

Erniyawanti Adam  
Sulaiman Mappiasse

# Chinese Indonesians' Identity: Negotiating Differences

 **LAMBERT**  
Academic Publishing

**Erniyawanti Adam  
Sulaiman Mappiasse**

# **Chinese Indonesians' Identity: Negotiating Differences**

**LAP LAMBERT Academic Publishing**

## **Impressum / Imprint**

Bibliografische Information der Deutschen Nationalbibliothek: Die Deutsche Nationalbibliothek verzeichnet diese Publikation in der Deutschen Nationalbibliografie; detaillierte bibliografische Daten sind im Internet über <http://dnb.d-nb.de> abrufbar.

Alle in diesem Buch genannten Marken und Produktnamen unterliegen warenzeichen-, marken- oder patentrechtlichem Schutz bzw. sind Warenzeichen oder eingetragene Warenzeichen der jeweiligen Inhaber. Die Wiedergabe von Marken, Produktnamen, Gebrauchsnamen, Handelsnamen, Warenbezeichnungen u.s.w. in diesem Werk berechtigt auch ohne besondere Kennzeichnung nicht zu der Annahme, dass solche Namen im Sinne der Warenzeichen- und Markenschutzgesetzgebung als frei zu betrachten wären und daher von jedermann benutzt werden dürften.

Bibliographic information published by the Deutsche Nationalbibliothek: The Deutsche Nationalbibliothek lists this publication in the Deutsche Nationalbibliografie; detailed bibliographic data are available in the Internet at <http://dnb.d-nb.de>.

Any brand names and product names mentioned in this book are subject to trademark, brand or patent protection and are trademarks or registered trademarks of their respective holders. The use of brand names, product names, common names, trade names, product descriptions etc. even without a particular marking in this work is in no way to be construed to mean that such names may be regarded as unrestricted in respect of trademark and brand protection legislation and could thus be used by anyone.

Coverbild / Cover image: [www.ingimage.com](http://www.ingimage.com)

Verlag / Publisher:

LAP LAMBERT Academic Publishing

ist ein Imprint der / is a trademark of

OmniScriptum GmbH & Co. KG

Bahnhofstraße 28, 66111 Saarbrücken, Deutschland / Germany

Email: [info@lap-publishing.com](mailto:info@lap-publishing.com)

Herstellung: siehe letzte Seite /

Printed at: see last page

**ISBN: 978-3-659-86542-8**

Copyright © 2016 OmniScriptum GmbH & Co. KG

Alle Rechte vorbehalten. / All rights reserved. Saarbrücken 2016

**Erniyawanti Adam  
Sulaiman Mappiasse**

**Chinese Indonesians' Identity: Negotiating Differences**

## **Abstract**

After the restriction of Chinese organizations and cultures in Indonesia in 1966, Chinese-Indonesians (the Tionghoa community) began to lose the opportunity to express their ethnic identity. Thus, Christian schools that are well known as schools for the Tionghoa indirectly play roles as the only places where the Tionghoa can strengthen bonds among themselves. This study examines the different expectations of Christian schools and Tionghoa parents in regard to Tionghoa students' identity and how Tionghoa students perceive and embrace their identity. Through class observation and interviews in Lombok, West Nusatenggara, Indonesia, this study suggests that Tionghoa parents' expectations are varied across generations and different economic stances. At the same time, Tionghoa students are multiplying and negotiating as well as claiming, un-claiming, and reclaiming their identity, depending on the accepted norms.

## Table of Contents

Abstract .....	i
Table of Contents .....	ii
Chapter 1: Introduction .....	1
A. Significance of issues .....	2
B. Research methodology .....	6
1. Settings .....	7
2. Participants .....	12
3. Procedures .....	13
C. Objectives of this study .....	14
D. Research Questions .....	15
Chapter 2: The Tionghoa in Indonesia and Lombok: Their Identity and Historical Narratives .....	17
A. The Identity of the Tionghoa .....	17
B. History and Background of Chinese-Indonesians in Indonesia .....	27
1. Early contact and migration .....	27
2. The Tionghoa's position under different Indonesian regimes (from the Dutch to the post-Soeharto regimes) .....	29
C. Chinese-Indonesians in West Nusatenggara Province .....	37
1. West Nusatenggara Province; An overview .....	37
2. Early Chinese contact and migration to Lombok .....	40
3. The features of the Chinese-Indonesians on Lombok .....	43
Chapter 3: Education for the Tionghoa: Past and Present .....	49
A. The History of the Education of the Tionghoa in Indonesia .....	49

