No one in Suriname will dispute the existence of a Chinese ethnic group in Suriname, but defining Chinese identity and ethnicity in Suriname is by no means simple. Despite the persistent presence of people everyone agrees to label ‘Chinese’, there are no studies to explain why a clear-cut ethnic Chinese segment should persist in the Caribbean. Cuba, for example, received the most Chinese labour migrants to the New World after Peru, but by the twentieth century the Chinese were largely assimilated.¹ However, despite ongoing assimilation, a distinct but undefined ethnic Chinese group persists in Suriname. Chinese ethnic identity in Suriname is a collective phenomenon by default, and calling individual subjects ‘Chinese’ generalizes them as representatives of the Chinese group. Chinese become evident to Surinamese on specific occasions: when shopping, going out to eat, going to a doctor, and in certain places such as Chinese organizations and sports clubs. But it is debatable whether a unified Chinese ethnic group operating in Surinamese society as a corporate agent has ever really existed.

In order to understand the very real transformations that the Chinese in Suriname are undergoing during the last decades, one needs to appreciate the diversity that has always existed under the label of Chinese identity, as well as the reasons why Chinese ethnic identity is so easily depicted as monolithic and immutable. In this chapter we will explore the inescapable jargon associated with any study of Overseas Chinese and Chinese identity, the basic elements of native Chinese identity discourse, as well as local Surinamese concepts that inform constructions of Chinese identifications. These include: primordial and sinocentric Chinese ethnicity; the concept of Overseas Chinese (the huaqiao-qiaoxiang model); the hierarchy of migrant cohorts (sinkeh versus laokeh); Hakka identity; and assimilation (tong’ap and laiap).

2.1 Primordialism and Sinocentrism

Moerman's (1965) definition of ethnicity as an ‘emic category of ascription’ (i.e. culturally specific) does hold for Chinese ethnic identity, shaped as it is by primordialist Chinese cultural discourse.\(^2\) Current Chinese cultural discourse is derived from imperial cosmology, in which concentric realms surrounded China, with the Emperor at its centre. Barbarism decreased as one approached the compelling civilizational power of the Imperial centre. Some modern versions of this schema posit Overseas Chinese in the liminal realm where Imperial ideology would place the sinicized non-Han Chinese, and places foreign countries where the barbarians were positioned.\(^3\) ‘Chineseness’ is primordialist in this way, and kinship, race, culture, history, and territory all overlap to reproduce the idea of fundamental and unchanging unity.

Primordialism remains central to the way Chinese ethnic identity is experienced, and while it is legitimate and even necessary to recognize that people frame their ideas of Chinese identity in sinocentric terms, one should keep in mind that the social sciences have abandoned the idea of essential and primordial ethnicity.\(^4\) Instrumentalist approaches to Chinese ethnic identity can be found in studies of Chinese economic and political positioning overseas.\(^5\) Even so, Chinese writers rarely challenge this centralist view, and generally struggle to fit the problem of assimilation with primordialist Sinocentric ideas that tie ethnic Chinese abroad to a Chinese motherland.\(^6\) They will generally articulate the borders around Chinese ethnic identity very much as a liminal realm between civilization and barbarism, while ignoring the reality of local embedding of identity in China and abroad. The PRC view of Chinese identity is a dominant outside view among Chinese in Suriname. It strongly links Chineseness to territorial claims and (nominally) citizenship in PRC multiculturalism (the idea of 55 official ethnic minority groups next to the Han-Chinese majority), but sinocentrism (in the form of anti-minority bigotry) still remains a strong and visible element in it.\(^7\)

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\(^2\) Moerman 1965.

\(^3\) See graph in Pan 1999: 13.

\(^4\) Cf. Dikötter 1992 and 1997; Honig 1992; Chow 1997; Ang 2001; Song 2003; Brown 2004; etc.

\(^5\) E.g. Patterson 1977, on Jamaican Chinese entrepreneurs; Suryadinata 1998, on ‘Chinese’ political participation in Southeast Asia.

\(^6\) E.g. Tu 1994, Pan 1999.

\(^7\) Mackerras 2004.
Written Chinese terms which are used to refer to ‘Chinese’ reflect primordialism. *Zhongguoren* (‘Chinese person; the Chinese people’) is ambiguous, as it can be an ethnic label as well as the normal word for ‘citizen of China’. *Huaren-huayi* (‘ethnic Chinese and people of Chinese descent’) does not explicitly signal political affiliation, and is commonly used as a label for a global ethnic Chinese category. In this way, Chineseness becomes undeniable and monolithic, and hybridity is subsumed in undifferentiated ‘diasporic identity’.

Modern nationalism which comes from the People’s Republic of China brings a highly political interpretation to traditional cultural discourse. Differences between Han Chinese and distinctions between nationality and ethnicity become malleable in the face of national unity. In fact, this reflects three tendencies that have been observed in the articulation of Chinese identity: racializing of the other and insistence on ‘racial purity’; emphasizing of Chinese phenotype and biological descent; insisting that ethnic boundaries are absolute and non-negotiable.

To complicate matters, ethnicity is not the same as ethnic identity. Ethnicity is a type of social cleavage which intersects with others such as gender and class. Social constructionist theories of ethnicity deny its natural or objective existence, but treat it as a fluid social construct that allows for multiple situational identities, while at the same time limiting identity claims. Eriksen approaches ethnic identity as a socially constructed collective identity, although for him group identity in reference to ethnic categories that is central to an instrumentalist approach is not the issue. “Ethnicity is essentially an aspect of a relationship, not a property of a group.”

In the logic of instrumentally constructed ethnic identity (the professed membership of ethnic categories that offer access to such scarce resources) is a pragmatic strategy and ethnic categories are valid precisely because and as long as they enable subjects to successfully pursue their socioeconomic interests under conditions of unequal power relations, usually in terms of social networks and ethnic loyalty. At the micro level, ethnic identity is about how

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9 Listed in Tong & Chan 2001a: 363.
10 Primordialism has been largely discredited as a valid heuristic concept in mainstream social science. This view of ethnicity matches the popular notion, and makes ethnicity a social distinction based on natural, inherited categories, rather like biological gender, and describes ethnic identity in terms of fixed categories and immutable states of being.
11 Eriksen 1993: 12.
individual agents deal with sets of existing labels and with the limits to the claims one can realistically make. Nagel, for instance, argues that people use their ethnic ties and affiliations as resources in a variety of contexts, in response to current needs, or in terms of competition with outside groups: “Since ethnicity changes situationally, the individual carries a portfolio of ethnic identities that are more or less salient in various situations ad vis-à-vis various audiences. As audiences change, the socially-defined array of ethnic choices open to the individual changes.”

