentiment towards Chinese Indonesians. The time period would be from 1942 to 1965, when the first president of Indonesia, Sukarno, was overthrown into a coup. During this time, Indonesia went through an intense period from transitioning under Dutch occupation to Japanese occupation, and then successfully obtaining but struggling to main national sovereignty. In about a decade, Indonesia went through three different regimes, which would be considered chaotic and hectic for any country in general. In addition to this chaos going on inside Indonesia, the world around Indonesia was transitioning from a second World War to a bilateral, fearful Cold War. Mistrust and paranoia was breeding everywhere. During this time, there were four main events going on in and around Indonesia that greatly influenced the perceptions of the Chinese Indonesians: the Japanese occupation of the Dutch East Indies, the Citizenship A of 1946 and subsequently the Dual Citizenship Treaty of 1955, the establishment of the PRC and their foreign policy towards Indonesia and other countries in this new bilateral world system, and the disparity between Suharto's admiration of the PRC and the increasing anti-Chinese sentiment going on around in Indonesia. Thus, I will divide this chapter into these four sections in order to explore how these four events affected perceptions of the Chinese Indonesian in Indonesia and consequently how Chinese Indonesians started to view their own national identities.

## I. Japanese Occupation in Indonesia

While the Japanese Occupation of Indonesia only lasted from 1942 to 1945, the events that happened during this period had a tremendous impact on Indonesia and the Indonesian nationalists' journey to local sovereignty. As covered in the previous chapter, the first half of the 1900's brought about the rise of Indonesian nationalist groups. While the Dutch colonialists still ruled Indonesia with an iron fist, a number of nationalist groups and movements had started to help make frays in the seams. By the time the Japanese imperial army arrived, the Dutch stronghold was so weak over Indonesia that Indonesia was practically a stateless country in an unofficial sense. Many of the mainstream Indonesian nationalist groups looked to Japan as the way to help them gain independence, only to have their hopes dashed as soon as the real face of Japanese occupation started to show. While the Japanese did not prove to be an ally in helping Indonesian nationalists secure independence, the Japanese occupation was the final death knell for Dutch sovereignty over Indonesia. After the Japanese occupation ended in 1945, the Dutch never was able to maintain control over Indonesia for long and was constantly at war with Indonesian nationalist groups. By late 1949, the Dutch government declared that Indonesia was its own sovereign state. In the middle of all this, the Chinese Indonesians found themselves under attack as a sort of political scapegoat during this time of anarchy and chaos, which set the precedent of strong, violent anti-sentiment against Chinese Indonesians during this time.

Right before the Japanese occupation, tensions between the Dutch and the indigenous Indonesian occupation were at an all time high. The Dutch government had

been trying to cooperate with the indigenous Indonesian population by introducing policies to help curry their favor to no avail. For example, “Merdeka was the introduction of the Native Militia Bill by the Dutch government in July 1941. Although they had been requesting the setting up of an Indonesian Militia for years, the nationalists in the People's Council unanimously rejected the bill. They did so because the Dutch, thus far, had refused to recognize the right of the Indonesian people to defend their own (Touwen-Bouwsma 3). The rift in cooperation between the Dutch and the Indonesian nationalists meant that many Indonesian nationalists were turning towards the Japanese in order to help liberate them towards independence. Many Indonesians were also taken with the Japanese’s “Asians for Asia” propaganda campaign and truly believed that the Japanese would help liberate Indonesia to independence in the name of pan-Asianism. The Native Militia Bill was thus also the Dutch’s attempt at curbing the Indonesian’s favor away from the Japanese. However this did not work out and “after the declaration of war with Japan, on 8 December 1941, the first thing the Dutch government did was to arrest all the Japanese in Java, about 2,000 persons in all and to place Indonesians known to have relations with Japanese under strict police surveillance” (Touwen-Bouwsma 6). In an interesting move though, the Dutch government seemed to be wary that they were fighting a losing battle against the Japanese and wanted to establish their stronghold as much as they could thus “once the war began, the Dutch government created facilities to help eventual victims of war among the people in the Indies. Several civil front organizations were set up by and for the Europeans, and other population groups like the Indonesians and the Chinese were given permission to form their own civil front organizations” (Touwen-Bouwsma 7). From this decree, the Dutch government seemed

to anticipate a Japanese occupation takeover but seemed to regard it as a temporary one seeing as these civil front organizations appeared to be an attempt to win back eventual favor from the Indonesians. The civil front organizations were charities that anticipated the need for future victims of the Japanese occupation and the Dutch hoped that it would make the Indonesians more grateful towards the Dutch government in the future. Furthermore, the decision to create a separate Chinese civil front organization from an indigenous Indonesian civil front shows that the Dutch were still trying to govern the Chinese Indonesians separately from the indigenous Indonesians. During this time of crisis in Indonesian history, the Dutch once again isolated the Chinese Indonesians from the rest of the indigenous Indonesians, which in turn them made it easier for the Chinese Indonesians to become the scapegoat and target for racialized violence, among other things.

When “the Japanese army in Java arrived on the night of 1 March 1942, all over the island planes dropped leaflets bearing the slogan, "One colour, one race", with the two flags (Japanese and Indonesian) printed on the reverse sides.” (Touwen-Bouwsma 8). The Indonesians had welcomed the Japanese Imperial army with open arms because it meant they were free from Dutch rule. This freedom resulted in a state of anarchy that led to the formation of local gangs that enforced “order” through plundering and looting the areas nearby. This phenomenon of relying on local “nationalistic” gangs and groups to enforce order through violence had its origins around this time but would continue on way past Indonesian national sovereignty when the local Indonesian governments would sponsor these nationalistic gangs. But at the time, the main targets of these local gangs were the Chinese Indonesians. This era set the precedent for local gang violence to go on

without government interference. While there were urban Chinese Indonesians who were targeted by these local gangs, “the main target of the bands were Chinese living in rural areas. In East Java all the rice mills in the vicinity of Jombang were ransacked, and Chinese men were forcibly circumcised by the Nahdatul Ulama. Chinese shops were looted and some of their owners were killed. The plundering of Chinese property, factories and rice-mills also occurred in Central Java. In Demak the looting began in the Chinese kampong. One report says that the Indonesians were shot at by the Chinese who had been armed by the Dutch. There upon members of the underground organization arrested all the Chinese and threw them into the local prison” (Touwen-Bouwsman 10). This resulted in "Peranakans and totoks in Java soon feeling that they had more to fear from the Indonesians than from the Japanese . . . [and so] many chose to cooperate with the occupying power and entrusted their security to Nippon. (Here it should be noted that the choice by Indonesian Chinese to cooperate with the Japanese at a time when China was still at war with Japan already undermines arguments by Western scholars that totok politics were primarily an extension of the politics of China” (Twang 70). The fact that both the totok and peranakan Chinese Indonesians sided with the Japanese just shows how they prioritized survival above everything else. Before Japanese occupation, the totok Chinese Indonesians primarily sided with Chinese politics because they thought that China was powerful enough to ensure that they received better treatment in Indonesia. The Totok Chinese Indonesians thought that China was a more dependable and better ally than the Indonesian nationalist groups or the Dutch Government, with their insistence on separating the Chinese Indonesian and the indigenous Indonesian populations. The Japanese occupation caused a brief separation in that idea because

