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# CHINESE INDONESIANS

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# CHINESE INDONESIANS

**Remembering, Distorting, Forgetting**

edited by  
Tim Lindsey  
Helen Pausacker



INSTITUTE OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN STUDIES, Singapore

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# Preface

The pressure on *peranakan* Chinese themselves to forget and the tendency of others to distort or neglect their role are giving way to a constructive remembering [of] the part which they have played in the development of Indonesian literature as a whole.

(Charles Coppel 1995)<sup>1</sup>

This volume honours, and reflects on, the life and work of Charles Coppel, who retired from the University of Melbourne in 2002. Throughout his academic career, Charles researched aspects of Indonesian Chinese, but his interests — as reflected in this volume — were broad, ranging from history, politics, legal issues, and violence against the Chinese to culture and religion.<sup>2</sup>

As students, colleagues, and friends of Charles, the authors of the chapters in this volume have all been influenced by his work and his interest in our research. The chapters in this volume have been chosen both because of the authors' personal links with Charles and because they reflect his own areas of interest within the field.

The chapters also all reflect the theme “remembering, distorting, forgetting”, as used in Charles' article “Remembering, Distorting, Forgetting: Sino-Malay Literature in Independent Indonesia”. In his work, Charles emphasized this theme to draw attention to misrepresentations of the Chinese, seeking to locate the realities behind the myths which form the basis for the racism and xenophobia they have often experienced in Indonesia. The chapters selected for this Festschrift reflect the same themes.

Jemma Purdey analyses incidents of violence against the Chinese in Indonesia during the *reformasi* period and in particular the rape of Chinese women in Jakarta in 1998. She queries whether there has been any “improvement” in attitudes towards the Chinese. Can traditions of violence towards the Chinese be forgotten?

Tim Lindsey focuses on changes to the Indonesian legal system post-Soeharto and the effects of these changes on the Indonesian Chinese. Successive governments since the New Order have pointed to reforms they claim have removed formal discrimination. This chapter asks whether this is a distortion of reality and whether New Order discrimination is still legislatively “remembered”.

Leo Suryadinata details the changing role of Confucianism and Chinese Buddhism in the past and reviews changes which have occurred

since *reformasi*. The use of religion to define the Chinese has politicized their belief system, thereby distorting it. As politics change, so do Chinese beliefs.

Arief Budiman details the debate about assimilation or integration of the Chinese from a historical perspective and questions the direction this will take in the current *reformasi* or post-Soeharto period. Will Chinese identity be remembered or forgotten?

Mary Somers Heidhues discusses the Makam Juang Mandor monument in West Kalimantan, which commemorates the victims of Japanese atrocities in World War II, and subsequent reinterpretations of the event, in particular the role of the Chinese. Her chapter looks at how memory has reinvented the Chinese in the revolutionary period, at their expense, and ties it to post-Soeharto Indonesia.

Claudine Salmon examines the involvement of political radicals in Confucianist religion in the late colonial period. She considers how the Chinese managed their relationship between their political and religious identity as Chinese and the inevitable distortions created by their roles as members of colonial East Indian society.

Jean Taylor analyses the role of the Chinese in the spread of Islam in Indonesian societies, suggesting that the Chinese played an important part in connecting those societies to an Islamic network, thereby exposing the people to Islamic people, ideas, and knowledge. Her chapter suggests that this link has been deliberately “forgotten”, edited out of accounts of Indonesian Islam.

Christine Pitt examines the distorting impact of modernity on the courting patterns of the Indonesian Chinese in the early decades of the twentieth century. Her chapter follows choices made by Chinese men and women between European and local modes of expression when writing to newspaper “agony” columns.

Helen Pausacker contests the stereotype of the Indonesian Chinese as solely concerned with business by exploring their involvement in Javanese *wayang* (shadow puppetry), usually viewed as the pinnacle of an entirely “indigenous” Javanese culture. The dominant paradigm in accounts of *wayang* has forgotten the Chinese, her chapter argues.

The editors of this volume are both former undergraduate and post-graduate students of Charles Coppel. We have also taught his courses and worked for him as research assistants. We wish to acknowledge the ongoing influence of Charles on our academic and professional work, and, in particular, his rigorous historiography and his attention to detail in research. Most important, however, is Charles’ loyalty as a friend and



mentor. As with many of his former students and colleagues, Charles has maintained an ongoing interest in our professional lives and writing, supporting and encouraging us for decades after the formal teaching relationship has ended. For this we (and countless others) are grateful. It has been a privilege to edit this volume.

We would like to thank Kathryn Taylor, Administrator of the Asian Law Centre at the University of Melbourne, and Claudine Salmon for their assistance with the Chinese words in this volume. Our gratitude is also due to ISEAS for their strong support for this project.

Ultimately, however, this volume is not just a tribute to Charles Coppel. We believe it stands in its own right as a reflection of current writing on the Chinese in Indonesia.

*Tim Lindsey and Helen Pausacker  
Melbourne  
February 2004*

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Charles Coppel, “Remembering, Distorting, Forgetting: Sino-Malay Literature in Independent Indonesia”, first published in *Asian Culture* (Singapore), 19 June 1995, pp. 14–28 and reproduced in *Studying Ethnic Chinese in Indonesia* (Singapore: Singapore Society of Asian Studies, 2002), pp. 191–212.
- <sup>2</sup> See this volume for his biography (p. x) and bibliography of his work (p. 9).

# Charles Coppel

## A Brief Biography

Charles Antony Coppel was born in Melbourne on 6 July 1937, the son of Elias Godfrey “Bill” Coppel (1896–1978) and Marjorie Jean Service (1900–70), both of whom had strong links with the University of Melbourne, recognized by their inclusion in the university’s *150 Years: 150 People* sesquicentenary publication.

Charles was educated at Caulfield Grammar and Geelong Grammar. In 1955 he became the first (and, perhaps, the only!) male student to study at Merton Hall (Melbourne Girls Grammar), attending French classes with other students, as well as additional classes with a private tutor in the Botanical Gardens.