Constructionist approaches thus see ethnic identity as the process of identifying in terms of semiotics and boundary negotiation. Barth sees ethnicity in terms of group differentiation and boundary maintenance; ethnic identity is identification on the basis of ethnic categories, arising from continuous renegotiation of borders between competing groups, and particular ethnic identifications may persist even after individuals cross borders of identification. The structure of ethnic groups is produced in symbolic coding. Eder et al distinguish three fundamental ideal types of symbolic coding: primordial coding, which naturalizes ethnic borders; traditional coding, which links the borders to the social routines and traditions and infringements of these; and universalist coding, which links the collective subject to the sacred. With regard to agency, Eder et al stress the importance of situationality; one needs to track who exactly is manipulating codes and boundaries, who is excluded or included, and which audience is observing.

Labelling is central to the negotiation process leading to ethnic identity. This is implied by Bauman’s and Cooper’s statements that identities are (unconscious and imperative) identifications, and thus a relational phenomenon. With regard to the direction of the identification claims, one can expect to see individuals self-identifying (as Insider or Outsider), identifying other individuals, being identified by another individual, or being categorized.

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14 In the Chinese context primordial coding would be reflected in the statement that Chinese ethnicity is a shared biological heritage. Traditional coding would then be about how Chinese ethnicity is based on canonical culture. An example of universalist coding would be the semi-religious cult of Chinese nationalism.
15 Eder et al (2002) promote the use of socio-psychological concepts such as Ego, Alter and Other in situational action theory. The Ego is the central agent who produces the claims about the ethnic boundary between the Ego’s and the Alter’s social groups. The fact that the claims are articulated in relation to a particular observing Other makes the negotiation process situational.
by something other than an individual, e.g. the State, and audiences that are either individuals or group subjects on either side of an ethnic border. This approach means that ethnic identity is never a single, absolute, and objective truth. It is an observation of an ongoing process in a particular setting over a particular period of time, which means that one should be mindful that the same ethnic label might mean different things in different locations at different times.

Having established that ethnicity is a social construct and ethnic identity is a situational and instrumental negotiation, we need to stress that ethnic groups and ethnic categories are therefore also not god-given. Writing of Guyana, a context closer to home, Garner stresses the difference between ethnicity as a State category and ethnicity ‘in the field’, which is imagined, multiple and situational and reflects unequal power relations through history.\(^{17}\) Garner warns against equating ethnicity in this sense with notions of ethnic groups and ethnic identity. Following Pierre Bourdieu’s views on identity, Brubaker stresses that ethnic categories are not the same as ethnic groups. In terms of analysis, ethnic groups are not bounded wholes, and ethnicity does not depend on the actual existence of groups – groups of real people communicating, responding to organization, and sharing common ideas.\(^{18}\)

Instead, ethnic groups – the shifting idea that groups of people exist ‘out there’, which Brubaker prefers to call ‘groupness’ – are brought into existence by the performative nature of ethnicity, much as Butler observes with regard to gender identities; identity is not about fixed categories, but arises in the performance of it by individual subjects.\(^{19}\) In her analysis of gender development, Butler sees performativity as the way in which identity is passed on or brought to life by discourse. Originally a concept from speech act theory,\(^{20}\) performativity is types of authoritative speech, with the power to frame objects which they are meant to describe. To Butler, gender is like a script which is made a reality by repeated performance. Gender is therefore an expression, not of what someone is but of one’s acts. This allows us to analyse ethnic ‘groups’ as

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\(^{17}\) Garner 2008. To Garner the State is more than the apparatus of the formal institute of the State, and includes its policies and the individuals operating and formulating the apparatus and policies.

\(^{18}\) Brubaker 2004.

\(^{19}\) Butler 1997.

events, and to distinguish between groups arising organically or as political projects of organizations which claim to represent ethnic interests.21

In my own personal experience, instrumental, situational, and performative ethnic identity is not arcane theory. Born in Suriname of part-Chinese descent, with a Sino-Surinamese surname, I share the experience of inescapable ‘Chineseness’ with many Surinamese, of being placed in a universal, ubiquitous, self-evident Chinese category, without actually being an insider to the ‘Chinese community’ in any way. My personal experience was also of contingency, flexibility, and the reality of the local against the backdrop of essentialist ethnic labels. In the vaguely matrilineal White North-eastern Caribbean way, I could be Paul Brendan Tjon Sie Fat, child of Rita Imelda Carty, grandchild of Maria Petersen, and great-grandchild of Deborah Vlaun. Patriarchal Hakka tradition in Suriname makes me: 張承元，張瑞鵬之子，張悠俊之孫，張本球之曾孫.22 Yet in Suriname I and my siblings were third generation bearers of the Sino-Surinamese surname Tjon Sie Fat, which hardly resembles monosyllabic 張 that legends link to the mythical Yellow Emperor. At that personal level, Chinese identity is just one of multiple self-concepts that individuals derive from perceived membership of social groups, relevant to positive self-esteem. In this psychological sense ‘Chineseness’ is dynamic, constantly adapting to provide consistency and guidance for the individual’s actions, but the ‘truth’ of one’s personal experience is irrelevant.23

Essential Chineseness may also enter analyses of Chinese identity through the back door. For instance, one should not automatically include terms such as ‘transnationalism’ or ‘diaspora identity’ in the structure of Chinese ethnicity in Suriname. The use of the word ‘diaspora’ is not neutral. With a capital D the term refers to the spread of Jews in the Hellenized world, and by extension the relation of Jewish identity with a lost (and reinvented) homeland. Without the initial capital, ‘diaspora’ can refer to any ethnic group that is identifiable in more than one location, whether or not a homeland actually exists. In any case the word is inherent-

22 ‘Zhang Chengyuan (Zong Sen’yèn), son of Zhang Ruipeng (Zong Suìpèn), grandson of Zhang Youjun (Zong Yuzun), great-grandson of Zhang Benqiu (Zong Bunkiu).’ Kejia pronunciation between brackets.
23 For a more extensive example of situational Chinese identity in Suriname, see Appendix 2.
ly emotive and affective, and involves its user in ethnic claims. When used in reference to Chinese outside of ‘China’, the word is often used as a synonym for ‘group’, ‘coethnics’, ‘ethnic network’, ‘language community’, etc., and suggests a uniformity where there is none.

Transnationalism refers to the effect of growing numbers of migrants living dual lives in their country of origin and their host countries: sustained ties of persons, networks and organizations across the borders of multiple nation-states, institutionalized to varying degrees. When the assumption of monolithic Chineseness - the popular idea that ethnic Chinese form a closed ‘Chinese community’ - merges with the idea of transnational communities, transnationalism simply becomes ethnicity. Faist warns against equating transnational communities with transnational social spaces, of which he distinguishes three types in an evolutionary order: transnational kinship groups; transnational circuits; and transnational communities. Up to the arrival of the New Chinese, the Chinese transnational field was a circuit, characterized by constant exchange of goods, people, and information between China and Suriname. Transnational communities, however, are typified by the mobilization of collective representations within symbolic ties, based on some form of collective identity (i.e. shared coding of ethnic borders) such as a diaspora; however, such group identities did not arise in Suriname.