China was also taken over by Japanese occupation at the same time. Hence, the Chinese Indonesians try to curry favor with the strongest player in the room at the time—the Japanese.

However, Indonesian nationalists soon learned to not rely on the Japanese imperial army to support their causes. “Within a month, however, the local Japanese authorities forced the nationalists to surrender local control of the administration to them and reinstated both Dutch and Indonesian civil servants. The Indonesian civil servants and police, now supported by the Japanese, gangs and arresting them for disturbing the peace struck back at the committees, branding members as leaders of robber gangs and arresting them for disturbing the peace” (Touwen-Bouwsman 13). The Indonesian nationalist groups were left feeling betrayed and vengeful after the Japanese imperial army essentially turned their backs on them. Furthermore, the Japanese started forcing the Indonesian people to do forced labor—called “romusha”—and basically enslaved a good amount of the Indonesian population, particularly in Java. After World War II was over in 1945, the Indonesians declared independence with a national constitution. For awhile, the rest of the world—particularly Britain and Holland—had trouble accepting Indonesian national sovereignty and there were destructive periods of warfare fought over sovereignty. The Indonesians no longer trusted or relied on anyone for help obtaining their national sovereignty. However, by late December 1949 the Dutch government recognized Indonesian national sovereignty. The time period of 1945-1950 can essentially be thought of as a “transition” period between the Dutch rule and Indonesian nationalist sovereignty. During this time, an important statute on Chinese Indonesian citizenship was passed in 1946, and its subsequent follow-up rule, defined the

view and status of Chinese Indonesians in Indonesian society for the rest of the 20th century.

## II. Citizenship Laws and Beyond

When Indonesia declared independence in 1945, “the Indonesian nationalists drafted up a Constitution that defined citizenship by stating “citizens are persons who are indigenous Indonesians and persons of another nationality who become citizens by way of law.” Thus, rather than citing race and religion as determinants, as was done under the colonial administration’s civil code, the defining property of citizenship in independent Indonesia came to pivot on the attribute of indigeneity. In other words, the indigenous people in the former Netherlands Indies territory came to be regarded as the natural, therefore principal, component of the nation” (Aguilar 89). Thus, this law implied that citizenship still put first priority on having indigenous Indonesian ethnicity. Because the Dutch considered the Chinese Indonesian population to be completely separate from the indigenous Indonesian population, Chinese Indonesians could not be considered citizens under this law. The influence of the Dutch shows in this citizenship law. “In 1946 the fledgling republic issued a law that accorded Indonesian citizenship to local-born Chinese automatically (known as the “passive system”), but with the option for a set period to reject Indonesian in favor of Chinese citizenship” (Aguilar 15). This 1946 Citizenship Law grew controversial amongst the Chinese Indonesian population and ended up defining the status of Chinese Indonesians in Indonesia for generations. It grew

controversial because the 1946 Citizenship Law felt presumptuous to many Chinese Indonesians who would automatically be considered Indonesian citizens if they were born there. Many Chinese Indonesians at the time wanted to claim otherwise. This law also grew controversial because it never stated that Chinese Indonesians would be as equal of citizens as the indigenous Indonesian population. Also while it may seem empowering to enable Chinese Indonesians to define the status of their own citizenship, this 1946 Citizenship Law forces Chinese Indonesians to define themselves in a binary, either or, decision. There was no option for dual citizenship. Chinese Indonesians are forced to choose between their “old” identity and “new” identity in a sense. Thus, what this 1946 Citizenship Law is actually reinforce that all Chinese Indonesians are outsiders in that whether they choose to reject Chinese citizenship or now, they will always be the outsiders who belong to China on a certain level.

The 1946 law was soon legitimized and recognized by other countries. “In August 1949 the Round Table Agreement that resolved the question of Indonesia’s independence from the Netherlands upheld the “passive system” of the 1946 citizenship act and included a provision for local-born Chinese to reject Indonesian citizenship until December 1951” (Aguilar 514). Thus, the recognition of the 1946 Citizenship Law at the Round Table Agreement was an international acceptance that Chinese Indonesians were either Chinese or Indonesian, not both. This legitimization at the law acknowledged that the Chinese diaspora in Indonesia was still to be considered as belonging to the PRC. Furthermore, the legitimization of the 1946 Citizenship Law at the 1949 Round Table Agreement shows that other countries were recognizing the PRC as a significant political force. Again, the approval of the 1946 Citizenship Law from other countries shows that

all these different governments are tacitly acknowledging the PRC's jurisdiction over the overseas Chinese diaspora in Indonesia. China's influence grew stronger and by 1955 the Indonesians had made a deal with the Chinese in the Dual Citizenship Treaty. "The treaty was a historic achievement as China relinquished its old claim that all persons of Chinese descent remained Chinese citizens, even if they had acquired another citizenship. On the other hand, the treaty imposed the "active system," which meant that for Chinese to acquire or retain Indonesian citizenship, they had to repudiate Chinese citizenship in a court of law, a choice to be certified in an official document. Significantly, the treaty contained no provision for naturalization of "alien Chinese." (Aguilar 515) Thus, this treaty was meant to apply solely to the Totok Chinese with no considered of the Perankan Chinese population. The Chinese were trying to claim as many of the Totok Chinese. This decision was also significant in that it flat out rejects the idea of a double citizenship, making the choice of either or even more prominent. By 1958, the Indonesian government in due course introduced an event more stringent citizenship law which made more it more difficult for the Chinese to become Indonesian citizens" (Surayadinata 96). This citizenship law of 1958 was enforced because of the backlash growing against the Chinese Indonesian community. Thus, the options for the Chinese Indonesian community were growing narrower and narrower.

