

THE CHINESE OF SUKABUMI: A STUDY IN
SOCIAL AND CULTURAL ACCOMMODATION

GIOK-LAN TAN

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PREFACE

The study of the Chinese minority in Indonesia has formed a considerable part in the work of the Cornell Modern Indonesia Project since its establishment in 1954. The results of the valuable research undertaken by Donald E. Willmott in this field have already seen publication. (1) Miss Giok-Lan Tan's study of the Chinese of Sukabumi (centering on the Peranakan section of the community) represents a significant addition to the published material on this subject and an important contribution to the continuing work of the Cornell Modern Indonesia Project.

This study of a Chinese community in West Java complements that of Dr. Willmott on the Chinese of Semarang, Central Java, published three years ago, and the forthcoming M. I. T. -sponsored study by Edward J. Ryan of the Modjokerto Chinese of East Java. Having this amount of published material available, we can begin to comprehend the range of variation, and at the same time the underlying unity, of Peranakan culture in Java. With the publication during the next few years of Professor G. William Skinner's research (sponsored by the Cornell Modern Indonesia Project in 1956-1958), the picture will undoubtedly become even fuller and clearer.

Miss Tan, a Peranakan who lived briefly in Sukabumi during the Second World War, undertook this study in 1956-1957 while a student at the Sinological Institute of the University of Indonesia in Djakarta. Her research was carried out under the direction of Professor Skinner, who was then in Indonesia. After completing her research in Indonesia, and following completion of her studies at the Sinological Institute, Miss Tan came to Cornell University to do graduate work in anthropology. She was awarded her M. A. degree in 1961.

Following her return to Indonesia, Miss Tan has undertaken further field research among the Chinese. She has designed and directed a project which studied a number

(1) The Chinese of Semarang: A Changing Minority Community in Indonesia (Ithaca, N. Y.: Cornell University Press, 1960) and The National Status of the Chinese in Indonesia, 1900-1958 (Cornell Modern Indonesia Project, Monograph Series; Ithaca, N. Y. 1961).

of desas in the Tangerang area (West Java) with special emphasis on the social interaction between Peranakan and indigenous farmers. Currently Miss Tan is an instructor in sociology at the Catholic University in Djakarta, and beginning in May 1963 was appointed research assistant in the National Economic and Social Research Institute of the Council for Sciences of Indonesia.

Ithaca, New York
May 25, 1963

George McT. Kahin
Director

FOREWORD

This study is based on research undertaken between May 1956 and December 1957 in Sukabumi, a Sundanese town in West Java about 75 miles southeast of Djakarta. It has a population of about 65,000 including 10,000 ethnic Chinese, of whom 6,000 are Indonesian citizens and 4,000 are aliens.

The fieldwork was conducted under the direction of Professor G. William Skinner within the larger framework of his research on the Chinese in Indonesia, for which purpose he stayed in Djakarta from 1956 to 1958. It was sponsored by the Cornell Modern Indonesia Project in collaboration with the Sinological Institute of the University of Indonesia in Djakarta.

During the first year of the fieldwork, the writer stayed in the house of a Peranakan widow in the northern part of the town. Thereafter she made extended trips from Djakarta to Sukabumi whenever necessary. This long stay on the spot enabled the writer to observe a full year's cycle of activities in the Chinese community. The writer was not unfamiliar with the area of study as at the outbreak of the Pacific War her family took refuge in Sukabumi. She went to school and stayed there for about six months, from December 1941 until June 1942.

As a member of the Peranakan group of the Chinese community, i. e., the group made up of the socially, culturally, and politically non-China-oriented part of the ethnic Chinese, of which the majority are Indonesian citizens, the writer had no difficulty in establishing rapport with the group in general and with the western-educated in particular. Less rapport was achieved with the alien, Chinese-speaking part of the community, mainly due to the fact that these aliens are mostly engaged in occupations which are extremely vulnerable socially and politically, rendering them suspicious of any outsider. This difficulty was aggravated by the fact that the older generation Chinese speak only their local Chinese dialect and the younger generation mostly Mandarin, while the writer has no knowledge of the former and an inadequate command of the latter.