While I would try to avoid essentialism in my analysis of Chineseness (i.e. Chinese ethnic identity) in Suriname, I do appreciate that any discussion of sinocentrism in native Chinese ethnic discourse may cause offence to localized Chinese (who do not view the PRC as a Homeland) or may support anti-Chinese agendas that claim that all Chinese are China-oriented. The point is not that Chinese “are all inherently sinocentric”, but that Chinese ethnic discourse in Suriname is meaningless without the concept of primordial ethno-racial origins in a distant Homeland. No matter how this idea originated, it is required for social positioning in Surinamese society, where ethnic identity is strongly racialized and linked to

25 Huang’s (2008) survey among subscribers to the huiguan newspapers includes valuable data on qiaoxiang links. A fairly consistent average of 60% of his respondents owned property in China regardless of period of arrival in Suriname. However, initial weekly contact with relatives back home tapered off to incidental as period of residence in Suriname increased.
imaginary and fixed migrant homelands.\textsuperscript{26} One also needs to be aware that native Chinese ethnic discourse remains relevant in Suriname, as New Chinese migrants and the PRC have effectively reintroduced sinocentrism in the guise of ‘new Chinese nationalism’. This nationalism can be interpreted as a broad, audience and context specific civic discourse between the PRC and huaqiao, in which ideological differences are downplayed for pragmatic reasons, and which is worded in terms of essentialist, familial ties to the PRC as the zuguo (motherland, literally ‘ancestor country’) of all ethnic Chinese.\textsuperscript{27} To a non-Chinese audience, the discourse can easily appear to stress the image of the PRC as an indivisible superpower which incorporates all Chinese migrants and ethnic Chinese.

\textbf{2.2 Huaqiao: Overseas Chinese}

The sinocentric bias also becomes apparent in Chinese views of Chinese overseas migration. Chinese scholars connect and view indentured labour, Chinese ethnic entrepreneurship and chain migration, particularly in the context of Southeast Asia, as a historical trajectory of Chinese indentured labourers (huaqong) leading to Chinese merchants (huashang) and then to Overseas Chinese (huaqiao).\textsuperscript{28} The term huaqiao may be translated as ‘sojourner from China’. The typical Chinese migrant ‘was supposed to be a sojourner who is due to return to his hometown, in order to visit his kin and friends, establish a business, enjoy a pleasant old age, or, particularly important to Chinese sojourners, be buried’.\textsuperscript{29} Qiaoxiang (‘sojourners’ native place’) is the homeland in this context of Chinese sojourners overseas, the place where the huaqian (dependents of Overseas Chinese) are. The huaqiao-qiaoxiang model describes the translocal or even transnational links and networks that connect Chinese migrants overseas to their homeland.

The specific huaqiao concept has always been a project of the Chinese State (Republican China and later the People’s Republic), to guide the loyalties of Overseas Chinese – hua being taken

\textsuperscript{26} East Indians = (Bollywood) India, which is not necessarily Bihar; Chinese = Hong Kong (up to 1990), PRC (since the 1990s), but not necessarily the exact ancestral villages of the migrants; Javanese = Java, but increasingly Indonesia (which is an abstract entity among ethnic Javanese in Suriname) under the influence of the Indonesian Embassy; Afro-Surinamese = ‘Africa’, often symbolized by Ghana; etc.

\textsuperscript{27} Liu & Lin 1999.

\textsuperscript{28} Wang 2000.

\textsuperscript{29} Douw 1999: 23.
very narrowly to mean ‘China’, so that *huaqiao* specifically means: ‘Chinese national residing abroad temporarily’. There is thus an ideological aspect to the trajectory of *huagong* and, or via, *huashang* to *huaqiao* and *huayi* (‘people of Chinese descent’, a euphemism for people of mixed Chinese ancestry). The mobilization politics of the Overseas Chinese (*huaqiao-qiaoxiang*) model makes it useful to explain the development of Chinese chain migration in Suriname. However, applying the trajectory of indentured labour to ‘people of Chinese descent’ (i.e. from huagong via huashang to huaqiao and huayi) directly to Suriname risks imposing Chinese cultural ideology on a local reality. Chinese indentured labourers in nineteenth century Suriname are unambiguously indentured labourers (i.e. huagong), but the entrepreneurial chain migration that followed is not simply a New World version of huagong. Trade was primarily an adaptive migration and survival strategy for post-indentureship migrants in Suriname, whereas it was the central goal of their counterparts in Southeast Asia. Overseas Chinese / huaqiao will be used here in a slightly different way, based on the huaqiao-qiaoxiang model: huaqiao are Chinese chain migrants in a transnational circuit whose identities are linked to their qiaoxiang and their economic niche in Suriname.

The labourer-merchant-sojourner model of Chinese migration to South-east Asia could be an example of Chinese ethnicity arising in response to changes through time and space in economic society. Indentured labourer (*huagong*) would then reflect the dominance of production capitalism, whereas Chinese merchants and sojourners (huashang and huaqiao) reflect a shift to the dominance of consumer capitalism. Leong approaches ethnogenesis in China from this angle, by explaining the marginalized Hakka and Pengmin groups as arising from economic migration centred on industrial heartlands in Southern China.30 In fact, the positioning of Chinese migrants in Suriname reflects this view of Chinese ethnicity; entrepreneurial chain migration was based on a Chinese ethnic economy in Suriname, which resulted in the strong association of Chinese ethnic identity with the retail trade.

It is important to point out that huaqiao or ‘Overseas Chinese’ should not be automatically equated with the idea of a ‘Chinese community’. The terms refer to a relationship between migrants and the state governing their homelands, and do not imply that such migrants necessarily constitute a bounded community. Community formation in Suriname is a response to local conditions
and the local requirements of migrants, and in many ways develops quite independently of the relationship they have with the homeland (i.e. the huaqiao-qiaoxiang link). Ethnic Chinese in Suriname - assimilated, local-born, established and recent migrants - are concentrated in Paramaribo as a result of their migration and economic strategies, but they do not cluster spatially in any way as to make group dynamics possible, so that a community in the sense of clear group behaviour and daily interactions independent of the Surinamese majority has never materialized.

2.3 Laokeh and Sinkeh

Although the terms huaqiao and huayi are used as ethnic labels by Chinese overseas, they are not particularly useful in analyzing Surinamese ethnic identities. Both terms suggest hybrid identities; Chinese observers treat huaqiao as a primordial category (the assumption being that huaqiao lineages can be traced directly back to China), while using huayi as a vague and strategic label (the strategy being inclusion of huayi among huaqiao). Rather than discussing the merits of huaqiao and related terms as valid heuristic tools, one should take them for what they are in Suriname: labels used locally in a process of identification by Chinese subjects to link notions of universal Chineseness to the reality of situational ethnic identity - basically an instance of glocalization. Moreover, concepts developed by Chinese migrants elsewhere to make sense of their local realities are unambiguous in Suriname, but they and are useful in linking migration history to the development of ethnic coding. Successive Chinese migrant generations in Southeast Asia are distinguished as sinkeh (literally 'new guests', meaning 'new-comers') and laokeh (literally 'old guests'). The term sinkeh refers to any new migrant regardless of regional Chinese background, but will be also used narrowly here in the context of Suriname to refer to generational cleavages within migrant cohorts of a shared regional or linguistic background.

