

## Chinese Migration and Multicultural Transformation in Sirenja District, Central Sulawesi (1950–2000)

Revy Mariska<sup>1</sup>, Lukman Nadjamuddin<sup>2</sup>, Minarni Nongtji<sup>3</sup>

Universitas Tadulako, Indonesia<sup>1,2,3</sup>

[mariskarevy44@gmail.com](mailto:mariskarevy44@gmail.com)<sup>1</sup>

**Abstract:** This study aims to analyze the existence, socio-economic roles, and migration factors of the Chinese ethnic community in Sirenja District, Donggala Regency, during the period 1950–2000. The research employed a qualitative approach using historical research methods, including heuristics, source criticism, interpretation, and historiography. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, field observations, and archival and local historical documentation. The findings reveal that the Chinese community played a significant role in local economic development through trading activities, goods distribution, and commercial relations with coastal communities. Social interaction between Chinese Indonesians and residents was relatively harmonious, supported by economic cooperation, social communication, and cultural adaptation. However, the Chinese community also maintained internal solidarity and kinship networks as part of their socio-economic survival strategy. The study further found that the migration of Chinese Indonesians from Sirenja during the late 1990s and early 2000s was influenced by declining local economic activity, changes in regional trade structures, and broader national socio-political conditions during the Reformasi era. This migration contributed to weakening commercial activity and reducing multicultural interaction within the district. This research contributes to the development of local historical studies, ethnic migration research, and discussions on multicultural societies in Indonesia, particularly concerning Chinese communities in the coastal areas of Central Sulawesi.

**Keywords:** Chinese ethnicity, local history, migration, multicultural society, Sirenja.

*Abstrak:* Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis keberadaan, peran sosial-ekonomi, serta faktor migrasi etnis Tionghoa di Kecamatan Sirenja, Kabupaten Donggala pada periode 1950–2000. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan metode penelitian sejarah yang meliputi heuristik, kritik sumber, interpretasi, dan historiografi. Data diperoleh melalui wawancara mendalam, observasi lapangan, serta dokumentasi dari arsip dan sumber lokal. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa masyarakat Tionghoa memiliki peranan penting dalam perkembangan ekonomi lokal melalui aktivitas perdagangan, distribusi barang, dan hubungan ekonomi dengan masyarakat pesisir. Interaksi sosial antara etnis Tionghoa dan masyarakat lokal berlangsung relatif harmonis melalui hubungan ekonomi, komunikasi sosial, dan adaptasi budaya. Namun demikian, komunitas Tionghoa tetap mempertahankan solidaritas internal dan jaringan kekeluargaan sebagai bentuk strategi sosial dan ekonomi. Penelitian ini juga menemukan bahwa migrasi masyarakat Tionghoa dari Sirenja pada akhir 1990-an hingga awal 2000 dipengaruhi oleh penurunan aktivitas ekonomi lokal, perubahan struktur perdagangan, serta faktor sosial-politik nasional pada masa Reformasi. Migrasi tersebut berdampak pada melemahnya aktivitas perdagangan dan berkurangnya interaksi multikultural di Sirenja.

*Penelitian ini memberikan kontribusi dalam pengembangan kajian sejarah lokal, migrasi etnis, dan dinamika masyarakat multikultural di Indonesia, khususnya mengenai komunitas Tionghoa di wilayah pesisir Sulawesi Tengah.*

*Kata Kunci: Etnis Tionghoa, sejarah lokal, migrasi, masyarakat multikultural, Sirenja..*

Corresponding Author:

Revy Mariska

Universitas Tadulako, Indonesia, [mariskarevy44@gmail.com](mailto:mariskarevy44@gmail.com)

## **Introduction**

The Chinese ethnic community has been one of the social groups that significantly contributed to the historical, economic, and social development of Indonesian society (Suryadinata, 2018). The presence of Chinese communities throughout the Indonesian archipelago dates back to the era of maritime trade and continued to develop during the colonial and post-independence periods (Hayton, 2024). In many studies of Indonesian history, Chinese Indonesians are frequently associated with commercial activities, economic networks, and social interactions with local communities (Tagliacozzo, 2009). At the same time, the position of Chinese Indonesians within Indonesian society has also been closely linked to various socio-political issues, including discrimination, social stereotyping, and assimilation policies during the New Order era (Sidjaya, 2014). These conditions indicate that the existence of Chinese Indonesians in Indonesia is not merely related to economic activities but also involves issues of identity, interethnic relations, and the dynamics of a multicultural society (E. K. B. Tan, 2001)

