

THE ORIGIN, DEVELOPMENT AND DECLINE OF THE PERANAKAN CULTURE IN JAVA

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SINOPSIS

Makalah ini meninjau sejarah Kebudayaan sosial yang umum tentang masyarakat Cina di Jawa dari tarikh 1405 A.D. hingga awal kurun 20, dengan menumpukan perhatian terjadap Cina Peranakan. Makalah ini memerikan keadaan-keadaan dalam mana orang-orang Cina yang datang terlebih awal menyesuaikan diri mereka dengan penduduk-penduduk tempatan serta dibincangkan juga disini faktor-faktor yang mempengaruhi identiti mereka apabila terdapat kemasukan orang-orang Cina (lelaki dan perempuan) beramai-ramai ke Tanah Jawa dari tahun 1850 seterusnya. Nilai-nilai tradisi kedua-dua masyarakat—orang-orang Cina yang mendatang dan orang-orang Jawa tempatan—dibincang dan dianalisa untuk menghuraikan sejauh mana berlakunya proses akulturasi antara dua bangsa ini. Juga proses asimulasi Cina Peranakan ke dalam kebudayaan Jawa juga digalorkan. Masalah identiti Cina Peranakan yang timbul setelah berlakunya kemasukan Cina beramai-ramai juga dinilai. Kebangkitan nasionalisma Cina, kelalaian pemerintah Belanda mengawal sekolah-sekolah Cina dan persatuan-persatuan yang besar bilangannya diseluruh Jawa, kesan daripada orang-orang Cina yang baru datang (Totok) dan mereka yang datang melawat, dan berikutan dengan pemecahan kumpulan Cina peranakan di Jawa adalah semuanya perkembangan-perkembangan penting yang diperkata dan diperbincangkan dengan agak ditil. Masa depan Cina peranakan di Jawa menjadi lebih nyata hasil dari pengalaman-pengalaman seperti itu.

SYNOPSIS

This article traces the general socio-cultural history of the Overseas Chinese in Java from about 1405 A.D. to the beginning of the 20th century, with particular reference to the Peranakan group. It describes the situational circumstances in which the early and subsequent Chinese immigrants adapted themselves into the local population and the factors affecting their identity when mass influx of male and female new arrivals flooded into Java from 1850 onwards. The traditional values of both the Chinese Overseas and the local Javanese are discussed and analysed to explain the degree of acculturation between the two races. The process of assimilation of the Peranakan into the Javanese culture is traced. The eventual identity crisis of the Pera-

nakan communities in Java after the 1850 influx is evaluated. The rise of Chinese Nationalism, the neglect of the Dutch authorities to control the numerous Chinese schools and associations throughout Java, the increased impact of things Chinese from within (the new arrivals or Totok) and from without (visitors and missions from China), and the consequent breakup of the Peranakan group in Java are all important developments which are mentioned and discussed in some detail. The fate of the Peranakan culture in Java becomes quite evident as a result of such experiences.

Two important Chinese sources about Cheng Ho's voyages to the Nanyang between 1405 A.D. and 1433 A.D. mentioned that there were Chinese-Moslems living in the northern coast of Java during that period. These works, namely *Ying-yai Sheng-lam* by Ma Huan¹ and the *Hsing-ch'a Sheng-lan* by Fei Hsin² recorded that in two states of Java, 'many of our countrymen from Kwangtung and Chang-chow are staying there'. Ma Huan described three types of inhabitants in Java—'the merchants who came from the West' (possibly Arabs and Indians), 'the infidel indigenous population (Javanese) and 'the faithful Chinese-Moslems'. Of the Chinese Ma Huan reported that

'... they are all from the provinces of Kwangtung and Fukien who are exiles from China. Nevertheless, they are very clean in dress and food. Many of them are followers of Islam and observe its rules about food.'³

Ma Huan, who was a Chinese-Moslem himself, was impressed by the faithfulness of the Chinese-Moslems residing in Java. He mentioned that there were several hundreds of his countrymen who were Moslems and have made their homes in that region. He may or may not have exaggerated on the number of Chinese who were actually Moslems living there. Nevertheless, his observation is significant. Firstly, Ma Huan's account suggests that there was a notable number of Chinese-Moslem among the earliest immigrants in Java. Secondly, it also shows that Chinese Moslems were still active, both as practising Moslems and as traders up to as late as the 15th century. It was not until the end of the 16th century when the Moslem-orientated ports of Java finally gained control over the disintegrating Majapahit "Empire" that the Javanese populace began to embrace Islam.⁴ It is interesting then to note that the early

