

## From Integration to Marginalization: The Influence of Assimilation Policies on Benteng Chinese Society 1966-1997

Nuraeni<sup>1\*</sup>, Rikza Fauzan<sup>2</sup>, Ana Nurhasanah<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1,2,3</sup>History Education, Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, Universitas Sultan Ageng Tirtayasa, Indonesia

\*correspondence email: 2288190003@untirta.ac.id

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### Abstrak

Tujuan dari penelitian ini yaitu: menganalisis pengaruh kebijakan Orde Baru terhadap masyarakat Cina Benteng di Kota Tangerang tahun 1966-1997. Metode penelitian yang digunakan adalah metode historis yang terdiri dari heuristik, kritik, interpretasi, dan historiografi. Hasil penelitian mengungkapkan bahwa akibat dari kebijaksanaan ini membuat masyarakat Cina Benteng di Kota Tangerang yang merupakan Tionghoa peranakan di Indonesia turut terkena imbasnya. Dalam bidang politik mereka tidak diperkenankan untuk dipilih, kesulitan dalam memperoleh identitas akibat sulitnya mengurus SBKRI, dalam bidang sosial mereka merubah nama Tionghoanya menjadi nama Indonesia, dalam bidang ekonomi masyarakat Cina Benteng kesulitan memperoleh pekerjaan, dalam bidang kebudayaan terdapat tradisi yang umumnya dilakukan di depan umum menjadi di larang dan dilakukan dengan sembunyi-sembunyi di dalam Klenteng, dan dalam bidang agama sebagian masyarakat Cina Benteng yang menganut Agama Konghucu tidak diakui keagamaannya.

**Kata kunci:** kebijakan asimilasi, orde baru, cina benteng.

### Abstract

*The aims of this research are: to analyze the influence of New Order policies on the Chinese Benteng community in Tangerang City in 1966-1997. The research method used is the historical method which consists of heuristics, criticism, interpretation, and historiography. The results of the study revealed that as a result of this policy, the Chinese Benteng community in Tangerang City, who were peranakan Chinese in Indonesia, were also affected. In the political field they are not allowed to be elected, they have difficulty obtaining an identity due to the difficulty in obtaining an SBKRI, in the social field they change their Chinese name to an Indonesian name, in the economic field the Chinese Benteng community has difficulty getting a job, in the cultural sector there are traditions that are generally performed in public being banned and carried out secretly in the Temple, and in the religious field some of the Benteng Chinese people who adhere to the Confucian religion are not recognized as religious.*

**Keywords:** assimilation policy, new order, cina benteng.

### INTRODUCTION

The Chinese community in Tangerang is known as the Benteng Chinese. The Chinese name Benteng comes from the Makassar Fort during the Dutch Colonial era which was located on the banks of the Cisadane river in the center of Tangerang City. The ancestors of Benteng China,

namely Hokkien China, used the trade route across the Cisadane River. These traders stopped in the Teluk Naga area and then settled in the area (Wahidin, 2011).

The arrival of Chinese people in Tangerang is not yet known for certain, but based on the Sundanese historical

book entitled *Tina Layang Parahyang* (Notes from Parahyangan) which has been translated by Soedjarwo from Old Sundanese into Latin, it is written that initially the arrival of Chinese people in Tangerang was due to The boat they were on experienced problems so it broke down, and when they arrived in Tangerang they ran out of supplies, making them unable to continue their journey (Suryadinata, 1984).

The Benteng Chinese people almost never encounter friction with other ethnic groups. The emergence of the issue of ethnic sentiment is more political, developed by people who have political interests. For example, in state policy during the New Order era. Since the New Order, policies have been implemented that are directly related to aspects of the social and cultural life of Chinese society (BAKIN, 1979).

If you look at the history of the nation, the existence of sentiment towards the Chinese community was deliberately created by the Dutch East Indies government using the politics of divide or divide or divide et impera (Darini, 2011). Sentiments towards the Chinese community then heated up when Indonesia was faced with a rebellion movement against its own country in 1965.

As a result of the 1965 G30S incident which occurred in 1965-1967, many Chinese people were made prisoners because they were considered part of the

communists. Many policies were specifically aimed at the Chinese community during the New Order era. This policy was issued to create assimilation with the surrounding community so that they could more quickly leave the traditions of their ancestral country, namely China (Siew Min Sai, 2013).

