

A Preliminary Survey of the Parallel, Independent and Interdependent Developments of the Chinese Peranakan Literature in Indonesia and Malaysia

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Abstract

The development of Chinese *peranakan* literatures in Indonesia and Malaysia have so far been studied separately. This means that a comparison of their similarities, differences and influences on one and the another has not been made. Whatever the reasons, this article is a preliminary survey of their parallel, independent, and interdependent developments taking place in roughly the same time at the end of the 19th century. No complete survey can be done without studying all of them, which is impossible at the moment without reading all of them. Whether in prose, or in poetry, whether original or translation or even transliteration, Chinese *peranakan* literatures were popular in big towns, concentration centres of these peoples, in Jakarta, Malang, Madiun, Malacca, Penang, Singapore, Solo, Sukabumi, Surabaya, to mention a few. The golden age of Chinese *peranakan* literature was clearly at the height of their economic position developed in close connection with the expansion of their economic power. Most of the extant publications are devoted to education and entertainment with some political overtures which make some of the Indonesian novels to appear like immigrant literature in the colonial period.

Keywords: Straits Settlements East Indies Chinese peranakan
Serialised Publications cloak and dagger novels

Background

The contact between the Malay World and China has been mainly trade for centuries. This has changed culturally with the birth of a new generation of Chinese *peranakan* who were educated and able to write, publish and circulate their literary works in books and newspapers, using the Romanized Malay, different from Jawi script, around the end of 1880s. The dawn of Chinese *peranakan* literature in Indonesia (called East Indies then) and Malaysia (particularly in the Straits Settlements consisting of Malacca, Singapore and Penang) also saw the first glimpses of the influence of Chinese literature in the Malay World and had continually crystallising and metamorphosing to become the Chinese *peranakan* literature for half a century. Salmon (1987: 375) documents that “G. Schlegel and J. Brandes were probably the first Western scholars to have paid attention to the development of Malay and Javanese writings by the Chinese. In a short article published in 1902, Brandes attempted to survey a few Javanese and Malay translations derived from Chinese works. In so doing, he pointed out the fact that at least two Javanese translations, namely *Sam Pek Ing Tae (Liang Shanbo yu Zhu Yingtai* 1873) and *Lo Tong (Luo Tong sao bei* or “Luo Tong Clears the North”, 1881) had preceded their Malay counterparts which appeared in 1885 and 1884-87 respectively. This assertion is corroborated by the fact that the oldest Javanese translation which has so far been traced (under the title of *Li Si Bin*) is dated 1859, whereas the first in Malay, entitled *Koran Giok Lek*, did not appear until 1877”.

Until the brink of 1980's, there was no study on how, why and what is Chinese *peranakan* literature in Indonesia and Malaysia, except Kwee (1997), Tan (1981), Salmon (1981 & 1987b) and Teo (1980) The translation of Chinese historical romances such as the *San-kuo* and Christian hymns for use in Protestant churches and the publication of newspapers are clear indications that not only a large reading public existed, but also that there was a big pool of Chinese *peranakan* writers. It is general knowledge that they were the descendents of some of the early Chinese emigrants,

who, for various reasons, have married local women and settled in the Malay World. Initially, they were pockets of merchant communities in big towns and ports. Not much is known of their cultural life when they remained abroad for several generations. Without returning to their native land, they frequently cut themselves off culturally, in particular from the instructions of their Chinese sages. In terms of language, food and dress, they imitated the natives in different localities, including the Malays, the Javanese, the Makassarese and the Madurese, to mention a few. Eventually, successful ones were trading elites, had links with the British in the Straits Settlements and Dutch in the East Indies, and prospered, as compared to the poor Chinese *totok* who arrived in waves of migration encouraged by the Dutch and British colonial masters in East Indies (now Indonesia) and British Malaya (now Malaysia) respectively in the 19th century. One distinct characteristics of this society of Chinese descent was that they used Malay in daily communication, later on in expressing themselves, and translating and writing in what is generally known as Chinese *peranakan* literature.

So far, the development of Chinese *peranakan* literature in Indonesia and Malaysia has been studied separately. This means that no comparison of their similarity, differences and influence on one another has been made. Is it because the two are independent developments? Or is it because Chinese *peranakan* in the Straits Settlements different from their cousins in Indonesia? Or is it because of the different spelling systems they used? Or is it because it is not known how the Indonesian Chinese *peranakan* popular literature was received by the Malaysian Chinese *peranakan* and vice versa? Whatever the reasons, we attempt to have a preliminary survey of their parallel and independent and interdependent developments taking place at roughly the same time at the brink of the 19th century to know how they developed, how they were received. No complete survey can be done without studying all of them, which is impossible at the moment. Without reading all of them, it is impossible to make comparison. What is possible is to

compare the summary of some of them provided by Salmon (1981 & 1987b), Sim (2008), Kwee (1997), and others. What are compared are mainly the themes and some social background. In doing so, we hope to map their similarities, differences and influences on one and the other through various borrowings, adaptations, imitations, and how they have penetrated into the neighbouring countries and how they have inspired local writers. Whether in prose, or in poetry, whether original or translation or even transliteration, Chinese *peranakan* literature were popular in big towns, concentration centres of these peoples, in Jakarta, Malang, Madiun, Malacca, Penang, Singapore, Solo, Sukabumi, Surabaya, to mention a few. The golden age of Chinese *peranakan* literature was clearly at the height of their economic position developed in close connection with the expansion of their economic power in the 19th century. Most of the extant publications are from this period when they devoted great attention to education and entertainment through the publication of didactic, fictional and Romantic works.