31 ‘Glocalization’ is a neologism that combines the concepts of ‘globalization’ (linking to the global, thinking and acting at a global scale) and ‘localization’ (adapting to local conditions, being or becoming local). Chineseness is glocal as it requires an actor who is articulating Chinese ethnic identity to refer to the imagining of a unified ethnic identity that spans the globe, while adapting to local conditions that limit or enable her or his choices.

32 Kejia-speakers in Suriname use the Kejia version of sinkeh in the same sense: sinhak.
2.4 Hakka Identity

Up to the late 1990s, ethnic Chinese in Suriname and other areas in the Caribbean (such as Trinidad & Tobago and Jamaica) came from a Hakka-dominated area in the Eastern part of the Pearl River Delta in Guangdong Province (the Fuidung‘on area), which is the reason why ‘Chinese’ and ‘Hakka’ are often used as near synonyms in Suriname. As the established Chinese segment in Suriname derives from Kejia-speaking chain migrants from the Fuidung‘on region in Guangdong Province (People’s Republic of China), Chinese in Suriname are traditionally identified as Hakkas, and Hakkas have been so closely equated with Chineseness that ‘China’ meant the homelands of the Fuidung‘on Hakka chain migrants. As a result, to most Fuidung‘on migrants in Suriname, particularly younger people, the question “are you Hakka?” simply means: “Do you speak the hometown dialect?” Though the question of whether Hakka identity is an ethnic identity is beyond the scope of this study, it is useful to distinguish the meaning of Hakka as an ethnonym from its meaning as a name of a dialect. ‘Hakka’ is used here loosely to refer to group identity; following current practice in Chinese linguistics the ‘Hakka dialect’ is here called ‘Kejia’. Hakka dialects (i.e. the languages spoken by people who identify or are identified as Hakka) and Hakka identity are easily conflated, often without sufficient basis. Hakka identity is a fundamental Han-Chinese identity in the Fuidung‘on region. Without other contrasting Han groups or languages, being Hakka would not have any special meaning in Suriname for the immigrants. It is interesting to point out that the term ‘Hakka’ basically means ‘outsider’, and originated in nineteenth century Guangdong Province when local Yue (‘Cantonese’) speakers (labelled punti in Kejia: ‘of this place’, i.e. the established) were confronted with migrants from outside the province (Haakga, Cantonese: ‘guest households’, i.e. outsiders). It is also interes-

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33 Fuidung‘on is an anagram of the Kejia pronunciation of the names of the three counties where the ‘Old Chinese’ migrant cohorts in Suriname come from: Fujiong (PTH: Huiyang), Dunggon (PTH: Dongguan), and Baoon (PTH: Baoan). For the informants in Suriname the term referred to the 19th century districts of Dongguan, Huiyang and Xin’an in the Hong Kong periphery, currently corresponding to areas in Dongguan Municipality, Huiyang County, Baoan County, Shenzhen Special Economic Zone, and the New Territories in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region.

34 Hakka is the exception to the Chinese rule of defining varieties of Han-Chinese culture as regional and linked to provinces. Because they are routinely described as without territory, Hakka are sometimes compared to gypsies.

35 Lau 2003.

ting to note that no speech communities were traditionally called ‘Kejia’ / ‘Hakka’; outsiders called the language ‘Guangdongese’, ‘language of the newcomers’, ‘language in which they say ngai for I’, etc. Hakka ethnic nationalism, invented by Hakka intellectuals at the turn of the nineteenth century, is no longer in favour among Fuidung’on Hakka immigrants, though a measure of chauvinism is still present among some Fuidung’on intellectuals in Suriname. In any case, Hakka ethnicity as a potential ethnonationalist movement does not have a place in the centralist Chinese cultural discourse in modern Chinese nationalism.

2.5 Tong’ap and Laiap

Ethnic Chinese in Suriname make a crucial distinction between migrants and local-born, which could be described in contrasting terms of laokeh versus sinkeh and huaren versus huayi. However, the distinction that the Kejia-speaking group from the Fuidung’on area – the ‘Old Chinese’ – make between immigrants and local-born has local relevance that goes further than the general meanings conveyed by the terms above. The main cleavage within the Fuidung’on Hakka group in Suriname is between local-born and those born in China. From a Surinamese point of view Chinese migrants were born in China, and are therefore called tong’ap. The word laiap refers to people born outside China / the Fuidung’on qiao-xiang, and therefore to Chinese people born in Suriname; since the late nineteenth century its original meaning of ‘mixed Chinese’ has extended to include all ‘local-born’. The Tong’ap / Laiap cleavage does not account for the intersections and overlap between identities in the field, but works well as an analytical tool to reveal details of networks and social and cultural capital, which would be less obvious if Fuidung’on migrants in Suriname were simply analysed as ‘Chinese’ versus ‘assimilated Chinese’. Tong’ap and Laiap are not ethnic categories or ethnic groups with distinct collective identities marked by symbolic codes, but are loosely defined ethnic labels.

Up to the Second World War polygyny was the norm among Fuidung’on Hakka sojourners in Suriname. Men often had a wife and also perhaps a concubine and children back in the village, or they would briefly return to China to marry. Chen Ta used the

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term ‘dual family system’ with Chinese migrants in mind who were head of one ‘family’ separated into (at least) two units. In this view, the women were recognized in a Chinese hierarchy, with the main wife acting as head of the family unit in China, and secondary wives / concubines abroad. Chen stressed that many migrants may have been married when they left their hometown, but were strictly speaking not family heads yet, and that the dual family units reflected a division of property. In Suriname the migrant might marry a local woman, but more commonly he would take a common-law wife (Kejia: sepo). Migrants could send local-born sons to China to be educated in the care of the main wife (Kejia: taipo). Some local-born sons were sent away, but it is not clear what proportion of those educated in China returned to Suriname. As the Surinamese sepo were mostly Creole women, many local-born children of Fuidung’on Hakka migrants were of mixed heritage. The Surinamese authorities considered the children Chinese nationals if recognized by the father – which also strengthened their Chineseness, by virtue of a Sino-Surinamese surname.

Chain migration constantly refilled the pool of sinkeh in Suriname, so that there was always a substantial difference between local-born and those born in China among ethnic Chinese in Suriname. By the end of 1914, colonial authorities recorded a total of 961 ‘Chinese’, either born outside Suriname or born in Suriname of Chinese parents. About two-thirds (626 or 65.1%) lived in Paramaribo, and most were men (802 or 83.5%). The 1921 census (the first general census in Suriname) gives an idea of the proportion of Suriname-born among the ethnic Chinese. A random sample of the raw data suggests that 47.2% of Chinese in Suriname were born abroad; 57.9% of men and 22.2% of women.