During the New Order period, the Indonesian government implemented policies restricting Chinese cultural expressions through Presidential Instruction No. 14 of 1967 concerning Chinese religion, beliefs, and customs (M. G. Tan, 1991). These policies created social pressures on Chinese communities and encouraged processes of adaptation and assimilation into local society. According to Dawis, (2009), political policies during this period shaped ambiguous social relations toward Chinese Indonesians; while their economic contributions were acknowledged, their social and cultural identities were simultaneously restricted in public spaces. Consequently, Chinese communities in various regions adopted survival strategies through strengthening economic relations and adapting socially to surrounding communities (Hu & Hassink, 2017).

Previous studies on Chinese Indonesians have predominantly focused on major urban areas such as Jakarta, Surabaya, Medan, and Semarang, particularly concerning identity politics, discrimination, social conflict, and economic dominance (DR Ir Justian Suhandinata, 2013; Februandari, 2023; Somers, 1965). Meanwhile, research on Chinese communities in local and coastal areas remains relatively limited, especially in Central Sulawesi. In fact, local regions possess distinct social dynamics because interethnic interactions occur more closely and

culturally. Therefore, local historical studies are essential for understanding how minority communities establish social relations, adapt to local society, and experience transformations due to changing economic and social conditions over time.

Sirenja District in Donggala Regency is one of the coastal regions in Central Sulawesi that once had an active Chinese community involved in local trading activities since approximately the 1950s. The presence of Chinese Indonesians in this area was closely connected to local economic development, particularly in the trade of daily necessities and the distribution of goods within coastal communities. Over time, Chinese Indonesians in Sirenja not only engaged in economic activities but also established social relationships with local residents through trade and daily interactions. However, by the late 1990s until around 2000, most Chinese families gradually left Sirenja District and migrated to other regions such as Palu City, Makassar, and Kalimantan due to economic changes, declining trading activities, and the emergence of new economic centers in other areas.

The migration of Chinese Indonesians from Sirenja District is an important phenomenon to examine because it is not only related to economic migration but also connected to transformations in the local social structure (Suntoro et al., 2023). The decline of the Chinese community in Sirenja affected trading activities, patterns of social interaction, and gradually reduced one aspect of social diversity within the coastal society. From the perspective of social history, the migration of an ethnic community is influenced not only by economic factors but also by changes in social relations, business opportunities, security, and broader social transformations within local society (Castles, 2010). Therefore, studying the Chinese community in Sirenja District is essential for understanding the dynamics of interethnic relations and socio-economic transformations in the coastal communities of Central Sulawesi between 1950 and 2000.

Several previous studies indicate that research on Chinese Indonesians has primarily emphasized issues of political identity, state discrimination, social conflict, and the economic roles of Chinese communities in urban regions (Freedman, 2003; Urban, 2013; Walujono, 2014). Other studies have mainly focused on state policies toward Chinese Indonesians during the New Order and post-Reformation periods (Suryadinata, 2019). However, studies concerning the local history of Chinese communities in the coastal regions of Central Sulawesi, particularly in Sirenja District, remain very limited. In fact, local historical studies provide important contributions in illustrating how minority communities establish direct social relations with local society in everyday life. Therefore, this study offers a significant novelty by focusing on the dynamics of the presence and migration of Chinese Indonesians in a local coastal area that has rarely been examined in previous research.

Beyond its historical contribution, this study is also important in the context of strengthening multicultural values and social integration in Indonesian society. A multicultural society requires harmonious social relations and mutual respect for cultural and social differences. In this context, the experiences of Chinese Indonesians in Sirenja District can serve as a reflection of how minority communities interact, adapt, and maintain their existence within local societies undergoing continuous social and economic transformations. This study also contributes to the development of local history, ethnic migration studies, and interethnic relations in Indonesia, particularly within the coastal regions of Central Sulawesi.

