



# Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs

---

Melvin, Jess (2013), Why Not Genocide? Anti-Chinese Violence in Aceh, 1965–1966, in: *Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs*, 32, 3, 63–91.

ISSN: 1868-4882 (online), ISSN: 1868-1034 (print)

The online version of this article can be found at:

[www.CurrentSoutheastAsianAffairs.org](http://www.CurrentSoutheastAsianAffairs.org)

---

Published by

GIGA German Institute of Global and Area Studies, Institute of Asian Studies and Hamburg University Press.

The *Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs* is an Open Access publication. It may be read, copied and distributed free of charge according to the conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution-No Derivative Works 3.0 License.

To subscribe to the print edition: [ias@giga-hamburg.de](mailto:ias@giga-hamburg.de)

For an e-mail alert please register at: [www.CurrentSoutheastAsianAffairs.org](http://www.CurrentSoutheastAsianAffairs.org)

The *Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs* is part of the GIGA Journal Family which includes: Africa Spectrum ● Journal of Current Chinese Affairs ● Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs ● Journal of Politics in Latin America ●

[www.giga-journal-family.org](http://www.giga-journal-family.org)



## Why Not Genocide? Anti-Chinese Violence in Aceh, 1965–1966

Jess Melvin

**Abstract:** This article provides an account of anti-Chinese violence in Aceh between 1 October 1965 and 17 August 1966. Drawing upon original oral history evidence and previously unknown documentary sources, this article builds upon current scholarly understandings that two phases of violence involving members of the ethnic Chinese community can be identified in Aceh during this period, to explain how a third explicitly ethnic-based phase of violence directed against members of the ethnic Chinese community in Aceh can also be identified. Based on this research and a reflection on the precedent set by the Cambodian genocide as to how the current legal definition of genocide can be applied, this article argues that the assessment that the Indonesian killings should not be understood as genocide is premature.

■ Manuscript received 5 November 2013; accepted 9 February 2014

**Keywords:** Indonesia, Aceh, Indonesian genocide, 1965–66 Mass Killings, anti-Chinese violence

**Jess Melvin** is a PhD student with the School of Historical and Philosophical Studies at the University of Melbourne. Her research focuses on military accountability for the Indonesian genocide and the structural causes of mass violence.

E-mail: <j.melvin@student.unimelb.edu.au>

## Introduction

A sea change is currently underway in research into the Indonesian genocide.<sup>1</sup> This change is being driven by the discovery of new documentary evidence and the recording of new eyewitness and perpetrator testimonies<sup>2</sup> that have made it possible to establish beyond reasonable doubt that the Indonesian genocide should be understood as the result of an intentional and centralised military campaign.<sup>3</sup> In light of the discovery of this new evidence, it is appropriate to return to the scholarly debate over the question of whether or not the 1965–66 Mass Killings in Indonesia, as the event is commonly known, should be understood as genocide.

According to the position that the Indonesian killings should not be understood as genocide, there are two main reasons why this is the case. The first reason is because “the overwhelming majority of victims in the 1965–66 massacres were indigenous Indonesians who were identified for slaughter by their association with the PKI” (Cribb and Coppel 2009: 448). While the second reason is because members of the ethnic Chinese community who were targeted during this period were targeted for their association, either real or imagined, with the PKI, rather than their ethnic identity per se (Cribb and Coppel 2009: 450). This position thus adopts the current legal definition of genocide, as codified by the Rome Statute,

- 
- 1 The Indonesian genocide was initiated on 1 October 1965 when the Indonesian military launched its long-anticipated seizure of state power, which it achieved by attacking its major political rival, the PKI (Partai Komunis Indonesia, or Indonesian Communist Party). It is believed that between half a million and one million unarmed civilians were murdered as part of this campaign. The use of the term “genocide” to describe these events is contested.
  - 2 One of the major catalysts in this process has been the release of Joshua Oppenheimer’s ground-breaking documentary film *The Act of Killing* (2012), which shows former North Sumatran death squad members speaking candidly about their involvement in the genocide.
  - 3 This case is laid out in my PhD thesis, entitled *Mechanics of Mass Murder: How the Indonesian Military Initiated and Implemented the Indonesian genocide, The Case of Aceh*, 2014, School of Historical and Philosophical Studies, The University of Melbourne, forthcoming. This position is also implicit in the executive summary that the Indonesian National Human Rights Commission (Komnas HAM) prepared for its official report into the events of 1965–66. This summary has called for further investigation into the role of the Commander for the Restoration of Security and Order (PANGKOPKAMTIB), Defence Region Commanders (Panganda) and provincial Military Commanders (Pangdam) in orchestrating and overseeing official operations leading to serious human rights abuses during this period (Ringkasan Eksekutif 2012: 196–197).

which defines genocide as the destruction “in whole or in part, [of] a national, ethnical, racial or religious group” (Rome Statute 2002: 3).