B. The Education of the Tionghoa in the municipality of Mataram .....	59
C. Education System in Indonesia Today .....	62
Chapter 4: Interviews .....	65
A. Case Study 1: Two Tionghoa students.....	66
B. Case study 2: Two non-Tionghoa students.....	74
C. Case study 3: Two staff members.....	78
D. Case Study 4: Two Tionghoa parents .....	85
Chapter 5: Interview Analysis.....	96
A. The schools' expectations.....	98
B. Parents' expectations.....	100
C. Tionghoa students' identity.....	104
Chapter 6: Summary and Conclusion .....	112
Appendix .....	119
Appendix A: Map of Indonesia .....	119
Appendix B: Map of the Island of Lombok.....	120
Appendix C: Interview Guide for Teachers.....	121
Appendix D: Interview Guide for Non-Chinese Students .....	122
Appendix E: Interview Guide for Chinese Students .....	123
Appendix F: Interview Guide for Chinese Parents .....	124
References .....	126

## **Chapter 1**

### **Introduction**

Identity is an important part of the existence of human beings. It defines the way individuals socialize with others. It constitutes the boundaries between insiders and outsiders. It also defines the rules of membership and the recognition of sameness among members of a group, which, at the same time, define their differences from other groups. However, individuals vary in how they respond to identity. Sometimes their responses depend on social and political situations, and most of the time they depend on whether a particular identity might be an advantage or disadvantage. Individuals' responses to their identity also contribute to their expectations about their descendants' identity.

Among the less affluent Chinese-Indonesians (Tionghoa) in Lombok, the oldest family members, who are mostly the first or second generation to live in Indonesia and who apparently still practice most of the Chinese traditions, usually live in the same house with their children and their children's families. Thus, the second or third generations naturally inherit their elders' sense of Tionghoa-ness through daily interaction with their parents. Yet this does not make them expect their descendants to strongly embrace their identity as Tionghoa. In contrast, the affluent Tionghoa families usually live separately from the older generations. As a result, it is fairly hard for them to transmit the Chinese traditions to their children. However, this does not make their expectations that their children embrace their Tionghoa-ness less strong. This paper discusses the intertwined influences of Christian schools' and Tionghoa parents' expectations on Tionghoa students' identity.



### *A. Significance of issues*

The Tionghoa<sup>1</sup> (Chinese-Indonesian) had their own education system during the Dutch colonial period in the East Indies (especially during the 1900s). Their schools were initiated by the Peranakan (Indonesia born Chinese) association called the Tiong Hoa Hwe Koan (THHK), which was established on March 17<sup>th</sup>, 1900. Its members were concerned that the Chinese in the East Indies were becoming either more Dutch or more indigenous in terms of culture and traditions. They hardly spoke Mandarin or any Chinese dialect, only irregularly practiced some of the sacred Chinese traditions and they were more Dutch-oriented in terms of education.

For that reason, on the one hand, the founding fathers of the Tiong Hoa Hwe Koan saw the significance of resinicizing the Peranakan Chinese. On the other hand, they saw education or schooling as the most obvious solution to the problem, since the Dutch colonial government did not provide education for Foreign Oriental inhabitants, including the Chinese. Since its first establishment in 1901, the THHK School gained its popularity among the Chinese community. Although criticized for the impracticality of the curriculum and school program (they taught Confucianism and Mandarin to their students, which was seen as appropriate for living in China but inappropriate for living in the Indies), the number of these schools grew steadily throughout the Indonesian archipelago. One of their primary goals was to strengthen the Peranakan's consciousness of their Chinese identity and to tighten their links to China, which they considered as their motherland although in fact, the earlier overseas migrations from China especially during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were regarded as traitors.

---

<sup>1</sup> I use the term "Tionghoa" to refer to Chinese-Indonesians after Indonesian independence (1945 onward) and I use the term "Chinese" to refer to the Chinese inhabitants of Indonesia before 1945 (during the colonial period).