Based on the explanations above, this study aims to analyze the existence of Chinese Indonesians in Sirenja District, Donggala Regency from 1950 to 2000, identify the factors that contributed to the migration of Chinese communities from the region, and examine its impacts on the social and economic life of local society. This study is expected to contribute academically to the development of social and local historical studies in Indonesia while enriching discussions on the dynamics of multicultural society within regional historical contexts.

### **Methods**

This study employed a qualitative research approach using a historical case study design to explore the existence, social dynamics, and migration of the Chinese ethnic community in Sirenja District, Donggala Regency, between 1950 and 2000 (Travers, 2001). A qualitative historical approach was selected because this research seeks to understand social phenomena, historical experiences, and interethnic relations through in-depth interpretation of historical events and community narratives. According to Creswell, (2014), Qualitative research is appropriate for examining social and cultural phenomena within their natural contexts, particularly when the researcher aims to understand meanings, experiences, and historical realities from participants' perspectives. In addition, the historical approach enabled the researcher to reconstruct the social conditions, economic activities, and migration processes experienced by the Chinese community in Sirenja over several decades.

The research was conducted in Sirenja District, Donggala Regency, Central Sulawesi, which was selected because the region historically accommodated a Chinese community actively involved in local trading activities. The primary data sources consisted of oral testimonies obtained through in-depth interviews with former Chinese residents, local community leaders, traders, elders, and local government representatives who possessed knowledge regarding the historical presence of Chinese Indonesians in the region. Secondary data were collected from archival documents, local government records, photographs, historical notes, previous studies, and relevant literature concerning Chinese Indonesians and local history in Indonesia. Data collection techniques included in-depth interviews,

participatory observation, and documentation. Interviews were conducted semi-structured to allow participants to explain their historical experiences freely, while observations focused on former trading areas, settlement locations, and social environments associated with the Chinese community. Documentation techniques were used to strengthen historical reconstruction through written records, photographs, and archival evidence (Wicks & Whiteford, 2006).

To ensure data validity, this study applied source triangulation, technique triangulation, and time triangulation by comparing information obtained from different informants, methods, and historical sources. Data analysis followed the interactive model proposed by Miles et al., (2019), including data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The researcher first categorized interview transcripts, historical records, and observational findings into thematic patterns related to migration, economic activities, social interaction, and interethnic relations. Subsequently, the data were interpreted using perspectives from social history, migration studies, and multicultural theory to understand the broader social transformations experienced by the Chinese community in Sirenja District. Through this approach, the study aimed to produce a comprehensive understanding of the historical dynamics of Chinese Indonesians within the local coastal society of Central Sulawesi.

## **Results And Discussion**

### **Result**

#### **The Historical Presence of the Chinese Ethnic Community in Sirenja District (1950–2000)**

The findings of this study reveal that the Chinese ethnic community had existed in Sirenja District, Donggala Regency, since approximately the 1950s. Their arrival was closely associated with the development of trading activities in coastal areas of Central Sulawesi after Indonesian independence. Most Chinese residents who came to Sirenja worked as traders and small business owners who distributed daily necessities and commercial goods to local communities. Based on interviews with local community elders, the Chinese community became one of the important economic groups that contributed significantly to the circulation of goods and the development of local trade in the region. The existence of Chinese traders also encouraged the growth of traditional markets and strengthened economic interactions between coastal and inland communities.

According to one local informant, the Chinese community in Sirenja was widely recognized for their discipline, persistence, and strong trading networks. A community elder explained:

*“At that time, Chinese traders controlled many shops in Sirenja. People depended on them for daily necessities because they brought goods from outside the region. They had strong economic connections and were trusted in business matters.”*

This statement illustrates that the Chinese community occupied an important economic position within local society. Their commercial activities were not limited to selling goods but also involved building long-term relationships with local residents through trade and social interaction. Several informants stated that Chinese shop owners frequently provided goods on credit to local residents, especially fishermen and farmers, which strengthened social trust between ethnic groups. Observational findings also indicate that former Chinese-owned shop buildings were generally located in strategic market areas and coastal trading centers, demonstrating their central role in the economic life of Sirenja society.

