

CHINESE-INDONESIAN An Odyssey through Racism, Ethnicity and Science

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CHINESE-INDONESIAN

An Odyssey through Racism, Ethnicity and Science



California, U.S.A.

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華裔印尼人

貫穿種族和民系歧視主義與科學領域的奧德賽

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Books by That T. Ngo

Enzyme-Mediated Immunoassay, Plenum Press, New York, 1985 (with H.M. Lenhoff).

Electrochemical Sensors in Immunological Analysis, Plenum Press, 1987.

Nonisotopic Immunoassay, Plenum Press, New York, 1988.

Molecular Interactions in Bioseparations, Plenum Press, New York, 1993.

Biotechnological Applications of Plant Cultures, CRC Press, Boca Raton, 1994 (with Peter D. Shargool).

Biosensors and their Applications, Kluwer Academic /Plenum Publishers, New Yok, 2000 (with V. Yang).

METHODS, Development in Immunoassay Technology, Academic Press, San Diego, 2000.

Quick, Easy and Healthy Dinner Recipes, volume 1: Vegetarian, 2009.

Quick, Easy and Healthy Dinner Recipes, volume 2: Seafood, 2009.

Quick, Easy and Healthy Dinner Recipes, volume 3: Meat, 2009.

BEYOND SALADS, Delicious Vegan and Vegetarian Meals. How to prepare them simply with 10 or less ingredients, 2011.

DEDICATIONS

Wu Da Ying dedicates this book to the memory of and in honor of his parents, Wu Nan Sheng (伍南生) and Chen Xi Feng (陳喜鳳) for their unconditional love, unfailing nurturing, sage guidance and immense sacrifices, and to P.Y. with love.

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- Many friends who roamed around his home town with him and played badminton and soccer with or against him.

華裔印尼人

- Roommates who put up with his and each other's idiosyncrasies and who helped each other in crowded boarding rooms.
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Cicero said: "Let us rise up and be thankful, for gratitude is not only the greatest of virtues, but the parent of all the others."

To respect the privacy of some individuals, we have either altered their names or simply used their initials; no useful purpose would be served by revealing their true identities. Many of them are still living in Indonesia. Similarly, names of some of the villages and towns were altered for the same reason.

All quoted statements, shown in italic, were referenced as detailed as possible. Whenever material facts were stated but their references were not readily accessible, they were made with as much objectivity and care as possible. Some of the more scientific discussions that are peripheral to this Odyssey have been placed in Appendices for those who wish to read in further detail.

His wife, P.Y., has his special thanks and gratitude for her understanding, support and patience during the writing of this book.

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INTRODUCTION

Chinese-Indonesians are a group of people of Chinese ancestral origin and who have continuously lived in Indonesia for many generations. Some families lived there for centuries and became acculturated and no longer spoke Chinese at all. The legal citizenship of the group has been enigmatic and complicated because of the successive change of rulers of Indonesia over the last two hundred years, and of the undefined and changing immigration policy of the different rulers. The group is one of the ethnic minorities of Indonesia (suku bangsa). From a sociological standpoint, it is more precise, appropriate and politically correct to call these Chinese descendants and citizens of Indonesia, "Chinese-Indonesians," just as the Americans of African descent living in the United States, feel it more appropriate to be called "African-Americans."

Indonesia is the world's largest archipelago, encompassing nearly eighteen thousand islands. It is the fourth-most populous nation in the world, and has a larger Muslim population than any other country. Its history was shaped by traders from India, China, and the Arabic Middle East, as well as the European colonization, which culminated in more than three centuries of Dutch rule and about three and a half years of the Japan's occupation (1942–45). Indonesian culture was an amalgamation of cultures brought by the early laborers, traders and colonizers.

Chinese-Indonesians represent about four percent of the Indonesian population, but they are disproportionately represented in the country's economy and commerce. In 1950s and 1960s, they were very well represented in professions like law, engineering, medicine, dentistry and pharmacy, but almost absent from politics and the military. Chinese-Indonesian 華 裔 印 尼 人

Historically, they were shunned from participation in politics, military, government or other Indonesian social-civic organizations. Furthermore, most of them were averse to discussing matters of racial or ethnic relationship and politics with indigenous Indonesians for fear of being perceived as offensive when they had divergent opinions, or for fear of provoking racial or political retaliation. This reticence on the part of Chinese-Indonesians was understandable given the embattled history of Chinese-Indonesian relations and the fear of negative repercussions from the Native Indonesians.

Unlike other ethnic groups, Chinese-Indonesians who had lived continuously in Indonesia for ten or more generations, some for a couple centuries, were still not considered native or indigenous to the country and have been consistently defined oxymoronically as "domestic outsiders" or "strangers who are not foreign." All the tension and racial discrimination between the indigenous and Native Indonesians and the Chinese-Indonesians were even more surprising considering there was already the presence of Chinese folk in the ports of Tuban and Gresik in East Java as far back as 1413. The Chinese transformed the bare stretches of these two barren prosperous commercial centers that saw the development of different Chinese communities (Pramoedya Ananta Toer, 2007). While being perceived by leaders of most Southeast Asian countries to be the most dynamic and entrepreneurial ethnic group in Southeast Asia, Chinese-Indonesians have often been incorrectly singled out as the root cause of the prevailing and chronic Indonesian economic malaise. Their lack of political and military backing and the fact that many of them owned shops that sold daily-needed staples made them easy targets whenever the populace wanted to express its anger. Time and again, in post-independent Indonesia, Chinese-Indonesians have been the defenseless victims of social unrest and of riots caused by issues not of their own making, and were arguably the most under-tapped human resource of the past six decades. Their contributions in the arts, in educational activities and in cultural expressions have been marginalized in Indonesia in the second half of the last century.