Unfortunately, due to political developments in Indonesia (to be discussed later), the Chinese were marginalized and were pinpointed as the cause of several problems because of various politically “made-up” reasons. In other words, the Indonesian government’s arguments blaming the Chinese for episodes of political and economic turmoil in Indonesia seemed very subjective and un-provable. For example, the Chinese were associated with the Indonesian Communist Party, which was said to have attempted to take over government in 1966, and in 1998 during the economic crisis they were again blamed. Thus, all Chinese schools and institutions were completely banned beginning in the 1970s. After the closing of Chinese schools, instead of sending their children to public schools, most of the Tionghoa preferred to send their children to Christian schools<sup>2</sup>.

If we look back to the initial motivation of the establishment of the THHK schools back in the 1900s, we might assume that the preference of Tionghoa parents to send their children to Christian schools relates to their intention of maintaining their children’s identity as Chinese-Indonesians<sup>3</sup>. However, all schools in Indonesia, including Christian schools, are guided by the national education system which mandates the implementation of Indonesian national culture<sup>4</sup> within the school environment. As a result, it is less likely that Chinese culture will be emphasized within the school although the majority of the students are Tionghoa.

In examining this situation, I conducted research in a Christian school in Nusa Tenggara Barat Province, the island of Lombok, Indonesia. Through this research I wished to examine how

---

<sup>2</sup> Both Catholic and Protestant schools. We should notice that in Indonesia, Christianity is considered as two different faiths: Catholic and Protestant. When people say Christian they usually mean Protestants.

<sup>3</sup> The majority of the Christian schools are run by Churches, and most of Church-goers are Tionghoa

<sup>4</sup> The term “Indonesian national culture” in the constitution of Indonesian National Education System is problematic because the constitution itself does not give a definition for it.

Tionghoa parents' expectation about their children's ethnic identity is contested, negotiated, or mediated within the school. Through interviews with both older Tionghoa people and Tionghoa and non-Tionghoa students, I also look at how Tionghoa students deal with their parents' and school's expectations in regard to their identity, and I ask to what extent these different expectations contribute to a consciousness of identity among Tionghoa students

This chapter provides the background of the issues that I am investigating, that is, the differences regarding the expectations of the Christian school and Tionghoa parents toward the children's identity. This chapter will also discuss the objectives of my study in more detail, as well as explaining the methodology I used during my field research. In the methodology section I describe the research, including the setting, the participants, and the procedures. I will also provide details about the features of the school in which I conducted my research, and I will describe the process of collecting data during my field research.

Chapter 2 examines important terms that are significant in explaining the socio-cultural life of the Tionghoa in Indonesia, as well as some concepts that are important in discussing Tionghoa identity. This chapter also examines some historical narratives regarding the presence of the Chinese in Indonesia, from their early contact through the colonial periods, until Indonesia's independence, and finally to the collapse of the Soeharto regime, which ruled the country for more than thirty years, in 1998. This history is important for seeing a broad picture of the "ups and downs" of life for the Chinese in Indonesia. I also address both historical features and the recent life of the Tionghoa in Lombok, particularly in the city of Mataram.

Chapter 3 is a literature review, which is divided into three parts. In order to understand the circumstances surrounding Tionghoa educational and identity problems, the first part will explore the Indonesian government's education and religion policy, which I consider to be

strongly related to the process of addressing Tionghoa identity. For instance, President Policy No. 1/PNPS/1965 and constitution No.5/1969<sup>5</sup> are among the factors that drove the Tionghoa to convert to Christianity. Although a significant number of Tionghoa were already Christian, this constitutes a new “attribute” of the Tionghoa. I will also discuss the government’s changing education policy that, to some extent, affects the Tionghoa’s opportunities to express their ethnic identity, particularly within the school environment.

The second part of Chapter 3 focuses on the education of the Chinese community in the municipality of Mataram from the time when Chinese schools still existed to the time when Chinese schools were banned. This part will also give some initial information about the current educational situation of the Chinese in Mataram.

The last part of this chapter will focus on concepts of identity in order to help us understand the way the Tionghoa students who are apparently Peranakan,<sup>6</sup> see themselves in term of ethnic identity. It is also important to us to understand to what extent the fact that they inherit Chinese blood contributes to their consciousness of “being or feeling” Chinese (Bakalian, 1994:6-7). With this understanding we can, then, turn to answer the research question of how these students deal with their parents’ and schools’ expectation about their identity.