1 Ma Huan, *My Journey Across the Seas*, Shanghai, Commercial Press, 1935.

2 Fei Hsin, *Records of My Journey*, Shanghai, Chung-hua Book Co., 1954.

3 Ma Huan, *My Journey Across the Seas*, p. 4.

4 J.F. Cady, *Southeast Asia: Its Historical Development*. McGraw Hill, N.Y., 1964, p. 167. For a discussion of the growing influence of Moslem traders in the region during that period, see Johns, A.D., 'Sufism as a Category in Indonesian Literature and History' in *Journal of Southeast Asian History*, Vol. 11, 1961, pp. 10-23.

Chinese settlers were Moslems surrounded by a pagan world, a reversal of today's situation. Among the early Moslem settlers in Java were Arab-Moslems, Indian-Moslems and Chinese-Moslems. They married local Javanese women and established Moslem families among the local unbelievers.

Since most of the early Moslem settlers were traders, the common language used among themselves was Malay, the lingua franca of international traders in the Malaysian-Indonesian waters.⁴ Thus, there developed a small multi-racial community in Java with common bonds of religion (Islam), Language (Malay) and wives (Javanese). The families thus created reflected much of the Islamic way of life. The Chinese-Moslems had to give up much of their own cultural tradition in order to be good Moslems. They even had to change their Chinese names into Islamic ones as required by the religion.⁵ Since these Chinese-Moslems were merchants, they could not have been upholders of the Chinese Confucian tradition. There could not have been any Confucianists among them because the latter would have nothing to do with the merchant class, let alone being merchants themselves. In fact, if these Chinese-Moslems were anything at all, they were more likely reactionaries to their traditional way of life. Although many of these Chinese merchants may have married in China, this did not prevent them from starting another family elsewhere because the Islamic religion allows a man to marry up to four wives if he could maintain them.

The Javanese women who married the Chinese men would discover that their own way of life was not drastically changed after marriage. Men in general are less home-centred compared with women and the Chinese who started families in Java generally left the upbringing of their children (hence, the socialization of the children) to their Javanese wives. After all, the early Chinese first went there to trade and to make as much money as possible. Business was their main concern. Therefore, they would have been less demanding in the family with regard to what the children should wear, or what they should eat, or which school they should attend. In time, a small community of Sino-Javanese offspring emerged and grew in numbers, influenced to a greater extent by the Javanese way of life through their Javanese mothers.

The Javanese culture and tradition had displayed its capability to adapt itself to other cultures, for example, the Hindu, the Buddhist and the Islamic impacts in successive eras. Up to this day, the Javanese have re-

⁵ Early Javanese converts had to change their names into Islamic ones as well. As a result, those who become Moslems formed themselves into a separate community from the non-believers. When Java was Islamised en masse, Chinese, Indians and Arab Moslems became absorbed into the wider Islamic community. This explains the disappearance of the non-Javanese Moslems as time went on.

tained their own social vitality, including their *Adat Isti'adat* (Customary Laws).⁶ The elements of Islam were merely additions to the Javanese way of life, as was the case with the early Hindu and Buddhist accretions. Javanese standards survived the Islamic impact on the higher status of women, village cohesion and wizardry, the field of music and the *wayang* (puppet-shadow plays), the religious sphere of magical control of evil spirits and the method of calculating lucky days and the veneration of their ancestral saints. The Islamic Confession of Faith became for the Javanese a new kind of magical incantation.⁷ What is the reason for the resiliency of the Javanese culture and its way of life and how did the Javanese wives managed to cope with their husband's foreign ways within their families?

The author believes that the answer lies in the two distinctive traditional outlooks of the Javanese with regard to their relationship with others. These are the concepts of *Ummat* or *Sungkan* and *Rukun*. The former is a collection of values associated with the etiquette of showing or giving respect to others according to their social status. The latter involves those codes of behaviour exercised in order to maintain harmony with other people. These two traditional conceptions are closely related to each other and together they caused the cohesiveness and resiliency of all intra-familial, inter-familial and inter-personal relationships of the Javanese people. The values centred in the concept *Umat or Sungkan*, as reported by Hildred Geertz, are:

'... based on the traditional Javanese view that all social relationships are hierachically ordered, and on the moral imperative to maintain and express this mode of social order as a good in itself.