This policy is known as the assimilation policy. The term assimilation comes from the Latin word *assimilare* which means "to be the same". Meanwhile, in Indonesian, assimilation means renewal (Hendropuspito, 1989; in Chessiaga, 2017). According to Mujib (2009), etymologically, assimilation has a similar or similar meaning, the social meaning is to merge and assimilate into a larger community. Groups that have been assimilated must blend or merge with a larger and usually more powerful community.

Based on the background above, the author is interested in researching the influence of the assimilation policy on the Benteng Chinese community in 1966-1997. This title was taken because researchers were interested in studying more deeply the existence of the Benteng Chinese people who have lived in Tangerang for hundreds of years and lived side by side with the local community in harmony. But when the New Order issued a policy of assimilation, the life of the Benteng Chinese community changed.

## **METHOD**

The method used in this research is the historical method. According to Kuntowijoyo (2013), historical research has five stages, namely: topic selection, source collection, verification (there is historical criticism and the validity of sources), interpretation (there is analysis and synthesis) and writing. The historical sources used are primary and secondary sources. The primary sources were obtained from ANRI (National Archives of the Republic of Indonesia) and interviews. For the National Archives of the Republic of Indonesia there is a legal document on the presidential instruction of the Republic of Indonesia number 14 of 1967 and a legal document of the presidential decree of the Republic of Indonesia number 240 of 1967.

Meanwhile, the source of the interview is Mr. Oey Tjin Eng, a Chinese Benteng cultural observer and former public relations officer for the Boen Tek Bio Temple, Mr. Yans Suharlim is on the Board of Trustees of the Nimmala Vihara Foundation (Boen San Bio), Mr. Dedy Hermanto Budiarsa is a businessman of Chinese Benteng descent and a former Trisakti activist, Mr. Goanda is a Confucian Spiritualist at the Indonesian Confucian High Council in Tangerang, Mr. Danny Fernando Alphin is Benteng Code 2020, Mr. Hermanto is a trader of Benteng Chinese descent and an employee of Boen Tek Bio, Mr. Hasan Daud is of Benteng Chinese

descent and Buddhi Dharma University staff, Mr. Azmi Abubakar is the founder of the Peranakan Chinese Library Museum. Furthermore, secondary sources were obtained from various libraries, especially those concerning the assimilation policy towards Chinese society, such as the book *State and Chinese Ethnicity, the Case of Indonesia* (Suryadinata, 2002), *Dilemma of Chinese Minorities* (Suryadinata, 1984), *Guide to Resolving Chinese Problems in Indonesia Volume I* (BAKIN, 1979).

After the heuristic stage, source criticism is carried out. This research ensures that it uses original, credible sources and is appropriate to the topic being studied. The next step is to interpret the source. In this stage the researcher carries out analysis and synthesis. Then the final stage is the writing stage.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **The Influence of Assimilation Policy on the Benteng Chinese Community in 1966-1997**

#### **Political Sector**

After the G30S incident, the intensity of anti-Chinese riots became increasingly intense. Incidents of looting, destruction and burning of houses, shops, schools and cars belonging to the Chinese community were widespread everywhere. Campaigns and various anti-Chinese actions coupled with the repressive actions of the military authorities have given rise to prolonged

worry and trauma, thus becoming one of the reasons why the Chinese community has been desperately trying to avoid politics for thirty-two years, and focus all its attention and activities only on the business world (Setiono, 2002). Christopher Nugroho also expressed a similar opinion in his book entitled *Young Chinese Thought* (2008).

The reality shows that there is indeed a large current of views among the Chinese who only want to focus on the business world. However, if we examine the causes of this life choice, the majority of the current Chinese generation still feel trauma from the past. Where there has been a massive massacre of citizens who were victims of the new regime in power. With the G30S incident and the change of power from the Old Order to the New Order, the lifestyle of the Chinese community in the political field was very discriminated against. The Soeharto government banned all Chinese socio-political organizations. This also has an impact on the apolitical or anti-political lifestyle of the Chinese people (Supraptiningsih and Yuni Fatmawati, 2020).