In Chapter 4, I will focus on the interviews I conducted during the research, describing the results of my interview with Tionghoa and non-Tionghoa students, teachers, school administrators, and Tionghoa parents as well as with certain people outside the school, such as leaders and officers of the Tionghoa Association. Although Christian elementary schools are not

---

<sup>5</sup> These regulations list the five religions (Islam, Protestantism, Catholicism, Hinduism, and Buddhism) that are embraced by most people of Indonesia

<sup>6</sup> Citizens of Indonesia who are of Chinese descent.

the main object of this research, I did conduct research in some of these schools in order to give a broader picture of the patterns of interaction among Tionghoa students and how these patterns are perpetuated while they are in high schools.

Chapter 5 will provide an analysis of the data from the interviews. This part extracts the data from the research and presents some generalizations from the data. In addition, based on the interviews in Chapter 4, Chapter 5 will challenge the existing theories about Chinese schools, Chinese-ness, and the concept of identity. Finally, Chapter 6 is the conclusion. This chapter examines how Christian schools' expectations have not changed as opposed to the dynamic expectation of Tionghoa parents toward their children's identity. In addition, this chapter elaborates how Tionghoa students deal with the different expectations between their parents and schools.

### ***B. Research methodology***

The methodology I used for this research is qualitative and includes some library and archival research. For library research, I mainly focus on literature about the history of Chinese traders and settlers in Indonesia, the history of Chinese schools from the earliest documentation until their closure in the 1975, and some literature on ethnic identity to a theoretical background for analyzing the Chinese-Indonesians (Tionghoa) ethnic identity. I conducted my research in the municipality of Mataram, in the Province of West Nusa Tenggara, Indonesia from May to July 2011. During this research period, I conducted class observations and interviews with students, teachers, and parents. Given that I am not a Tionghoa and I have never been to Christian schools, conducting a research within Tionghoa communities and within Christian schools is very challenging.

This research was primarily conducted in a Catholic senior high school called “Sekolah Menengah Atas Katolik (SMAK) Kesuma”. One of the reasons for selecting this site was because in order to answer my research question, I had to conduct my research at a school in which the majority of the students are Tionghoa. For many years, SMAK Kesuma has been considered a “Sekolah Cina” (school for the Tionghoa), although in fact, now, the number of Chinese students at this school is equal to the number of students of other ethnicities. The second reason is that because this is the only Christian school that exists in the municipality of Mataram, most of the Chinese send their children there.

At the SMAK Kesuma, I undertook class observations for one month as well as carrying out interviews with students and teachers. For class observations, in some classes I become an observer sitting in the class without interrupting the teaching/learning processes. However, in other classes, particularly in English classes, I was asked to teach or to help students with their English tasks. I also interviewed some leaders of Tionghoa associations and Tionghoa parents. For both my interview and observations I took field notes. I conducted the interviews in Bahasa Indonesia, and then transcribed them and translated into English for analysis. I also engaged in informal conversations with Tionghoa parents I met at the Avalokiteshvara Temple during the teaching sessions on a Sunday class<sup>7</sup>.

## **1. Settings**

As mentioned, this research centered mostly at the Kesuma Catholic Senior High School in the municipality of Mataram. This school was established in August 1965 by a team led by the Bali-Lombok bishop, Paulus Sani. The name of the school, Kesuma, is an abbreviation for

---

<sup>7</sup> Sunday class is a weekly class established at place of worship for students whose religious subject is not provided at school. Usually, Sunday class is started with religious rituals followed by teaching session.

Kecerdasan Suluh Masyarakat (Intelligence, torch, community). This reflects its mission, which is to actively work to educate and to provide education for the people. Since it was established by the church community, most of its students were originally the children of families in the church community, and therefore mostly Chinese. Thus, this school was regarded as the Sekolah Cina (school of the Chinese).