So how did the Chinese Indonesians themselves react to this? On the one hand, the government spin of this 1946 Citizenship Law was that the citizenship law was empowering for the Chinese Indonesians because they had the choice to choose between which country to file for citizenship. But the situation in Indonesia had gotten dire for the Chinese Indonesian people themselves as the strong anti-Chinese sentiment started to

grow amongst the rest of the population. “As early as 1949 Hsin Pao had warned hua-kiao (totok) that “those who want to continue living on this piece of land should have a new determination and a new understanding of the situation, or it may not be easy for them to retain a foothold any longer . . . tung-ch'iao [fellow country-men] should make a radical change in their attitudes. Whatever business we run, besides gaining reasonable profits, we also seek to serve the public. In particular the selfish attitude of profiting oneself at the expense of others . . . should be eradicated” (Twang 73). Thus, the Chinese Indonesians were aware that there was a strong anti-Chinese sentiment in Indonesia, primarily due to the bad reputation of Chinese Indonesian moneylenders. The statement from Hsin Pao shows that some Chinese Indonesians were aware of the stereotypes that were held against them and thus decided to fight them to insure their survival. However, most Chinese Indonesians ended up turning to China as their safest option. “By 1953 the [Indonesian] government was startled to learn that between 600,000 and 700,000—or approximately 40 percent—of the local-born Chinese had formally rejected Indonesian citizenship. Since nearly another million Chinese were foreign-born and were thus already considered [PRC] nationals, about half the entire Chinese population now had to be considered mainland citizens, according to the provisions of the Round Table Conference” (Aguilar 515). Even when the Dual Citizenship Treaty was established in 1955, very few Chinese Indonesians knew about or applied for dual citizenship. So why would Chinese Indonesians turn to Chinese citizenship as the safer option for them, even though they were living in an Indonesia with fierce anti-Chinese sentiment? Chinese Indonesians probably turned to the PRC because they probably were buying into the PRC propaganda of a united China. The PRC had seemed to emerge as a powerful,

independent nation from the Hundred Years of Humiliation through the power of Mao and the Chinese Communist Party. Furthermore, it seemed as if the PRC and the Soviet Union would be allies at the time, because they were both under communism. Thus, it seemed as if the PRC was a strong force and it would be most beneficial for the Chinese Indonesians to ally with them. It was purely about strength and protection, not shared ideology of communism. As mentioned in Chapter 2, many Chinese Indonesians actually found the principles of communism immoral and did not support the Indonesian communist national groups at the time. Thus, the Chinese Indonesians chose the PRC over the KMT purely for political power reasons, over ideology. "The most urgent task of that faction, then, was to try to prove to all the Chinese, and particularly to the local-born Chinese, that to be citizens of the Republic of China was not to be "stateless." The KMT faction did attempt this crucial task 73--but was apparently unsuccessful in persuading local-born Chinese to become "citizens" of the Republic of China. Pro-KMT totoks would face other difficulties, such as obtaining a passport for overseas travel" (Twang 81).

Lastly, it was probably easier for many Chinese Indonesians to identify more as Chinese as opposed to Indonesian after all the discrimination and separation that had been going on through the Dutch colonial era and afterwards. By this time, the Chinese Indonesians had to separate themselves from other indigenous Indonesians because they were ordained to be there. They were frequent targets for racialized violence and stuck with many negative stereotypes of being greedy, outsiders, sneaky, and dangerous. Also by this time, the Totok Chinese Indonesians greatly outnumbered the peranakan Chinese

Indonesians who had a long history of living in Indonesia. Thus, it was easier for many Chinese Indonesians to identify as Chinese.

### III. Sukarno and China

While there was a growing anti-sentiment against the Chinese Indonesians in Indonesia, Sukarno—the first president of Indonesia—was a reverent admirer of China ironically enough. Sukarno had been a leading figure of the most prominent Indonesian Nationalist Party in the 1920's, which was called the Indonesian Nationalist Party (PNI), and was thus one of the nationalist leaders that the Japanese manipulated and tried to woo ironically enough. Sukarno even threw his support with the romusha movements in order to curry favor with the Japanese, though he later regretted it. However, despite the fact that he bought into the hope that the Japanese imperialist army was going to liberate Indonesia to national freedom, Sukarno had actually idealized China as a sort of model for Indonesia to follow as a sovereign nation—long before the Japanese came into play. “Sukarno believed that Indonesia and China had identical goals and common aspirations in their struggles for national independence. This conviction was an extension of his Pan-Asianism, and he wrote in the newspaper *Suluh Indonesia Muda* in 1928: People are beginning to be conscious of a sense of unity and a feeling of brotherhood between the Chinese people and the Indonesian people, that is, that both are Eastern people, both are people who are suffering, both are people who are struggling, demanding a free life.... Because the common lot of the people of Asia is certain to give birth to uniform behavior; a common fate is certain to give birth to a uniform feeling. He concluded by

saying that the Indonesian and the Chinese peoples were "comrades-of one-fate, comrades-of-one-endeavor, comrades-of-one-front" (Liu 30)

Despite his later sympathies with the Communist parties in Indonesia, Sukarno never officially identified as a communist. While he wasn't an anti-Communist like his successor Suharto, Sukarno had always been a big believer in democracy. The type of democracy that Sukarno had wanted for Indonesia was one that was different from Western democracy. It was to be a democracy that maintained the Indonesian principle of *musyawarah untuk mufaka*, or approval of the people as a monolith essentially, as Sukarno mentions in his 1945 BPUPKI speech. Thus, early Sukarno's beliefs should have put him at odds with the Communist PRC. However, Sukarno managed to separate the idea of communism from the rest of the PRC. "This separation of China from Communism was a central feature in Sukarno's construction of the pre-1956 China. One of the major reasons for downplaying the role of Communism lies in the fact that Sukarno's images of China were fashioned primarily by his domestic concerns. When national independence was his overriding consideration, he saw China mainly in the light of a nationalist inspiration" (Liu 31). Sukarno was fond of Chinese tradition and history, up to the point that special government officials would make sure to import a regular supply of his favorite Chinese cuisine such as dim sum. While the rest of the Indonesian population for their traditional Chinese heritage and culture was attacking Chinese Indonesians, the president of Indonesia fawned over Chinese culture up to the point of fetishization. When Sukarno admired China from a political point of view, he tended to admire China because of its foundation as a country and the power of its nationalism. "Sukarno attributed China's rapid progress to two major factors: China was endowed with

all the necessary natural resources for economic development; and more importantly, the Chinese people, "the PRC's most valuable asset", worked industriously and were willing to sacrifice individual interests for the nation's interests" (Liu 36)