After matriculating in 1954 in classical European languages, pure and applied mathematics, and English expression and literature, he matriculated again at the end of the following year, this time in modern European languages (French and Italian) and British History. During this second year Charles travelled to Europe, where he studied at the University of Grenoble and the University for Foreigners in Perugia, and travelled more widely in France, Italy, England, and Wales. On his way to and from Europe in 1955, he stopped over very briefly in Jakarta, his first contact with Indonesia.

In 1956 Charles commenced studies at the University of Melbourne for his undergraduate degree in Law. As one of his first year non-law subjects, he chose Economic Geography where he made his first Indonesian friend, Zainu’ddin, later an academic colleague.

In 1960 Charles graduated with his Honours LLB degree, in the company of future Supreme Court judges, Stephen Charles and John Batt. Soon after, he commenced articles with Phillips Fox and Masel, a prominent Melbourne firm of solicitors. In 1961 Charles was called to the Victorian Bar and became one of the first tenants of the new building for barristers, Owen Dixon Chambers. As counsel, Charles appeared in a range of courts, from Petty Sessions (now the Magistrates Court) to the High Court, twice led by his father.

During his student years, Charles was called up for compulsory National Service training. While he was still a member of the Citizens Military Force, an appeal was made for volunteers to study the Indonesian language. Charles volunteered, thinking that this would be more

useful than shouldering a rifle, but abandoned this idea when compulsory National Service was abolished. In 1963, however, Charles joined the University of Melbourne's Summer School Indonesian language programme, taught by Pieter Sarumpaet. The following year, he commenced Indonesian studies in earnest in the Department of Indonesian and Malayan Studies and in 1965, under Jamie Mackie's guidance, began to research the ethnic Chinese in Indonesia for the first time. He was commencing more than three decades of research in this field.

By the end of 1965, Charles found that Indonesian studies had become more interesting than the practice of the law and so he left the Bar. He supported himself and his family by tutoring in the Monash Law School (Teaching Fellow, 1966; Senior Teaching Fellow, 1967), while undertaking an M.A. (Prelim) in Political Science at Monash (1966–67). At the same time he studied Indonesian language and literature with Idrus, Harry Aveling, Rabin Hardjadibrata, and others. His closest academic relationship then was, however, with his supervisor Herb Feith who in 1968 persuaded him to convert what was by then a full M.A. candidature into a Ph.D. candidature. Charles was inspired by Mary Somers' seminal work on *peranakan* Chinese politics to do more in this area.

Over 1968–69 he spent a full year doing fieldwork in Indonesia. This was still a tumultuous and difficult time in Indonesia. Soeharto had just been confirmed as President and the New Order was being created in the wake of violence and killings. The ethnic Chinese felt themselves to be in a precarious position and Charles' work focused on their ethnic and political identities.

After his return to Monash in 1969, he worked on his contribution to *The Chinese in Indonesia: Five Essays*, edited by Jamie Mackie, followed by another four months' fieldwork in Indonesia in 1970. In 1971 he tutored in Politics and then, in 1972, lectured in Indonesian Politics, during Herb Feith's absence on study leave. In 1973 Charles was appointed to a continuing position at the University of Melbourne as Lecturer in Indonesian Studies in the Department of East and Southeast Asian Studies (a merger of the former departments of Indonesian and Malayan Studies and Oriental Studies), where his Indonesian colleagues included Sarumpaet, Slamet, Zainu'ddin, Hendrata, and others.

In 1975 Charles' Ph.D. was completed and it was later published as *Indonesian Chinese in Crisis*, still a leading text in the field.

In 1978 Charles was promoted to Senior Lecturer and appointed Deputy Chairman of the Department of Indonesian and Malayan Studies (which had regained its independence in 1976). In 1979 Charles became Chair-

man of the department, a position he held for almost a decade through its further 1983 *mutasi* (permutations) to become the Department of Indian and Indonesian Studies (a strictly alphabetical order, he advises), until that department too ceased to exist at the end of 1987. He then moved to the somewhat more resilient Department of History. The university's error in closing down a department for Indonesian studies was realized a decade later, when it was revived as part of the Melbourne Institute of Asian Languages and Societies, of which Charles became an adjunct member.

Charles also held positions as Associate Dean in the Faculty of Arts from 1979 to 1981 and was Deputy Chair of the School of Asian Studies in 1987. In fact, for much of the 1980s and 1990s, Charles played a leading role in the development of Asian studies across the university. In 1992 he was appointed Associate Professor, in connection with his joint appointments as Co-ordinator of Asian Studies in the Faculty of Arts and Associate Director, Asian Business Centre (1989–92). With Professor Malcolm Smith, Charles thus became responsible then for co-ordination and policy development of Asian studies across the university. The current strong standing of Asian studies at the University of Melbourne owes much to Charles' persistent advocacy and energy.

In 1994 Charles was formally promoted to Associate Professor and, in the same year, became one of the early convenors of the Indonesia Interest Group (now the Indonesia Forum). For almost a decade the Forum has been the largest and most active country interest network on the campus. This is in large part a result of Charles' work both as Convenor and later as Deputy Convenor and, in particular, as the manager of his widely received e-mail Indonesia news service, a major contribution to the development of Australia as an internationally recognized centre for Indonesian studies.

Charles can now reflect on an illustrious career as a leading scholar of Indonesian studies, the ethnic Chinese in Southeast Asia, and broader issues of race and identity. He has also made a lasting contribution to the development and administration of Indonesian studies at the University of Melbourne. He has been a generous colleague and supporter of countless younger scholars, both in Australia and internationally.

*Tim Lindsey*  
*October 2002*

# Contributors

**Arief Budiman** was born in Jakarta in 1941. Arief initially trained as a psychologist and then became a sociologist. He is currently Foundation Professor of Indonesian and Head of the Indonesian Programme in the Melbourne Institute of Asian Languages and Societies at the University of Melbourne, researching the political-economic problems of the transition to democracy in Indonesia since 1998. He has known Charles Coppel since the 1960s, when Charles was in Indonesia, collecting data for his Ph.D. thesis on the Chinese Indonesians.