Nowadays, this school is no longer dominated by Tionghoa students. There are no statistics on the numbers of students by ethnicity. The available data only describes the numbers of students by religion. Of a total of 726 students, 46% are Hindu, 30% are Christian (either Catholic or Protestant), 11% are Buddhist, and 13% are Muslim. Even though Konghucu (Confucianism) has been regarded as one of the officially acknowledged religions in Indonesia, none of the students are reported as Konghucu. Although I am not sure of how many students at this school are Tionghoa, I can give an estimate based on their religions. In fact, all of the Buddhist students and most of the Christian students are Tionghoa and none of them is Hindu. Most of Hindu students are Balinese with a very small percentage of Hindu Sasak students. Thus, the number of Tionghoa students in this school is approximately 41%.

Similarly, there is no data available about the ethnicity of the members of the school board. According to a teacher at the school, they are mostly Christian with some Hindu members. As for the teachers, most of them are also Christian, but none are Tionghoa.

The curriculum used in this school is the same as that used in other schools in Indonesia. The language used as the medium of instruction is Bahasa Indonesia (the Indonesian national language), which is also used in other schools. There are no special events or occasions celebrated at this school that relate to any Chinese culture. In Indonesia, religion is categorized as one of the compulsory subjects of study. Public schools usually only provide Islamic

teachings, basically because most of their students are Muslims. Non-Muslim students have their religion classes on Sunday at their churches or temples. Likewise, Protestant schools usually only provide their students with Protestant teachings. Kesuma, unlike public schools and Protestant schools, provides lessons relevant to all of its students' religions.

In order to get an idea of the educational quality at Kesuma, I look at school facilities, such as laboratories, the library, internet access, sports facilities, and students' achievement in the national exams. School facilities in Kesuma, such as laboratories, are very standard, with only basic instruments such as microscopes and the lack of other features that should be part of a laboratory. Similarly, the school library is somewhat standard. The book collections consist mainly of required books provided by the government. The number of books on general subjects is very limited, and the students' interest in reading is very low. Internet access is provided by the school but students have to pay for every hour they use it. Sport facilities are very limited due to the restricted space of the school grounds. There is only one yard in the middle of the school building. This yard functions as a basketball and badminton field and is used as a flag ceremony ground every Monday morning. Compared to other schools, Kesuma students' academic achievement is average, with ten students who did not pass the national exams in 2011. Although these criteria do not reveal everything about the quality of the school, as a private school, it does seem that Kesuma should be able to be better than it does.

Besides conducting research at Kesuma Catholic Senior High School, in order to understand better how Tionghoa students interact and embrace their identity within a pan-ethnic school context, I also observed two other Christian schools: Alethea Christian Junior High School (SMP Alethea) and Sekolah Tiga Bahasa (Three Languages School) Budi Luhur. These schools are considered to be the exclusive schools in the municipality of Mataram, partly



because of the better quality of education they provide compared to that at most of public schools. In addition, they provide their students with three languages, namely Bahasa Indonesia, English, and Mandarin. Due to the expensive school fees, most of the students at these schools are from affluent families, and most are Tionghoa.

Alethea is a school complex constituting a Play Group for students aged three to five, Kindergarten for students aged five to seven, Elementary School, and Junior High School. About 80% of the students in these schools are Tionghoa. These schools were established by the Evangelical Church of Mataram. Unlike SMAK Kesuma, which is more welcoming to the outsider<sup>8</sup>, Alethea is somewhat more exclusive and stricter toward outsiders.

Sekolah Tiga Bahasa (Three Languages School) Budi Luhur shares some similarities with Alethea. Like Alethea, Budi Luhur was established by a Christian church centered in Surabaya. Additionally, most of the students in Budi Luhur are Tionghoa, and less than 5% percent are non-Tionghoa. Budi Luhur is also a school complex. Because this school was established recently in 2005, so far it only consists of a play group, kindergarten, and first and second grade of elementary school. However, the school board plans to establish both a junior and senior high school.

Unlike at Alethea, at Budi Luhur, Chinese traditions are strongly embraced. From the entrance gate to the teachers' office and classrooms, Mandarin writings and proverbs, Chinese images, color and decoration dominate every corner of the building. Bahasa Indonesia, English, and Mandarin are taught in all levels of the school. More interestingly, Mandarin is very well taught at these schools. Mandarin teachers at these schools are native speakers from Taiwan who

---

<sup>8</sup> In this context, outsiders means those who are not part of either the school such as students, teachers, staff, school board members, as well as school's custodian; or member of the church to which the school is affiliated.