Sukarno also bought into the pan-Asian ideology that China promoted, which ultimately had a significant impact on his relationship with other major powers at the time. Sukarno believed that the West and the East were separate each other and as an Eastern country, Indonesia should not try to copy "Sukarno's observations of China's practices reinforced his opinion that Asia was different and that Asian problems should be dealt with by using "Asian formulas". As a newly independent Asian country which had made seemingly remarkable accomplishments, the PRC clearly had a greater appeal to him" (Liu 39). Sukarno was also reluctant to embrace the West because he felt that Indonesia could not use them as an example because they were too far ahead development-wise. For example, "Sukarno's trip to the United States was a disappointment. Although he was impressed by the material progress in America, Sukarno realized that Indonesia and the United States were in different stages of development and that it would be difficult for his nation to catch up with America." (Liu 33). Thus, Sukarno started to distance himself from the United States. In the post-World War II bilateral world, it would have been natural then for Sukarno to turn to the United State's enemy the Soviet Union. However, Sukarno was also not as taken with the Soviet Union as he was with China. "Although Sukarno and his party were well received by the Russians, they were also not very pleased with the trip to the Soviet Union, which was described as "something considerably less than an unqualified success". For one thing, many Indonesians were inclined to see the Soviet Union as a modern Western nation.

However, Sukarno and the members of his party were astonished to discover the existence of serious social problems in the USSR” (Liu 34). After this trip, Sukarno decided to focus more on trying to emulate China as opposed to any other Western states. Thus, “Sukarno's 1956 trip to China was a key factor in shaping his perception of the PRC. Because Sukarno considered China to be a successful example of socio-economic development in newly independent nations, he liked to employ China as an antithesis to demonstrate the deficiencies of Indonesia's postcolonial transformation” (Liu 38). Also during his trip, China made sure to welcome Sukarno warmly up to the point of holding rallies to cheer his arrival. During this time, China made it clear that they were trying to aggressively court favor with Sukarno and wanted Indonesia as an ally. After his trip to China, Sukarno attempted to take control of power and model Indonesia after China. Sukarno’s obsession with China and his attempts to turn model Indonesia after it contributed greatly to his downfall and eventual thrust out of power.

#### IV. Sukarno vs The Rest of Indonesia and the World

When Sukarno was first elected to be President of Indonesia, it was meant mostly as a figurehead position. Indonesia was ruled under a parliamentary system and the Parliament, with its different political parties battling for power, were the primary source of power in Indonesia. Until around 1956, Indonesia was ruled primarily under this system of Western-style liberal democracy.

During this time, Sukarno was growing increasingly agitated as a figurehead president and started seeking ways to gain more control of Indonesia. His trip to China inspired him to try to take more control of Indonesia and push towards a “guided

democracy”—a democracy based on the traditional Indonesian village system of listening to all sides before having an elder village leader making the decision. In this scenario, Sukarno imagined himself as the elder village leader of Indonesia. However, Sukarno's stance on Guided Democracy proved to be so unpopular that his Vice President at the time Mohammad Hatta resigned from power, prompting the military to take over local police positions and ignore orders from the federal level. This caused Sukarno to restructure the Indonesian government. He started by replacing the Vice President and Prime Minister with men who agreed with his views. By 1960, Sukarno abolished the parliamentary system and implemented the Guided Democracy system and the original 1945 Constitution he had advocated for.

Sukarno's Indonesia was soon turning into an unstable dictatorship. Ever since 1956, Sukarno had faced numerous assassination attempts from extremist Islamist parties such as the Darul Islam extremist groups, which led him to disband major Muslim political parties such as the PSI and Masyumi. He had also started to rely more on Communist parties such as the PKI, the Communist Party of Indonesia, which led to many nationalist groups and the military to distrust the PKI and start to engage in power struggles with them. Sukarno had also started to increasingly restrict political freedoms by taking over the press, in order to maintain his control over Indonesia.

On an international level, it seemed as if Sukarno's Indonesia was turning into another Communist dictatorship state. Both China and the Soviet Union started to throw more support behind Sukarno's Indonesia. In this bilateral world, the United States started to feel threatened that the Soviet Union might snag Indonesia and the CIA even attempted a failed assassination of Sukarno at one point. While Sukarno was growing more

sympathetic to communism, he wasn't necessarily trying to turn Indonesia into a Communist state. He was trying to get Indonesia under his control and as a result used Communism more as an ally and a way to keep the country together.

During this time, Chinese Indonesians started to face a backlash from other Indonesians due to the fervor and complications of national sentiment in Indonesia. Particularly before 1957, Dutch and Chinese Indonesian companies dominated the Indonesian economy. Sukarno soon started to nationalize the Indonesian economy most notably by issuing the Presidential Directive No. 10 of 1959. The Presidential Regulation No. 10 of November 16, 1959, banned Chinese retailers, distributors and middlemen from the rural areas of Indonesia, was suddenly rigidly enforced and often amplified. In the earlier days of the Peking-Jakarta axis the measure had to all intents and purposes been forgotten. Some territorial military commanders, on the basis of the 1959 regulation, virtually quarantined local Chinese communities, frequently even if documentary proof of Indonesian citizenship was displayed, or forbade movement or settlement of new Chinese nationals into their areas.” (Kroeff 26). By this time, Chinese Indonesians were considered to be Chinese foreigners and this policy was implemented against them. This sentiment was considered such an aggressive move that China ended up sending ships so that around 120,000 Chinese Indonesians could escape from Indonesia. This directive caused many rural Chinese Indonesians to move to the cities, in order to survive. Sukarno's fascination with China did not extend to his support of Chinese Indonesians, who were still considered foreign and undesirable by everyone else in Indonesia. This was the warning sign for Chinese Indonesians that circumstances in Indonesia would only get worse, as many Chinese Indonesians would later learn during the Suharto era.