Besides economic activities, the Chinese community also established social interactions with local residents in everyday life. Although cultural differences remained visible, the relationship between Chinese Indonesians and local communities in Sirenja was generally described as peaceful and cooperative. Local residents interacted with Chinese traders through commercial transactions, neighborhood relations, and social communication within market environments. Several informants explained that interethnic relations during the 1970s and 1980s were relatively harmonious because economic cooperation created mutual dependence between communities. Nevertheless, despite these interactions, the Chinese community tended to maintain a relatively closed social structure within family and business networks, particularly in preserving traditions and economic relations.

#### Factors Influencing the Migration of Chinese Indonesians from Sirenja

The study found that the decline of the Chinese community in Sirenja District became increasingly visible during the late 1990s until approximately 2000. Most Chinese families gradually left the region and migrated to larger urban centers such as Palu, Makassar, and several regions in Kalimantan. This migration process was influenced by multiple interconnected factors, particularly economic transformation, declining local trade opportunities, and broader social changes occurring within coastal society.

One former resident explained:

*“Business opportunities in Sirenja became smaller over time. Many younger Chinese generations preferred moving to bigger cities because trade was more promising there. Sirenja was no longer as active economically as before.”*

This testimony demonstrates that economic factors played a dominant role in the migration process. As transportation systems and regional economic networks developed, larger cities offered broader commercial opportunities and better economic security. Consequently, younger generations of Chinese Indonesians were less interested in continuing family businesses in Sirenja and preferred relocating to urban areas with more dynamic economic activities.

In addition to economic factors, several informants also mentioned social and political considerations influencing migration decisions. Although there were no major ethnic conflicts reported in Sirenja, the broader national atmosphere during the late New Order and Reformasi periods created uncertainty among Chinese communities in many parts of Indonesia. Some interviewees suggested that national political tensions indirectly affected feelings of security among Chinese Indonesians, encouraging migration toward larger cities where social networks and economic communities were stronger.

Observational findings further indicate that many former Chinese-owned shops in Sirenja were either abandoned or transferred to residents after the migration period. Some buildings remain physically visible today, although their functions have changed significantly. Documentation data also reveal that the number of Chinese families living in Sirenja gradually declined from decade to decade, particularly after the emergence of alternative economic centers in urban regions outside Donggala Regency.

### **Social and Economic Impacts on Local Society**

The migration of Chinese Indonesians from Sirenja District produced noticeable impacts on local economic and social structures. Economically, the reduction of Chinese-owned trading activities contributed to the decline of certain commercial networks previously managed through interregional connections. Several local residents stated that after many Chinese traders left the region, market activities became less active, and access to imported or external goods became more limited. One informant explained:

*“When many Chinese traders moved away, the market atmosphere changed. Fewer goods came into Sirenja, and trade was not as busy as before.”*

This statement reflects the important economic role previously played by the Chinese community in supporting local commerce and goods distribution. The departure of these traders not only affected economic circulation but also altered patterns of market interaction within society.

Socially, the migration of Chinese Indonesians also reduced the level of ethnic diversity within the Sirenja community. Previously, daily interactions between Chinese traders and local residents represented a form of multicultural social life within the coastal region. The gradual disappearance of the Chinese community led to a decline in interethnic social interaction and reduced one aspect of the multicultural character of local society. However, several informants emphasized that the historical presence of Chinese Indonesians remained an important part of collective memory within the community.

The findings further indicate that despite the migration process, social relations between local residents and former Chinese communities generally remained positive. Some families maintained communication and economic relationships

even after relocating to other cities. This demonstrates that interethnic relations in Sirenja were largely shaped through practical cooperation and long-term social interaction rather than conflict or segregation.

Overall, the findings show that the existence and migration of Chinese Indonesians in Sirenja District between 1950 and 2000 represented not only a process of economic transformation but also a broader social change affecting interethnic relations, local trade structures, and the multicultural character of coastal society in Central Sulawesi.