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38 Tong’ap and Laiap informants use the Kejia word sepo slightly euphemistically. There are no indications that these Surinamese ‘sepo’ were recognized by the qiaoxiang, or that the relationship with the Chinese migrant was formalized through traditional ceremony.
39 Chen 1940: 120-137.
40 Chinese surnames were not recognized by Surinamese colonial law, and instead the full name registered by the immigrant was taken to be the surname of his descendents in Suriname (Man A Hing 1990).
41 By contrast, most ethnic Chinese in Guyana were local-born by the first quarter of the twentieth century, and assimilated into the colonial middle class (Kwok-Crawford 1989: 7). The difference between the Surinamese and Guyanese situation requires explanation. Apparently a transnational circuit persisted in Suriname but not in neighbouring Guyana, but it is not clear if that could be attributed to migrants having different qiaoxiang.
42 In 1914 Chinese made up 1.76% of the 35,530 residents of Paramaribo and 1.12% of the Surinamese population (85,536 people).
Sampling also gives some idea of the proportion of Suriname-born to migrants. Most men were single (67.1%), while only a minority (5.2%) had married a Chinese woman in Suriname. The rest (27.7%) either had a formal or common-law local wife. Local-born children of two Chinese parents were in the minority compared to local-born children of mixed Chinese descent: 18.1% versus 81.9%.

Children who grew up in Suriname were never really Chinese in the eyes of migrants, as Chineseess was firmly linked to the physical qiaoxiang. As a result, the main cleavage within the Fuidung' on group in Suriname is between migrants and local-born. Local-born are called laiap (lit.: ‘Mud Duck’), which refers to people born outside China / the Fuidung’ on qiaoxiang, and therefore to those born in Suriname. The word laiap is the name of an old duck breed in Guangdong Province, it is the offspring of a male fan’ap (lit.: ‘foreign duck), a large running duck that was introduced from Southeast Asia in Guangdong a few centuries ago (originally – ironically – from Central and South America) and a female of a local pond duck breed (sometimes referred to as tong’ap, ‘Chinese duck’, i.e. local duck breed). Laiap ducks are fairly large white birds with brown beaks with a red edge that are kept without the need for extensive ponds by farmers in Guangdong. As a metaphor for ‘human hybrids’, laiap is like ‘mulatto’, which is derived from Portuguese / Spanish mulatto (from mulo ‘mule’), meaning ‘baby mule.’

Due to the small numbers of Fuidung’ on women immigrants in the first stages of the Chinese presence in Suriname, the first local-born children were mixed Chinese, usually from Creole mothers; local-born eventually became synonymous with mixed ancestry.

By analogy, migrants are called tong’ap (see above). The word is an adjective and noun referring to people born in the Fui-

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43 A random sample of 328 male migrants from China over the age of 20 and their children, according to marital status and religious affiliation. It was carried out by Ad de Bruijne in the 1960s, and it is unpublished data. Original data of the 1921 census are available at the Dutch National Archives in The Hague: 1921 census in Suriname 2.10.19.01.

44 Of the 91 cases in De Bruijne’s sample, 69 lived with Christian women, which suggests that they were Creoles, and 22 with Muslim women, which suggest that they were Javanese.

45 廣州市志 http://www.gzsdfz.org.cn/gzsz/09/ny/sz09ny020106.htm

46 Mulato originally referred to all mestizos, ‘mixed people’, but eventually came to specifically mean ‘having African blood’.

47 The tong in tong’ap derives from tongsan, literally: ‘Tang Mountain’. The name of the Tang dynasty (618-905AD) is used by speakers of Yue (Cantonese) and Kejia dialects to indicate Chinese ethnicity, in the same way the name of the Han dynasty (206BC-220AD) is used by speakers of Mandarin. ‘Tang Mountain’ – used as a noun
dung’on homelands. The label was used by Laiap to identify themselves to migrants directly or as a public, and though not as disparaging as Laiap, the term is never positive. Here is an example taken from a focus group discussion with six middle and upper-middle-class men and women whom I thought were Dutch and Kejia-speaking Laiap, but who could all pass for ‘real Chinese’:

Interviewer: “So all of you were born here?”
Woman A: “Yes. They call us laiap, don’t they? Hahaha. You know about that, don’t you?”
Woman B: “I was born in China. My parents arrived here when I was four or five…”
Interviewer: “So then you are a Tong’ap...”
Woman B: “No, I’m not!”
Woman A: “Yes you are. You’re Laiap when born here. If you were born in China you’re not Laiap.”
Woman B: “Not at all, I don’t feel any link to those people. I have nothing to do with them. All my friends are Laiap.”

In itself the colloquial term laiap is negative – huayi is used as a euphemistic written equivalent – which is clear from the adjective si (Kejia: depending on the tone, “dead; shit; corpse”) which some Tong’ap place before it: “goddamned half-breed”. Tong’ap (and most Southern Chinese outside Suriname) fully understand the meaning of laiap, and are very reticent about using it loosely, sometimes even denying that such a word exists. Laiap are aware that it implies mongrelisation, but they can and do use it to mean ‘Surinamese Chinese’. As Fuidung’on migrants did not import poultry farming practices, most Laiap are not aware that laiap is the name of a duck breed, and take the word literally; a duck made of mud (i.e. a fake duck, or a hopeless duck, as it would dissolve in the pond it should be swimming in), a muddied duck (i.e. a tainted duck), or a duck fashioned from local clay (i.e. a local duck, not a duck from China – tong’ap). But being called Laiap by a Tong’ap is insulting to the extreme, as if one is being condemned to a limbo between real humans (i.e. ethnic Han Chinese, Kejia: tongnyin. Literally: “Tang dynasty person”) and sub-humans (all non-Han.

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is the most common way to indicate the Chinese homeland among people from Guangdong Province.

Although some Chinese suggested it as a direct equivalent, the Sranantongo term lala Sneisi (literally: ‘raw Chinese’) is not fully synonymous with tong’ap; it refers to unassimilated Chinese in general and not specifically to recent immigrants.
Kejia: gui, “ghost, demon”; wugui, “black ghost”, i.e. someone with a dark skin; pakgui, “white ghost”, someone with a pale skin, etc.).