## V. Conclusion

In order to establish the basic foundations of the newly formed nation of Indonesia, nationalists—whether Sukarno or others—looked to foreign countries for sources of inspiration. They used Western models such as liberal democracy and socialism in order to establish Indonesia's path as a country. Unfortunately, due to the anti-Chinese Indonesian sentiment that had been propagated since the Dutch colonial era and the nationalist movements of the first half of the 20th century, the Chinese Indonesians were classified as foreigners and therefore a burden to establishing Indonesia as a new country. Chinese Indonesians themselves started to define themselves more as Chinese as opposed to Indonesians for their own safety. Meanwhile, Sukarno's plans to take control of Indonesia which included using China as a source of inspiration and support and relying increasingly on the Communist party while turning against the military and Islamists led to a huge backlash. Since Sukarno's fascination with China did not extend to the Chinese Indonesians, Sukarno set up the stage for the Chinese Indonesians to face even more hate in the future. By 1965, this huge backlash led to a military coup and a New Order was quickly established with a new president—Suharto.

**Chapter 4:**

Since the end of Sukarno's Indonesia was a state of increasing instability and resentment, it wasn't hard for Suharto—at that time a Major General of the Army—to wrestle away power from Sukarno. Suharto first started off with the '30 September Movement' in 1965—or as the Indonesian generals called it the 'Gestapu', an attempted coup on Sukarno's that turned out to be false and many conspirators suspected was planted by Sukarno himself. Suharto blamed the Gestapu on the Communists and recruited civilian groups to kill “suspected Communists” all across the country. After eliminating Sukarno's support from the PKI aka the Communist Party of Indonesia, Suharto easily turned the military and Islamist parties against Suharto and by 1967 they were able to successfully oust him out of power.

Sukarno's reign of Indonesia lasted from 1967 to 1998, one of the longest rules of a dictator in history. During this time—often called the “New Order”, Chinese Indonesians faced the harshest government regulations against them and were left to deal with some of the strongest, most violent anti-Chinese sentiment of the time. Part of the reason why the Chinese Indonesians were hit so hard was because the Communists were named as the villains and hence many people thought the People's Republic of China gave support to the would-be usurpers. This led for relations between China and Indonesia to completely stop for awhile. Both of these things led to increased tensions between the Chinese Indonesians and the rest of the Indonesian people, because by this

time the Chinese Indonesians had been clearly defined as Chinese by citizenship laws. In the meanwhile, this led to Sukarno to attempt an “assimilation” pattern which when contrasted with the citizenship laws—just furthered discrimination against the Chinese Indonesians. Lastly, Suharto later realized he needed Chinese Indonesians in order to seriously build up Indonesia’s economy so the Chinese Indonesians actually got richer during this time period, which led to even more resentment against them from the mostly poor indigenous Indonesian population. Thus, the discrimination this period actually led to many Chinese Indonesians to start to identify more as Indonesians because they were being forcibly assimilated, even though they faced discrimination.

#### I. Fallout from Gestapu

Even during Sukarno’s era, there was a growing resentment against the People’s Republic of China. While Sukarno had been taken in with China, the rest of Indonesia had not. The army and Islamist parties were growing distrustful of China and worried that China was secretly supporting the Communist parties that were backing up Sukarno and taking away his attention. There were many rumors that the PKI were building up a secret army in order to fight the Islamist parties and army with the funding and help of the PRC. When the Gestapu happened, the Communists in Indonesia were held to blame. Thus, these local civilization armies were sniffing for blood and soon found enough ammunition to confirm their suspicions against the PRC.

After a riot, “student demonstrators who ransacked the foreign ministry office in Jakarta early in March 1966 reportedly found documents which revealed an agreement between Subandrio (then still Indonesian Foreign Minister) and the Chinese Premier,

Chou En-lai, signed at an unspecified time well after the Gestapu affair. According to this agreement, a new attempt would be made to eliminate anti-communist military leaders and "rightist" elements in the Indonesian government, while in return Peking would give its support to Sukarno's pet project, the "Conference of New Emerging Forces," which he hoped would rival the United Nations. Shortly after the students acquired the document, Sukarno reportedly visited the foreign ministry in person, complaining that a secret document and agreements with other countries were missing. Almost immediately after the discovery of this secret Sino-Indonesian agreement and in the midst of mounting unrest in the capital, Sukarno surrendered much of his de facto powers to Suharto (March 11, 1966)" (Kroef 21). It should be emphasized that during this time Indonesia was in a state of anarchy. The military and the Islamist parties were fighting for control of power of Indonesia and many of the civilian army groups committed mass killings anywhere. These civilian army groups in particular just needed to accuse any target as Communist before proceeding to kill them. Thus, Indonesia was suffering through a very unstable period and people were looking out for blood. Just the accusation of the PRC being behind a conspiracy was enough to send many of these civilian army groups to suspect Chinese Indonesians of being secret spies of the PRC—whether they were Totok or Peranakan—and mass murder them. Indeed, "there were numerous attacks on Chinese, their shops and houses, from Amboyna in the east to Medan in the west in the first eight weeks after the coup. On December 10, 1965 in Medan, North Sumatra, some 200 Chinese, of both Indonesian and Chinese citizenship, were clubbed or knifed to death by members of anti-communist Muslim organisations, particularly youth groups." (Kroef 25). The sentiment against Chinese Indonesians was at an all time high amongst the

common people of indigenous Indonesians, particularly amongst the nationalistic. "In November 1966 thousands of university and high school students at a "Youth Pledge " rally in Bogor, West Java, demanded the expulsion of all Chinese nationals from Indonesia and urged the government to seize Chinese-owned businesses" (Kroeff 30). Tensions were at an all time high.