As a student at the University of Indonesia, where she was doing graduate work at the Sinological Institute, the writer received generous cooperation from the Indonesian authorities; and being a native speaker of Indonesian, she had no difficulty on that score in establishing rapport with the Indonesian population.

The methods used in collecting the data were personal observation and informal interviewing. She visited homes practically every day during the research period; she participated in family celebrations and observed meetings and programs organized by the government as well as by private organizations; she also observed the activities in the temple and in the Christian churches, and she visited schools and business enterprises. Except in the case of observations in institutions, where there is a more or less impersonal atmosphere, notes were usually not taken on the spot

but were recorded as soon as possible afterwards.

The language used was primarily Indonesian. Dutch or a mixture of Dutch and Indonesian was used with western-educated Peranakans and several of the western-educated Indonesians. Some Mandarin was also employed with the younger generation alien Chinese.

Apart from these personal observations and contacts, the writer made intensive use of statistical data on the alien Chinese acquired from the Municipal Hall in Sukabumi and on the citizens of Chinese descent, derived from the registration lists for the election of the DPRD (regional assembly), acquired from the four Kelurahan (wards) in the town. Other official data were also collected for the chapters on occupations and enterprises and on education. It should be noted, however, that these statistical materials should be viewed with caution, for they were collected by inadequately trained personnel. The writer also reviewed as much as possible of the existing body of published material pertaining to the Chinese in Indonesia, especially those publications written by Peranakans.

The writer has attempted to be as consistent as possible in the spelling of the Peranakan form of terms derived from the Hokkien.

Peranakan terms of Chinese origin are brought together at the back of this volume in a glossary which also cites the Hokkien forms, in transcription and characters, from which the Peranakan terms are apparently derived.

The writer would like to express her gratitude to Professor Tjan Tjoe Som of the Sinological Institute of the University of Indonesia in Djakarta for her earlier training in sinology, which laid the foundation for her further study of the Chinese, especially the overseas Chinese.

Having been, at the outset of this study, a student without experience in fieldwork, she feels greatly indebted to Professor G. William Skinner for the training she received while in the field, for the subsequent organization of the data, and for valuable suggestions and improvements in the final draft of the study.

To Professor Robin M. Williams, Jr., the Chairman of her graduate committee at Cornell University, she is indebted for instruction and advice.

