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PERANAKAN CHINESE IDENTITIES

IN THE GLOBALIZING MALAY ARCHIPELAGO

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LEO SURYADINATA

**PERANAKAN
CHINESE
IDENTITIES**

IN THE GLOBALIZING MALAY ARCHIPELAGO

First published in Singapore in 2022 by
ISEAS Publishing
30 Heng Mui Keng Terrace
Singapore 119614

E-mail: publish@iseas.edu.sg

Website: <http://bookshop.iseas.edu.sg>

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ISEAS Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data

Name(s): Suryadinata, Leo, 1941-, author.

Title: Peranakan Chinese identities in the globalizing Malay Archipelago / by Leo Suryadinata.

Description: Singapore : ISEAS – Yusof Ishak Institute, 2022. | Includes bibliographical references and index.

Identifiers: ISBN 978-981-4951-67-8 (soft cover) | ISBN 978-981-4951-70-8 (pdf)

Subjects: LCSH: Peranakan (Asian people)—Ethnic identity. | Chinese—Indonesia. | Chinese—Southeast Asia.

Classification: LCC DS523.4 C5S962

Cover design by Refine Define Pte Ltd

Typesetting by International Typesetters Pte Ltd

Printed in Singapore by Mainland Press Pte Ltd

CONTENTS

Preface vii

Acknowledgements x

Part I: Regional Dimensions: Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore (IMS)

1. Peranakan and Other Related Terms 3
2. Peranakan Chinese Identities in IMS (1): Indonesia 11
3. Peranakan Chinese Identities in IMS (2): Malaysia and Singapore 26
4. Peranakan Chinese Identities in IMS (3): The Resurgence of Peranakan Associations and Peranakan Identities 39
5. Peranakan Chinese in IMS: The Socio-Political Dimension 55
6. Malay/Indonesian Translations of Chinese Literature: Past and Present 66
7. Innovation and Transformation: Peranakan Chinese Literatures/Publications in IMS 91
8. Political and National Identities of Peranakan Chinese Leaders in IMS: Before and After Independence 101
9. Prospects of the Peranakan Community: Comments on Dr Tan Ta Sen's Speech 136

Part II: Focusing on Indonesia

10. Peranakan Chinese and the Indonesian Press, Language and Literature	149
11. Muslim Chinese in Indonesia: Between Chinese-ness and Indonesian-ness	176
12. State and “Chinese Religions” in Indonesia: Confucianism, Tridharma and Buddhism During the Suharto Rule and After	194
13. Peranakan Chinese Politics and Decolonization in Indonesia	213
14. The Integration of Indonesian Chinese into Mainstream Society: A Reflection	231
<i>Appendix 1: The Prospects of the Peranakan Community at the Age of Globalization, by Tan Ta Sen</i>	245
<i>Appendix 2: Some Books on the Peranakan Chinese Published between 2007 and 2021</i>	255
<i>Bibliography</i>	258
<i>Index</i>	271
<i>About the Author</i>	289

PREFACE

In the recent past, there were quite a few studies on the Peranakan Chinese in the Malay Archipelago, particularly in the three countries: Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore (IMS). I have conducted some bibliographical research and published one article entitled “Selected Publications on Partially Assimilated Chinese in Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore, 1980–2006” (see Leo Suryadinata, *Understanding the Ethnic Chinese in Southeast Asia* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2007), pp. 173–92). In this article, I have included four categories of the publications: (1) General Studies; (2) Politics, History, Education and Society; (3) Religion; and (4) Memoirs and Biographies.

As the article only covered the publications up to 2006, that means that it did not include publications in the last fourteen years (2007–21). As a matter of fact, after 2006 there were many studies on the Peranakan Chinese in IMS. The Chinese Heritage Centre (NTU) and the Baba House (NUS) had jointly conducted two international conferences on the Peranakan Chinese in the globalizing world. These conference proceedings have also been published in 2010 and 2015 respectively. Apart from the two conference proceedings, there are also many books published, including two books on the Peranakan Chinese in Indonesia during the above period (see Appendix 2).

Peranakan Chinese communities and their “hybrid” culture have fascinated many observers. Some argue that these communities and their culture are still alive while others maintain that they have demised as they have become a museum culture. Apparently, observers are using different perspectives in putting forward their arguments. Who are the Peranakan Chinese? Should they be narrowly or broadly defined? Where are they to be found? What are the Peranakan identity and culture? Do they share identical characteristics throughout the Malay Archipelago? How do the Peranakan communities evolve in the colonial, post-colonial and globalization eras? What is the current status of the Peranakan communities and their culture? How is the future of the Peranakan community being envisioned? These are some of the questions that this book attempts to answer.