The term laiap is unique to the Caribbean end of the Fui-dong’on Hakka migrant network. As in Suriname the meaning of the term is shrouded from local-born Hakka:

“Lai-ap” is Hakka for the Chinese children born here. The literal translation of lai-ap means “sand-duck”, the connotation being a duck’s natural [sic] is the water (China) where it is so graceful. When it is in the sand (Trinidad), outside of its natural element it is awkward. (Johnson 2006: 148)

Christine Ho’s article on hybridity among Chinese in the three largest areas of the Anglophone Caribbean helps to put the issue of hybridity of Surinamese Fuidung’on Hakka in a regional context. A distinction between China-born and local-born existed in Guyana and Trinidad paralleling the Tong’ap-Laiap distinction in Suriname. The Guyana-born Chinese were culturally and linguistically identical to locals in the eyes of those born in China, while those born in China imported Chinese brides, newspapers, books, and foodstuffs. One main difference between the ethnic Chinese born in China who lived in Guyana and Trinidad and the Tong’ap in Suriname was the fact that the Chinese in Guyana and Trinidad were from two regional backgrounds: Cantonese and Hakka. Although the two groups had a history of violent competition in Guangdong Province and the Cantonese outnumbered the Hakka in Guyana, regional or linguistic background did not form the basis for the creation of migrant adaptive organizations there. This was the case in Trinidad, where there were five Cantonese organizations versus one Hakka organization. In a context where local-born far outnumbered those born in China, these organizations were more like upper-middle-class clubs than huiguan, with few members fluent in Chinese, and few distinctive cultural traits maintained. In Jamaica there was only one

49 For a discussion of ‘Creolization’ of Chinese in Guyana, Trinidad & Tobago, and Jamaica, see Ho 1989.
The term laiap is restricted to the Caribbean, unlike Sarnami / Caribbean Hindi dogla (spelled dougla in Trinidad & Tobago), which is used in the same way for a person of mixed East Indian and Afro-Caribbean descent in Suriname, Trinidad & Tobago, Guyana and the old colonial metropoles. Dogla, which originally meant ‘bastard; illegitimate’, will occasionally be used by Tong’ap speakers of Sranantongo as a direct equivalent of laiap. Sranantongo watra sneisi and its Dutch translation water-chinees (literally: ‘water Chinese’, meaning watered-down, diluted Chinese) is used by Laiap to describe their own hybridity.

50 Ho: 1989.
regional background, Hakka, but the distinction between local-born and those born in China was more outspoken, no doubt strengthened by a history of violent anti-Chinese sentiments. Proficiency in Hakka was a strong ethnic resource in the Chinese ethnic ownership economy, and ethnic distinctions became gendered as only sons (mixed Chinese or not) were sent to the qiaoxiang for a Chinese education, while local-born daughters were incorporated into Jamaican society. Ethnic Chinese were not exclusively urban in Guyana and Trinidad, whereas in Jamaica and Suriname they were concentrated in the capital cities.

Malaysian Fuidung'on Hakkas who are linked to Suriname via the old migration networks do not use the term. Mixed Chinese children would be called a-fan (‘foreigner’; ‘barbarian’). In Latin America the term tusan (from Cantonese tusang, literally ‘earth born’) refers to local-born ethnic Chinese, both ‘pure’ and mixed. The Kejia equivalent tusang is not used in Suriname, but it is used, for instance, by Tahiti-born Fuidung'on Hakkas. Laiap is pejorative, but it can also be taken up as a proud sobriquet. In the 1920s, one Tjong Soei Phen, the author of a Dutch-language article in Chung Hwa Hui Tsa Chih, the newsletter of the Chinese Chung Hwa Hui association, published in February 1928, stresses that the (pure) Chinese of Suriname are ‘Hakka Chinese’ that can be divided into two groups: immigrants and Suriname-born. The author goes on to say that as the Suriname-born are Westernized, do not speak Chinese or disregard it, the immigrants consider them ‘deniers of their race’ who are beyond the pale of civilization. A local-born himself, the author disregards mixed Chinese because they apparently tend to try and conceal their Chinese heritage. The resentment that is clear from this text is obliquely present in another Dutch-language text by doctor Ferdinand Siem Tjam, originally written sometime after the 1960s. Whereas Tjong Soei Phen is disappointed about the lack of educated Chinese professionals in Suriname, Siem Tjam is proud of the successful manifestation of precisely that sector in modern Suriname. In his view, Laiap include purebred as well as mixed Chinese, and he proudly interprets the word to mean ‘duck made of local mud’, which implies that they are proven citizens.

The Tong’ap-Laiap cleavage resembles the common distinction made in Malaysia, Singapore and Indonesia between the older

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51 Hu-DeHart 1999: 258.
52 Tjong 1928.
53 Siem Tjam 1993.
generations of Chinese migrants and the assimilated and ‘hybridized’ Chinese, who are referred to totok and peranakan in Indonesia. Ang voices the common perception of the dichotomy: ‘The peranakan are people of Chinese descent who are born and bred in South-east Asia, in contrast to the totok Chinese, who arrived from China much later and generally have had much closer personal and cultural ties with the ancestral homeland.’ As Ang explains, totok is an Indonesian word meaning “pure blood foreigner”, while the term peranakan means “children of” (the root being anak, “child”). Ang argues that the construction of the Peranakan Chinese as a distinct ethnic group was strengthened by the Dutch ‘apartheid’ policies in their East Indian colony, which separated ‘foreign Orientals’ from Europeans and Eurasians, and the indigenous locals from one another. Peranakan Chinese had developed a thoroughly hybrid identity, and their own language (Baba Malay in Malaysia and Singapore, Bahasa Melayu Tionghoa in Indonesia) and material culture. The idea of a Peranakan / Baba Chinese / Straits Chinese category is linked to the basic distinction between local-born and immigrant; the different ‘local-born’ labels in the Malay orbit are not exact synonyms, however, and Peranakan identity is situational.

Despite an attempt to transplant it to Suriname from Indonesia just before the Second World War, colonial ‘apartheid’ policy never emerged in Suriname. Therefore no Chinese migrant group or hybrid population was ever developed as a formal ethnic group, as was the case in South-east Asia. In contrast to the Peranakan of Indonesia and the Straits Chinese of Malaysia, the highly assimilated Laiap component in the small Chinese segment in Suriname never developed a substantial hybrid culture, and so the term laiap never became an ethnic category. Laiap implies counterfeit culture and bastardisation, and local innovations are all considered watered-down versions of authentic Chinese culture by Tong’ap as well as Laiap, and so Laiap codes have little value in ethnic boundary negotiations by Laiap agents.