During the New Order era there were also restrictions in the world of politics for people of Chinese descent in Indonesia. They have difficulty participating in politics, let alone entering directly into government. This is most likely a result of the bad relations

between Indonesia and the Chinese after the 1965 G30S incident. The Benteng Chinese community, which is one of the Peranakan Chinese in Indonesia, has definitely felt the impact. They are allowed to choose, but they cannot feel the right to be chosen. As stated by Mr Dedy Hermanto Budiarsa when interviewed on 13 May 2023:

“Fortress China is experiencing restrictions in the political world as well. Just look at the New Order era, who was the Chinese Governor, Legislative, Judiciary and Executive? Even if there is something close to power. The rest is not possible. For example, if you want to register as a member of the legislature, the requirements are difficult. It's possible that if in the New Order era there were Chinese legislative members, perhaps the Tangerang Old Market would not have been like this, there were no pedicabs passing by, it was neatly arranged.”

Never mind becoming leaders by entering the world of politics, people of Chinese descent in Indonesia during the New Order period were not allowed to become civil servants or ABRI. If they want to become civil servants or ABRI, they must meet the requirements, namely genuine Indonesian citizenship. Meanwhile, processing these letters is very complicated and costs quite a lot of money (Sulistiyani, 2011). The people of Benteng China themselves had no problems with general elections during the New Order era, they could take part in

this activity. This was expressed by Mr. Oey Tjin Eng who stated that general elections are not prohibited, because they are mandatory for citizens. In fact, at that time, GOLKAR was the dominant choice because at that time it was making LPKB, so it usually contained Chinese people.

Thus, based on the sources obtained by the researcher, it can be concluded that during the New Order government, equal opportunities were not obtained among people of Chinese descent in Indonesia, even though one of the factors that can accelerate assimilation is the balance obtained between different cultural groups so that they can neutralize the differences that exist between each group. However, this does not happen for the Chinese community, including the Benteng Chinese community, who are Peranakan Chinese in Indonesia.

Furthermore, during the time of President Soeharto, the Chinese community in Indonesia was no exception, including the Benteng Chinese community, in carrying out administration they required a Proof of Citizenship of the Republic of Indonesia (SBKRI). SBKRI has its own consequences for Indonesian citizens of Chinese descent, because this document is one of the requirements that must be fulfilled to process residence documents such as birth certificates, marriage certificates and even passport applications. This was expressed by Mr

Dedy Hermanto Budiarsa when interviewed on May 13 2023:

“The marriage license was difficult during the New Order era, because one of the requirements was SBKRI. It can be very complicated, for example, if I want to make a passport, one of the conditions for making a passport is that you have to have your parents' SBKRI, so you have to attach it to confirm that you are giving up your Chinese citizenship. In fact, since when did we give up our Chinese citizenship, we were just born and ate here unless we just arrived here like foreigners.”

SBKRI is felt to be a discriminatory act that is openly directed at Indonesian citizens of Chinese descent. With the implementation of the SBKRI, the people of Benteng China experienced difficulties, because it was not easy to obtain an SBKRI letter. So it is not surprising that many of the Benteng Chinese people do not have important documents such as marriage certificates, birth certificates, or even KTPs.

The biggest difficulty or challenge for the Benteng Chinese community is that parents are always asked for their SBKRI as a condition for obtaining citizenship documents, birth certificates and SBKRI. This is difficult for the people of Benteng China to fulfill because many of their parents and previous generations did not have the intended SBKRI. Another

difficulty is because many of them are of mixed descent where the father is Chinese and the mother is native. Their mothers do not have SBKRI because they are natives, so the children cannot show SBKRI as a requirement for obtaining documents such as birth certificates or SBKRI (Purwanto, 2012).

Although in 1996, Article 5 of Presidential Decree No. 56 of 1966 very clearly stipulated that with the enactment of this Presidential Decree, all laws and regulations that have certain interests require that SBKRI be declared invalid. But there are still a handful of people who take advantage of it and still ask about SBKRI.

### **Social Sector**

In the New Order government policy there was a prohibition on using Chinese characters and language as stated in MPRS Decree NO.XXXII/66. As a result, anything related to Mandarin cannot be displayed in front of the general public. In general, Chinese people, apart from the names they use, also use the characters of their ancestors to name their shops. However, because during the New Order era Chinese was not allowed to be displayed, all shop names had to be changed to Indonesian. However, there are still some who retain their Chinese characters, but they are generally placed in an inconspicuous place.

