

Editor's Introduction

The 2009 volume of *Chinese Southern Diaspora Studies* focuses on Chinese in the Bahasa-speaking world of the Indonesian archipelago and Malay Peninsula, past and present.

The research articles begin with a symposium by three distinguished scholars discussing different, but related, aspects of the long historical association between Chinese business interests and the Dutch East India Company (VOC). Pin-tsun Chang analyses the economic and organisational basis that sustained this flourishing relationship for nearly two centuries by demonstrating the essential complementarity between the Dutch Company and Chinese business networks. Claudine Salmon traces the history of one Chinese community on Java—that of Surabaya—in an article that explores more than two centuries of Chinese life and commerce in what is now the second city of modern Indonesia. George Souza uses two new and valuable primary sources—a 1697 stele in Fujian and the records of credit extended to Chinese opium merchants by the Opium Society of the VOC—which, taken together, throw an important new light on many of the individuals and their personal networks involved in opium commerce and use under the VOC in the eighteenth century.

Next come two articles that address the same contemporary issue. It is now a decade since the fall of the Suharto government in Indonesia and the start of a reform era that has allowed the open expression of Chinese Indonesian culture, banned for decades by the former government. Chang-Yau Hoon and Margaret Chan both examine the phenomenon of Imlek festivities, the public expression of Chinese New Year since it became an official public holiday in 2002. Hoon's analysis explores Imlek from a national political perspective; while Chan puts the contemporary expression of the old West Kalimantan Hakka tradition of spirit-medium parades, now firmly linked to the final day of Imlek, under her ethnographic microscope.

Finally, the section concludes with two essays on aspects of contemporary Chinese life in Malaysia. Florence Graezer Bideau and Mondher Kilani explore the issues and local implications involved in the recent acceptance of old clan jetties in Penang as part of a UNESCO World Heritage area; while James Chin takes a wider perspective to analyse the social and economic consequences of the discriminatory New Economic Policy, and its tacit continuation until today, for Chinese Malaysians.

The 2009 issue contains four short research notes, beginning with two that return the focus to Chinese in twentieth-century Surabaya. Francisca Handoko discusses how the interconnection between changing educational policies and practices has resulted in complex multilingualism among Chinese families, at the same time that it has formed a young generation among whom many now identify as Indonesian and consider their Chinese heritage no longer personally significant. Then Ahk Muzakki explores how the new, Chinese-style mosque constructed in 2002 by the Chinese Muslim minority of Surabaya is helping to bridge the gap between them and the majority Indonesian Muslim community. The last two research notes switch back to Malaysia. Tojo Tetsuo's analysis shows how Chinese tin miners in the 1880s, formerly tied to Larut kongsi organisations by indebtedness to mine owners, grasped the opportunity to flee to the new tin fields opening up further inland, in Kinta, where circumstances let them pursue their own economic interests as free labourers. Finally, Tan Teng-Phee takes us behind the barbed wire of the New Villages during the Malayan Emergency to reveal the new grassroots perspective on this troubled period that oral history opens up for us.

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