**Tim Lindsey** is Director of the Asian Law Centre and an Associate Professor in the Faculty of Law at the University of Melbourne. Tim's doctoral thesis was on Indonesian history and he now specializes in Indonesian law and Islamic legal systems. His publications include *The Romance of K'tut Tantri and Indonesia*; *Indonesia: Law and Society*; and, with Howard Dick, *Corruption in Asia: Rethinking the Governance Paradigm*. Tim was a student of Charles Coppel, first as an undergraduate and then during his doctoral studies. He later became a colleague, teaching with him in the History Department at the University of Melbourne. They have since published articles in books edited by each other.

**Helen Pausacker** studied *wayang*, both as performance art and a research topic, in Solo, Central Java, for about four years, over the period 1976–98. Her publications include *Behind the Shadows: Understanding a Wayang Performance*. She currently works as a research assistant in the Asian Law Centre at the University of Melbourne. Helen was a student of Charles Coppel in the 1970s and has worked with him in an administrative capacity, as a research assistant, and lecturing in one of his courses.

**Christine Pitt** was a student in the Department of Indonesian and Malayan Studies at the University of Melbourne when Charles Coppel began lecturing there in 1973. She recently organized a thirty-year student reunion to mark his retirement. Christine wrote the article in this collection when she returned to study an M.A. Prelim. with Charles in 1984. She is currently an ESL (English as a Second Language) teacher, having maintained a wide interest in Indonesian and other languages and cultures.

**Jemma Purdey** completed her Ph.D. on “Anti-Chinese Violence in Indonesia, 1996–99” at the University of Melbourne. Her interests include representations of violence in Indonesia, human rights, and the legal position of the ethnic Chinese in Indonesia today. She has contributed articles to a number of publications, including *Asian Survey* and *Asian Ethnicity*. She is a former student, supervisee, and colleague of Charles Coppel.

**Claudine Salmon** is Director of Research Emeritus at the CNRS, Paris. She graduated from the Institut National des Langues et Civilisations Orientales, then studied history at Beijing University (1964–66). Claudine conducted fieldwork in Indonesia (1966–69) and took her Doctorat-ès Lettres in 1970. She has written extensively on the history of the relations between China and Southeast Asia and of the Chinese in Insulinde. She has been a colleague and friend of Charles Coppel for almost thirty years.

**Mary Somers Heidhues** has taught in Germany and the United States, most recently as Visiting Professor of Southeast Asian Studies at the University of Passau. Among her publications are *Southeast Asia: A Concise History* (2000) and *Golddiggers, Farmers, and Traders: The Chinese in West Kalimantan, Indonesia* (2003). With Charles Coppel she shares a decades-long fascination with Indonesia’s *peranakan* Chinese.

**Leo Suryadinata** is Senior Research Fellow at the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies (Singapore). He was formerly Professor, Department of Political Science, National University of Singapore. He was a postgraduate student at Monash when Charles Coppel was doing his Ph.D. there. They jointly published a paper on the Indonesian Chinese in Indonesia in September 1970. His most recent books include *Elections and Politics in Indonesia* (2002) and *Indonesia’s Population: Ethnicity and Religion in a Changing Political Landscape* (with Evi Arifin and Aris Ananta, 2003).

**Jean Gelman Taylor** is Associate Professor of History at the University of New South Wales. She teaches general Southeast Asian History and the seminars Understanding Indonesia, Chinese in Southeast Asia, Southeast Asian Historiography, and Islamic Worlds. Her research focuses on the social history of colonialism, particularly the interactions of Asians and Europeans in Indonesian history; and the uses of costume, painting,

and photography in writing the history of Indonesia. Her most recent book is *Indonesia: Peoples and Histories* (2003), and she is a contributing author to *The Emergence of Modern Southeast Asia*, edited by Norman G. Owen (2005). Her relationship with Charles Coppel goes back to the first day of Indonesian language class at the University of Melbourne when both were students of Jamie Mackie and the late Pieter Sarumpaet.

# Glossary

Chinese words list Hokkien first, with the Chinese characters and the Hanyu Pinyin transliteration following, in italics. Titles of publications are also listed in italics in the left-hand column.

Adi Buddha	Great Buddha
Agama Khonghucu	see Khonghucu
ang pao (紅包 <i>hongbao</i> )	red envelopes containing money, often given to children at the Chinese New Year
asli	“original”, indigenous
Ba Xian (八仙)	the Eight Immortals
babad, hikayat	metrical chronicles composed in Javanese and Malay, which narrate the history of societies in the Indonesian archipelago
Badan Kordinasi Masalah-Cina	Chinese Problem Co-ordinating Body
bahasa Indonesia	Indonesian language
bahasa Melajoe	so-called Sino-Malay or low Malay, used in the marketplace, frequently by Chinese Indonesians
bangsa	nation, race, ethnic group
Banteng Muda Indonesia	Young Wild Bulls of Indonesia (paramilitary organization associated with PDI-P)
Baperki (Badan Permusyaratan Kewarganegaraan Indonesia)	Consultative Body for Indonesian Citizenship
Barongsai (獅子[舞] <i>shizi [wu]</i> )	lion [dance]
Begawan	title given to a spiritual master (often a hermit, priest, or ascetic)
Boen Bio	see Bun bio



Bulog (Badan Urusan Logistik)	National Logistics Agency
Bun bio (文廟 Wen miao or Kong miao 孔廟)	Temple of Literature; also called Temple to Confucius; see also Lithang
Bun Su	see Haksu
Burgerlijke Stand	Civil Registration Offices, now known as Kantor Catatan Sipil
Burgerlijke Wetboek	Code of Civil Procedure, now known as Kitab Undang-undang Hukum Dagang
buta	demons in <i>wayang</i>
camat	regional administrative sub-district
Cap Go Me (十五夜 <i>Shiwu ye</i> )	the fifteenth day of the first lunar month (Lantern Festival); alternative spelling: Cap Go Meh
cempala	wooden mallet used to tap on the puppet chest to call for particular musical pieces in a <i>wayang</i> performance
Cina	official state term for Chinese and China in the New Order — considered insulting by many Chinese; see also Tionghoa
commies	clerk in the Dutch colonial administration
cukong	financiers (usually ethnic Chinese) who engage in illegal practices and co-operation with the authorities
Dalmas (pengendali massa)	crowd control troops
dhalang	puppeteer (Javanese spelling. Indonesian spelling is <i>dalang</i> )
DPR (Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat)	People's Representative Council, the Indonesian legislature