Documentation

It is these literary works that demonstrate authorship, creativity and writing skills of the Indonesian and Malaysian Chinese *peranakan*. Tan (1981) and Salmon (1981 & 1987b), among others, have traced, identified and listed most of the literary works in their catalogues. It is through Salmon's catalogues that we are better informed of the various versions of the translation mostly in the Malay language, while some under Javanese, Madurese and Makassar languages. Without their original titles, it would be difficult to identify their originals. Now, majority of the Chinese *peranakan* publications, printed in newsprints, are in bad shape. Many were left with only records in the form of advertisement in some other books in some major libraries in USA, Europe, Indonesia and Malaysia. But, it is through these advertisements, some kind of sale strategies used then, that we have a better picture of the physical breadth and circulation of the

publications.

It is also from the catalogues and advertisement lists that we more or less know when the first translations, transliterations, serialised publications, *pantun* and others appeared. But we are not sure whether the Chinese *peranakan* literature in Indonesia and Malaysia are parallel, or independent or interdependent developments. One example of interdependent development is the reprinting in Batavia, with a few changes, in 1884, a translation work called *Koran Giok Lek*, published originally in Singapore in 1877. The advertisement of some Indonesian books in Malaysia might indicate some idea on the circulation of Indonesian publications in Malaysia and vice versa. It is through translation works that Chinese *peranakan* in Malaysia and Indonesia maintained an interest in Chinese literature and link with China. We are grateful to Salmon (1987) in tracing the oldest translation of a Chinese story in a Javanese manuscript, dated 1859: *Xue Rengui zheng xi*. To-date, the oldest printed work, some kind of religious and didactic nature, was published in 1877 in Jawi script and the first known translation of a Chinese novel was published in Batavia in 1882. No less than forty works were printed between 1883 and 1886. Salmon lists more than 700 translations in Malay with less than 20 titles of translation in Javanese for a period spanning over a century from 1870 to 1960 in Indonesia, while there are some 70 translations published in Malaya and Singapore between 1889 and the 1950's. We are also informed of Balinese and Madurese versions of *Liang Shanbo and Zhu Yingtai* (Salmon 1987b). As it is, we are now struck by the wide range publications: original prose and poetry, short stories, translations and newspapers in a span of some 100 years in Indonesia and 50 years in Malaysia. It is the translation of historical novels, like other religious and didactic books, from China had a significant role in shaping Chinese *peranakan* popular beliefs and values. Thus, in the span of a few years, there appeared numerous translations of very popular historical novels.

The Development of Chinese Peranakan Literature

As there is still so much that we do not know and are not sure of at the moment, we can only provide a preliminary survey of the Chinese *peranakan* literature in Indonesia and Malaysia in the 19th century. To begin with, we know virtually nothing about the way they acquired their knowledge of Chinese belles-lettres besides the information that some children from well-to-do families might have been given private tuition at home by someone familiar with Chinese literature. Gradually, they could read texts in Chinese and enjoyed reading. The massive and sudden appearance of books implied the existence of a big pool of writers, translators, publishers and reading public, men and women and school-going children. All these indicated that the Chinese *peranakan* then had not only had disposable income, but also the time. All these social and economic factors made the new generation of Chinese *peranakan* realized the importance of reading, education and entertainment. They started by translating a wide range of Chinese stories, particularly the historical novels, before writing original stories with local background.

There are many theories on the origin of Chinese *peranakan* literature. One of them is the Chinese *peranakan* community liked to read for knowledge and entertainment after doing well economically, besides that point that this new activity provided additional opportunity for them to venture into a new kind of business: publication and printing. Equally important is that the Dutch colonial rule encouraged Chinese *peranakan* literature and their circulation in the sense that most of the initial Chinese *peranakan* literature were published by Dutch firm, for example, van der Velde Co in Semarang. In 1887 Lie, under economic pressure, sold his printing machines to a Dutch firm, Albrecht and Co. In addition, Sie Hian Ling had also worked as a journalist first for G.G.T. van Dorp that created *Selompret Melajoe* in 1860 and later for Gebr. Janse that started *Tamboer Melajoe* in 1885. Many translators had their works published in Batavia by Dutch firms such as van Dorp and Bruining in 1883. Even the first translation

known to date of a Chinese novel was published in Batavia in 1882 by that above-mentioned Dutch publisher who also published Malay newspapers. Nevertheless, the majority of Chinese *peranakan* literature was published by *peranakan* publishers, including Sam Hien inn Kiok, Hap Sing Kong Sie, Liang You, Kemadjoean, Unitas, Ho Kim Yoo (Semarang), Kwee Khe Soei, Tjong koon Liong, Kho Tjeng Bie, Kwee Seng Tjoen, Tan Thian Soe, Kho Tjeng Bie, Lie Tek Loong, Sunrise (Batavia), Tan Khoon Swie (Kediri), Sie Dhian Ho, Swastika (Solo), Ong Tjong Sian (Tangerang), Louw Co, Semangat, (Djombang), Geb. Gimberg, Siang Nak In Kwan, Indah, (Soerabaya), Seng Hap Tjan Lie, Sin Po, (Bandung), L. M. H. Thorig (Ambon), Paragon (Malang) and Phoenix Publishing House (Medan). Across the Straits of Malacca, there were nine texts published in Singapore by four different publishers in 1889: Poo Wah Hean Press, Koh Yew Hean Press, Kim Sek Chye Press and the Mercantile Press. There were incomplete translation works, varying in lengths of between 61 and 274 pages, from well-known Chinese novels and short stories including *Sanguo yanyi*, *Erdu mei* and *Mulan cong jun*. They were among the historical novels, love stories, fantastic and social novels. Like their cousins in Indonesia, Chinese *peranakan* in Malaysia enjoyed the stories as story-tellers continued to retell Chinese tales and the tradition of translating novels continued. It was the Japanese occupation of Indonesia and Malaysia in 1942 that brought an end to this literary production. Knowing that most Chinese in Indonesia and Malaysia had used newspapers and literary works to voice their patriotism, the Japanese authorities had suppressed the former and hundreds of journalists and authors arrested, imprisoned and tortured (Ding 2006). On the other hand, the discriminatory policy under the Dutch colonial rule had inspired Chinese *peranakan* in Indonesia to write novels and cloak-and-dagger stories that fitted so well with their aspirations and were always looking for room to express anger, frustration, and fight for justice and freedom. In other words, the new generation of Chinese *peranakan* in Indonesia and Malaysia knew the