Paradoxically, distinctly local cultural developments are associated with Tong’ap rather than Laiap, and this can go unnoticed despite the fact that they are very different from customs in the qiaoxiang. For instance, local versions of Hakka dishes are completely accepted as ‘normal’ Hakka cuisine. One example is a keunyuk dish (lit. ‘buttoned meat’, because the alternating slices of

pork and vegetable are arranged to closely overlap). This dish in
the qiaoxiang would be sliced pork belly and sliced yam or radish
steamed with fermented tofu or preserved fish, and is made with
cassava in Suriname. Although it is completely local, it is not widely
popular outside Chinese circles. What is more intriguing in public
settings where non-Chinese outsiders are not really expected, is the
habit of serving food in flat plates (despite the availability of rice
bowls) with a spoon to be held in the left hand and a pair of
chopsticks in the right. Language is the clearest exception. The lo-
cal Kejia variety with its typical mix of archaic, borrowed and locally
invented lexical items – ‘laiap hakga’ – is rejected as a clear symbol
of cultural impurity and has never become the language of a hybrid
Surinamese Chinese culture.57

Hybrid Chinese identity in Suriname is different from that in
the Malay orbit, but that is seldom evident in Suriname. The way
Peranakan flaunt their hybridity makes it difficult for Laiap and
Tong'ap to consider them ‘Chinese’. Fear of being caught acknow-
ledging local Chinese culture combined with the necessity to defuse
‘dangerous ethnicity’ by public self-effacement can make Laiap
seem very un-Chinese to Peranakan. As a middle-aged Peranakan
woman who was born in Indonesia and met her Laiap husband in
the Netherlands told me:

I just tell my husband and his family that they are not Chinese. In
Indonesia one visits the temple, but there are no temples here [in
Suriname]. Chinese here also do not have any Chinese values.
What does Chinese culture here consist of, anyway?

As Rudolph notes for the Malay world, the meaning of hybrid
Chinese categories developed over time, from being gende-red and
generational to ethnic.58 ‘Tong’ap’ and ‘Laiap’ are labels, not
categories in the sense that ‘Tong'ap-ness’ and ‘Laiap-ness’ are
inheritable and reproducible over time. Fuidung’on Hakkas are
Tong'ap by virtue of being migrants, and their children may be
Laiap if they were born or raised in Suriname. Within ethnic Chine-
se families in Suriname one may thus find both Tong'ap and Lalap
generations.59 In practice the Tong’ap label will sometimes be used

57 Tjon Sie Fat 2002.
59 As a generation gap, the Tong'ap-Laiap cleavage makes for an ethnic group
apparently without a history. Many older immigrants were - and are - unwilling to
speak of their past in any detail. Their stories boil down to: “What’s to tell? Life was
hard. So we left.” There are virtually no current memories of the qiaoxiang, except a
to refer to people who look like (Fuidung’on Hakka) immigrants. The term laiap has also become very vague as its original meaning of ‘mixed offspring of Chinese migrants’ (the current fundamental meaning of huayi) has been broadened to include all local-born. It is important to note that many Laiap (mixed or not) have Creoles as their reference group rather than Chinese, and therefore do not self-identify as Chinese. Surinamese of mixed Chinese ancestry (Sranantongo: moksi sneisi, “mixed Chinese”; sometimes Surinamese Kejia kepboi is an equivalent) may not have a Sino-Surinamese surname, might not physically resemble the Surinamese stereotype of an ethnic Chinese, and might not even be aware of the identity of their (remote) Chinese ancestor. As a regionally isolated subgroup of a numerically small minority, Laiap are unlikely to experiment with dangerous hybrid cultural pride, comparable to East Indian ‘douglarization’ which is a challenge to Creolization and conservative ‘Indianness’ in Trinidad & Tobago.

Laiap are fairly typical second or third generation immigrants according to the paths of cross-generational mobility laid out in Portes and Rumbaut (2001: 283). In their typology of social mobility, achieving middle class status among first generation migrants can lead to the second generation acquiring professional and entrepreneurial occupations, and complete integration into social and economic mainstream in the third generation. If the first generation has working class status and strong coethnic support, the second generation can attain middle class status through education, and the third generation can achieve full integration into the mainstream. However, if the first generation is of working class status but lacks strong coethnic community ties, educational achievement in the second generation tends to be low and the third generation remains marginalized working class or may even suffer downward mobility. In the case of Laiap, one can observe selective to full acculturation and upward mobility to middle class or professional and entrepreneurial occupations, but one can only rarely find number of archaic cultural and linguistic items preserved from the 19th and early twentieth century, and memories of maybe the most basic rituals regarding death, some family relationships and anecdotes.

Some participants came up with nuances to describe the continuum of Chinese-ness: ‘pure Chinese Laiap’ for people of pure Chinese descent, or blaka sneisi (Sranantongo: ‘Black Chinese’) for dark-skinned Afro-Surinamese with Sino-Surinamese surnames. Interestingly, when Tong’ap call moksi sneisi (especially people who cannot pass for ‘Chinese’) ‘Laiap’, the intention is generally a compliment, or a claim of loyalty.

downward mobility and reactive ethnic identity among Laiap who can pass for ‘real Chinese’.

Laiap identity is readily viewed in terms of segmented assimilation, i.e. assimilation and social mobility of migrant groups over the span of generations. Light and Gold describe it with regard to ethnic ownership economies in the following way: “Racially defined immigrant youth often adopt the oppositional cultural and economic orientation of their native-born, coethnic peers, rather than that of the white majority; in so doing, they may also reject their parents’ social and economic strategies.” However, even though Laiap have not assimilated into a racialized underclass and achievement is equated with a Chinese background, many Laiap do reject racialized Chinese ethnicity. Analysed in terms of ethnic boundary negotiations, Laiap identity is a marginal identity, not a new ethnic category. Marginality is the positioning of the subject of a negotiation near a boundary, in a “socially constructed human ‘no man’s land’ in which ‘we’ have located people (real or imagined) who are neither ‘we’ nor ‘them’, they are rather a subjugated subjectivity, which is a negation of ‘we’”.

Laiap are marginal among the Fuidung’on Hakkas (meaning vis à vis Tong’ap), and they stay marginal when they choose to cross ethnic borders strategically. Their marginality explains their ambiguous status in the eyes of Chinese migrants: neither ‘we’ / Chinese, nor ‘them’ / non-Chinese. Analysed in terms of power relations, Laiap ambiguity is even clearer; Laiap are subordinate to hegemonic Chineseness, yet wield the power to subordinate Tong’ap in Surinamese creolized society.

The Tong’ap-Laiap cleavage works well as an analytical tool to reveal details of networks along with social and cultural capital which would be less obvious if Fuidung’on migrants in Suriname were simply analyzed as ‘Chinese’ versus ‘assimilated Chinese’, or huaqiao versus huayi. As Laiap are a Tong’ap out-group, ethnic loyalty between the two groups should not be assumed to be a natural given. In the early 1990s an attempt by Laiap entrepreneurs to set up a joint trade organisation of Tong’ap and Laiap shopkeepers failed because of mutual distrust.

63 Jørgenson 1997.
64 Details of the organization process are scarce, but it seems clear that potential members were approached carefully through personal and ethnic networks. Tong’ap entrepreneurs were approached on their own terms, in Kejia as much as possible. Apparently distrust originated among Tong’ap who were afraid that the Laiap members would use their networks (opaque to the Tong’ap because of language
remain migrant entrepreneurs, while the Laiap generation are encouraged to move out of that niche. Laiap are generally locally (and better) educated and tend to be better integrated into the job market and the mainstream economy than Tong’ap. Seen by outsiders as a unified urban trading minority, Tong’ap and Laiap are often stereotyped as middle class entrepreneurs and professionals, respectively.