ekonomi rakyat	people's economy
FKS (Forum Kepedulian Sosial)	Social Welfare Forum
gamelan	traditional Indonesian percussion music, performed in a number of regions, including Java and Bali
gereja aneh	strange church
gereja karismatik	charismatic church
Giok Hong Siang Tee Sioe Tan (玉皇上帝壽誕 <i>Yuhuang shangdi shoudan</i> )	birthday of the Emperor of Jade celebrated on the ninth day of the Chinese New Year
Goan Tan (元旦 <i>Yuandan</i> )	the first day of the Chinese New Year (New Year's Day)
Guangfu hui 光復會	Society for the Return of Light, a short-lived revolutionary movement, founded in Japan in 1904
gunungan	see kayon
Guru Agung	Great Teacher
Haksu (學士 <i>xueshi</i> ), Bun Su (文士 <i>wenshi</i> ), and Kauw Seng (教生 <i>jiaosheng</i> )	Sino-Indonesian organization of Confucian priesthood, with three different ranks (Top Priest, Confucian teachers, and missionaries)
Hansip	community security guard
Hezhong xuetang 和中學堂	School of Harmony and Equilibrium, established by supporters of the movement <i>Zhonghe tang</i> (see entry in this glossary)
hikayat	see babad
Hokkien Kong Tik Soe (福建 功德祠 <i>Fujian gongde ci</i> )	Fujian Temple of Merits, founded in 1862, to promote Chinese culture and revive Chinese customs in weddings and funerals
Hongmen hui 洪門會	a secret society

Ibu Suci	Holy Mother
Ik Joe Hak Koan (益友學館 <i>Yiyou xueguan</i> )	School of the Friends of Progress, which merged with the school Hezong xuetang to become Tiong Hoa Hak Tong
IMB (Izin Mendirikan Bangunan)	Building Licence
Imlek (陰曆 <i>yinli</i> )	Chinese lunar calendar
Indische Staats Regeling	Indies State Regulation; see also Wet op de Staats Inrichting van Nederlands Indie
inlanders	natives
InPres	Presidential Instructions
integraliststaatsidee	integralist state idea
INTI (Perhimpunan Indonesia Keturunan Tionghoa)	Chinese Indonesian Association, formed in the <i>reformasi</i> period
Izin Pendirian Gereja	licence to found a church
Jenggi (裝藝 <i>zhuangyi</i> )	Chinese theatrical procession
Jumat Kliwon	day in the Javanese thirty-five-day monthly cycle, considered to have spiritual significance
kampung	village or small urban area
Kantor Catatan Sipil	Civil Registration Offices, formerly known as Burgerlijke Stand
KASI (Konferensi Agung Sangha)	Conference of Supreme Buddhist Clergy
Kauw Seng	see Haksu
kayon or gunungan	tree- or mountain-shaped <i>wayang</i> puppet prop, which marks the end of a scene, or which represents a forest, mountain, door, etc.
kekerasan	violence

kekosongan hukum	legal vacuum
Keppres (Keputusan Presiden)	Presidential Decision
keprak	three or more hanging bronze plates, which are struck with the foot or a small mallet to accentuate the movements of <i>wayang</i> puppets in performance, or to conduct the <i>gamelan</i>
keramaian (also spelled kerameian)	liveliness, often involving many people and much noise
keraton	Javanese court
Ketetapan	Decision
Khit Khau Ciat or Cit Sik (乞巧節 <i>qiqiao jie</i> )	seventh day of the seventh month of the lunar year (Chinese Valentine's Day)
Khong Kauw Hwee (孔教會 <i>Kongjiao hui</i> )	Confucian Association (in Indonesia)
Khonghucu (孔夫子 <i>Kongfuzi</i> )	Confucius
Kilin (麒麟 <i>qi lin</i> )	Chinese mythological animal comparable with the Western unicorn; associated with only positive traits and personifies all that is good, pure, and peaceful
King Thie Kong	prayers celebrated on the seventh day of the lunar New Year in honour of Thie Kong
Kitab Undang-undang Hukum Dagang	Code of Civil Procedure, formerly known as Burgerlijke Wetboek
Klenteng (觀音亭 <i>Guanyin ting</i> )	temple dedicated to Guanyin and by extension any kind of Chinese temple (in Indonesia)
Komedi Stamboel	theatre in the colonial times, particularly known for its racial mix
Komnas HAM (Komisi Nasional Hak Asasi Manusia)	National Commission on Human Rights

Kong Koan (公館 <i>gongguan</i> )	Chinese Council of Jakarta
Kong miao (孔廟)	see Bun bio
konglomerat	common term for an ethnic Chinese business tycoon
Kontras (Komisi Nasional untuk Orang Hilang dan Korban Kekerasan)	Commission for Disappeared and Victims of Violence
KTP (Kartu Tanda Penduduk)	Resident Identity Card
lakon	the plot of a <i>wayang</i> story
lingga	Hindu statue in the shape of a phallus
Liong (龍[舞] <i>long[wu]</i> )	dragon [dance]
Lithang (Litang) (禮堂 <i>litang</i> )	Sino-Indonesian Confucian church (literally Ceremonial Hall); see also Bun bio
LPKB (Lembaga Pembinaan Kesatuan Bangsa)	Institute for Development of National Unity
madrasah	Islamic schools
Maha Sangha Indonesia	Indonesia's Great Buddhist Clergy
Mahkamah Agung	Supreme Court (the highest court in Indonesia)
maklumat	Presidential Decrees
massa	the masses, crowd
Matakin (Majelis Tertinggi Agama Khonghucu Indonesia)	High Council of the Confucian Religion of Indonesia
milik pribumi	property of a native/indigenous person
Mingming Shangdi (明明上帝)	Ming Ming God
MPR (Majelis Permusyawaratan Rakyat)	People's Consultative Assembly, the highest elected body in Indonesia
MPRS (Majelis Permusyawaratan Rakyat Sementara)	Provisional People's Consultative Assembly