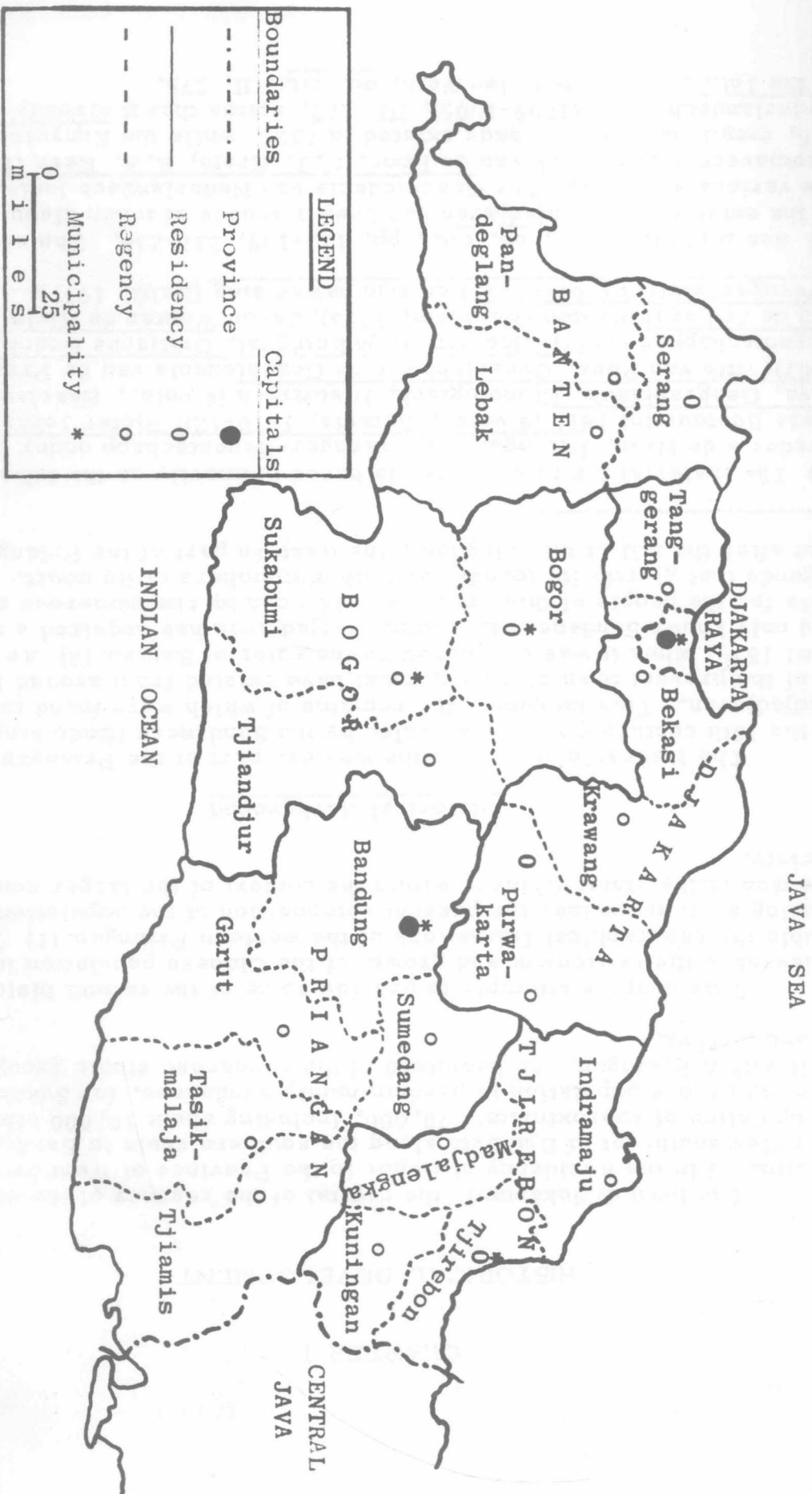
Despite the guidance and suggestions of these eminent professors, the writer is acutely aware of omissions and inadequacies in the study. For all these, she alone takes full responsibility.

The writer would also like to extend her special gratitude to Professor George McT. Kahin for his continuous moral support. Thanks are also due to Mrs. Skinner for editing the major part of the

final draft of this study. To all her friends who have helped her in one way or another with the completion of the work go her deepest gratitude and appreciation.

Needless to say, the writer feels completely indebted to the people of Sukabumi, especially the Peranakan community, without whose cooperation this study could not have been made. It is impossible to list here all the people in Sukabumi who were of substantial help, and so the writer reluctantly refrains from mentioning any. Special gratitude is nonetheless extended to each and every one.

Finally the author acknowledges her deep gratitude to the Cornell Modern Indonesia Project for sponsoring the fieldwork, to the Cornell Southeast Asia Program for providing her with a Southeast Asia Training Fellowship, to the P. E. O. Sisterhood for the contribution to her living expenses during the fall of 1960, and to the Rockefeller Foundation for providing her with a generous travel grant.



Map 1. Administrative Division of West Java.
 (Based on: U.S. Office of Strategic Services, Research and Analysis Branch, "Java and Madura. Administrative Divisions," Washington, 1945.)