power of pen in education, entertainment and expression.

It is believed that story telling and theatrical performances were also responsible in promoting the development of Chinese peranakan literature in Indonesia. Salmon(1987b) documented that Liem told that an old lady, a match-maker by profession, was frequently asked to go to private homes to entertain relatives, friends and guests on special occasions, like weddings, births and funerals. By retelling the stories as she moved around, she had helped to spread the Chinese fictions. On the role of story tellers, John Kwee (1977) informs that his grandmother was a good story-teller who had Chinese and indigenous stories read to her and she retold them to her grandchildren. She was believed to have a good memory of stories, plots and characters as discussed by Walter Ong (1982).The development of Chinese *peranakan* literature was also boosted by the population growth and boom in local printing and publishing houses and newspapers which sponsored translations and serialised publications. To better appraise the reception of Chinese *peranakan* literature, we have to reflect on how they were circulated. To this could be added the institution of lending libraries, *taman bacaan*, which did play a role in circulating and preserving some of them. These commercial lending libraries developed in big towns and cities where Chinese *peranakan* concentrated, including Palembang, Batavia, Banjarmasin and Makassar. In its own way, *taman bacaan*, had also created an appetite for Chinese stories as storytellers and theatrical performances. European travellers, including Edmund Scott, who went to Banten, West Java, between 1602 and 1605, saw opera performances. More importantly, theatrical performances continued until the 19th century when Major William Thorn also reported performances of *wayang kulit* showing the tale of *Liang Shanbo Zhu Yingtai* which was immensely popular with many printed versions in Malay, Javanese, Balinese and even Madurese languages. As it is, Chinese novels were introduced in Java rather early. Related to it, Salmon (1897) quoted J.J.L. Duyvendak who had documented that Dutch brought back some oriental books, including at least a copy of the

well-known novel *Shuihu zhuan*, which they might have acquired in Banten, an important trading port then. As years went by, Banten was just one of the towns where Chinese *peranakan* literature emerged and developed. They included Kediri, Madiun and Surabaya in East Java, Semarang, Surakarta, Parakan and Blora in Central Java, Buleleng in Bali. Batavia, Palembang, Kerukut, Tembora, Jembatan Lima, and Kampung Rawa Sentiong in Banjarmasin, centres of administration, commerce, printing press, education and opportunity.

The appearance of printed fiction in Malay by the Chinese *peranakan* at a time when they were incapable of composing original stories should be regarded as a highly significant phenomenon. It shows that there was a great and urgent need for reading materials, whether for entertainment or education or information. They started with translating Chinese historical novels, romance, religious and Western novels. The term traditional Chinese fiction refers to stories of Ming and Qing dynasties. In the beginning, translations of novels were extremely popular. Top the list were historical novels like *Sanguo zhi yanyi*, love stories such as *Wumei yuan* and supernatural world like *Baishhe jingji*, which had inevitably led to the rise (or renewal) of interest in ancestral culture among the Chinese *peranakan* of the mid-19th century. This development could also be due to translation and the news in local newspapers about foreign countries and especially about China with the new wave of migration resulting from the suppression of the Taiping rebellion (1866) in China. Salmon (1987b) has documented no less than 759 translations from the Chinese spanning from the 1870's until the 1960's compared to some 233 Chinese-Malay translations of Western works. This figure may indicate that Chinese *peranakan* had a deeper interest in the culture of their ancestral motherland as the translation work continued, with Boen Sing Hoo, Lie Kim Hok, Tjong Hok Long, Yap Goan Ho and women translators, including Thio Tjio Nio, who translated fictions for a newspaper, *Tiong Hoa Wi Sien Po*, founded in Bogor in 1906. There must have been a very large

public wanting to read Chinese novels and Confucian teachings.