Nabi	apostle, prophet, messenger
Nanyang xunmeng guan 南洋 訓蒙館	South Seas Training School, a “modern” Chinese school, opened by Tjioe Ping Wie in the late 1870s in Surabaya
non-pribumi	non-native/non-indigenous
NU (Nahdlatul Ulama)	Awakening of the Islamic Scholars, Indonesia’s largest traditionalist Islamic organization
orang pasar	market vendors
pahlawan	hero
Pancasila	“five principles”, the Indonesian national ideology: (1) belief in one God; (2) humanitarianism; (3) Indonesian unity; (4) representative democracy; and (5) social justice
pasar murah	cheap market
passenstelsel	an internal passport system, which applied only to Foreign Orientals during the colonial era
PBI (Partai Bhinneka Ika)	Indonesian Unity in Diversity Party, a party formed by Indonesian Chinese in the <i>reformasi</i> period, previously known as Partai Bhineka Tunggal Ika Indonesia
PDI-P (Partai Demokrasi Indonesia — Perjuangan)	Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle
pedalangan	the study of <i>wayang</i> (Indonesian spelling)
pembauran	integration, assimilation
pengadilan keraton	royal court (colonial times)
Penjelasan	Explanatory Memorandum

peranakan Chinese	Chinese born in Indonesia and speaking Indonesian or a regional language as their first language. <i>Peranakan</i> originally defined a person of mixed ancestry, where one ancestor was indigenous to the archipelago, including mixed blood with Europeans and Arabs, but this is rarely the case nowadays.
perang gagal	the “losing” or indecisive battle in the first part of a <i>wayang</i> performance
Persatuan Arab Indonesia	The Arab Union of Indonesia
Persatuan Tionghoa Indonesia	The Chinese Union of Indonesia
piara	kept woman
pihak tertentu	certain parties, shady characters
potehi	see wayang potehi
premanisme	gangsterism
pribumi	indigenous (Indonesian)
provokator	provocateur
punakawan	the four clowns who accompany the Pandhawa and other heroes of the right
<i>Qing shilu</i> 清實錄	“Veritable Records of the Qing Dynasty”
reformasi	reformation, term used for the period after the New Order
ruko ( <i>rumah toko</i> )	home and shop in the same building
Sam Kauw (三教 <i>Sanjiao</i> )	three religions (a combination of Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism)
Sam Kauw Hwee (三教會 <i>San jiao hui</i> )	The Association of Three Religions (later known as Tri Dharma)

Sangha	Buddhist clergy
santri	Muslims considered to be devout or pious
SBKRI (Surat Bukti Kewarganegaraan Republik Indonesia)	Indonesian Citizenship Certificate
Selasa Kliwon	day in the Javanese thirty-five-day monthly cycle, considered to have spiritual significance
sembako ( <i>sembilan bahan pokok</i> )	the nine basic household needs, which have been defined as: rice, sugar, cooking oil (or margarine), beef/chicken, eggs, milk, kerosene, and salt
Shengyu 聖諭	Imperial Edicts
Shenshang 紳商	gentry and merchants
<i>Shun Feng Hsiang Sung</i> (順風相送 <i>Shun Feng Xiang Song</i> )	“Fair Winds for Escort”, a fifteenth or early sixteenth century Chinese shipping manual
silat	martial arts
sinshe (先生 <i>xiansheng</i> )	traditional Chinese medical practitioner
<i>Sishu</i> (Su Si) (四書 <i>si shu</i> )	“Four Books”, or Confucian “bible”
Sishui (泗水)	Chinese name for Surabaya
siten-siten or palemahan	strip at the bottom of a <i>wayang</i> puppet, on which the feet of the <i>wayang</i> puppet stand
Siwen hui 斯文會	Association of the Confucianists
SNB (Solidaritas Nusa Bangsa)	Solidarity for the Motherland and Nation
Soe Po Sia (書報社 <i>shu bao she</i> )	Reading Club
Staats Regeling	state regulation



Staatsblad	government gazette
STSI (Sekolah Tinggi Seni Indonesia)	Indonesian College of the Arts
Surat Edaran	Circular Letter
syukuran	thanksgiving
TGPF (Tim Gabungan Pencari Fakta)	Joint Fact Finding Team
THHK (Tiong Hoa Hwee Koan 中華會館)	China Association
Thoe Lam Jit Po (圖南日報 <i>Tu nan ribao</i> )	“Far Reaching Schemes Daily”, newspaper produced in Singapore from 1904
Tian (天 <i>tian</i> )	Heaven
Tiong Ciu Ciat (中秋節 <i>Zhongqiu jie</i> )	the moon festival, the fifteenth day of the eighth month (also known as Mid-Autumn Festival)
Tiong Hoa Hak Tong (中華學堂 <i>Zhonghua xuetang</i> )	school which resulted from the merging of two schools, Hezong xuetang and Ik Joe Hak Koan. The name Tiong Hoa Hak Tong was adopted in 1908.
Tionghoa (中華 <i>Zhonghua</i> )	term for Chinese or China; see also Cina
TNI (Tentara Negara Indonesia)	Indonesian national army
Tongmeng hui (同盟會)	The United League, founded in Tokyo in 1905 under the leadership of Sun Yat Sen. This organization aimed for the overthrow of the Qing dynasty and the restoration of Chinese rule.
totok Chinese	Chinese born outside Indonesia, who do not speak Indonesian or an Indonesian regional language as their first language

Tri Dharma	see Sam Kauw Hwee
TRuk (Tim Relawan untuk Kemanusiaan)	Volunteers Team for Humanity
Tuhan Yang Maha Esa	The One Supreme God
tukang becak	pedicab drivers
<i>Tung Hsi Yang K'ao</i> (東西洋考 <i>Dong xi yang kao</i> )	“Study of Eastern and Western Oceans”, a seventeenth century Chinese shipping manual
ulama	Islamic religious teachers
Undang-undang	law, statute
vihara	Buddhist temple
wahyu	a divine gift/inspiration or spiritual power sent by the gods; often visible as a source of light
wali	Muslim religious teacher. The <i>wali sanga</i> (nine <i>wali</i> ) are credited with bringing Islam to Java.
Walubi (1. Perwalian Umat Buddha Indonesia and 2. Perwakilan Umat Buddha Indonesia)	1. Indonesian Buddhist General Organization and 2. Representatives of the Indonesian Buddhist Community
wayang golek	three dimensional puppets, operated by three rods from below
wayang kancil	<i>wayang</i> which relates the story of the mouse deer
wayang klitik	<i>wayang</i> puppets made of wood
wayang kulit	<i>wayang</i> puppets made of buffalo hide, commonly known in English as “shadow puppets”
wayang potehi (布袋戲 <i>budai xi</i> )	Chinese three-dimensional glove puppets (performance)
wayang purwa	<i>wayang kulit</i> , based on the Indian Mahabharata and Ramayana epics