Interestingly enough, it took the People's Republic of China awhile to respond to this entire affair. At first, China tried to ignore or minimize the effects of the Gestapu affair. However, once they realized it was not going away, "new Chinese reports on the spreading "white terror," and on the "rabid anti-communist, anti-popular activities of Indonesian right-wing forces," began to alternate with alleged reprints of anti-Chinese utterances in the Indonesian press and with complaints that the Indonesians were sabotaging their shipping agreement with China" (Kroeff 36). Understandably enough, China was trying to distance itself from the Gestapu events. They were trying to put the blame on anyone who was not themselves or the Chinese diaspora living in Indonesia. It is interesting that they blamed the events on the "white terror", considering Indonesia was not having any relations with the United States at the time and was always more distant with the Soviet Union ever since Sukarno's unimpressive visit towards there. China's emphasis on "white terror" reinforced their goals of pan-Asianism. The Gestapu events and China's response to them make the case against the bilateral world picture that Western countries tried to paint at this time. During this time, the Western predominant view of the world was that a country was either on the United States's and thus Democratic side or the Soviet Union's and thus Communist's side. Even though the PRC was a communist state and Indonesia shifted from a socialist to anti-Communist state

from the regime change of Sukarno to Suharto, both China and Indonesia established themselves as firmly operating in their own, anti-Western spheres as evidenced by this Gestapu fallout. Also significant about these news reports is that China seemed unconcerned with the PKI and any sort of Communist activity going on in Indonesia. All news reports focused on the ethnic Chinese, which indicated where their concerns lied. However, China eventually let Indonesia go, as tensions grew worse. ““An emergency cabinet meeting was held on October 9, when it was decided to declare an official suspension of Jakarta's diplomatic relations with Peking. On October 28, Peking formally announced a suspension of its own ties with Indonesia, hold-ing the Indonesians " entirely responsible " for this development. After an initial delay and new accusations that diplomats were being held hostage, the final exchange of diplomats took place on October 31” (Kroeff 45). By 1969, Indonesia announced it was officially suspending relations with the PRC. It’s important to remember that during this time China was struggling with it’s own Cultural Revolution. China was turning insular as it deal with it’s problems and Indonesia was left alone without China as an ally until August 8th 1990 when diplomatic relations were officially restored between China and Indonesia.

## II. The Start of Suharto’s New Order

The core ideology of Suharto’s New Order was a philosophical principle Suharto called Pancasila. “Pancasila consists of five principles: the belief in one supreme God, humanism, nationalism, popular sovereignty and social justice. This national ideology was promoted as the single basic principle for all ‘mass organizations’ and ‘social-political forces under the Suharto regime” (Morfit, 1986, p. 42). This Pancasila was

influenced by a combination of Indonesian nationalist principles influenced from Western liberal theologies and a direct reaction opposite against Sukarno's regime. The belief in one supreme God was a principle that was primarily targeted to accommodate the Islamist parties, since Sukarno's Indonesia had been cagey on religion. While there is a Christian minority in Indonesia, the majority of the Indonesian population is Muslim and according to recent statistics the Muslim population makes up about 88%.

Another important factor of Suharto's Pancasila is the idea of nationalism. Obviously, Suharto had to rely on nationalists in order to obtain power over Indonesia. Thus, he had to cater to the nationalists' perception of nationalism and national identity. Thus, "in Suharto's Indonesia (and to some extent even now), 'national identity' required more than proof of birth in the country. Among citizens, there were official categories of pribumi (native) and non-pribumi (non-native)—based on 'race' and indigeneity—with the former being regarded as the 'authentic' (asli) inhabitants of the land" (Hoon 151). Suharto took the previous Citizenship Law of 1945's and emphasized the importance of ethnicity as right of citizenship even more. Of course, this was also targeted into making sure that Chinese Indonesians could not be called citizens. Indeed, during the Suharto era, the Chinese Indonesians were reclassified as Cina—regardless of whether they were totok or peranakan. "The Suharto regime's imposition of Cina entailed a renaming of Zhonghua renmin gongheguo (the PRC) from Republik Rakyat Tiongkok to Republik Rakyat Tjina, with at the outset no change in the acronym RRT as Tjina followed previous spelling conventions. In consequence, although Tionghoa was derivative of Chinese nationalism and thus emblematic of foreignness (perhaps murky in social memories by the 1960s), Suharto's designation of Chinese-Indonesians by the label Cina

directly implied a connection with an alien state and a fundamental linkage with another polity, and thereby the substance of their choice of Indonesian citizenship and their avowed loyalty to Indonesia was questioned” (Aguilar 511). This additional labeling only served to further alienate the Chinese Indonesians and stir up more resentment and isolation against them. Also during this time, the Dual Citizenship Treaty and the rights for Chinese Indonesians to be naturalized as Indonesian citizens was taken away briefly until 1969. PCR staying away from Indonesian affairs during this time period, many Chinese Indonesians ended up becoming completely stateless. They were not officially Chinese citizens nor were they officially Indonesian citizens. “By 1980, there were about 3.5 million Chinese in Indonesia, of which 914,00 were PRC citizens, 120, 000 were “stateless” and 1,907 were Taiwan nationals” (Surayadinata 97). Chinese Indonesians were pushed to the outsider, foreign edge of Indonesian society on a social class level.

While Chinese Indonesians may have been defined as outsiders by Indonesian citizenship laws, Suharto and the Indonesian government relied on many Chinese Indonesians to build up the Indonesian economy. Suharto wanted to develop the Indonesian economy in order to help establish Indonesia as a serious, legitimate, important presence in the global market. However, Indonesia was starting with a weak infrastructure and needed a lot of foreign investment and aid in order to build up capital. The Indonesian economy relied on using a lot of capital investment from the Chinese—whether overseas or especially domestic, much to the displeasure of the indigenous Indonesian population. Unlike the indigenous Indonesian population, the Chinese populations overseas and domestic had more business experience and infrastructure to become a reliable source of investments. “At the beginning of 1967, a foreign capital

investment law was promulgated that stated "foreign capital should be made useful to the maximum to accelerate the development of the Indonesian economy and utilized in the fields and sectors in which investment of Indonesian capital is not or not yet available within a short time to come." The law defined foreign investment as "direct capital investment." Local Chinese capital in Indonesia was not considered "foreign investment" (Suryadinata 772).

If the indigenous Indonesian businessmen did want to participate, they were often held at a disadvantage compared to the Chinese Indonesian businessmen since the primary way for them to get the license to do business was through the alliance partnership known as the Cukong system. "Cukong is a Chinese term which means "master" but in the Indonesian context, this is used to refer to an ethnic Chinese businessman who collaborates with the power elite (including those in the Palace) in joint ventures. The indigenous partner provides facilities and protection while the Chinese sometimes supplies the capital and runs the business" (Suryadinata 98). Hence, the Chinese Indonesians would always be the ones who controlled the business and gained larger shares of the profits earned.