Translation of Chinese Literature

As mentioned earlier, Chinese *peranakan* literature began with translation before original writing with local background. Translation of a wide range of Chinese stories, particularly the historical novels, was necessary as not only because many Chinese *peranakan* audience either could not read or found it difficult to read the original texts but also because that it was is the alternative route of transmission. As many translators took liberties with the texts and deviated from the original, omitted original poetry, chapter divisions and the headings and left out descriptions which have no ready equivalents in Malay, included additional material (including footnotes, maps, illustrations, glossary, *pantun* and *syair*) either for explanatory purposes or to make the translation more understandable, readable, enjoyable, palatable and appealing to the local audience who could not read Chinese text, thus the word translation is used as a blanket term to refer to both translations and adaptations. This means that very few Chinese *peranakan* translations were faithful to the original. Thus, we find different kinds of additions in the translation of *Sanguo* by Tjie Tjin Koeij (Indonesia) and Chan Kim Boon (Malaysia). The former had also provided his translation of *Sanguo* a map with the various place-names found in the novel, gave their contemporary names and tried to give the Western equivalent for each date in the original, and the latter, Chan Kim Boon, whose translation in Singapore much earlier, had converted the dates of the original and added footnotes, including a list of Chinese expressions used in Malay from volume 10 onwards. By and large, translation did not follow the original plot, but did it with omissions here and there, and even some changes in the order of the paragraphs and the sub-titles. The above-mentioned changes, including abridgement, omission, coining new terms combining a Chinese word with a Malay word, were needed as not only there were simply no ready equivalents in the two different languages (Chinese and Malay),

but also to explain a particular point, and thus expand the narrative, giving more space to the characters to perform and convey things unavailable in the original texts. These insertions functioned like explanatory, cross-reference and introductory footnotes, besides the introductory notes and prefaces. In other words, it is difficult to render the compactness and the precision of the well-rooted original Chinese meaning and context in translation and it is difficult to separate translations from adaptations and adaptations with partial rewritings. In some *Chritera dahulu kala*, there are poems in *pantun* and introductory poems to introduce the story not available in the originals. Similarly, Liem Kheng Yong in Indonesia, who translated Chinese fiction into Makassarese, also inserted long poems, which refer to his personal life. Thinking about the great diversity of social origins and the qualifications of the translators, it is inevitable to say that the translations differed greatly in quality. As there were also verse adaptations of Chinese stories transcribed into romanised *peranakan*, thus, we have both translation(s) and adaptation(s) of the same Chinese story. It is never easy to get hold of the Chinese original. *Ular putih and hitam* and *Liang Sambo and Zu intai* are two examples of free verse adaptation. They are either based on previous prose translations, or they have a lot of additions not directly related to the story. Thus, it is not easy to distinguish either translation, adaptation or new version of story, moreover there are modifications in the translation republished under a different title. As most of the translations are loose adaptations, it is indeed a challenge to know the influence of Chinese fiction in Indonesian and Malaysian *peranakan* literature. Nevertheless, it was the fairy tales, ghost stories and historical romances from China that first exerted an immense influence on the creation of *peranakan* literature. They were firstly “translated and only in later years many original literary works were written based on the *peranakan*’s experience, aspiration and true stories as collected by newspaper men. Whether inculcated from translation or developed from journalism, the original literary works based on creativity and imagination were “unofficial histories” forming the bulk of

reportage literature then. They were also important in terms of education and entertainment as there were frequent reprints. Interestingly, many of these novels are large, some extending to many volumes, and many taking a year or more to read.

The most popular Chinese literary works translated were *Sanguo zhi yan*, *Sam Pek Ing Tai*. In Indonesia, the translation of the long story *Sanguo* appeared initially serially in *Sin Po* in 1910, and then in book form in 65 instalments, totalling 5,308 pages, between 1910 and 1912. In Singapore, Chan Kim Boon (1851-1920) published his translation of *Sam Kok* in 30 volumes, totalling 4,622 pages, from 1892 to 1896. Its popularity might be measured by the fact that it was translated almost simultaneously. This means that this novel has occupied a special place in *peranakan* imagery. Greatly appreciated by readers, many other translations were published in book form, some serially in newspapers first, including *Sin Po* and *Keng Po* and then in book form in small run. As mentioned, we have problems with translation works. One of them is that it is not always easy to determine whether they are new translations or revised re-editions of works already published. One way to cut cost of production and sustain the interest of regular customers, many works, including translation and long *syair*, were published serially in some newspapers, circulated very widely. This was also one way to boost the sale of short-lived newspapers.

To understand how translation could take root and grew, it must be borne in mind that a rapid increase in the number of readers with the printing press and newspapers playing a vital role. Related to it, numerous translations first appeared in newspapers. This also meant that *peranakan* journalists generally assumed the role of translators, while the newspapers became the forum of the new *peranakan* literature. The development of Chinese *peranakan* newspapers had also definite repercussions on the growth of publishing. To encourage reading habit, publishers brought out novels and translations in serial instalments whose sale was stretched out over

periods of time. More importantly was the economic position of the Chinese *peranakan* as shown in the first page of the *Bintang Peranakan* (Singapore) with star shooting fire in the centre of the page, at the top, and below that Malaya was represented symbolically by its economic riches: a sack of tin in the centre, flanked by a rubber tree to the right and a palm tree to the left, with a lion and a tiger on either side (Salmon 1987b). This development proved that the Chinese *peranakan* were already financially capable of supporting their publication, though the newspapers might be short-lived, including *Perdagangan*, launched in January 1928 by Liem Koen Liang. Most of the translators, like Oey Kim Tiang (born in 1903 in Tangerang, West Java) or at the *Jinan xuetaang* in Nanking (a school designed for the children of the Overseas Chinese), like Go Tiauwo Goan (1890-1956), Ong Kim Tiat (1893-1964) and Tan Tek Ho (1894-1948), were the new generation of *peranakan* who had been educated in the local *Tiang Hoa Hwe Koan* schools. There were also translators born in China and came to Indonesia while very young. Gan K.L. (born in 1928 in Amoy, Fujian), and learned Malay and was associated with Sino-Malay newspapers. There were women translators too, including Chen Hiang Niang, Lie Loan Lian Nio, Nona Phoa Gin Hian and Tan Poen Bhik Sio Tjia. There were no professional translators. They were primarily journalists, printers, publishers, editors and writers.

