

programmes are compared to those which were primarily characterized by the so-called "monological journalism" aired during the New Order era.

In the final chapter (Chapter IX pp. 159-163), Jurriëns concludes that radio journalism of the late- and post-Sioeharto periods has enabled segments of the Indonesian population to engage in new media experiences and to build an identity that extends beyond their local societies, making them feel more like members of a cosmopolitan society. However, I would also like to point out that in the *Reformasi* period many radio stations also became interested in broadcasting programmes in regional languages and with local contexts. This demonstrates that these new media trends not only fostered a sense of cosmopolitanism, but that these new opportunities also created room for different regions to seek to present themselves. No doubt, the mediation of local culture in radio and other media contributes to an increased sense of regionalism in Indonesia, which is expected to affect, both politically and socially, the nation-state project of Indonesia as a multi-ethnic country.

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Dewi Anggraeni, *Mereka bilang aku China; Jalan mendaki menjadi bagian bangsa*. Yogyakarta: Bentang Pustaka, 2010, ix + 289 pp. ISBN978-602-8864-05-3. Price: IDR 40,000 (soft cover).



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This is a remarkable book, written by a remarkable woman about remarkable women. So far, studies about ethnic Chinese in Indonesia have focused mostly on economic and political aspects. There have been studies on their social and cultural life, but they are much less in number and they usually concern the entire community, and pay little or no attention to gender specificity. It is thus not easy to find significant studies that focus on ethnic Chinese women's lives and conditions.

Fortunately, the situation has recently improved. In 1990, Lim Sing Meij published her dissertation entitled *Ruang sosial baru perempuan Tionghoa; Sebuah kajian pascakolonial* (A new social space for Chinese women; A postcolonial study). It is a study based on interviews with six women professionals and focuses on identity and Chineseness. Another is Ju-Lan Thung's study entitled *Identities in Flux; Young Chinese in Jakarta*, which is a study of eighteen Chinese Indonesians, of whom nine are women (For more references on this topic, see

Mely G. Tan 2007).

Dewi Anggraeni's book is a valuable contribution and a welcome addition to these books, and she has written it in a special way. She is a journalist and a novelist and this book is her third non-fiction book and her first on Chinese Indonesians. Although she has an academic background and is Adjunct Research Associate at the School of Political and Social Inquiry of the Faculty of Arts at Monash University in Melbourne, Australia, she has made it clear that this is not an academic book. This is why I consider her a remarkable woman: with her academic background, combined with her experience as journalist and novelist, she has succeeded in using a different approach. Remarkably, she does not refer to the eight women that appear in her book as her respondents, but rather as her "protagonists", like the characters that populate a novel. She spoke with them more than once, and their conversations became very personal and intense. She met most of them in Jakarta, but in order to meet one of them she also traveled to Banda Aceh while she traveled to Papua figuratively, where two of them originally came from, but who now have settled in Bogor and Yogyakarta where she interviewed them.

Dewi herself is of Chinese origin, and because of that, she used to think that she understood the situation of the ethnic Chinese because she thought she was able to view the situation from within (p. 1). When she finally decided to work seriously on the book, she realized that her insider understanding was an illusion because the condition of the ethnic Chinese in Indonesia is much more complicated than she ever imagined. However, reading the literature about ethnic Chinese brought her also to the observation that there are descriptions and analyses that do not fit her own experience, or those of others she knows.

This led her to questions of stereotypes and stereotyping. She found that the most persistent stereotype is that ethnic Chinese are supposedly obsessed with amassing money. The term used for this is *mata duitan*, to accumulate money in whatever way. Although in her experience she found many ethnic Chinese that do not fit this stereotype, it persists nonetheless. Apparently, ethnic Chinese who are not *mata duitan* seem to be invisible. The focus of the book is to make these individuals visible (p. 3).