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CHAPTER I

HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT

The town of Sukabumi, the capital of the regency of the same name, is situated in the Residency of Bogor in the Province of West Java, about 75 miles southeast of Djakarta along the southern route to Bandung. It has a population of approximately 70,000, including about 10,000 ethnic Chinese. The indigenous population is predominantly Sundanese, for Sukabumi lies well within Priangan, the heartland of the Sundanese ethnic group of the island of Java.

This chapter attempts to provide some of the salient historical facts relevant to the settlement and growth of the Chinese population in Sukabumi within the geographical framework of the western Priangan. (1) The concluding section outlines the present composition of the population and the position of the ethnic Chinese within the context of the larger contemporary society.

Historical Background

The traceable history of the western part of the Priangan goes back to the 15th century when it was ruled by the Sundanese Hindu kingdom of Padjadjaran. This kingdom, the remains of which were found in the vicinity of the present town of Bogor, must have existed from around 1433-1434 until 1579, when it was conquered by the ruler of Banten. (2) As the last and only known Sundanese kingdom, Padjadjaran has acquired a mythical aura for the people of this area, as evidenced by the numerous stories and legends that glorify its founder and other members of its court. It seems that after the fall of this kingdom, the western part of the Priangan was

(1) The material for this chapter is based primarily on the following sources: Frederik de Haan, Priangan: De Praenger-Regentschapp onder het Nederlands Bestuur tot 1811 (4 vols., Batavia, 1910-12); Pieter Johannes Veth, Java, Geographisch, Ethnologisch, Historisch (4 vols., Haarlem, 1875-1907); Otto van Rees, Overzicht van de Geschiedenis van de Preanger Regentschappen (1877); Hoesein Djajadiningrat, Critische Beschoeuwing van de Sedjarah Banten (Haarlem, 1913); Jacob Wouter de Klein, Het Preanger-stelsel (1677-1871) en zijn nawerlsing (Delft, 1931).

(2) See Djajadiningrat, op. cit., pp. 135-139, 232-236. The exact dates of the existence of Padjadjaran has been a source of much dispute among the various scholars. The Geschiedenis van Nederlandsch Indie, ed., A. Thomassen and Theussink van de Hoop, N.J. Krom, R.A. Kern (1938), I, 276, mentions that it already existed in 1333, while the Encyclopaedie van Nederlandsch-Indie (1899-1905), III, 167, states that it already existed in the 12th century; see also Veth, op. cit., II, 275.

left to go to waste with no clear indication of who nominally ruled over it. Early Dutch travel reports of this area described it as extremely sparsely populated and practically uncultivated. The people lived as semi-nomads with the cultivation of dry ricefields, gaga, as the main source of living. The cultivation of the wet ricefields, sawah, seems to have been a much later development, probably influenced by the Javanese. As de Haan pointed out, this technological change of the method of rice cultivation from dry to wet fields must have been a crucial point in the life of the Priangan people, for it changed the typical Sundanese from "a wanderer to a settled cultivator." (3)

Apparently all through the 16th century this area was a bone of contention among the three kingdoms then ruling the western part of Java: the Moslem kingdoms of Banten in the west and Tjirebon (sometimes also spelled Tjeribon or Cheribon) in the northeast, and the kingdom of Galuh in the southeast. At the end of this century a fourth contender came in the form of the kingdom of Mataram, the Javanese kingdom which was at that time rapidly expanding to the west. First, Galuh came under its domination in 1595, then the area west of it to the borders of Banten, and finally Tjirebon, which became a vassal around 1600. (4)