wayang thithi	<i>wayang</i> in Javanese language, accompanied by <i>gamelan</i> , which related traditional Chinese tales
wayang wong	<i>wayang</i> stories, performed as a dance drama by people
Wedana	indigenous district chief
Wen miao 文廟	see Bun bio
Wen mio (Boen Bio in Hokkien)	see Bun bio
Wenchang 文昌	the God of Literature
Wenchang ci 文昌祠	Temple to the God of Literature
Wet op de Staats Inrichting van Nederlands Indie	the <i>de facto</i> Constitution of the Netherlands East Indies
wong cilik	the little people (Javanese language)
Wujing (五經 <i>Wujing</i> )	“Five Classics”
Xiucui 秀才	licentiate
<i>Yak Keng</i> (易經 <i>Yijing</i> )	“The Book of Changes”
Zhonghe tang 中和堂	Club of Equilibrium and Harmony, a short-lived revolutionary movement, founded in Yokohama, Japan, in 1898 by a Cantonese revolutionary, You Lie
Zhonghe xuetaang 中和學堂	School of Equilibrium and Harmony
<i>Zhongyong</i> 中庸	“Doctrine of the Mean”

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# Introduction

## Researching the Margins<sup>1</sup>

Charles A. Coppel

To study the ethnic Chinese in Indonesia might be thought a marginal enterprise. The Chinese overseas have long been an exotic interest in Chinese studies, outside the Sinological mainstream, with its thousands of years of historical sources and commentaries. This is perhaps especially so in the case of Indonesia's Chinese minority, with its large numbers of acculturated, *peranakan* Chinese, who from the perspective of China scarcely seem to merit the description "Chinese". In Indonesian studies, too, they have been seen as marginal. This is not only because they are but one ethnic group among hundreds, comprising a mere 2 or 3 per cent of the total population, but also because they have been constructed as "foreign", no matter how many centuries they have been settled in the archipelago.

Many Chinese Indonesians themselves have been marginalized and felt alienated from the surrounding society in their own life experience. This has not only applied when they were classified in Dutch law as "Foreign Orientals" (even if they were "Netherlands subjects") and in Indonesian law as "of foreign descent" and not "indigenous" (even if they were Indonesian citizens) (Coppel 1999c and 2001). It has also applied to many of those Chinese Indonesians who "returned" to what they believed to be their motherland, only to discover that in China, too, they were "foreign" and treated differently from the rest of the population (Coppel 1990a).

Greg Denning (1980, p. 3) writes of islands and beaches as "a metaphor for the different ways in which human beings construct their worlds and for the boundaries that they construct between them". My islands are Sinology and Indonesian studies, and the study of the Chinese in Indonesia is the study of the beaches, liminal spaces between the two. As

Dening found with his Pacific beaches, I find the study of the ethnic Chinese in Indonesia valuable as a site for my research, precisely because of their marginal or liminal situation. The study of Indonesia itself is seen by some as marginal to the “seminal civilizations” of India and China. From this perspective, Chinese Indonesians are even more marginalized.

That having been said, my own research on the ethnic Chinese of Indonesia lies overwhelmingly in the field of Indonesian studies, not in Sinology. I have tried to understand them in their Indonesian context rather than as an extension of China. I have also tried to listen to their voices, particularly as expressed in Malay or Indonesian, against the dominant discourses of Dutch colonialism and Indonesian nationalism. Over the past century, these voices have not spoken in unison. One of the reasons that I find Chinese Indonesians endlessly fascinating is the way in which they, and I mean especially the *peranakan* Chinese, have argued with one another over so many political and cultural issues.

Many things have changed over the last thirty years, in the world of ideas as well as of events. My own thinking has changed and developed over the period, and this is reflected in the terminology I use to refer to the ethnic Chinese in Indonesia. Whereas in my earlier work I wrote of “Indonesian Chinese”, I now prefer to use the more inclusive term “Chinese Indonesians”. In 1970 Leo Suryadinata and I discussed the way in which the word *Tjina* came to be regarded as derogatory and was replaced by the words *Tionghoa* and *Tiongkok*, but then was restored by army and government decision in the anti-Chinese atmosphere of the early years of the New Order (Coppel and Suryadinata 1970). In the post-Soeharto era, the use of *Tionghoa* has made a partial recovery but the usage is still contested. Similarly, the word *asli* is used in the Indonesian Constitution of 1945 to denote indigenous Indonesians. For many years, this terminology was used in the discourse of economic nationalism to justify discrimination against ethnic Chinese and in favour of indigenous Indonesians. During the New Order period, it was replaced by the term *pribumi* but used in the same way. At the same time, proponents of policies of assimilation of the ethnic Chinese began to use the term *pembauran* instead of *asimilasi*. Since the fall of Soeharto in May 1998, the voices of ethnic Chinese opposed to these assimilation policies have re-emerged, but they now tend to use the word *sinergi* rather than *integrasi* for the integration policy which was favoured by Baperki under Soekarno.

The passage of time has also affected the subject matter of my re-

search. I commenced my study of the ethnic Chinese in Indonesia in the late 1960s and early 1970s while I was a graduate student in political science at Monash University. Most of my early work focused on what was then recent political history (Coppel 1968, 1970, 1972, 1976*a*, 1982, 1983; Mackie and Coppel 1976). One exception was a demographic study which was based on a statistical analysis of the linguistic data in the 1920 Netherlands Indies census (Coppel 1973). By the time I completed my doctoral thesis in 1975, I was tired of the politics of the Chinese in Indonesia and was teaching in the Indonesian Studies programme at the University of Melbourne. I was ready to take a new tack, and no longer felt tied to the discipline of political science.