In the past, I have edited at least two books on the Peranakan Chinese, published one book on Peranakan politics in Java and many papers on the subject. However, I did not have the opportunity to publish my own studies on the Peranakan Chinese in the Malay Archipelago as a book. This Covid-19 pandemic crisis during which we have to work from home has given me time to look at my past papers on the subject and eventually put them together into a book.

These papers, which were mainly written in the last two decades, addressed issues such as Peranakan identities and culture, society and politics, language and literature in the three countries in the Malay Archipelago, i.e., Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore. Due to the coverage of the papers, I have divided the book into two parts. Part I is on the regional dimension, which contains nine chapters that discuss the three countries and beyond. Part II consists of five chapters which focus on one country, i.e., Indonesia. This book is far from being comprehensive as it does not include chapters on Peranakan economic activities, Peranakan porcelain, Peranakan cuisine and Peranakan attire, as these require more detailed investigation.

On the regional aspect, I have included one chapter entitled “Prospects of the Peranakan Community: Comments on Dr Tan Ta Sen’s Speech”, which is in fact my comments on Dr Tan Ta Sen’s speech on the same topic. As this is an important issue and worth discussing, I have also included Dr Tan’s speech as an appendix.

Many of the chapters were previously published in the *Asian Culture*, a journal of the Singapore Society of Asian Studies, one was specially written for this book, and the rest were derived from various book chapters. However, some have been rewritten or combined to prevent too much repetition.

I hope the publication of this book would further encourage people to look at the Peranakan Chinese phenomena from a regional and even global perspective.

Leo Suryadinata
July 2021
Kota Singa

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to express our thanks to the publishers for permitting us to reproduce fully or partly the following articles:

Chapter 5: “Peranakan Chinese in IMS: The Socio-Political Dimension”. First published as “Peranakan Chinese in Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore: The Socio-Political Dimension”, in *Peranakan Chinese in a Globalizing Southeast Asia*, edited by Leo Suryadinata (Singapore: Chinese Heritage Centre and NUS Baba House, 2010), pp. 41–49.

Chapter 6: “Malay/Indonesian Translations of Chinese Literature: Past and Present”. First published in *Asian Culture* 34 (June 2010): 24–41.

Chapter 7: “Innovation and Transformation: Peranakan Chinese Literatures/Publications in IMS”. First published as “Innovation and Transformation: Peranakan Chinese Literatures/Publications in Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore”, *Asian Culture* 41 (December 2017): 92–99.

Chapter 9: “Prospects of the Peranakan Community: Comments on Dr Tan Ta Sen’s Speech”. First published as “Prospects of the Peranakan Community: Comments on Dr. Tan Ta Sen’s Speech”, *Asian Culture* 40 (December 2017): 130–37.

Chapter 10: “Peranakan Chinese and the Indonesian Press, Language and Literature”. The above chapter is based on two of my published articles: “The Contribution of the Indonesian Chinese in the Development of the Indonesian Press, Language and Literature”, in *Chinese Studies in the Malay World: A Comparative Approach*, edited by Ding Choo Ming and Ooi Kee Beng (Singapore: Eastern Universities Press, 2003), and “Modern Peranakan Indonesia Literature: Past and Present”, in *Peranakan Communities in the Era of Decolonization and Globalization*, edited by Leo Suryadinata (Singapore: Chinese Heritage Centre and NUS Baba House, 2015), pp. 55–65.

Chapter 11: “Muslim Chinese in Indonesia: Between Chinese-ness and Indonesian-ness”. First published in *Asian Culture* 32 (June 2008): 32–43.

Chapter 12: “State and ‘Chinese Religions’ in Indonesia: Confucianism, Tridharma and Buddhism During the Suharto Rule and After”. First published in Tan Chee Beng, ed., *After Migration and Religious Affiliation: Religions, Chinese Identities and Transnational Networks* (Singapore: World Scientific Publishing, 2014), pp. 19–42.

Chapter 13: “Peranakan Chinese Politics and Decolonization in Indonesia”. First published in Leo Suryadinata, ed., *Peranakan Communities in the Era of Decolonization and Globalization* (Singapore: Chinese Heritage Centre and NUS Baba House, 2015), pp. 3–15.

Chapter 14: “The Integration of Indonesian Chinese into Mainstream Society: A Reflection”. First published in *Asian Culture* 36 (August 2012): 9–17.

Appendix 1: Tan Ta Sen, “The Prospects of the Peranakan Community at the Age of Globalization”. First published in *Asian Culture* 40 (December 2016): 124–29.