### **Discussion**

The findings of this study reveal that the existence of the Chinese ethnic community in Sirenja District from 1950 to 2000 represented a complex historical process shaped by migration, economic adaptation, social interaction, and regional transformation. The Chinese community in Sirenja was not merely a migrant minority group seeking economic survival, but also an important social actor that contributed significantly to the development of local economic structures and intercultural relations within coastal society in Central Sulawesi. Their presence reflected broader historical patterns of Chinese migration in Indonesia, where economic opportunity, trade networks, and local adaptation became the primary foundations for community survival in peripheral regions outside major urban centers (Côté, 2014; Yew & Tan, 2022). In the context of Indonesian historiography, this study contributes to expanding historical discussions concerning Chinese Indonesians by focusing on local social realities rather than exclusively emphasizing national political narratives or urban commercial dominance.

Historically, Chinese migration into various coastal regions of Indonesia has often been associated with trading activities and the formation of intermediary economic systems between rural communities and wider regional markets. The findings of this study confirm that similar dynamics occurred in Sirenja District. Chinese Indonesians developed their livelihoods primarily through trade, distribution networks, small shops, and commercial interactions that connected local agricultural and fishery products with broader market systems (Sobariah & Herlambang, 2025). This finding supports Crawford, (2000) argument that Chinese communities historically functioned as economic intermediaries across Southeast Asia due to their flexibility, mobility, and ability to establish commercial relationships within diverse social environments. In Sirenja, Chinese traders occupied strategic positions because they supplied goods needed by local communities while simultaneously facilitating market access for local products. Consequently, their existence became deeply integrated into everyday economic life.

The role of Chinese Indonesians within the Sirenja economy also illustrates the interconnected nature of economic survival between migrant communities and local society. The findings indicate that residents, particularly fishermen, farmers, and

small-scale traders, depended heavily on Chinese-owned shops for household necessities, farming tools, and trading capital. The practice of providing goods on credit became one of the most important mechanisms through which Chinese traders established long-term trust with residents (T. Zhang et al., 2020). Such economic trust gradually developed into broader social relationships that reduced ethnic distance and encouraged coexistence. This finding is consistent with social integration theory, which argues that interaction and cooperation in practical daily life often become stronger foundations for social cohesion than formal institutional arrangements. Through continuous economic interaction, Chinese Indonesians in Sirenja became recognized not merely as outsiders but as integral participants in local community life.

Nevertheless, although harmonious interactions developed between Chinese Indonesians and local communities, the findings also reveal the persistence of certain social boundaries. Chinese families generally maintained close internal kinship relations and tended to preserve business activities within family networks. Marriage patterns, family associations, and economic cooperation frequently remained concentrated within the Chinese community itself. Such patterns can be understood as adaptive survival strategies commonly found within migrant minority communities. According to Setijadi, (2016), Chinese Indonesians historically maintained internal solidarity systems as mechanisms for preserving security, identity, and economic stability within uncertain socio-political environments. In Sirenja, these strategies did not necessarily produce open social conflict but instead reflected a pragmatic balance between integration and cultural preservation. Chinese Indonesians participated actively in local economic and social life while still maintaining distinct communal identities in certain cultural and familial aspects.

The findings further demonstrate that cultural adaptation played an important role in shaping relations between Chinese Indonesians and local communities in Sirenja. Many Chinese traders adopted local languages in daily communication and adjusted their social behavior according to prevailing community norms (Q. Zhang, 2017). This adaptation process strengthened social acceptance and minimized the possibility of ethnic tension. In multicultural societies, the willingness of minority groups to adapt to local social structures often becomes an important factor in maintaining harmonious coexistence. At the same time, local communities also displayed relatively accommodating attitudes toward Chinese Indonesians because economic cooperation created mutual dependence and practical benefits for both sides. This reciprocal relationship illustrates that multicultural harmony in local communities is often sustained through practical social interactions rather than through ideological discourse alone.