The *Rukun* concept, continued H. Geertz, is:

'... the determination to "Maintain harmonious social appearances," to minimize the overt expression of any kind of social and personal conflict, is based on the Javanese view that emotional stasis, is of highest worth, and on the corresponding moral imperative to control one's own impulses, to keep them out of awareness or at least unexpressed, so as not to set up reverberating emotional responses in others.'⁸

From these two traditional concepts, the Javanese have proved that they were capable of adapting themselves with people of other cultural backgrounds. The non-Javanese who married the local women in those days

6 R. Winstedt, *The Malays: A Cultural History*. Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd., London, 1961, pp. 19-26.

7 K.P. Landon, *Southeast Asia*. pp. 134-64.

8 H. Geertz, *The Javanese Family: A Study of Kinship and Socialization*. Free Press of Glencoe, U.S.A., 1961, p. 147.

would not have been confronted with open disagreement or opposition from their wives. On the other side, the foreign husbands, being mainly Moslems, would not have insisted on their own traditional way of life. Concerning food, the blending of Chinese, Indians or Arabian way of cooking with those of the Javanese was and still is, a popular type of food in Java.

One of the most important observations made on the "Chinese"⁸ in the Indies (mainly Java) during the 17th century was by an eminent Dutch surgeon-traveller named Wouter (Gautier) Schouten (1638-1704). He took careful notes of the 'idolatrous Chinese merchants' living in Batavia (present Djakarta). By 1676, the year Schouten wrote his memoir about the "Chinese" in Java, there was already a significant number of second and third generation Sino-Javanese living in the urban centres. Describing a Chinese New Year celebration he had witnessed in Batavia on 23rd January, 1676, Schouten wrote:

'They erected scaffolds and theatres like those of our own country, and gave representations of their most famous heroes with gestures most appropriate to their humour, which went on all night for nights on end. They also had buffoons disguised, as at Mardi Gras at home, as wild animals and fabulous beasts, with much beating of drums. Those who were more religious lit candles while others celebrated the New Year by gambling.'⁹

This quotation is taken to show the existence of a combined Sino-Javanese way of life already prevalent during the 17th century. The eye-witness description of the celebration quoted above reveals several characteristics which disqualifies it as a typical Chinese or typical Javanese celebration. It was a blending of both these cultural elements. A typical traditional Chinese New Year celebrations in China was usually a quiet occasion, except for the firing of crackers at the beginning and at the end of the New Year season. It was usually a time for relatives and friends to visit each other and wish each other well. Hence, it was more or less a family-centred celebration.¹⁰ Schouten's mention of a community-scale celebration was certainly alien to the traditional Chinese in China. What Schouten observed must be an adoption of the local Javanese style of celebrating an occasion called a "slametan". The temporary erection of 'scaffolds

9 Translated from the French translation (*Voyage de Gautier Schouten aux Indes Orientales. Commence l'an 1658 et fini L'an 1665*, Rouen, 1725) by Purcell, V., *The Chinese in Southeast Asia*. O.U.P., 1951, p. 399. Schouten's report was originally written in Dutch in *Aanmerkelijkje Voyagie, Gedaan door Wouter Schouten naar Oost-Indien* (1676).

10 For a detail description of a traditional Chinese New Year celebration, see the novel by Pa Chin, *Chia* (The Family). Hong Kong, 1967, chapters 12 and 13. See also Low, D. and Comber, L., *Chinese Festivals in Malaya*. S'pore, 1958, chapter 1.

and theatres' in public with shows about 'their most famous heroes' was parallel to the Javanese *wayang* or puppet shows, which was, and still is, quite popular throughout Java. In fact, it was through these shows that much of the Javanese tradition and history were publicised. The celebration which went on 'for nights on end' was originally Chinese for the Chinese New Year was traditionally celebrated for fifteen days, but the style of celebration described by Schouten was Javanese. Schouten's reference to the '... buffoons disguised... as wild animals and fabulous beasts, with much beating of drums...' was most likely a distorted description of the Chinese dragon dance. The candles mentioned were probably jossticks used by the Chinese for worship. It can be seen that by this time, a combination of the traditional Chinese and Javanese way of life, had already undergone a harmonious process of acculturation.

