

Beyond the National: The Regional and Transnational Trajectories of Chinese Indonesians

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Conference Call for Papers

Beyond the National: The Regional and Transnational Trajectories of Chinese Indonesians

20-21 October 2016

ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute, Singapore

The long history of Chinese migration to the Indonesian archipelago that began from pre-colonial times has been marred by racial discrimination, forced assimilation, and episodes of violent pogroms, most recently in the form of the anti-Chinese attacks of May 1998. Indeed, known for their economically strong but politically weak position, Chinese Indonesians have been widely regarded as "essential outsiders" seemingly condemned to the permanent status of non-native (non-*pribumi*) strangers who could never lay claim to "true" belonging in Indonesia.

However, as scholars have noted, the situation changed dramatically after the fall of the New Order regime in 1998 and the abolition of assimilation policies in the post-Suharto era that ushered in a "revival" of Chinese culture and identity politics in Indonesia. In particular, the post-Suharto years, with the rise of regional autonomy and identities, have also seen a more pronounced regional identity politics among ethnic Chinese keen to express their diverse regional origins. Externally, the rapid rise of China in the last fifteen years has become a significant factor that influenced Chinese Indonesian identity politics. For many Chinese Indonesians, the rise of China incited a feeling of pride towards one's Chineseness, particularly after decades of forced assimilation. Furthermore, the burgeoning bilateral relationship between the PRC and Indonesia has seen Chinese Indonesian organisations and individuals playing a greater role in dealings between the two countries.

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In the context of these new developments, new questions need to be asked with regards to the position and perceptions of contemporary post-Suharto Chinese Indonesians. For instance, how are Chinese Indonesians from different parts of Indonesia shaped by their regional contexts, and how does this affect their roles in local politics and economies? What roles do Chinese Indonesians play in contemporary Sino-Indonesian relations? How do Chinese Indonesians perceive Chinese identity and belonging at the time of China's rise? At the other end of the spectrum, it also needs to be asked: how do non-Chinese Indonesians perceive the greater visibility of Chineseness in post-Suharto Indonesia? Furthermore, in an era of heightened connectivity, what sort of trans-national/trans-border/trans-local connections do Chinese Indonesians forge and maintain? What is the significance of these networks, and how do they differ across regions? Do they have historical precedence, and what do these connections reveal about the contemporary Chinese Indonesians' sense of belonging?

In the past, scholarly analyses about Chinese Indonesians have largely focused on issues of assimilation, integration, and national belonging within the framework of ethno-nationalism in modern Indonesia. While these earlier studies are important and reflective of the time period in which they were written, today, the time is right for scholars to reassess the Chinese Indonesian situation and to potentially move beyond the conventional framework of the nation-state. This conference is intended to be a scholarly "update" on the contemporary history and ethnography of Chinese Indonesians. It is also intended to be a forum where both established and emerging scholars can introduce new directions and trends in Chinese Indonesian studies, particularly those with a transnational approach.

The conference would welcome papers that are relevant, but not limited, to the following topics:

- Contemporary history of Chinese Indonesians
- Studies of Chinese Indonesians from different parts of Indonesia
- Relationship between Chinese Indonesians and China
- New Chinese migrants in Indonesia
- Chinese Indonesian business networks
- Chinese Indonesians and Chinese transnational connectivities
- Ethnic Chinese in Indonesian politics
- Chinese religious networks
- (Re)Sinification in the post-Suharto era
- Post-Suharto Chinese Indonesian identity politics

Please send individual paper abstract submissions of no more than 250 words (plus

100 words bio note) to charlotte_setijadi@iseas.edu.sg by **27 May 2016**

No panel proposals will be accepted and the conference organizers reserve the right to allocate accepted papers into the relevant pre-arranged panels.

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