Another important finding of this study concerns the transformation of Chinese Indonesian migration patterns during the late twentieth century. The gradual migration of Chinese Indonesians from Sirenja to larger urban areas during the 1990s and early 2000s reflected significant economic and social changes occurring within the region. Declining local economic opportunities, reduced commercial activity, and weakening regional trade circulation became major push factors encouraging migration. At the same time, urban centers such as Palu, Makassar, and Kalimantan offered more promising economic prospects, larger consumer markets, and stronger business infrastructure. This migration pattern corresponds closely with Lee's migration theory, which explains that population mobility is influenced by both push factors in the area of origin and pull factors in destination regions. In the case of Sirenja, economic stagnation and limited opportunities functioned as major motivations for relocation.

However, economic factors alone cannot fully explain the migration of Chinese Indonesians from Sirenja. The findings indicate that broader socio-political conditions at the national level also influenced migration decisions. During the late New Order and Reformasi periods, Chinese Indonesians across Indonesia experienced heightened uncertainty due to political instability and anti-Chinese sentiment emerging in several regions. Although Sirenja itself did not experience direct ethnic violence, national events created psychological insecurity among Chinese communities, encouraging many families to relocate to urban environments perceived as offering greater security and stronger communal support networks. Chong, (2018) argues that the Reformasi transition significantly affected the social confidence of Chinese Indonesians, even in regions where open conflict did not occur. The findings of this study support this argument by demonstrating that migration decisions were shaped not only by local economic decline but also by broader perceptions of vulnerability experienced by minority communities during periods of political transition.

The migration of Chinese Indonesians from Sirenja produced substantial consequences for local economic structures (Setijadi, 2023). One of the most visible impacts was the decline of trading activity and the weakening of local market circulation following the closure of Chinese-owned businesses. Residents reported that markets became less active and access to goods became more limited after many Chinese traders left the region. This finding confirms that Chinese Indonesians previously occupied central positions within local commercial systems. Their departure created economic gaps that were not immediately replaced by other groups. In many peripheral regions, minority trading communities often function as connectors between rural economies and broader market networks. Therefore, the migration of such communities may produce structural economic disruption extending beyond demographic change alone.

Beyond economic consequences, the migration of Chinese Indonesians also influenced the social and multicultural character of Sirenja society. Before migration, daily interactions between Chinese traders and residents contributed to the formation of intercultural familiarity and practical tolerance within community life. Markets, shops, and social gatherings became spaces where interethnic communication occurred routinely. As Chinese families gradually left Sirenja, opportunities for intercultural interaction diminished, reducing the visibility of ethnic diversity within local society. This finding highlights the importance of minority communities in sustaining multicultural social environments. Ethnic diversity within local communities is not simply a demographic characteristic but also a social process maintained through continuous interaction, cooperation, and shared experiences in everyday life (Wickes et al., n.d.).

The findings further reveal the significance of social memory in preserving historical awareness concerning the Chinese community in Sirenja. Although most Chinese Indonesians have migrated from the district, memories concerning their presence remain embedded within local narratives, former shop buildings, and stories transmitted across generations. Residents generally remember Chinese Indonesians as hardworking traders who contributed positively to the local economy and maintained relatively harmonious relations with surrounding communities (Effendi, 2019). Such collective memories demonstrate that local historical experiences often preserve more nuanced understandings of interethnic relations than national political narratives, which frequently emphasize conflict and discrimination. In this context, social memory functions as an important cultural mechanism for maintaining awareness of past multicultural coexistence within local communities.

From a historiographical perspective, this study provides an important contribution by shifting analytical attention toward local experiences of Chinese Indonesians in rural and coastal regions. Much previous scholarship concerning Chinese Indonesians has concentrated primarily on urban economic dominance, state discrimination, or political identity at the national level (van Bruggen, 2022). While these issues remain important, local studies such as this reveal the diversity of Chinese Indonesian experiences across different regional contexts. The Sirenja case demonstrates that interethnic relations in peripheral coastal communities were frequently shaped more by economic cooperation, social accommodation, and practical coexistence than by direct political confrontation. Consequently, local historical perspectives are essential for developing more comprehensive understandings of multicultural dynamics in Indonesian society.

This study also reinforces theoretical discussions concerning multiculturalism and social integration in Indonesia. The findings demonstrate that economic interaction can become a powerful instrument for reducing ethnic boundaries and

fostering mutual trust within diverse communities (Pieterse, 2003). The Chinese community in Sirenja was accepted not because ethnic differences disappeared entirely, but because practical social relations created systems of interdependence beneficial to all parties. This condition reflects a form of functional multiculturalism, where social harmony emerges through shared participation in economic and community life rather than through complete cultural assimilation. Such findings challenge simplistic assumptions that ethnic diversity necessarily produces conflict within local societies.