In Schouten's report about the 'Chinese' in Java, he also mentioned that the children of these people were allowed to run about naked until they were seven or eight years old. Then they would be given a piece of cloth each to be wrapped round their waists. When these children were injured or ill, they were rubbed from head to foot with a kind of local ointment, called "Borborborri", a mixture of coconut-oil, sandalwood and herbs. This again portrays the local influence in the manner of bringing up children. In traditional Chinese society, the children were usually well dressed and almost kept exclusively indoors.¹¹ Hence, the scanty clothing of the children described by Schouten reflect adaptation of local customs.

It is interesting to note that the type of education given to the Sino-Javanese children as reported by Schouten was quite different from traditional Chinese education. These children in Java were taught practical subjects such as arithmetic and book-keeping. The girls learnt to sew, embroider, knit and even taught to engage in business management. Such subjects were ideologically opposed to the traditional Confucian education. Here, we see a clear example of a shift-away from Chinese traditional education among the Overseas Chinese. This indicated that the Chinese who came to Java up to this time were not from the conservative scholar-class. The teachers may have been educated in China, but the fact that their students would not be preparing for the Imperial Examination in China would have forced these teachers to teach subjects more practical for their immediate use.

It is also interesting to know that the Sino-Javanese girls in Java were given an education similar to those of the boys if they wanted to. It is not surprising to find the girls being encouraged to take part in business since their mothers were Javanese women and the latter were well known for their active role not only in managing the affairs at home, but also in

11 O. Lang, *Chinese Family and Society*. New Haven, Yale U.P., 1946 p. 76.

running their family business enterprises as well. Therefore, when the Javanese women married the Chinese, these wives would have encouraged their daughters to participate in all aspects of family life, including family business.

Schouten further mentioned the eating habits of the Sino-Javanese in Java, noting the fact that they used chopsticks to eat their food and that rice was served at the end of a meal. Since the wives were Javanese, cooking style must have been predominantly Javanese, with a blending of Chinese ways. The outcome of such blending is the famous and popular *Peranakan* or *Baba* food. Present-day *Peranakan* cooking testifies to the combination of Sino-Javanese recipes, such as *sajur asam* (a sour vegetable soup), *gado-gado* (a mixture of cooked or fresh vegetables, garnished with fried potato slices), *fried tempe* (fungus-fermented soya-bean cake), tahu (soya-bean curd) and *krupuk* (hard boiled eggs with shrimps or fish chips served with peanut sauce).¹²

The process of acculturation continued steadily throughout the 18th century with the Sino-Javanese population becoming more indigenised in their habits and customs. However, there were certain characteristics of the Chinese (e.g. ancestor worship, use of chopsticks), that persisted among the Sino-Javanese communities in Java. The regular inflow of fresh immigrants from China settlers constituted a major check to the complete assimilation of the Chinese settlers in Java. The better economic status of the Sino-Javanese encouraged them to stay together within their group. As a result, the way of life of the Sino-Javanese group became more and more withdrawn from the rest of the population. By the end of the 19th century, the Sino-Javanese communities became a significant part of the population and gradually became known as the *Peranakan*.

The *Peranakan* generally inherited and carried on with their predecessors' businesses. They need not work as hard as their Chinese forefathers in order to establish themselves. Therefore, they became more relaxed in their attitudes and far less zealous in their business enterprise. Comparing them with their Chinese forebearers, Crawford considered that these Sino-Javanese were 'inferior in energy and spirit to the original settlers.'¹³ This does not mean that the *Peranakan* were less capable than their Chinese predecessors. It means the absence of that sense of urgency among the Sino-Javanese to amass as much wealth as possible. They did not have the poverty-stricken background of their forefathers and, to a great extent, of the new arrivals, particularly those who came after 1850. These new arrivals were more hardworking. After all, the *Peranakan* were born in an environment with many opportunities to make a good living. They had no reason to work hard, especially most of them being self-employed.