The Tong’ap-Laiap dichotomy makes it very difficult to pin down the size of the Chinese segment in Suriname. In the Caribbean and Latin America ethnic identity was often not consistently registered, and consequently all numbers of Chinese in the various countries are estimates, often reflecting the political agenda of those in power.\(^65\) Strongly racialized Chinese ethnic identity was not distinguished from Chinese citizenship. Only the 1950 census was explicitly designed to record hybridity, and showed that there was not a complete overlap between Chinese ethnicity and Chinese nationality; 804 ‘Chinese’ held Chinese nationality (88.5% of 908 Chinese nationals in Suriname, 33.9% of the Chinese group), compared to 54 ‘Black-Coloured’ and 50 ‘Others’. Data from the 1950 population census suggest that numbers of local-born and foreign-born self-identifying ethnic Chinese were about equal: of 1,099 ethnic Chinese in Paramaribo, 585 were Suriname-born and 514 foreign-born (506 born in China).\(^66\)

Between 1954 and 1959 the annual number of Chinese nationals settling in Paramaribo hovered around 19, but between 1960 and 1963 the number increased from 26 to 71, only to drop to 29 in 1964. The increase might reflect an influx of entrepreneurial migrants. In the same period the percentage of foreign-born apparently dropped from 41.1% (of 2,468 in 1950) to 29.4% (of 5,339 in 1964), despite an absolute increase of numbers of ethnic Chinese in Suriname.\(^67\) The latest population census of 2004 sets the number of ethnic Chinese in Suriname at 8,775; of these 5,575 were foreign-born, while the number of Chinese nationals was 3,654.\(^68\) This means that 3,200 individuals self-identified as local-born ethnic Chinese, but as the number of New Chinese migrants

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65 Kent 2003: 120-124. Kent quotes widely diverging estimates for the number of Chinese in Suriname for the period of 1990-2000: 3,000, 10,000 and even 40,000.
67 SIC 33.
68 SIC 213-2005/2.
cannot be traced in the census data, one should not assume that Tong’ap outnumber Laiap.

Extremely complex situational and performative identity processes make it difficult to treat mixed Chinese (Sranantongo: *moksi sneisi*) as a special and relevant case of Laiap identity here. Some *moksi sneisi* currently can and do pass for ‘Chinese’ (even speaking different varieties of Chinese) so that it makes little sense to distinguish them from Laiap who can pass for ‘real Chinese’. On the other hand, treating anyone with any amount of Chinese ancestry as Laiap regardless of their choice of self-identification has no merit either. Despite the fact that the Laiap label resembles an ethnic category by virtue of the criterion of being local-born of Chinese descent (local-born children of Laiap could thus conceivably also be called Laiap, no matter how mixed), it is fundamentally situational. Furthermore, performative freedom of mixed Chinese individuals is limited by the ability to ‘pass for Chinese’, either because of physical appearance or cultural knowledge.69

Although one can fairly confidently predict which individuals will be labelled Tong’ap or Laiap in particular contexts, there is often a high level of uncertainty. ‘Laiap’ can refer to ‘real’ Laiap, Tong’ap raised in Suriname, and New Chinese raised in Suriname. In the same way New Chinese and the latest Tong’ap *sinkeh* can be indistinguishable to outsiders. The Tong’ap-Laiap distinction implies pure-bred versus mixed Chinese. Mixed Chinese (Sranantongo: *moksi sneisi*), the ‘original Laiap’, are in practice not automatically included under the Laiap label. Depending on phenotypical limitations, i.e. whether or not a mixed Chinese can pass for a ‘real Chinese’, mixed Chinese have the freedom to choose Chineseness situationally. One group of Tong’ap *sinkeh* stands out: the ‘Hong Kong Chinese’. After the founding of the People’s Republic of China, Fuidung’on migration itineraries required a prolonged stop in Hong Kong, and so the last major group of Fuidung’on migrants in the 1960s and 1970s consisted of remigrants from Hong Kong. Acculturated to the Cantonese-speaking modernity of Hong Kong, they

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69 They might have been labelled Laiap, but mixed Chinese returnees to Suriname could fill the same niches as Tong’ap. In *Wi Rutu* of July 2008 (‘Sranan roots: George Eduard Fung-A-Jou aka ‘Blakka Sneesie’), William Man A Hing presented the case of probably the most famous *moksi sneisi*, George Eduard Fung-A-Jou (1911-1994). The son of Johanna Henriëtte Elstak and Fung-A-Jou, an immigrant from Dongguan, George was taken to the qiaoxiang by his father when he was very young, and returned to Suriname in the early 1930s. Being a mixed Creole himself, he twice married Creole women in Suriname, after which he married a Chinese woman from Taiwan. George was an entrepreneur and sat on the board of one of the Chinese associations.
transplanted the notions of the inferiority of Kejia and reinforced latent attitudes towards Cantonese as a high status public medium in Suriname.

The Laiap label is derived from Chinese cultural ideology as a category that is more distant from the Chinese Centre than a category of Chinese emigrants (huaqiao), at least in the eyes of Tong’ap. What the Laiap label means to New Chinese is not always clear; some use it to stress the gap between New Chinese and ‘Old Chinese’ (Tong’ap and Laiap together), others consider the gap between migrants and local-born (‘pure’ as well as mixed Chinese, i.e. huayi) as more basic. In any case, as Frank Dikötter says that “racialized identities are central, and not peripheral, to notions of identity in China”, and that “Chineseness – in Taiwan, Singapore or mainland China – is primarily defined as a matter of blood and descent”. He adds that modern ethnic discourse in the PRC is laden with strong notions of the threat of foreign pollution, hybridity as sexual transgression, and Han-Chinese racial superiority.70

Ethnic Chinese in Suriname cannot be strictly defined by reference to a single ethnic group. It is easier to observe the maintenance of a border between Tong’ap and Laiap than between Laiap and non-Chinese. Many Laiap have Creoles as their reference group rather than Chinese, and therefore do not self-identify as Chinese. In Suriname, dichotomization between Chinese and non-Chinese is most easily framed in terms of race. However, the relationship between ethnic Chinese, in particular the Fuidung’on Hakkas, and Creoles shows complementarization – reflecting a ‘We-You’ relationship rather than ‘Us-Them’. For example, some Surinamese use the label Moksi Sneisi (Sranantongo: mixed Chinese) for people of mixed Chinese heritage, but without providing symbolic markers beyond the fact of a Chinese ancestor. Issues of mixing / creolization / hybridization were not linked to the maintenance of ethnic borders prior the appearance of New Chinese; ethnic Chinese were becoming more similar to non-Chinese groups over time, without developing cultural revivalist or ethnonationalist movements. With the arrival of New Chinese, the differences between ethnic Chinese and non-Chinese would appear larger to the casual observer.

70 Dikötter 1997: 32.