The majority of the translations were novels while remainder consisted of a few love stories in ballad form, including the story of *Liang Shanbo yu Zhu Yingtai*), a few religious and didactic works, and a collection of short stories. Translating Chinese books with supernatural theme, fantastic, romantic and erotic stories, including the *Sanguo Zhi yanyi* and *Shuihu zhuan*, had certainly played a definite role in widening the scope of reading, and the joy of reading. These stories were heavily laced with legendary events not only stressed on superhuman elements, but also human efforts of rational heroes. Reading them gave the Chinese *peranakan* hints on solving their manifold social and political problems and clues to

understanding their own world, and also provided the space for them to unfold romantic imagination on justice, right and humanities. They also liked the fantastic *cloak-and-dagger* stories which portrayed righters of wrongs and attackers of injustice because of social injustice they were in. Instead of confronting the all-powerful Dutch colonial ruler, they turned to such stories to seek entertainment, solace and justice.

Chinese fiction was not necessarily translated from the original Chinese source. Some were retranslated from other Indonesian languages created originally from the performance of wayang kulit and story-tellers as mentioned earlier. One example is *Liang Shanbo and Zhu Yingtai* which was first published in Javanese in 1873, followed by several versions in Malay, Balinese and Madurese later on. Salmon (19??) was certain that the Madurese version of 1930-31 was derived from a Javanese version of 1928. The story of *Sam Pek Eng Tae* appeared first in 1873 in van Dorp's *Javaansche Almanak* printed in Semarang (Central Java) and in 1880 in *Bramartani*, a newspaper in Javanese published in Surakarta (Central Java) and appeared in *Shaer Sam Pek Ing Tai* by Wee Hock Chee in Singapore in 1956 (Ding 2008: 84).

Among the most prolific and colourful figures in the Chinese *peranakan* literature was Chan Kim Boon (1851-1924). Born into a merchant family in Penang, he went to a local English Free School, and learned Chinese with a private tutor at home, an usual practices among the well-to-do *Baba*. In 1867, he went to Fuzhou Naval School (Fujian, China) and returned home in 1872 due to health problem and joined Aitken & Rodyk (subsequently Donaldson & Burkingshaw, advocates and solicitors) in Singapore, as book-keeper and cashier. He died in Singapore at the age of 69 and left behind his translations including *Fan Tang yany*, *Sanguo*, *Shuihu zhuan*, *Xiyouji*, *Wumei yuan* and many others, some with the help of Tan Kheam Hock (1862-1922), and Cheah Choo Yew. One equally prolific and colourful representative from Indonesian Chinese *peranakan* was Lie Kim Hok, born in Bogor and died in Batavia in 1912. He did

not know Chinese well as he had been educated in missionary schools. His translations were assisted by Tan Kie Lam and Tee Pek Thay, acting as Chinese readers. In 1885, after the death of the printer and publisher D.J. van der Linden with whom he had worked, Lie decided to take over the business and started his own printing house called Lie Kim Hok Co in Bogor. In the following year he undertook the printing of the daily *Pemberita Betawi* with difficulty because of competition from other printing houses in Batavia. As mentioned earlier, there were no professional translators and worse, very little was known about the background of many other translators, including Goei P.H., Jo Tjin Goan, Y.T.H. and particularly Tjie Tjin Koeij who was the first to translate *Sanguo*. We are informed that he was born in Sukabumi around 1890, educated by a private tutor and he had a very good command of Chinese. He translated no less than 14 novels, in addition to contributing articles in *Li Po*, founded in Sukabumi in 1901. Another important translation figure was Yap Goan Ho, a publisher, a translator and was also an extraordinarily dynamic entrepreneur, launched a newspaper in 1888 and opened a printing house in Semarang in 1893, and more importantly, he had distributing agents in Sukabumi, Surabaya Sibolga and Padang. This is generally the social-economic background of the development of Chinese *peranakan* literature then. Playing a catalytic role in the formation and diffusion of a general readership for novels, translations enabled Chinese fictions to penetrate the Malay world. To appraise the wave of translations from Chinese fiction, Teo (1980) has made a list of translations published in book form, which could be supplemented by Claudine's catalogue. Though the figures are smaller than the actual one, it is fairly representative of the translation movement that seems to have begun and continued until the arrival of the Japanese. World War II marked a very clear break off in publishing activity. In other words, it is also the translation that sows the seed of original Chinese *peranakan* literature.