Likewise with the Benteng Chinese community, there is one shop that still uses Chinese in its stance. The people of Benteng China themselves are known as people who have a firm opinion. However, it is worth noting that the firm stance held by the Benteng Chinese people, if not matched by the integration they carry out, will certainly make it difficult for the Benteng Chinese people to maintain their ancestral traditions. As said by Danny Fernando Alphin, as the 2020 Fortress Code when interviewed on May 15 2023:

"In the old market here, there is a Ban An Tong drug shop, which was founded in 1908, but from the time it was founded, until the end of the New Order, its Chinese name was not changed, even though one of the New Order policies was that for Chinese people, the names of shops and streets were not allowed to use Mandarin names. This can show that the Benteng people are very firm in their stance and the Ciben people blend in very easily."

According to this explanation, one of the reasons there are shop names in Chinese in the China Benteng Chinatown area is because of the integration they carry out with the local community, thus creating a sense of security in continuing to show their Benteng Chinese identity. The same statement was reinforced by Mr. Azmi Abu Bakar as founder of the Chinese Peranakan Library Museum, Tangerang, on May 14 2023:

"In the past, if we look at the Old Market, according to historical records, the shop names had a lot of Mandarin characters, but that had to come down during the New Order era. So it's not just people's names that have changed. Even street names have had to change, previously there were lots of typical Chinese names but they have turned into names with unknown meanings. Houses of worship have also changed, the Chinese smell must disappear. But there is something interesting about this that has not changed, the name Ban An Tong Pharmacy. This drugstore has never changed its name, since its founding in 1908."

Based on this explanation, it can be concluded that the influence of the assimilation policy implemented by the New Order government made names that had a Chinese impression in the Old Market area of Tangerang disappear, only a few were able to maintain them. The Benteng Chinese in Tangerang can be categorized as Peranakan Chinese whose existence is known and validated and they have become part of the life of the local community concerned. Furthermore, there is a policy for Indonesian citizens of foreign descent through the assimilation process, especially in preventing a life of racial exclusion, and there is a recommendation that Indonesian citizens of foreign descent who use Chinese names be changed to Indonesian names. This policy during the New Order era was stated in the Circular Letter of the

Presidium of the Indonesian Cabinet No.SE06/PresKab/6/1967. As a result, many of the Benteng Chinese people do not use their Chinese names, this is done so as not to complicate their lives. As stated by Mr Yans Suharlim on May 12 2023:

"For example, if I'm told to change my name, I follow it and there's a fee for changing the name, so I still have to pay for it. My birth certificate doesn't say the name Yans Suharlim, so I still use that 3-letter name. Anyway, if you follow the easy rules, maybe the ones who are foreigners make things more difficult if I'm an Indonesian citizen by birth. If you haven't taken care of your Indonesian citizens, that's difficult. That's why there is something called SBKRI, that's what I created."

In Suharyo's research from Diponegoro University with the research title Name Patterns of People of Chinese Descent (2013). Concluding the reason why most Chinese people in Indonesia have abandoned their original names, because they are worried about the RAS issue and the habits of the New Order era. Indeed, at that time the Chinese people were filled with suspicion as a result of the 1965 G30S incident. So they inevitably had to change their names or name their children with names that were much more "Indonesian". This was felt by Mr. Dedy Hermanto Budiarsa, who is of Benteng Chinese descent in Tangerang City. Regarding the name change policy during

the New Order era, Mr. Dedy Hermanto Budiarsa expressed this when interviewed on 13 May 2023:

"Then those who were influential, including myself, experienced it, because those who were born in the 70s could no longer get Chinese names. I, my brother and my sister no longer have Chinese names. Because at that time there was a ban on the use of Chinese names, so Chinese names were not created."

In contrast to Mr. Dedy Hermanto Budiarsa who did not get a Chinese name, Mr. Hermanto Gozali, a trader of Benteng Chinese descent, got a Chinese name from his parents but did not use it due to a ban from the New Order government.

Based on the explanations of the sources above, there are differences in responding to the New Order government's policy of changing names. But what is clear is that this policy means that many Chinese people in Benteng use names that look more "Indonesian". This is done to make it easier for them to take care of matters related to administration, for example making KTPs, Passports, and so on. However, it still exists the Benteng Chinese community retains its Chinese name. One of them is Mr. Oey Tjin Eng as a Chinese Benteng cultural expert who also experienced directly the government's pressure on the Chinese community during the New Order era.

Based on Mr. Oey Tjin Eng's explanation, it is true that there are

suggestions for changing Chinese names. This was done by the New Order government at the beginning of its reign. However, in its implementation there was subtle pressure from the government to change the name, because changing the name was considered a symbolic behavior, a kind of declaration by the Chinese people that they wanted to become fully Indonesian and wanted to change their identity to be the same as other fellow Indonesians (Jusuf, 2016).