Understandably, the indigenous Indonesian businessmen declared the system unfair and the Indonesian government tried its best to give indigenous Indonesian businessmen more of an advantage. "A regulation was issued in 1976 requiring all offering investments in Indonesia to assume the form of joint ventures. In the joint ventures, the local partners should consist completely of, or at least a majority of, indigenous Indonesians." Keppres No. 14A was issued in 1979 stated that "government institutions and ministries give priority to businessmen and contractors, who are from the

economically weak group (i.e. indigenous Indonesians), for the purchase of goods and in terms of contracts.” In terms of big projects, joint ventures between Chinese Indonesians and the indigenous population are encouraged but the indigenous partner should hold at least 50 per cent of the share and they should also be active business partners” (Surayadinata 98). However, these new regulations were not publicized and the status quo pretty much stayed the same. It also didn’t help that because the Chinese Indonesians were so used to being so isolated from the rest of the population, their businesses tended to be as exclusive to Chinese Indonesians as possible. “The most common practice of structural familism in traditional ethnic-Chinese firms is to reserve the most crucial position in the management exclusively to a family member of the owners who themselves are linked by family relations. Normative familism refers to the situation when the corporate values or the values of the business network are extensions of the values maintained in the family. Paternalism, harmony, uprightness and informality are examples of normative familism manifested in the ethnic-Chinese business institution and network. Many traditional ethnic-Chinese firms are basically family businesses, relying almost totally on family resources in both capital and personnel needs as well as moral reasoning” (Wijaya 311) Thus, the Chinese Indonesian population continued to be overrepresented in the Indonesian economic sector. Not only that but during the Suharto era, the Chinese Indonesian population overall became richer. The Chinese Indonesian had gone from being an economic privileged class during the Dutch colonial era to an even richer, more economically privileged class during the Suharto era. Naturally, this made the Chinese Indonesian presence even more conspicuous and a strong backlash

against the Chinese Indonesians was flamed by both the indigenous Indonesian businessmen but also the rest of the indigenous Indonesian population.

While Chinese Indonesians were certainly used to be singled out and targeted for racism under previous eras such as the Dutch colonial rule, the Suharto reign became infamous for the increasing government regulations that discriminated against the Chinese Indonesians. As mentioned above, the popularity of the Chinese Indonesian population was at an all-time low amongst the rest of the indigenous Indonesian population due to anti-Communist fervor and the generally high economic status of the Chinese Indonesian population. The anti-sentiment that had been growing since the era of Dutch colonialism had risen to a burning hatred that could not be ignored by Suharto and the Indonesian government. “Chinese-ness” was also widely perceived as a ‘domestic’ problem (known as the ‘Chinese problem’ or ‘Masalah Cina’) which was detrimental to the nation’s solidarity. Viewing the dominant position of the Chinese in the nation’s economy as a problem, the New Order government attempted to solve it by endorsing a military-backed ‘Assimilation Program’ (‘Program Pembauran’)” (Hoon 152).

First off, the idea of assimilating an ethnic minority population that could never be fully considered to be real citizens by the rest of the population and the government is an irony in itself. It had been established by both the citizenship law and the treatment of the Chinese Indonesian population by the indigenous Indonesian population that there would always be a certain foreign “Chinese-ness” to them that could never be eliminated. Thus, this government mandated Assimilation Program was a paradox that was guaranteed to push the Chinese Indonesians in a further other-ized and resented category. Ultimately, this push towards the paradox of assimilation could be credited to the idea of

nationalism—of trying to protect the indigenous Indonesian population while trying to demonstrate both the power of the Indonesian government, people, and society.

The Assimilation Program mainly consisted of government regulations that tried to restrict the Chinese culture of the Chinese Indonesian population. Special emphasis seemed to have been put in eliminating all usage of the Chinese language. In a way, the Assimilation Program was a direct opposite reaction to the Dutch colonialist regulations on the Chinese Indonesian population centuries ago. While the Dutch colonialists insisted on keeping the Chinese Indonesian population separate from the indigenous Indonesian population by enforcing them to be visually and physically separate from the rest of the indigenous Indonesian population, the Assimilation Program focused on trying to eliminate one of the most visible symbols of Chinese-ness—the language. In a way, the Assimilation Program’s direct opposition to the Dutch colonial regime shows the long lasting influence of Dutch colonialism. These Assimilation Program regulations included prohibiting “conspicuous (*menyolok*) displays of Chinese characters, as well as other religious and customary practices in public; instead, such activities were required to take place “internally, ... within the boundaries of the environment of the household of a family... or place of worship” and “banning “alien owned” (read: Chinese) retail stores from rural areas. That measure was followed by the banning of Chinese from residing in rural areas and enforced by regional military commands” (Ling 136). While part of these regulations to group the Chinese Indonesian population together in the city and eliminate them from rural areas were stricter implementations of Sukarno’s earlier rule, the definition of conspicuous displays of Chinese characters became a trend for this Assimilation Program. Soon last names started to classify as conspicuous displays of

Chinese characters. “After Suharto came to power in 1966, a name-changing regulation was once again introduced” (Surayadinata 104). Like many of the regulations of the Assimilation Program, this was never formally implemented but it was highly encouraged for the Chinese Indonesian population’s safety. Not changing a Chinese last name to an Indonesian last name could be taken, as a clear sign that a Chinese Indonesian subject was disloyal to the Suharto regime. Therefore, most of the Chinese Indonesian population changed their last names from Chinese to Indonesian. Interestingly enough, many Chinese Indonesians picked Indonesian last names that were the equivalent to their previous Chinese last names. Hence, this was a sign that many Chinese Indonesian people still tried to keep their Chinese heritage or at least saw themselves as different from the indigenous Indonesian population.

Apart from eliminating the usage of the Chinese language in public and enforcing obvious discriminatory practices, the Assimilation Policy is significant to Chinese Indonesians because it stripped away all of the power that Chinese Indonesians used to have. After Suharto came to power in 1966, all the Chinese Indonesian political parties were banned. They were banned under the guise of being secret gatherings for communist spies but it was really just an excuse to disempower the Chinese Indonesian population. Similarly, all the Chinese language papers—which had been the start of Chinese Indonesian political parties—were banned. The Chinese Indonesians who wanted to be politically active were forced to join indigenous Indonesian political parties, often the same ones that were suspicious of Chinese Indonesians. According to the leaders of the Assimilationist Policy, this regulation was enforced in hopes that Chinese Indonesians

could assimilate with indigenous Indonesian political parties. In reality, it just eliminated the one outlet Chinese Indonesian political grievances could be heard.