Original Writings and Cloak and Dagger Novels

The rise of original writings, some of them from 1902 to 1942 in Indonesia which have been analysed by Sim (2006), could be because translations not only could not completely satisfy the need of the general public, but also that more and more of them wanted their migration, subaltern and post-colonial stories known, their voice heard, their anger expressed, their message conveyed and to make them more visible. Many of the original Indonesian Chinese *peranakans*' writings criticised the unfavorable condition they were in. Their writings appeared to reflect the political questions of the time under Dutch colonial rule (Sim 2006). Gradually, the general public, particularly *kaum moeda* in Indonesia, liked to read stories written against local background and real experience and true stories. Thus, original novels, *Cloak-and-dagger* novels, short stories and *pantun* appeared either simultaneously or in quick succession. With this development, translation works disappeared. With local setting, the themes of the original composition included contemporary social problems, identity issues arising from the discriminatory colonial Dutch rule, looking for new home, love affairs. The first original Chinese *peranakan* novel, *Tjhit Liap Sing atau Bintang Toedjoe*, by Lie Kim Hok, appeared in 1886, set in China under Emperor Xiangfeng (1851-1861). Subsequently, many other literary works with a strong impact on the society in the period 1911-1923 have been produced by Tjoe Bou San (1886-1925), Kwee Tek Hoay (1886-1951), Soe Lie Piet (1904-1988), Liem Khing Hoo (1900-1942), Pouw Kioe Ann (1906-1981), Ong Ping Lok (1903-1978) and Njoo Cheng Seng (1902-1962), in terms of searching for new identity in a new homeland, Indonesia, and expressing their frustrations and anger under the Dutch colonial rule. Their visibility and voice could be seen and heard much clearer and louder with the proliferation of newspapers, including *Bintang Timor* (1886), *Bintang Soerabaia* (1887), *Tamboor Melayoe* (1887), *Bintang Betawi* (1888) dan *Bintang Barat* (1888) (Ahmat Adam 1995: 63-68). The emergence of this migrant and post-colonial literature was due to the rise of a new

generation of Chinese *peranakan*, *kaum moeda*, who were educated, literated and with disposable income, thus were different from their forefathers who were generally traders and labourers. The difference between the old and new generation of Chinese *peranakan* was also a result of the great transformation taking place after the establishment, with Dutch approval, of *Tionghoa Hwee Kuan* on 3 June 1900, allowing them the opportunity to learn Chinese for the first time. As they were discriminated against, looked down upon by the Dutch, thus anti-Dutch feeling flared as noted by Sim (2006), who explained: “*The anti-colonial elements in the novels are perhaps the earliest evidence of anti-colonialism in subaltern works as much as it is in the East Indies. Though subtle and often in the Tionghoa peranakan novels provided the avenue in which they could criticize the Dutch administration in dismal portrayals of the Dutch character as irresponsible, often absent and dishonorable, if not helpless individuals. These novels proved to be the voices of the subalterns in a colonial era when none, not even the natives, were to be heard*”.

Chinese *peranakan* authors were talented and among the popular themes in their writings were searching for new identity as in *Oeji-Se* by Thio Tjien Boen (1903), *Lo Fen Koei* from Gouw Peng Liang (1903), *Njiai Alimah* by Oei Sei Tiang (1904), while *Pembalesan Kedji* from Lie Kim Hok (1907) and *Sie Po Giok* from Tio Ie Soei (1912) were looking for reference and grasp into past history. Thus, these works were very didactic in nature and characterisation.

As years went by, there was a great demand for “original stories against local settings searching for new destiny, fighting the injustice, which might explain the rise of *cloak-and-dagger* stories, *cerita silat*. They liked the knights-like heroes and warriors who fought for justice with their attention focused on the loyalty and courage of the heroes, laced with supernatural and magical powers. In this context, the rise of *cloak-and-dagger* novels, around 1925, could be due to their increasing dissatisfaction at the limited social improvements available and political changes as mentioned earlier. Reading these stories depicting “freedom”, fighting heroes

capable of exercising their own will, were a great relief and also a necessary source of entertainment to the Chinese *peranakan* who then lacked the power to act politically on their own. Alternatively, they were thrilled and enjoyed the deeds of heroes, the themes of vengeance, mountain scenery, swords flying through the air and the descriptions of magic and supernatural beings.

Cloak-and-dagger novel was launched in Bandung by the well-known translator Tan Tek Ho, and was called *Goedang Tjerita* and changed to *Tjerita Silat* in 1933. In 1931, another translator, Ho Nai Chuan, created a magazine *Kiam Hiap Monthly Magazine*. Since then, *cloak-and-dagger* novels had been very popular with the series like *Penghidoepan*, *Tjerita Roman* and *Tjerita Pilian* with stories that fitted so well with the aspirations of the local reading public that entertainment and relief and more importantly some kind of spiritual victory under the discriminatory Dutch colonial rule was necessary. Their composition could be linked to the political rise of new generation of *peranakan* who looked for home and their identity in Indonesia. Their new interest in *cloak and dagger* novel was no less than that in the translation of historical works in the past which allowed them to learn from history to understand the current politics in Indonesia. They were popular reading because of patriotic indignation over the wounds dealt by the Dutch discriminatory policy and their psychology of yearning for heroes who could rectify wrongs and fight injustice, like *Robin Hoods* in England and *Zoro* in Latin America in the contemporary Indonesia which had many bandits, close to *Shuihu zhuan* which gave a remarkable description of the resistance of “brigands of a number of men who resisted compulsory conscription and organized bands of outlaws living in the hills. These stories spread their wings of imagination and helped them overcoming hardships, self-fulfilment and death of an individual, and morality of life.