12 G.L. Tan, *The Chinese of Sukabumi*, Cornell Monograph, 1965, p. 42.

13 J. Crawford, *History of the Indian Archipelago*. vol. 1, Edinburgh, 1820, p. 135.

The process of acculturation, and to a certain extent, assimilation, of the Peranakan continued gradually towards the indigenous way of life. This process was suddenly interrupted by the influx of Chinese female immigrants into Java after the Taiping Rebellion in 1850. From that time onwards, the Peranakan communities in Java became much more isolated than ever before. The new arrivals were much more aggressive than the earlier Chinese settlers. With the greater influx of Chinese male and female immigrants at the beginning of the 20th century, the spirit of competition and racial identity were heightened to such an extent as to cause the Dutch authorities to appoint "Chinese Capitans" to manage their own affairs in Java. The new arrivals ceased to marry local Javanese women as there were many Chinese women around. Hence, "pure" Chinese families appeared who were more Chinese in their way of life than the Peranakan and less sympathetic to the local population. In time, the new arrivals, called "Totok", became a significant group in Java and gradually grew to become aloof from the rest of the population. The Peranakan communities became divided both culturally and ideologically between the indigenous Indonesians and the Totok.

Although the demands for Chinese labourers to work in the mines and plantations in the Malaysian-Indonesian areas were great from the end of the 19th century onwards, there had never been a significant demand for these labourers in Java itself.¹⁴ Those who came to Java mostly engaged in retail businesses or shopkeeping. These new arrivals were quick to take advantage of the economic opportunities opened to them. They began to take over most of the commercial activities which were previously dominated by the Sino-Javanese or Peranakan. The "pure" Chinese families increased in number, especially after the opening in the first decade of the 20th century, of a Japanese passenger line, the *Nippon She Sen Kaisha*. This connected emigrant ports in China with Indonesian ports.¹⁵ As a result of mass immigration, the new arrivals soon became a dominant influence on the Peranakan in particular and on the other sections of the community in general.

A major development among the new immigrants in Java was the establishment of the *Tiong Hwa Hwe Koan* ("the Overseas Chinese Association") in Batavia in 1900. Within a few years, Chinese communities throughout Java had similar such organisations. They were established for two main purposes:

- (i) to promote Chinese Nationalism on the basis of Confucianism;
- and

14 D.E. Willmot, *The Chinese of Semarang*. Cornell U.P., Ithaca, 1960, p. 17.

15 T.J. Liem, *Kiwajat Semarang*. (History of Semarang) Boeklandel Ho Kim Yoe, c. 1933, p. 20.

- (ii) to break down the barriers which existed between the Peranakan and the Totok, and between the various speech groups—the Hokkiens, the Cantonese, the Hakkas and others.

The main function of these *Tiong Hwa Hwe Koan* was to operate Chinese schools for the Overseas Chinese there, using textbooks and teachers from China and teaching in Mandarin, the “national” language. Originally, the associations were set up to promote nationalism on the cultural basis, but after 1911, when the Chinese Republic was formed in China, these associations became politically dominated.¹⁶

In 1904, a *Tiong Hwa Hwe Koan* school was established in Semarang, a major township north of Java. It had an initial enrolment of 80 pupils and by 1930, the number rose to about 1,000. It was reported that throughout the Dutch period, there were far more Totok and Peranakan children attending Chinese schools than the Dutch-Chinese schools, the latter using Dutch as a medium of instruction.¹⁷ The fact that most of the Peranakan continued to send their children to the modern Chinese schools shows the extent of the influence of the China-orientated Totok over them. The main reason for the continued support of the Chinese schools by the Peranakan was due to neglect of the Chinese by the Dutch authorities. For decades, the Dutch Government in the Netherlands Indies followed a policy of ‘non-interference’ in the affairs of those under their rule as long as their own interest was not affected. By 1900, the Totok and the Peranakan began to organise their own schools through their *Tiong Hwa Hwe Koan*. These China-orientated Chinese schools received response from the Overseas Chinese in the area. The Dutch authorities at first permitted the Chinese to have a free hand in organising the schools for their own children. It was not until these Chinese schools began to show signs of becoming politically and socially dangerous to the public and to the Dutch in particular that the authorities began to establish rival schools in 1908, called the Dutch-Chinese schools.¹⁸

Another factor which affected the Chinese in Java, whether Peranakan or Totok, was the fact that these people were generally regarded by the authorities and treated by them as aliens. For a long time, the movements of the Chinese in Java were restricted and unreasonable heavy taxes were imposed upon them. A Peranakan official once made an enquiry about why the Peranakan parents continued to send their children to private Chinese schools rather than the Dutch-Chinese Schools. The replies indicated that the Dutch were prejudiced against them and also that they

16 J.L. Nio, *Riwajat 40 Taon dari Tiong Hwa Hwe Koan, Batavia*. T.H.H.K., 1940.

17 M. Hutasoit, *Compulsory Education in Indonesia*, UNESCO, *Studies on Compulsory Education*, XV. The Netherlands, Joh. Enshedeem Zonen, 1954.