During my doctoral fieldwork in Indonesia I had acquired for the Monash University library the manuscript of an unpublished history of the famous company Kian Gwan (Oei Tiong Ham Concern) which had been written by the Semarang journalist Liem Thian Joe. I introduced this manuscript to a wider audience and the work remains my only venture into economic history (Coppel 1989*c*). I then shifted away from recent and contemporary politics towards a deeper historical study of Chinese Indonesians, focusing particularly on the period from the late nineteenth century to the end of colonial rule.

As well as gaining greater historical depth, the subject matter of my research has also broadened and diversified over time. One strand has been the study of Confucian religion (Coppel 1979*b*, 1984, 1986, 1996*a*, 1996*b*). Another strand has been my interest in the Malay language and literature of the *peranakan* Chinese of Java (Coppel 1973, 1977*b*, 1994, 1995*b*, 1997*b*; Pausacker and Coppel 2001). In the more recent work of this kind, I have abandoned the use of the term “Sino-Malay” in favour of “colloquial” or “low” Malay for reasons discussed in these articles. A third strand has been reflection on the historiography of the study of Chinese Indonesians (Coppel 1976*c*, 1977*a*, 1977*b*).

Much of my work has been curiosity-driven, empirical research but I have taken up a somewhat eclectic group of theoretical questions when I have found this productive. These questions have included the case of double middleman minorities (Coppel 1979*a*). I am temperamentally a “splitter” rather than a “lumper”, preferring to argue dialectically against the theoretical formulations of others, rather than to generate them myself. I have interrogated an aspect of Benedict Anderson’s theorizing on the “imagined community” of the nation (Coppel 1994); challenged John Furnivall’s characterization of Java as a “plural society” (Coppel 1997*a*); and criticized Anderson’s characterization of the Chinese as “a commer-

cial bourgeoisie” (Coppel 1976c) and Lea Williams’ dismissal of Confucian religion as a cloak for Chinese nationalism (Coppel 1981).

In the mid-1980s I was steeping myself in the study of Confucian religion in Indonesia, with related interests in the Christian missions, the Sam Kauw Hwee and other Buddhist organizations, and their connections with the Theosophical Society and Javanese *kebatinan* sects. Out of a clear blue sky, George and Julia Hicks inspired Michael Godley and me to investigate the community of Chinese Indonesians living in Hong Kong. The project as originally conceived was a study of one graduating class from a Chinese-language secondary school in Jakarta, most of whom had taken one-way tickets to China, but had ultimately made their way to Hong Kong, where they established a network with annual class reunions. For various reasons — not least the impossibility of maintaining the anonymity of so clearly defined a group of informants even with the use of pseudonyms — we had to abandon it. Instead, we turned to a more conventional history of the reverse migration of ethnic Chinese from Indonesia to China and the experiences of these “returned overseas Chinese” there; and a sketch of the Chinese Indonesian community in Hong Kong (Godley and Coppel 1990a, 1990b; Godley 1989).

The experience of conducting interviews in Hong Kong in February 1986 led me to review my understanding of Chinese Indonesian identity and the meaning of the terms *peranakan* and *totok*. My earliest research, undertaken in the late 1960s, was inevitably biased towards the *peranakan* Chinese of Java. Partly as a consequence of my lack of competence in any Chinese language, and partly due to the political situation at that time, most of my sources were in Indonesian and most of my informants were *peranakan* Chinese whose first language was Indonesian or Dutch. Many of the Chinese-educated had left the country. The graduates of the Chinese-language schools — who I assumed to be *totok* — that we interviewed in Hong Kong twenty years later turned out, in many instances, to remain fluent enough in Indonesian to be interviewed in that language. Decades of life in Chinese-speaking China and Hong Kong had not eliminated the effects of their childhood socialization in Indonesia, such as a taste for Indonesian food and an ability to sing Indonesian songs. Few of them had “married out” of their Chinese Indonesian group to “real” Chinese in China. The Chinese Indonesians in Hong Kong were quintessentially diasporic, comparing themselves to the Jews or the Gypsies.

After this Hong Kong digression, I returned to the history of the Chinese Indonesians in the late colonial period. The Confucianists’ debates about

changes in Chinese customs (Coppel 1986, 1989*b*, 1996) — which might be characterized as a case of the invention of tradition — now appeared to me as part of a wider process of cultural change. I began to take a wider interest in the transformation of everyday life under colonial rule, and to browse widely in the pre-Balai Pustaka Malay-language publications of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. I found myself increasingly interested in what appeared to me to be a *mestizo* society in Java at that time, of which the *peranakan* Chinese were just a part; a far cry from what Furnivall called a “plural society” in which the different races met only in the marketplace (Coppel 1994, 1997*a*). As I argue in the latter article, Furnivall was unaware of the extent of publishing in colloquial Malay in Java more than thirty years before he did his first research on the Netherlands Indies.

During a two-month visit to the Netherlands in the middle of 1992, I came across a small book in Malay published in 1890 on the Chinese legal position in the Indies (Albrecht 1890). I was surprised to find that the familiar division into three population groups simply was not there. Instead I found a primary distinction between the Europeans (*orang Eropa*) on the one hand and the natives (*anak negri*) on the other; this was accompanied by a secondary pair of categories, namely those equated (*di samakan*) with the Europeans and those equated with the natives. The Chinese were included in the latter group, and the category “Foreign Orientals” was absent. This surprise goaded me to reassess the history of the legal position of the Chinese (Coppel 1999*c*, 2002*b*).

Claudine Salmon’s marvellous bibliography of the literature in Malay by the Chinese in Indonesia (Salmon 1981) led me to a prolific and fascinating genre of writings which had attracted surprisingly little attention from researchers. The genre is what I call “colloquial Malay histories”, because their sub-titles include a phrase such as “which really happened (*jang betoel soeda kedjadian*) in Batavia”, or wherever it was the story was set. The authors of such “histories”, who flourished from the last decade of the nineteenth century, included Dutch, Indo-Europeans, and Indonesians as well as ethnic Chinese. The “colloquial Malay histories” in particular — regardless of whether they were strictly fact or fiction, whether in prose or in verse — seemed important as a source for Indonesian social and cultural history (Coppel 1994, 1997*b*; Pausacker and Coppel 2001).