This article does not seek to disagree with the observation that the majority of victims of the 1965–66 killings were indigenous Indonesians who were identified due to their real or perceived association with the PKI. Nor will it argue with the current legal definition of genocide, despite its clear shortcomings. It will, however, argue that, based on the precedent currently being set by the United Nations sponsored trial of former senior members of Democratic Kampuchea (as will be explained below), the question of “proportion” is irrelevant to the question of whether charges of genocide can be brought. It will also argue that the assessment that “there is no evidence for a special targeting of Chinese for murder during this period” is not supported by the information now available. As this article will demonstrate, new documentary and testimonial evidence from Aceh province suggests that such targeting did occur.

## The Cambodian Precedent

The deliberate narrowing of Rafael Lemkin’s original concept of genocide at the 1948 Genocide Convention to exclude groups based on political identification was pursued in the interest of allowing the world’s then binary superpowers to “retain a free hand” to pursue their objectives in the face of the newly emerging, ideologically defined Cold War (Ratner, Abrams, and Bischoff 2009: 44). This arbitrary exclusion has limited the meaning of the term and has resulted in a hair-splitting debate over the difference between ‘ethnic’ and ‘political’ identity no longer supported by contemporary understandings of the similarities between these two often overlapping terms. As Cribb and Coppel explain, “ethnic identity is far more constructed and far less primordial than it was understood in Lemkin’s time, and therefore [...] closer in character to political identity than Lemkin realised” (2009: 464). One could also argue that the current legal definition of genocide prioritises the perpetrator’s self-identification of its target group(s) over the manner in which these target group(s) are attacked by the perpetrator group. This creates the odd situation in which different target groups of the same campaign can be classified in different ways depending on the manner in which the groups are defined, even if they are treated in essentially identical ways. Indeed, if we were to rigidly adhere to the current legal definition of genocide, it would be necessary to exclude certain target groups of the Nazi Holocaust, such as

those targeted for their political beliefs or sexual orientation,<sup>4</sup> as victims of genocide. It is unclear what the purpose of such an arbitrary exclusion would be, other than the pursuit of over-zealous taxonomical purity, or to highlight the inconsistency inherent within the current legal definition of genocide.

The debate over whether the 1975–79 killings in Cambodia should be understood as genocide initially revolved around the question of whether atrocities committed against the Cambodian population should be classified as genocide when the majority of the Khmer Rouge’s victims shared their ethnic identity with their attackers (Kiernan 1990: 35). This debate was resolved in the late 1980s, when the United Nations’ special rapporteur on genocide, Benjamin Whitaker, argued that the Khmer Rouge regime was “guilty of genocide, ‘even under the most restricted [legal] definition [...] since the victims *included* target groups such as the Chams [an ethnic and religious minority]’” (cited in Kiernan 1990: 40, emphasis added). The same position was also adopted by the US State Department in 1989 (Kiernan 1990: 40) and by the current United Nations-sponsored trial of senior leaders of Democratic Kampuchea, who are accused of “the crime of genocide [...] crimes against humanity [...] grave breaches of the 1949 Geneva Conventions [including War Crimes ...] and other crimes [such as murder which can be tried under domestic law in Cambodia] (Agreement Between the United Nations 2003: 7–8). If we are to follow the precedent set by the Cambodian example, an event can be understood as genocide even if only discrete cases of genocide are identified within the total event. There is no need to tally up the proportion of various target groups.

In the case of Indonesia, the main impediment to finding discrete cases of ethnic-based violence appears to be a lack of basic chronological data on the killings. As John Roosa has observed, the fact that we simply do not know what happened in many provinces makes it impossible to categorise specific cases of violence in these areas (Roosa 2013: 2). Moreover, in other provinces, such as Aceh, where it has been considered possible to identify patterns in the types of violence perpetrated, the discovery of new documentary and testimonial evidence has highlighted the extremely provisional nature of these early assessments.<sup>5</sup> Indeed, the greatest danger is that a categorical insistence that genocide did not occur in Indonesia in 1965–66 may lead researchers to believe that further

---

4 For a discussion of the manner in which non-ethnic based groups were targeted during the Nazi Holocaust, please see Berenbaum (1990).