As mentioned in the second chapter, Chinese Indonesians had placed great emphasis on education for Chinese Education children. After the 1965 coup, “all ethnic Chinese children, regardless of their citizenship, had to go to Indonesian schools. Those who still wanted to study Chinese tended to engage Chinese tutors at home. However, the government had strongly discouraged this practice. A few who could afford to send their children overseas succeeded in giving their children an opportunity to learn Chinese but their number was small. The majority of the Chinese children, even the totoks, had gradually lost an active command of the Chinese language” (Surayadinata 102). Thus, the Assimilation Policy used what was a former source of empowerment and community for the Chinese Indonesian population and completely dismantled and stripped it of its once Chinese heritage. While it was understandable to depoliticize the Chinese language schools since they had not only served as a source of Chinese Indonesian political congregations but were also divided into pro-Beijing and pro-KMT factions, the elimination of Chinese language schools meant that the future generations of Chinese Indonesians lost touch with their heritage. While it can be argued that in general many second-generation immigrants around start to lose fluency in their heritage tongue once they start to settle into their immigrated country and keep going further down generations, the Chinese Indonesian situation is different because of this enforced paradox from the Chinese government. While Chinese Indonesians were not allowed to be classified as true Indonesian citizens, they were not allowed to be Chinese citizens.

These future Chinese Indonesian children were stuck occupying a hated, separate space far off.

Since Chinese Indonesians were left without an outlet to express political power and were faced with very real threats of violence and danger, there was much not room for Chinese Indonesians to play an active role. Mostly, Chinese Indonesians were forced to comply with the Assimilation Policy ordinances as best as they could. Many Chinese Indonesians lived in separate communities in order to avoid very real threats of violence. The Chinese Indonesians had to also self fulfill negative stereotypes of being a very insular community in order to survive. Because of the socially enforced isolation and separation of the Chinese Indonesian population from the rest of Indonesian society, Chinese Indonesians were forced to work with and rely on each other to survive. The labels of *totok* and *peranakan* mattered a lot less, since the rest of the Indonesian society didn't distinguish between the two. Between the lingering suspicions of Communism and the resentment against the economic status of Chinese Indonesians, the indigenous Indonesian was willing to paint a caricature of Chinese Indonesians as a fearful, dangerous people. While three were the lingering stereotypes of the ethnic Chinese as greedy, sneaky, and distrustful people, some rumors were turned mystical as some of the indigenous Indonesians claimed that Chinese Indonesians were "said to practice "black magic" and enter treaties with "a wild boar" in order to obtain their economic dominance (Aguilar 522)". Thus, it became necessary for the Chinese Indonesians to isolate and protect themselves. In order to protect themselves, Chinese Indonesians relied on gangsters called *keamanan* for protection. "There indeed exists a "permit" for which *keamanan* is exchanged. It is a permit authorized by bureaucrats and hoodlums to grant

their “nonservice” so that the Chinese can be left alone and carry on their everyday course of life smoothly” (Ying 147). Thus, Chinese Indonesians had no power in this situation.

Conclusion:

Under the guise of nationalism, Suharto’s regime of Indonesia made things at it’s most perilous for Chinese Indonesians. After relations between the People’s Republic of China and Indonesia soured, Suharto enforced a paradox of government ordinances that stripped both sides of Chinese Indonesian nationality into a void and isolated them from the rest of society. While Chinese Indonesians had previously leaning towards their Chinese heritage for safety, these new circumstances stripped Chinese Indonesians of power and nationality and they were forced to accept the void in order to survive.

**Thesis Conclusion:**

The idea of the Chinese Indonesian population having a separate nationality status from the indigenous Indonesian population started with the Dutch colonialists. The Dutch colonialists chose to separate and isolate the Chinese Indonesian population from the indigenous Indonesian population in order to divide and conquer as well as take advantage of the Chinese business connections. As a result, many of the indigenous Indonesian population was left feeling bitter towards the Chinese Indonesian population and a lot of resentment and stereotypes were directed towards the Chinese Indonesian population.

Meanwhile, Indonesia was trying to obtain national sovereignty through a very European method—nationalism. Indonesian nationalists were quickly split amongst different parties and power struggles were fought whether it was with the Dutch, the Japanese, or amongst themselves. Meanwhile, nationalism soon meant that Chinese Indonesians must not only be separated and excluded from the indigenous Indonesian population. However since the Chinese Indonesians generally were in better economic

standing than the native indigenous Indonesian population, the Indonesian government relied on them to build Indonesia's fledgling economic infrastructure—which caused only more resentment, hate, and violence against the Chinese Indonesian population by the indigenous Indonesian population. Indeed, Indonesia's history as a nation-state has mostly consisted of Indonesia responding in reactionary way: from embracing pan-Asianism to shutting out China and practicing a sort of isolationism, to Sukarno and Suharto's actions generally being reactionary towards the previous regime.

The Chinese Indonesian population went from being considered equal to the indigenous Indonesian population, to being considered and embracing their Chinese heritage sides, and then to being legally barred from both their Chinese and Indonesian heritages and occupying a separated, isolated space in between. Through every step of the way, there were always sectors of the Chinese Indonesian population that tried to ascertain political power but mostly the Chinese Indonesian populations mostly just chose to identify their nationality as whatever they thought would help them best. During Sukarno's era, the Chinese Indonesian thought it would be their Chinese heritage that would save them but during Suharto's era, Chinese Indonesians quickly learned that they must assimilate as much as possible while knowing they could never truly assimilate with the indigenous Indonesian population. Particularly in Suharto's era, the Chinese Indonesians forcibly had their Chinese heritage and political power stripped as they grew richer than ever.

While Suharto had a long run, eventually the Asian financial crisis of 1995 hit Indonesia hard. The Chinese Indonesians were seen as a scapegoat and most infamously there were the May 1998 riots where hundreds of Chinese Indonesians were mobbed and

killed by poor, resentful indigenous Indonesians. Suharto was soon ousted out of office and subsequent regimes have taken steps to allow Chinese Indonesians equal citizenship and to be more embracing of imported Chinese culture. However, the legacy of the Chinese Indonesian discrimination will always remain as a unique but ultimately enlightening example of how a minority population can be persecuted due to the lingering after effects of colonialism and Western ideas of nationalism and establishing a nation-state.

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