Despite my strong desire to pursue my interests in Confucian religion and the Malay-language literature of the late colonial period, over the last decade I have found myself repeatedly dragged back to the political and



legal history with which I began my study of the Chinese Indonesians in the 1960s. I presented a paper on human rights and the Chinese in Indonesia at the international conference on overseas Chinese held in San Francisco in November 1992 (Coppel 2002a, ch. 23). I followed current events in Indonesia through e-mail lists on the Internet in 1995–96. The debates around the issue of the celebration of Chinese New Year in early 1996 were much less inhibited than one could normally find in the controlled Indonesian press of Soeharto's New Order. I presented the findings of my "electronic fieldwork" to an ISSCO (International Society for the Study of the Chinese Overseas) international conference held in November 1996 at Xiamen (Coppel 1998b). This visit was my first experience of mainland China.

As the Soeharto regime drew to its close, there was a marked rise in anti-Chinese violence in Indonesia, which reached its climax in the May 1998 riots in Medan, Jakarta, and Solo and led to Soeharto's resignation. In another unwelcome return to my earliest research, I have been necessarily concerned once again with the issue of violence against the ethnic Chinese, comparing the situation of the Chinese Indonesians in the 1960s and the 1990s (Coppel 2001). I also convened a panel on "Violence in Asia" at the Asian Studies Association of Australia conference and a following workshop on "Violent Conflict in Indonesia", both of which were held in Melbourne in July 2000. At least four of the thirty papers focused on the anti-Chinese violence, and most of the rest were about other violence in Indonesia. Once again, I have tried to understand the ethnic Chinese in their Indonesian context (Coppel, forthcoming). Whether with regard to the denial of their human rights (Coppel 2002a, ch. 23) or to their experience of political violence, I believe that no good purpose — academic or political — will be served by treating the ethnic Chinese separately, as if their experience of these evils is unique in the Indonesian context.

Studying the ethnic Chinese in Indonesia is not as isolated or marginal an enterprise as it was when I began to do it, more than thirty years ago. In an era of globalization and rapid economic growth in East and Southeast Asia in which the ethnic Chinese of the region have played a prominent part, there has been a burgeoning of studies of diasporas and the phenomenon of transnationalism. Bodies like the ISSCO, the Centre for the Study of the Southern Chinese Diaspora at the Australian National University, and the Chinese Overseas Databank (<[www.huayinet.org](http://www.huayinet.org)>) provide scholarly support for the study of the history of Chinese in the diaspora. Since the end of the Cold War, scholars of the Chinese diaspora from China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Southeast Asia, and beyond have been

meeting at international conferences with increasing frequency. Increasingly, too, Chinese communities in Southeast Asia, Australia, and New Zealand have been researching their own histories and establishing heritage centres and museums. The recent violence against Chinese in Indonesia stimulated the growth of electronic networks like the Huaren website (<[www.huaren.org](http://www.huaren.org)>), which proclaims its goal to be “a passion to promote kinship and understanding among all Overseas Chinese” and which actively mobilized outrage about the violence among ethnic Chinese worldwide.

In the midst of all this activity, a tension remains between those, on the one hand, whose studies emphasize the transnational links amongst the Chinese in the diaspora and their ancestral ties to China and those, on the other hand, who emphasize the connections between the Chinese in the diaspora and the countries in which they have settled. My own work, which stresses the historical embeddedness of the ethnic Chinese in Indonesia, belongs with the latter group. I make no claim that this is a superior approach other than to say that I believe that it mirrors the experience of many *peranakan* Chinese in Indonesia.

All historical research is to some extent a reflection of one’s own background and experience. Like most *peranakan* Chinese in Indonesia, I am of mixed ancestry. Elias Coppel, the paternal great-grandfather whose surname I have inherited, was a Jew who was born in Poland and migrated to Melbourne in the middle of the nineteenth century. Two of my maternal great-great-grandparents were born in Yorkshire, migrated to Melbourne at much the same time as Elias and built a Methodist chapel near where they lived. Two of my maternal great-grandparents, who were born in Scotland, were Presbyterians, and migrated with their children to Australia in the late nineteenth century. One of these children, my grandfather, was a rationalist freethinker. Such a mixed family background no doubt helped to make me aware that ethnic and religious identity are not predestined by one’s remote immigrant ancestors. Changes in circumstances, coupled with individual personal choices, can lead to very different outcomes for the descendants of the original immigrant. I suspect that it is my personal history that has made me sensitive to the influence of the local environment on the ethnic Chinese of Indonesia and, I hope, tolerant and respectful of the different choices they have made.

In the course of my intellectual journeying over the past four decades I have accumulated debts to many people. Jamie Mackie and Margaret Clark taught me at the University of Melbourne in 1965 in a subject in which we compared the ethnic Chinese of Indonesia and Malaysia. The

monograph by Mary Somers (Heidhues) which I read then made me want to know more about the *peranakan* Chinese of Indonesia. My fascination was so great that I left the legal profession to study them full-time. I have never regretted that decision and still want to know more about the Chinese Indonesians. I am forever grateful to Jamie, Margaret, and Mary for that lasting influence on my life. My next debt is to Herb Feith and, again, Jamie Mackie, who shared my interest in the Chinese in Indonesia and supervised my postgraduate research at Monash University; and to the supportive research environment of its Centre of Southeast Asian Studies with its other Indonesianist academics and fellow graduate students. It was there that I acquired my first Chinese Indonesian friends, who helped induct me into the world from which they had come and which I wanted to study.

Over the years librarians and academic colleagues<sup>2</sup> in various parts of the world who shared my interests have assisted me in different ways. They have guided me (or provoked me into argument) through their writings; pointed me towards interesting sources; supplied photocopies of publications; commented on drafts; introduced me to valuable informants; and much more. Informants — particularly those in Indonesia, Hong Kong, and the Netherlands — have provided information verbally and in writing. I have learned much from my students and research assistants, some of whom have gone on to become academic colleagues. Sadly, some of the many who helped me are no longer alive.

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## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> An earlier version of this article appeared in Coppel (2002a). Thank you to the editor, Leo Suryadinata, and to the publisher, Singapore Society of Asian Studies, for permission to include it in this volume.
- <sup>2</sup> See Coppel (2002a, pp. 8–9) for a detailed list of these people.

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