Regarding the extortion stated by Mr. Oey Tjin Eng, there is the same opinion expressed by Mega Christina. He outlined his experience in administering SBKRI in a book entitled *SBKRI No Way for a Future Without Discrimination* (2006). In his writing, he explained that he had difficulties in the process of creating the SBKRI. Even though at that time the names used were not Chinese, officials often asked for documents proving citizenship to stall for time, to cause trouble and also to seek bribes. Thus, during the New Order era, the problem faced by the Benteng Chinese community was an identity crisis. It should be noted that the policy taken by the New Order government towards the Chinese community was a policy of assimilation. For reasons of speeding up assimilation, they are expected to change their names to Indonesian names. However, in its implementation there are things that actually hinder the assimilation process.

Because there are individuals who take advantage of central policies to take advantage.

One way to facilitate assimilation in society is to have an open attitude from the ruling groups. This can be realized by providing equal opportunities for minority groups. But in the case of the Chinese community in Indonesia, it seems that the government treats them as a different group from other communities. Even though they have changed their names to Indonesian names, they are still treated differently. Thus, interference from the ruling group towards other minority groups can disrupt the smooth process of assimilation (Soekanto, 2015). Furthermore, relations between the Chinese Benteng community and local communities in the temple environment during the New Order were also affected. The existence of an old temple building in an area can be used as a reference that at that time there was a Chinese settlement. One of the temples in the Cina Benteng residential area is the Boen Tek Bio Temple.

During the New Order era, the impact of Presidential Instruction No. 14 of 1967 made activities at the Temple change. However, the tolerance that exists in the Chinese Benteng community and the local community is going well. Boen Tek Bio as a religious institution has four types of services, namely religious services (Confucian and Buddhist), health

services, educational services and social services. Temple managers have programs that apply to the public. Such as providing free services, participating in Muslim religious celebrations such as Isra Mikhraj and Eid, providing assistance in the form of food and clothing to residents in need. Thus, this also provides benefits for people who are not of Chinese descent (Haryani, 2020). A similar opinion was also expressed by Danny Fernando Alphin on May 15 2023:

"Just look at the Sewan area, Teluk Naga, even the Muslim temples that look after them are also involved, they help sweep and clean the temples, you can also see the form of tolerance that has existed. In the social life of the Chinese Benteng community, there are also social assistance activities in the temple, or essentially serving the community, one of which is by offering prayers, for example prayers on Brotherhood Day. This means that prayer is offered to God but has been provided such as rice, noodles and so on and given to people who need it. It was at a moment on Fraternity Day. "In this activity, it is not only Chinese people who are involved, because the area is mixed with Muslims, automatically when you want to hold an activity like this you also need to work together to run the event you want to hold smoothly."

Based on various literature, it is explained that the temple not only functions as a place to preserve the arts of the Chinese community, but also as a place for social activities that further

strengthen the relationship between the Chinese community and the surrounding community. However, during the New Order era there were restrictions on activities at the Temple, especially in displaying the culture of the Benteng Chinese community.

### **Economics Sector**

The people of Benteng China live very simply. This encourages them to blend into local culture. The existence of Benteng China is proof that not all Chinese people in Indonesia are rich. Not a few of them don't even have social access for their economic life. David Kwa, as an observer of Chinese in Indonesia, sees the Chinese Benteng phenomenon as a form of assimilation that occurs naturally. In everyday life they do not experience friction with other ethnic groups. Social sentiment towards Chinese society is more motivated by people who have political interests (Haryani, 2020). A similar opinion was expressed by Mr Yans Suharlim on May 12 2023:

"In Tangerang itself, I was already in my 20s at that time and there were no major events that occurred, even if there were any, they were only on a small scale. There were no mass riots. In Tangerang Cina Benteng, the mix is already very strong. These Fort Chinese have been assimilated and most of their wives are native and their husbands are Chinese. That's why none of the Benteng Chinese people can speak Mandarin. Even I

myself can't speak Mandarin, let alone my children. Especially if you go to the villages, there are no Benteng Chinese who can speak Mandarin, unless they went to school in Jakarta. China Benteng itself, before the New Order policy was implemented to carry out assimilation, actually here we were already very, very assimilated, you can see that during the Peh Cun boat celebrations from the past, the rowers were mostly natives, even though culturally it was the Chinese Benteng event that had them. I myself took part in the boat race so I saw for myself that many of those taking part in the race were also natives. That's why you could say our tolerance is very good. Even though during the New Order era Peh Cun was prohibited, I feel that the integration was good. We were safe at the Nimmala Vihara alone, even in 1998, even though there were riots in various places, our place was protected. No problem. In Tangerang itself, no monasteries or temples were burned. Because our lives here are very harmonious, the integration is very high. Even those who are not Chinese, the fortress actually protects them. But the impact that is most felt is in the culture, for example at the Nimmala Vihara here, there used to be lots of Chinese characters in front but we didn't dare to put them up, because we were told to open them."

Based on Mr. Yans Suharlim's explanation, it can be concluded that pure integration in everyday life makes them live in harmony, so that there are no major incidents that occur, such as anti-

Chinese events in the 1970s in other areas when the New Order government was in power. The integration of the Benteng Chinese community is not only in social life, but in their field of work they are also integrated with local natives. This was expressed by Mr. Hermanto Gozali when interviewed on May 14 2023:

"Because I'm one of the Citadel Chinese whose economy is down, I don't really feel the influence of the New Order policies, so it's normal. In the 70s, the old Tangerang market was still just stalls, the situation was not as busy as it is now. Here in Tangerang, the equal opportunity is very clear because I personally feel that no one is superior because they have always been very mixed up. "Even though the New Order policy of assimilation was implemented, actually the Benteng Chinese people and the people here have already assimilated."

The reality of the life of the Chinese Benteng community has shown that the Chinese community is actually the same as other communities. As a social group, there are rich groups but there are also those who are poor and even below the poverty line. As a result of the restrictions imposed by the New Order government, the space for the people of Benteng China to fulfill their daily needs was limited, especially since many of them did not have SBKRI, making it difficult for them to get work because they were not equipped with complete identification because one of the requirements for making an ID card

was at that time SBKRI was needed. Automatically, due to the difficulty of getting an ID card, they cannot look for work.

Due to limited work during the New Order, it is not surprising that in general the people of Benteng China were better known as farmers, traders or fishermen. This was expressed by Mr Goanda when interviewed on 16 May 2023:

"We cannot group the Chinese into a more prosperous or more affluent existence. But if we look at it in general, China's Fortress is due to limitations in activities in the economy, many of which are minimal, many of the minimal, many are difficult, many are poor. Especially around the Cisadane River. They may only be able to fish or activities related to the Cisadane River. That's a lot in our area. "If you look at it as a whole, there are a lot of Chinese people who are in trouble, especially the Benteng Chinese, and thankfully they don't rebel and accept what they are by living a simple life."

Based on the statement expressed by Mr. Goanda, it can be concluded that the people of Benteng Cina tend to lead a low economic life, especially in the area around the Cisadane River, and are still very dependent on activities related to the Cisadane River. Regarding the limitations of the Chinese Benteng community in finding work, it was also expressed by Mr. Oey Tjin Eng when interviewed on May 14 2023:

"Influencing, for example, it's difficult for Chinese people to apply for jobs, so if they want to work, it's usually with Chinese people. As for the local people in this area, there is no social jealousy because they already know what we are like, they have both lived here for a long time. In Benteng China itself, generally lower middle class people are not like those close to the Chinese central government. They are usually farmers, traders, there are also pedicab drivers."

Based on sources obtained in the field, it can be concluded that the New Order government's policy which implemented SBKRI as a mandatory requirement for people of Chinese descent in Indonesia, also affected the economy of the Benteng Chinese community because it became increasingly difficult for them to find work. Citizenship status contains a number of rights and accesses that a human being can have, therefore the problem of being without citizenship status is not trivial. In addition, the existence of negative stereotypes among the Chinese community makes their situation even worse. The consequences of not having citizenship documents make their lives even more complicated. However, among the local community, they still get equal opportunities because their integration has been very good, which means that they do not have the social jealousy that generally occurs among other Peranakan Chinese in Indonesia.