The tragedy that took place during the night of September 30th, 1965 and the early morning of October 1st, 1965 in Jakarta resulted in the murder of six Indonesian army generals and the killing of more than two million people in less than one year thereafter. It was a watershed event for me, for other Chinese-Indonesians and also for many Native Indonesians. It marked the beginning of the downfall of my hero, President Sukarno, the founding president of the Republic of Indonesia, and the rise to power of Major General Suharto, that led to his 31 year, unchallenged, autocratic rule over Indonesia. It was a turning point for the Indonesian government's policy toward the People's Republic of China (PRC) and Chinese-Indonesian residents in Indonesia. The policy precipitated the severance of the diplomatic relationship with PRC, the largest country in Southeast Asia and generated very hostile attitudes toward Chinese-Indonesians living in Indonesia. The mass killing in Indonesia during 1966 to 1968 was unprecedented in the human history of non-battlefield killings, which squarely placed the Suharto regime ahead of Pol Pot, Pinochet, Milosevic, Stalin, Idi Amin, Mao Ze Dong and all the other mass murderers of their own people (Chris Kline, 2008).

The so-called September 30th movement placed an enormous burden on my generation. It provoked complex reactions of disbelief, uncertainty, contradiction and fear. The consequence of the September 30th Movement was a sort of Rorschach test for my generation. The Indonesian

people collectively and helplessly grieved for the lost of millions of lives. Many of them did not receive a due process of laws. On an individual and personal level, untold hundreds of families lost their bread winner, father, mother, husband or wife, siblings or other close relatives, and suffered unimaginable pain and suffering in the disrupted lives of the victims' families. The oral history of the tragedy that included murder, torture, false imprisonment of men and women was recently recorded in a book "Suara di Belakang Prahara" (Voices Behind the Tempest) by Baskara T. Wardaya, SJ (2011, Galang Press). Shortly thereafter, the nation experienced the loss of our beloved founding father of the Republic of Indonesia and we were saddened and soon filled with nostalgia for him as an idealistic revolutionist and the mouthpiece of Indonesian people (penyambung lidah). Three decades of the Suharto iron-fist rule and his forced assimilation policy succeeded in destroying and eradicating three precious pillars of the culture of Chinese-Indonesians. All Chinese-Indonesian schools were forcibly closed down in 1966, all Chinese mass media and civic organizations were banned, and all Chinese-Indonesians were advised to change their names to Indonesian or non-Chinese and non-Chinese sounding names (Leo Survadinata, editor, in Ethnic Chinese in Contemporary Indonesia, Institute of Southeast Asian studies, 2008). The final chapters of that tragic event have yet to be written. The true mastermind ("dalang") behind that incident has yet to be fully revealed, but since "a paper cannot contain a burning flame", the truth will eventually be uncovered. As Lu Xun wrote, "falsehood written in black ink definitely cannot cover the fact written in blood." (Lu Xun in Roses without flower, Part "墨寫得謊話,決掩不住血寫的事實", 無花的薔薇之二).

Looking back, after almost five decades, I can appreciate how the events subsequent to September 30, 1965 placed me in a murky quagmire with regards to my university education. Graduates from Chinese-Indonesian high schools were not allowed to sit for the entrance examinations of state-run universities. For Chinese-Indonesians who graduated from Indonesian high schools, their admissions to state universities were subject to quota limitations. Even after they were admitted, students were still subjected to racial discrimination on the campus. Trying hard as I could, I could not find a way out of my predicament in Indonesia. The situation was made worse by attempts to overthrow the Sukarno government, the murder of six highest-ranking army officers in the capital of Jakarta that was followed by mass killing of Indonesian communist party members and a violent anti-Chinese-Indonesians campaign (John Roosa, 2006). It pushed me as if to the edge of a cliff and forced me to take a life-changing leap into the unknown through seeking to obtain my university education in Germany or in Canada. In spite of the trauma inflicted on me by the decision to leave Indonesia, I consider myself one of a few very lucky Chinese-Indonesians who was able to leave Indonesia shortly after Suharto assumed power.

My reluctance and the imperative decision to leave Indonesia were alleviated by the unconditional support from my entire family. My parents quickly converted their hard-earned savings of the previous thirty years in the form of gold bullion into cash to purchase airline tickets for my travel to Canada and to provide sufficient deposit in a Canadian bank for my first year of study. I still do not know how my father managed this, because at the time it was extremely difficult to send money abroad. I was lucky to obtain an admission into a Canadian university based on my high school diploma, and a certificate that I had