At the same time, the findings also indicate the fragility of multicultural coexistence when economic and structural conditions change significantly. The decline of local economic opportunities weakened the foundations sustaining interethnic interaction in Sirenja, ultimately contributing to migration and social transformation. This demonstrates that multicultural relations are closely connected to broader socio-economic conditions and cannot be understood solely through cultural perspectives. Economic stability, access to opportunities, and social security all play important roles in maintaining diverse social environments within local communities.

In relation to local historical studies, this research highlights the importance of examining peripheral regions often overlooked within mainstream Indonesian historiography. Coastal districts such as Sirenja provide valuable insights into how migration, trade, and multicultural interaction shaped local societies outside major urban centers. Such local histories reveal the diversity of Indonesian social experiences and contribute to more inclusive historical narratives. The experiences of Chinese Indonesians in Sirenja demonstrate that local communities possessed their own forms of multicultural accommodation, economic cooperation, and social adaptation that differed significantly from national political representations (Pieterse, 2003).

Overall, this study concludes that the existence and migration of Chinese Indonesians in Sirenja District between 1950 and 2000 represented a multidimensional historical process involving economic transformation, migration dynamics, social adaptation, and multicultural interaction. The Chinese community played crucial roles in shaping local economic structures and intercultural relations, while their migration contributed to significant social and economic changes within the district. The findings confirm that local historical analysis is essential for understanding the broader complexities of ethnic relations and multicultural transformation in Indonesia. Furthermore, this research emphasizes that economic interaction, social trust, and local adaptation remain fundamental factors in sustaining harmonious coexistence within diverse societies.

## **Conclusion**

This study concludes that the existence of the Chinese ethnic community in Sirenja District from 1950 to 2000 represented an important part of local social and economic history in Central Sulawesi. The Chinese community played a significant role in strengthening regional economic activities through trade, distribution networks, and commercial interactions with local society. Their presence contributed not only to the circulation of goods and economic stability within the district but also to the formation of multicultural social relations characterized by cooperation, trust, and mutual dependence. The findings demonstrate that interethnic relations between Chinese Indonesians and local communities in Sirenja were generally shaped through practical economic interaction and everyday social accommodation rather than through formal political integration. Through adaptation to local culture and participation in community life, Chinese Indonesians became an integral part of the local social structure despite maintaining certain aspects of communal identity and kinship solidarity.

The study further reveals that the migration of Chinese Indonesians from Sirenja during the late 1990s and early 2000s was influenced by interconnected economic, social, and political factors. Declining local economic opportunities, changing regional trade structures, and broader national political uncertainty encouraged many Chinese families to relocate to larger urban areas with better economic prospects and stronger communal networks. Their departure created noticeable impacts on the local economy, particularly in the weakening of market activity and commercial circulation within Sirenja District. In addition, the gradual disappearance of the Chinese community reduced the intensity of multicultural interaction that had previously characterized local social life. These findings indicate that minority ethnic communities often hold strategic positions not only in economic systems but also in maintaining social diversity and intercultural engagement within local societies.

This research contributes theoretically by enriching studies on Chinese Indonesians through a localized historical perspective that highlights everyday social interaction, migration, and economic adaptation in coastal communities outside major urban centers. The study demonstrates that local historical experiences are essential for understanding the broader complexity of multiculturalism and ethnic relations in Indonesia. However, this study also has several limitations. The research relied primarily on oral testimonies and limited local documentation due to the scarcity of written historical archives concerning Chinese Indonesians in Sirenja District. In addition, many former members of the Chinese community had already migrated from the region, making direct historical reconstruction more challenging. Therefore, future studies are recommended to expand research through comparative regional analysis, broader archival

exploration, and interdisciplinary approaches in order to develop a more comprehensive understanding of Chinese Indonesian migration and multicultural transformation in local Indonesian history.

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Revy Mariska et al.

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