



UNIVERSITI BRUNEI DARUSSALAM  
INSTITUTE OF ASIAN STUDIES

# Bridging China and Indonesia: The Role of Chinese Indonesians

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[www.cyhoon.com](http://www.cyhoon.com)

# Who are the Chinese in Indonesia?

- 1.2% (2.8 million) of the population identified as Chinese (2010 Census)
- 'Wealthy' and conspicuous urban middle class
- Large population of poor Chinese in smaller cities are less visible



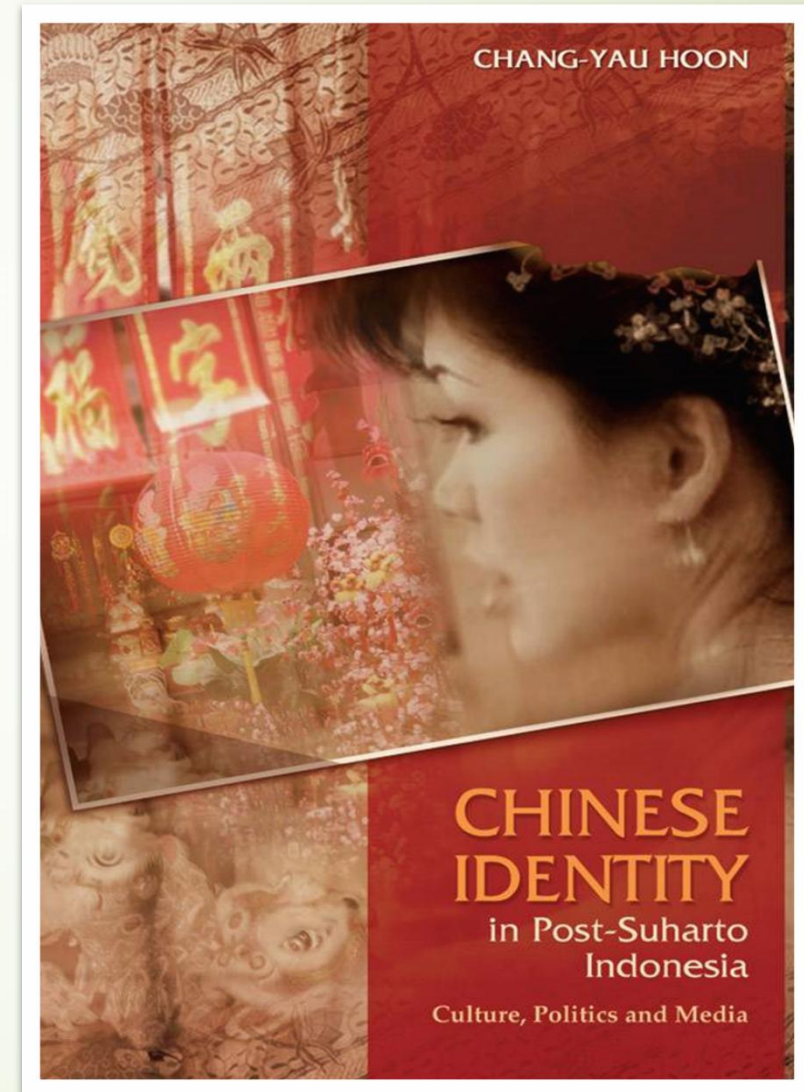
# Chinese during the Suharto's regime

- ▶ Given privilege to expand the nation's economy and their own wealth during the New Order (1966-1998)
- ▶ Military-backed Assimilation Policy
- ▶ Closure of Chinese schools, media and associations (3 pillars of Chineseness)
- ▶ Marginalised and discriminated against in all social spheres (culture, language, politics, entrance to state universities, public employment)

# Post-Suharto's democratization

- ▶ Abandonment of the Assimilation Policy
- ▶ Democracy and Multiculturalism
- ▶ Resurgence of Chineseness
- ▶ Political activism among the Chinese

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# Entering the political sphere

- ▶ Rising number of Chinese candidates for legislative elections:
  - ▶ 20 in 1999
  - ▶ 150 in 2004
  - ▶ 213 in 2009
  - ▶ 315 in 2014 (Tjhin 2009 & Setijadi 2016)
- ▶ There are currently 18 ethnic Chinese members in the national parliament



# Governor of Jakarta: Basuki Tjahaja Purnama 鐘萬學 (Ahok)

- ▶ Former Regent of East Belitung Regency in the Bangka-Belitung Province, and Vice Governor of Jakarta. Succeeded Joko Widodo as Governor after his election as President
- ▶ Divisive figure, bad temperament, pro-middle class
- ▶ 'Black campaign' on his minority status as Chinese Christian
- ▶ Gubernatorial election 2017



# Chineseness as social capital

- ▶ 'A Beautiful Bridge'
- ▶ Rise in China and China's soft power in SE Asia
- ▶ China-Indonesia Comprehensive Strategic Partnership (2013)
- ▶ Chinese associations function as trade and cultural intermediaries
- ▶ Mandarin-speaking Chinese businessmen function as 'bridge'



# Case Study: Harry Susilo

## 黃世偉

- Currently 75 years old
- Founded the Sekar Group 實嘉集團
- 'King of Prawn Crackers in Indonesia'
- From rags to riches
- Son of a Chinese father (Fujian) and Peranakan mother
- Multiple homes: Indonesia, China, US and Singapore





# Bridging Indonesia and China: Harry Susilo

- ▶ 1966: Started with a modest seafood acquisition and distribution business
- ▶ 1968: Collaborated with Japanese company Toyo Menka
- ▶ Business expanded to refrigeration, processing and export of seafood
- ▶ 1995: Invited by Indonesian government to be an advisor on Sino-Indonesia economic, social and cultural exchange
- ▶ 1999: Invited to be part of President Abdurrahman Wahid's delegation for Wahid's first state visit to China
- ▶ Awarded the Indonesian Government Upakarti (1987) and Upapardana (1991) Awards for contributions in SMEs

# Bridging Indonesia and China: Harry Susilo

- ▶ 1976: Started exporting cashew nuts to China
- ▶ Became a regular VIP invitee to significant events in China (e.g. Return of HK, opening ceremony of the China Olympics, etc)
- ▶ 2004: Donated to the establishment of the Harry Susilo Applied Finance Lab at the Beijing Language and Culture University
- ▶ Maintained very close relationship with the Overseas Chinese Affairs Office
- ▶ Led Chinese business delegates from Indonesia and Singapore to China for official visits.