The author has not described explicitly what criteria she used to decide who her "protagonists" would be or how she was going to find them, but she has succeeded in bringing together a remarkable group of women who do not fit the stereotype of ethnic Chinese at all.

Ester Indahyani Jusuf (born in Malang in 1971) is a human rights activist, very assertive, consistent, and persistent in her demand for an end to discrimination and injustice. Susi Susanti (born in Tasikmalaya in 1971) has brought fame to Indonesia as a badminton gold medalist during the Olympics in Barcelona, Spain, in 1992, and in other international sports events, despite the fact that while she was doing her utmost to win the title, her family back home was threatened by violent attacks during anti-Chinese riots. Both women have become national and international figures.

Linda Christianti (born in Sungailiat in 1970) is remarkable because she has worked as a labour activist and has organized demonstrations. She is also a well-known short story writer who has won the Khatulistiwa Award, and is recognized as an essay writer with a sharp pen. In *Kompas* of 29 September 2010, a news item featured Linda as speaker at the launch of *Ceritalah Indonesia* by the well-known Malaysian lawyer and columnist Karim Aslam, a book that Linda edited.

Then there is Hajah Sias Mawarni Saputra, born with the name Lie Yit Pin in 1943, a Muslim ethnic Chinese, who owns and operates a chain of Ragusa restaurants, and who also teaches Mandarin. She is a familiar figure at ethnic Chinese gatherings, walking around in her Muslim garb with her head covered.

Maria Sundah (born in 1953) is a teacher and translator of English. She is the daughter of an ethnic Chinese father and a Manadonese mother. After her father adopted his wife's family name, he and all his children no longer use their Chinese names.

Jane Luyke Oey (born in Semarang in 1935) may be said to be an "ethnic Chinese by association", because her husband, the well-known late Oey Hay Djoen, was a member of the PKI, the Indonesian Communist Party. After 1965, he was detained and later sent in exile to Pulau Buru. He was imprisoned for 14 years without trial. During his absence, Jane, their daughter Mado, and her sister-in-law suffered terrible injustices. These injustices were caused by her husband's affiliation with the communists. The insults shouted at her had nothing to do with her husband being Chinese, but because he was a communist. Her response to these injustices was nothing short of heroic, as she responded in a firm, assertive way.

Finally, there are the two sisters, Milana (born in Nabire in 1975) and Meilani Yo (born in Jayapura in 1978). Theirs is the story of the daughters of an exceptional family. Both parents are ethnic Chinese, but the grandmothers on both sides were ethnic Papuan. They used to live in a multi-ethnic environment and physically they show their mixed parentage.

It is clear that all these women are different, and have moved away completely from the traditional model of ethnic Chinese women as being submissive and meek: as obedient daughters of their fathers, as wives obedient to their husbands, and as widows obedient to their oldest sons. Dewi has succeeded in finding "invisible" Chinese Indonesians: in their choice of work, attitude, and behaviour, they do not at all fit the "money grabbers" stereotype.

I agree with Dewi's observations at the closing of her book (pp. 261-267). These eight protagonists may be said to belong to the "middle class". They are well-educated professionals, although not all of them hold a university degree. This background, which is no doubt similar to that of the author herself, has enabled Dewi to communicate with them well. She admits that she had difficulty in gaining the trust of "working class" women, because they were afraid that telling their story might get them into trouble and they were also suspicious of her motivations as to why she wanted to write her book.

Another interesting observation is that racial integration may occur through interethnic marriage (Jane's family is multi-ethnic, Maria Sundah's father is an ethnic Chinese and her mother is an ethnic Manadonese) and through adoption at a very early age (the parents of Linda's mother were ethnic Chinese, but her mother was adopted when she was three days old by a Bangka-Malay family).

The author also discusses "moral reciprocity". In my view, this means that ethnic Chinese and the ethnic Indonesian community interact in such a way that in everyday life, in both communities, people individually and collectively operate in the same stream of society. Those who live exclusively in their own community will not experience this reciprocity.