If we look at the concept of assimilation by Soerjono Soekanto (2015), one of the factors that can facilitate assimilation is the existence of balanced opportunities in the economic sector for various groups of people with different cultural backgrounds. In such an economic system, where each individual has the same opportunity to achieve a certain position on the basis of his abilities and merits, the assimilation process is accelerated because this fact can neutralize the differences in opportunities given as opportunities by cultures. those are different. Thus, it can be seen that before the New Order came to power, the process of assimilation between the Chinese Benteng community and the natives was already going well. In fact, the New Order government's policies that limited the work of the Chinese community prevented assimilation from occurring due to interference from the ruling group towards minority groups (Soekanto, 2015).

### **Cultural Sector**

Furthermore, there is a prohibition on displaying culture in public as stated in Presidential Instruction No.14/1967. With this policy, all cultural activities with a Chinese theme must be carried out on a small scale or cannot be displayed in front of the general public. The people of Benteng China themselves are known as a cultured society, their lives are very much

based on the customs of their ancestors. This can be seen from the existence of "ash tables" which are often found in the homes of the Chinese Benteng community. The ash table is a prayer altar for the spirits of ancestors.

During the New Order era, the Benteng Chinese were treated by the Indonesian government as Indonesian citizens of foreign descent and at the same time various regulations regarding citizenship were applied to them like Chinese people in Indonesia. If in the past the position of the Benteng Chinese in Tangerang was like that of natives, then their position in the New Order era was like that of foreigners who were guests in Sundanese and Betawi areas (Sulistiyani, 2011). Regarding the policy of Presidential Instruction No.14 of 1967, Mr. Oey Tjin Eng explained it as follows on May 14 2023:

"Actually, this policy is discriminatory because there is Presidential Instruction No. 14 of 1967 which does not allow cultural displays in public, except at one's own home at that time. You can do it in Lintang, but you can't go outside inside. Likewise, when playing Liong you have to be inside, so you can't see the point. Indeed, this has a big impact, the Chinese New Year celebration which should be allowed cannot be celebrated so you can only do it at home or in the temple to perform worship. For the government, that is indeed the policy, but for us, the Chinese people feel

the influence the most. During the New Order era, the Chinese community only had 3 zodiac signs. Shio goat, Shio rabbit, and Shio cow. The Chinese people's Chinese zodiac sign is used as a scapegoat, the rabbit zodiac is used as a guinea pig and the cow zodiac is used as a dairy cow."

Based on Mr. Oey Tjin Eng's explanation, the policies issued by the New Order government under the pretext of assimilation actually made them feel discriminated against because they were not free to express their culture in public. A similar opinion was expressed by Mr Yans Suharlim on May 12 2023:

"Liong, lion dancing is prohibited. Worship services run smoothly as long as if there is an event it is kept to a minimum, it should not be festive, the service will still go on, religious ceremonies are also welcome. So what changed was that the kanji letters were lowered, the names were changed. Just don't use Chinese names. Don't make the Chinese New Year event too flashy to prevent social jealousy, because it originates from social jealousy, that's why there was the G30S PKI rebellion and the impact was that the Chinese community was scapegoated. If the temple is still running here, there won't be any problems. There was quite a bit of culture during the New Order era, it didn't exist during the New Order era, so the impression is that this policy actually eroded the culture of Benteng China, but for example, the Gambang

Kromong is still there because it usually fits at weddings and besides, the Gambang Kromong itself is not synonymous with Benteng China but Betawi. that unity."

Based on Mr. Yans Suharlim's presentation, it can be concluded that the culture generally practiced by the Benteng Chinese community was also affected because it could not be displayed in public, for example, such as lion dance, liong, Peh Cun performances, thus giving the impression of eroding the Benteng Chinese culture. Peh Cun itself is a festival that is routinely held on the 5th of the 5th month in the Confucian calendar. Peh Cun is an important festival in Chinese history and culture. But it had to experience a hiatus for 33 years during the New Order era. As a result of the policies issued by the government at that time.

In the Peh Cun festival, the Chinese community and the local community blend into one. Peh Cun is proof that there is harmonization of the life of the Chinese Benteng community with the local community. In fact, with the Peh Cun festival, there was a natural mingling between communities, but during the New Order era this festival was actually prohibited. This causes assimilation that has been well established for hundreds of years to experience obstacles. However, Gambang Kromong art can still be freely displayed because it is identical to Betawi culture.

Even though there was discrimination during the New Order era, the Benteng Chinese people still maintained and preserved their ancestral culture and traditions. The people of Benteng China passively maintained their identity, cultural traditions and religious rituals secretly, in their homes or temples, namely areas that could not be controlled directly by New Order government officials. As well as Barongsai, liong which can still be played in places of worship and is not performed in public or in competitions. The Chinese people of Benteng still carry out the taopekong mutual ritual and Chinese New Year celebrations, but they are not festive.