Serialised Publications and Others

The trend towards serialised publication was in connection with the

spread of the press. Among the popular series are *Penghidoepan*, *Tjerita Silat*, *Boe Hiap*, *Gie Hiap*, *Kiam Hiap*, *Panorama*, *Goedang Tjerita*, *Star Weekly*, *Tjerita Pilihan*, *Pemberita Betawi*, *Tjerita Roman*, *Senang and Liberty* in Indonesia. Many Chinese *peranakan* newspapers appeared in Java and Singapore as early as 1850s, including *Soerat Kabar Bahasa Melajoe* (Soerabaya, 1856) *Soerat Kabar Betawie* (Batavia, 1858), *Selompret Melajoe* (Semarang, 1860), *Bintang Soerabaia* (1860) and *Bintang Timor* (Singapore, 1894). The aim of these papers, whether dailies or weeklies or other frequencies, was to provide the Chinese *peranakan* with education, general knowledge, information, news, cultural activities, Malay language teaching, in addition to advertisements. Important in the development of Chinese *peranakan* literature, serialised publications were important too in cutting the cost of book production and sustaining the interest of readers. Otherwise, it was impossible to have so many books published and circulated. Frankly, it was mainly financial reasons that cut short the life span of the papers with a small run of some 200 copies. Newspapers should also be credited with the emergence of Chinese *peranakan* authors, writers, translators and publishers. Tan Tjin Hoa, for example was a translator, *syair* writer and journalist. *Among the other translators-journalists were Go Tiauwoan* (1890-1956) who worked for the daily *Sin Po*; Tan Tek Ho (1894-1948) who worked as editor for many newspapers and specialised in translating *cloak-and-dagger* stories; and Lie Sim Djwe and Ong Kim Tiat (1893-1964), translators and regular contributors to newspapers. From Malaysia, we have Lim Hock Chee, a poet and a translator. He wrote a version of the *Wanhua lou*, a novel about General Di Qing of the Song dynasty, published by the Denodaya (Singapore) in 1890, and a collection of poems which appeared in the same year. In a poem named *Sahyir burong*, he hinted that he was from Aceh:

Burong terbang dari Aceh,
 Baik patok bunga per-paia;
 Terkarang dari Lim Hock Chee,

Yang punya chap Sam Kong Cheah.

Another supra-nationality Indonesian-Malaysian Chinese *peranakan* writer was Na Tian Piet, born in Bencoolen around 1836. He lived for a time in Riau, traded at Aceh for some time and then Deli, before settling down in Singapore. In his long poem, *Shaer Almarhoem Beginda Sultan Abubakar di Negri Johor* (1896), he gave an account of the wedding of the Sultan's daughter in 1894 and the illness, death and funeral of Sultan Abubakar in 1895. His language was different from other Malaysian *peranakan* authors as he was educated in Dutch East Indies. While in Singapore, he wrote for newspapers in Java, particularly the *Pembrita Betawi*, under the pseudonym of *Kalam Langit*.

Another important figure associated with Chinese *peranakan* press and serialised publication was Siow Hay Yam, a translator, publisher and acting secretary of the Chinese Directory & Press Ltd. Associated with the publication of *Kahar Uchapan Baru* (1926) and *Kabar Bintang Timor News* (1930), he published a translation of *Xue Rengui zheng dong* anonymously in 1921. He had also produced other translations in book form as well as serially in the press, *Chrita Ular Putay sama ular Itam* (previously translated by Tan Beng Teck in 1889) and *Chrita Mwee Liang Geok* or *Jee Toh Moey* (also translated by Tan Beng Teck also in 1889). One more colourful Malaysian *peranakan* publisher, translator and author of *pantun* was Wan Boon Seng. Struck by the great success of Indonesian Chinese *peranakan* literary movement in Java, he intended to rival them to show that the *Baba* in Malaya were just as good. Pen-nameed Panah Peranakan, he was also anxious to develop Sino-Malay culture. With Goh Cheng Lim, he launched a daily newspaper called *Kabar Slalu* in 1924, which not only contained information on current events, but also translations of Chinese novels, generally written by Siow Hay Yam. The newspaper survived only a very short period. In October 1930, he started another new newspaper in Singapore, *Bintang Pranakan: Straits Born Chinese Romanized Weekly*. Wang Boon Keng wanted to help *Baba*

who had neglected the study of English (*kurang hati fasal plajaran surat Inggris*) and consequently were unable to read English newspapers. In his capacity as publisher, he wrote several prefaces urging readers to support his publications.

Interestingly, journalists, translators, adaptors and readers were included as writers who were the hotbeds for the propagation of *peranakan* literature. They were also public intellectuals from the new generation of Chinese *peranakan*, different from their forefathers who were mainly in trade and business. As it is, we know very little about the biographies of most of the other authors. While some of them were virtually unknown, others obviously used a pen-name, which was sometimes Chinese such as Ay Kok Djien (The Patriot), Bong Tiong Djien (The Dreaming Man), Hai Teng Djin (The Native of Haicheng).

Conclusion

Boosting an increase in readership, there is no doubt that the spread of printing and *taman bacaan* had made Chinese *peranakan* literature accessible to more and more readers. It is here that we find a strong link between the development of the local press both in Indonesia and Malaysia and a gradual spread of Chinese *peranakan* literature with the printing of cheap editions (Eisenstein 1979). To begin with, translations were printed in book form in the early 1880s, both by Dutch and Chinese *peranakan*. Alongside the translations from the Chinese, the publishers were simultaneously promoting translations of Western fiction, including *Le tour du monde en quatre-vingt fours* by Jules Verne which appeared in Semarang in 1890. It was not until after 1911 that Western fiction appeared frequently in serial form before being published in book form. Throughout this period the demands of the reading public seemed to be on the rise and more importantly the Indonesian Chinese *literature* not only popular in their homelands, but also in Malaysia and vice versa as shown by advertisements across the Straits of Malacca,

despite the different spelling systems used in the Malay language.