Dewi has dug a gold mine of experiences in her protagonists' stories. They show the Chinese Indonesians' variety in ethnic background and include ethnic Chinese-Papuans; in choice of employment they range from Olympic gold medalist to labour and human rights activist, to fighter against injustice, to entrepreneur, dentist, writer, and university teacher; as to their choice of spouses: four married ethnic Chinese (one of them divorced and is now single); two married non-ethnic Chinese; two did not marry (one of them had a non-ethnic Chinese and later an ethnic Chinese boy friend). From the stories her protagonists told the author I can discern a continuum in the two interrelated concepts of identity and Chineseness: from those who do not question their ethnic Chineseness at all (Ester, Susi, Hj. Sias), to those who feel uncomfortable or even insulted when people say that they are *Cina* (hence the title: "*Mereka bilang aku China*") (Linda, although she later seems to have come to terms with the fact; Maria Sundah, who prefers to be associated with her non-ethnic Chinese family); to those for whom their Chinese background is irrelevant and who seem to have no difficulty with their identity (Milana and Meilani Yo).

Their facial features – how Chinese they look – is apparently also a factor in their acceptance and rejection of, or indifference towards their Chinese background. Linda, whose mother looks Chinese and is taken for a Chinese rejects her background and refuses to discuss the fact that she was adopted from ethnic Chinese parents. The same holds for Maria Sundah, who looks Chinese, and who is an interesting case of someone who has adopted the basic Chinese family value: the *uhao* (Hokkian pronunciation; *xiao* in Mandarin, meaning filial piety) she found in her former husband's family, and although she is divorced, she maintains close relations with her former mother-in-law. Then there are the Yo sisters, whose features clearly show their mixed background and who have no problem with their identity.

No doubt, the stories of these eight women are rich and there are many more interesting aspects that could be explored further. However, there are a few blemishes that might have been avoided. Is the correct wording *etnis* or *etnik* Chinese? This should have been checked with the *Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia*. Then there is the use of terms like *ambiance*, *imaji*, *respek*, *rekor-rekor*, *signifikan*, *aksi bully*, *eklektik*, *asertif*, *subliminal*. For these words, the equivalent

in Indonesian might have been used. Then on page 163, there is mention of "toko P&D", which is from the Dutch *Provisiën en Dranken*, meaning a "store selling daily necessities and drinks". Today it is the equivalent to a small supermarket. Then there are a few more little things that still need to be looked into. On page 191, for *gadis Eurasia* it is more common in Indonesian to use *gadis Indo*; *pasangan penari*, should be *pasangan pedansa*

To conclude, this is a highly interesting book, telling in their own words the experiences of a variety of women who have one thing in common: they are, or are considered by others, ethnic Chinese in varying degrees, or as in Jane's case, closely associated with an ethnic Chinese. Basically, the book explores the problem of identity and Chineseness, a topic that has become very important in view of the spread (some people see it as the threat) of globalism. Studies on this topic abound and many more will probably be written. Dewi Anggraeni's book is a valuable contribution in this search for identity and I suggest a very readable one.

#### REFERENCE

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Cok Sawitri, *Sutasoma*. Jakarta: Kaki Langit Kencana, 2009, 469 pp. ISBN 978-6-02-855613-2. Price: IDR 75,000 (soft cover).

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The Old Javanese *Kakawin Sutasoma* was written by Mpu Tantular in the late fourteenth century during the heydays of the Majapahit Empire. So far, only few people have read this literary masterpiece because it is originally written in the Old-Javanese language. However, nowadays, a more extensive readership has access to the contents of the text thanks to Dwi Woro Retno Mastuti and Hastho Bramantyo's hard work as, together, they translated Tantular's poem into Indonesian. As the base for their translation, they used the transliteration of the *Kakawin Sutasoma* Soewito Santoso published in 1975. Readers who understand Old Javanese can check directly whether the