#### **Religious Sector**

After the New Order government came to power, the status of the Confucian religion became unclear. Even President Soeharto's instructions after the cabinet meeting on January 27 1979 clearly stated that Confucianism was not a religion (Suryadinata, 2002: 187). On the other hand, the religions adhered to by the people of Tangerang are very varied, some of them are adherents of Confucianism which is generally adhered to by the people of Benteng China. As a result, after Confucianism was not recognized, its religious status also affected the lives of the people of Benteng China. This was expressed by Mr. Goanda as the Confucian Spiritualist of Tangerang City on May 16 2023:

"We Confucians can be said to be at a great disadvantage, because we cannot write our faith on our ID cards, nor can we carry out celebrations. Chinese New Year or Peh Cun celebrations, for example, cannot be held because they are limited or don't even have to be done. Because we are a minority, we cannot oppose government policy. In the media, we can fight back, but if we directly carry out demonstrations, protests or things that cause crowds, we don't do that. So in our opinion, whatever government policy is, we cannot fight it. MATAKIN itself has the connotation of being a Confucian community. As far as I know, for the activities of Confucians, during the New Order era, their civil rights were abolished, so the government did not serve them if someone was a Confucian believer, so there is no column on their KTP to write their identity as Confucians, but in general, we can still carry out internal activities. carry out but privately or independently, not open to the public. So MATAKIN can only move internally, so it cannot carry out its worship in public, especially those related to Chinese culture. It has become a government regulation to limit activities with Chinese people, especially in their culture, so as Confucians it is very limited. In notifications and announcements, we are warned that these events should not be held, especially in public, for example, the culture of playing lion dances, putting up lanterns in public, or if we have festive events to gather people in public are not allowed. Even though our

identity is not recognized, we continue to carry out our faith and coordinate our organization and cannot hold events that commemorate major Confucian holidays, because we do not have permission. So we just carry out internal worship in our room."

Based on Mr. Goanda's statement, it can be concluded that during the New Order, Confucians had no other choice but to follow the rules of the central government. In administrative matters they experience difficulties such as stating their religious identity, because there is no option to choose the Confucian religion. But in matters of worship, Confucians can still carry out things internally within their environment. While the Confucian community experiences many obstacles, on the other hand, the Buddhist community of Benteng China does not have as much difficulty in managing administration as it does for the Confucian community. This can be seen from the experience of Mr. Yans Suharlim when interviewed on May 12 2023, who stated that he adheres to Buddhism so there are no problems in obtaining an ID card, so it is easy for him to process it. Since he was 17 years old, he has had an ID card and had no difficulty managing it during the New Order era.

In fact, since the issuance of the Presidential Instruction in 1979 until May 1998, Confucianism was no longer recognized as a religion. According to the

news, on KTPs, religion cannot be included, so people who are Confucians include other religions. For example, Buddhism, as a religion adhered to. Likewise, when Confucian couples marry, because Confucianism is not included in the "religion" category, they are forced to move to one of the state-recognized religions in order to be able to marry in a civil registry (Suryadinata, 2002)

## CONCLUSION

In Soerjono Soekanto's assimilation theory, it is said that one of the factors that makes it easier for assimilation to occur in society is that there is an open attitude from the ruling groups. This can be realized by providing equal opportunities for minority groups. However, when the New Order government implemented an assimilation policy, the space for the people of Benteng China to move became limited. With the implementation of the SBKRI, which actually questioned their citizenship status, it made it difficult for the Benteng Chinese people to have KTPs, as a result, it made it difficult for the Benteng Chinese people to find work. In fact, one of the factors that can accelerate assimilation is the balance achieved between different cultural groups in order to neutralize the differences that exist between each group. To make matters worse, Confucianism was not recognized as a religion, which was far from the success of assimilation that the New Order

government wanted to achieve, because the conditions for assimilative interaction were not met. Especially in matters of belief which tend to be sensitive and were not even recognized during the New Order era. As a result, the people of Benteng China who believed in Confucianism were forced to lie to themselves by changing their religious identity to Buddhism. Despite this, the Chinese Benteng community and local residents continue to live in harmony, their lives continue as usual considering that they have blended into local society long before the New Order implemented the assimilation policy

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