Chinese *peranakan* in Indonesia and Malaysia had made considerable effort to develop a literature of their own. They were credited with translation, while the others journalism, writing original prose (novels and short stories) and poetry set in Indonesia and Malaysia. All the literary works are the product of the creativity of the new generation of Chinese *peranakan*, though some of them were adaptation, while the others handed down by story-tellers, and still others were transposition of a residual oral version. Original writings appeared following requests for local stories depicting the lives and desires of the ordinary folks, including their anger and frustrations with the discriminatory rule under the Dutch colonial rule, and their search for home, identity and visibility, and of course the disappearance of the story-tellers. Among the original writings are *cloak-and dagger* stories which in many ways were influenced by the Chinese historical fictions, like *Feng shen yanyi* which was on trial cases handled by sagacious officials and *Shuihu zhuan* which dealt with the exploits of a band of outlaws in the 12th century. In these works, local and some Chinese settings were used to create an utopia to avoid direct confrontation with the Dutch authority and reprisals from the latter. While in Malaysia, there appeared the *Chriteria dahulu kala* series, a genre of fictions, combining historical facts and fantasy as that produced by their cousin in Indonesia. Though it appears that the plot in *Chriteria dahulu kala* was borrowed from Chinese fictions, they deviated in many respects in the sense that some of the stories are considerably abridged, different endings may be provided and a lot of details about the heroes are changed. Anyway, they are fictional works that contain a score of historical materials that allow space for creativity and imagination in both the authors and the characters in the stories, combined with respect for established facts. One example is *Sanguo zhi yanyi*, which is about gods and devils. These works were well received across the Straits of Malacca through agents for Sino-Malay publications, such as D.T. Lim, a writer and translator himself. Their works were published and circulated quite widely. The audience'

s taste for historical novels persisted with re-editions of translations which were new versions of novels which had already been translated earlier on. This may explain why the same novels were translated across the Straits of Malacca. From the cover of *Bintang Peranakan* we know that the weekly was circulated widely: throughout British Malaya, Dutch East Indies, Siam, Saigon and Sarawak. New literature spread and flourished as socio-economic position of *peranakan* was elevated to a higher and stable position. *Peranakan* literature from Indonesia had been popular in Malaysia and vice versa. This development proved that there was at least an embryo of fictional literature by the *peranakan* society.

The influence of Chinese *peranakan* literature on Indonesian and Malay literature has been documented by C. W. Watson (1971), Zaini Lajourbert (1996), and Leo Surydinata (1996). Related to that, reception of Chinese *peranakan* literature in the Malay World has been expressed by Mohamed Salleh bin Perang in a letter (1894): "*I was very fond of reading Chinese tales, my favorite being the story entitled San guo for this work contains much that is of value, including allusions and parables which should be heard by officials in the service of king's*" (Claudine 1987b). The comparative study of Chinese *peranakan* literature in Indonesia and Malaysia in terms of vocabulary, style, content and structure had hardly begun given the fact that the wealth of these literature had just recently been "rediscovered" after decades of neglect. The number of texts known to date is certainly much smaller than what it was as many had disappeared, while the others were in bad condition. This cursory survey may indicate that there is a possibility that the Indonesian and Malaysian Chinese *peranakan* literature were connected. There are some elements of parallel and independent developments between the two. But, only a comparative study of them would allow us to see how they are linked and deviated from one another and to what extent the tales were adapted to meet the needs of the local audience. To do it, these texts have to be approached more from a social point of view than a literary critic. From my research, I notice that if the *pantun* by the Chinese *peranakan* in the Straits

Settlements is Romantic (Ding 2008), then the the novels and short stories from the Chinese *peranakan* in Indonesia tends to be looking at themselves as an uprooted subaltern, discriminated against by the Dutch colonial rule (Sim 2006). Some of their anger and frustrations are also expressed through *cloak-and-dagger* novels. Nevertheless, the Chinese *peranakan* in Indonesia and their cousins in Malaysia found great relief and enjoyment in Chinese traditional culture and literature through translation. Most books printed were between 200 and 500 copies, though some as many as 2,000 copies. The short-lived newspapers, by publishing many translations and *pantun* serially, had helped in its development. This method of publication has not only helped to sustain the life of the newspapers, but also pushed both the circuculation of the newspapers and the literary works. An analysis of this complex problem would, however, give us ideas on the authorship of the Chinese *peranakan* and their public. When the two are compared, it cannot be denied that there are many close resemblances in points of the creation of the heroes, the supernatural and erotic materials, and the style. *Sanguo* was ever popular and appreciated by all classes of the population as it first appeared. In later years, some might like the stories of a historical nature, while others liked the stories of love and ramanoce between scholars and pretty girls. We could attribute the beginning of Chinese *peranakan* literature to the increasing rate of literacy among then population who had inevitably seen a growing appetite for written literature. The translation of the *Sanguo* by Chan Kim Boon, from Penang; 30 volumes between 1892 and 1896, 4,622 pages, suggests the existence of a big pool of reading public. We may assume that translation was the initial source of inspiration for Chinese *peranakan* literature. In the beginning, they enjoyed mythical stories and supernatural tales which were important in terms of education and socialization. The occupation of the Dutch Indies in 1942 by the Japanese brought this literary production to an end. The Japanese authority knew that most Chinese in Indonesia, whether Chinese or Malay speaking, had used the press and literary works as a vehicle for voicing

their patriotism. Consequently, newspapers and literary reviews were suppressed and hundreds of journalists were arrested, imprisoned and tortured.

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