18 I.L. Thio., ‘De Achtergrond van het Chinese ouderwijsprobleem in Indonesia’ in *Oriëntatie*, 1950, p. 113.

were resented by the indigenous ever since the Totok became a dominant group. Therefore, they joined with the Totok and turned to China.¹⁹ As a Peranakan himself put it:

'The undesirability of the present situation is not so much that our *warga-negara* of Chinese origin prefer Chinese education, but that they prefer this despite the fact that the interests of their children really lie in Indonesian education.²⁰

The Peranakan parents were obviously reacting against prejudice. Their feeling of insecurity and awareness of general mistrust and longstanding discrimination against them made them seek refuge in the organizational strength of their own ethnic group. Since the Peranakan were generally identified with the Totok by the rest of the community, they naturally turned to the Totok group. The Peranakan began to take pride in the traditions and customs of their land of origin (i.e. China). They hope this would strengthen their position.

Another current of influence on the Peranakan in Java came from the appearance of the various Chinese nationalist organizations as early as 1908. In that year, several *Soe Po Sia* ("Book and News Centres") were established in the various towns throughout Java. These began as discussion groups, but after 1911, they became mainly forums for propagating Chinese Nationalism and advocating allegiance to China. Through these organizations, the Peranakan in Java could gather up-to-date news of events in China and became more interested in the things happening in China. They gradually became less and less interested in what went on around them. This explains why most of the Chinese in Indonesia were passive or not interested in the Indonesian struggle for Independence from the Dutch.

The spirit of Chinese Nationalism in Java, as well as in other urban centres of Indonesia, was greatly stimulated by a series of visitors and emissaries from China. Outstanding among them was K'ang Yu-wei, a leading reformist who escaped the Empress Dowager's purge in 1898, made a visit to Java in 1903. He advocated Chinese patriotism and reform for China in which the Overseas Chinese in the Nanyang should have a part. He encouraged the establishment of Chinese schools among the Chinese communities overseas and discouraged the wearing of Javanese dress, chewing of betel-nuts, filing of teeth, and other indigenous customs then popular among the Peranakan women.²¹

The first Manchu Official visited Java (Semarang) in 1907. He was Ong Hong Siang, an Inspector of Education of the Imperial Government of

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 116.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 125 (Translated).

²¹ Liem, *Riwajat Semarang*, p. 190.

China. A peranakan newspaperman and a local Historian described the reaction of the Chinese community of Semarang in the following words:

'The Inspector's visit further strengthened the relationship between the Peranakan community in Semarang and China. The Inspector encouraged the establishment of *Tiong Hwa Hwe Koan* schools even in small towns. Mr. Ong Hong Siang was given a most rousing welcome'.²²

Besides visitors and envoys who came to Java, the Chinese press also encouraged the pro-China attitude among the Chinese communities in Java. Since the beginning of the 20th century, newspapers, periodicals and books were being published by the pro-China Peranakan intellectuals. Most of them wrote in the Malay language. The articles were mainly dedicated to reviving the Chinese cultural tradition amongst the Peranakan communities in Java. Like the various other Chinese organizations and activities, the printed page soon became more political than cultural in its pro-China emphasis.

Throughout the Dutch period, the Chinese were left to govern themselves through a Dutch appointed Chinese "Capitan" in each of their communities. However, when conflicts arose between the Dutch and the Chinese, especially in commercial matters, the Chinese were obliged to comply with Dutch Laws. This led to great resentments from the Chinese, who were familiar with anything European. Finally from 1919 onwards, Dutch Laws were enforced on the Chinese, thus having to grant equal status to the Chinese as well.

Since the influx of Chinese immigration from 1850 onwards, the Peranakan communities in Java while gradually undergoing a process of assimilation into the indigenous culture suddenly experienced a sudden impact of Chinese nationalism which confronted them with an identity crisis. By the middle of the 20th century, the Peranakan in Java finally became divided into different groups with various affiliations and loyalties. They began to lose their own distinctiveness and cohesiveness. The Peranakan culture eventually became nothing but a thing of the past, surviving to this day as a very insignificant group in a world of tremendous social and political changes.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 191.