The 17th century saw a complete change of scene with the entree of the Dutch East India Company in 1602. In 1619, after the conquest of Jacatra (the present Djakarta, known during the colonial period as Batavia), the first Governor, General Jan Pieterszoon Coen, declared the limits of the Dutch territory to be as follows: Banten to the west, the Java Sea to the north, Tjirebon to the east, and the Indian Ocean to the south. Thus he included the western and central part of the Priangan. Actually, however, Coen regarded this area of so little value that in practice he continued to consider the area south of Jacatra as Banten's territory. (5) Mataram ignored this Dutch claim completely, recognizing Banten as its western neighbor, which is shown by the fact that Javanese migrants were sent to settle in this area. Soon, however, the Company imposed its rule through the treaties with Mataram in 1677 (with Amangkoerat II, who reigned from 1677-1703) and 1705 (with Pakoeboewana I, who reigned from 1703-1719), thereby bringing into its possession the entire area of the Priangan: Bogor (then called Buitenzorg), Krawang (the northern area between Djakarta and Tjirebon), the western part of Indramaju (to the north of Tjirebon), and the former regency of Tangerang (to the west of Djakarta). (6) Dutch influence was extended westward as the power of Banten declined under Sultan Hadji (1682-1687), and in 1684 Banten became a protectorate of the Dutch Company.

(3) de Haan, op. cit. I, 31-32.

(4) de Haan, op. cit., I, 1-34. See Map 1.

(5) de Haan, op. cit., I, 1.

(6) de Haan, op. cit., I, 69; van Rees, op. cit., pp. 50-55; and de Klein, op. cit., pp. 10-12. See Map 1.

(7) We have already mentioned that early Dutch travelers found the Priangan sparsely populated and practically uncultivated. Though initially uninterested in this mountainous area, the Dutch Company before long discovered its enormous possibilities and the cultivation of the berg-cultures (mountain crops) was started. This occurred after the treaty of 1677 when they established effective rule over the western part of the Priangan, which consisted of the regencies of Tjiandjur, Kampungbaru (Buitenzorg), Tanggerang, Krawang, Tjiasem, and Pagaden (the last two areas situated between Krawang and Tjirebon), by putting it under the direct administration of a Dutch official, the Gecommitteerde tot de saecken der Inlander, (7) and referred to it as the so-called "Jacatrasche Bovenen Benedenlanden." (8) As to the regency of Tjiandjur, we find that it was established only in 1691 through colonization from Tjirebon and headed by a member of this court. It was at that time an insignificant settlement.

The treaty of 1705 with Mataram marked the end of the Javanese supremacy over the western part of Java which had lasted for almost two centuries. This domination had a great influence on the Sundanese, even to the point where Javanese became the official language, used among the Priangan regents themselves in their correspondence. This influence is still markedly apparent, especially among the upper class, which constitute the former nobility, the menak, who "share many common parts of their

(7) de Klein, op. cit., pp. 21-27, devotes an entire section to the task and function of this official. Van Rees, op. cit., p. 97, described the Gecommitteerde as the Oppertoezicht over de Preanger-landen (chief supervisor of the Priangan lands). It seems that originally his main task was that of opperkoopman (principal agent) for the government, charged with the purchase of the products of the compulsory cultivation. Due to the fact that he also functioned as moneylender to the regents, he acquired great power over them, so much so that, as de Klein stated (speaking of the position of this official in 1804 and counting its institution as from 1727): "in 75 years the 'gecommitteerde' developed from a petty official into a powerful despot. The regents and their subordinates were entirely dependent on him for their careers as well as their finances" (the present writer's translation). He was also the head of police and in charge of jurisdiction. His territory had always been primarily the Benedenlanden of Djakarta, but also the area between the rivers Tjisedane (to the west of Djakarta) and Tjitarum (to the east of Djakarta), thus including the regencies Tjiandjur, Bogor, Tanggerang, Pamanukan, Tjiasem, and Krawang.

(8) de Klein, op. cit., pp. 130-134. The limits of the so-called Jacatrasche or Bataviasche Ommelanden, Benedenlanden en Bovenlanden, seem to have been changed continually. Officially it seems that the boundaries of the Ommelanden (surrounding lands) were: from the Java Sea southwards to the mountains, between the rivers Tjitarum, Tjisedane, and Tjikaniki (an upstream river which forms one of the sources of the Tjisedane). The limits of the Benedenlanden (low lands) and Bovenlanden (uplands) were even more confusing. Some regencies, e.g., Bogor, were shuttled back and forth, at one time incorporated in the one region and at another time in the other.