5 Testimonial evidence that genocidal anti-Chinese violence occurred in North Sumatra can also be found in *The Act of Killing*.

investigation is not required. As the following sections will attempt to demonstrate this could not be further from the truth.

## What Is Known about Anti-Chinese Violence in Aceh During the Indonesian Genocide?

It has been established in the literature that violence specifically targeting members of the ethnic Chinese community occurred in Aceh during the period of the Indonesian genocide. As Charles Coppel explained in his classic 1983 study *Indonesian Chinese in Crisis*,

The most serious sign of [anti-Chinese prejudice rising to the surface] was in Aceh, where thousands of Chinese were driven out of the province [...] In Lhokseumawe, north Aceh, great pressure was applied to the alien Chinese [from April 1966] (Coppel 1983: 69).

Following this violent expulsion, Aceh's Military Commander Ishak Djuarsa took the unprecedented measure of issuing an expulsion order demanding "all alien Chinese" leave the province by 17 August 1966 (Coppel 1983: 69). At least ten thousand members of the ethnic Chinese community fled Aceh at this time (Coppel 1983: 69). Unfortunately, little else is known about anti-Chinese violence in Aceh during this period.

## Importance of Political Identity within the Ethnic Chinese Community in Aceh

The interviewees that I spoke to for this study do not describe the ethnic Chinese community in Aceh as being homogenous. On the contrary, they have shown how this community was deeply fragmented along ideological lines. As Ho Fui Yen has explained,

In Aceh, the ethnic Chinese community was divided into two groups, one that was Kuomintang [Chinese National Party] and one that was Kun Chan Tang [Chinese Communist Party]. One was pro-Taiwan, the other pro-Beijing (Ho, Xie, and Wak 2011: 9).

Members of the Association of Overseas Chinese (the *Asosiasi Huakiao*), such as Ho, Xie Jie Fang and Wak Tin Chaw, were part of the pro-Beijing group. They followed developments in Chinese politics and felt an affinity with the Peoples' Republic of China. Members of the Consultative Body for Indonesian Citizenship (Baperki: *Badan Permusjawaratan Kewarganegaraan Indonesia*), a mass organisation for ethnic Chinese with

close links to the PKI, were similarly part of the pro-Beijing group. They tended, however, to be more focused on domestic Indonesian politics, and were strong supporters of Sukarno's political program (Siauw 1999: 386).

Ho Fui Yen was born in 1946 in Banda Aceh, and grew up in Peunayong, Banda Aceh's Chinatown. After finishing school, Ho travelled to Medan to train as a teacher, after which she returned to Banda Aceh and taught at an *Asosiasi*-affiliated school for one year. The events of 1 October 1965 caused the school to be closed and forced Ho's family to flee the province (Ho, Xie, and Wak 2011: 3, 12, 31, 33).

Xie Jie Fang was born in 1946 in Banda Aceh, and grew up in Peunayong. Xie's father had travelled to Aceh from Quan Tung, Guandong in southern China when Xie's father was thirteen with a friend who often travelled between Malaya, Indonesia and China, who taught him the art of furniture making. After finishing school, Xie also travelled to Medan to train as a teacher and was in the same group of new graduates as Ho. Upon completion of his training, Xie also returned to Banda Aceh to teach at an *Asosiasi*-affiliated school, where he taught for one year before the events of 1 October 1965 intervened and he and his family were forced to flee (Ho, Xie, and Wak 2011: 3, 29, 30–31).

Wak Tin Chaw was born in 1946 in Banda Aceh, and grew up in Peunayong. Her father, Wang, was originally from Shandong, between Beijing and Shanghai. Wang was originally a cloth merchant, but during the Japanese occupation of Aceh he and two of his close friends opened a restaurant, the "Hap Seng Hing" (Ind. *Kemenangan dan Kesenangan*, or 'Happy Victory'), which served barbecued pork. Wang and his friends were members of the *Asosiasi*, as well as members of the anti-Japanese underground. Wak has explained that part of the reason for setting up the restaurant was so members of the anti-Japanese underground would have a place to hold secret meetings. Wang was a leader within the *Asosiasi*-affiliated community and later helped convoys of expelled members of the ethnic Chinese community to flee the province (Ho, Xie, and Wak 2011: 31, 36–37, 40).

Ethnic Chinese members of the PKI, such as “Asan”,<sup>6</sup> the sole surviving member of the PKI’s Provincial Secretariat in Aceh (Asan 2011a: 11), were primarily involved in the PKI’s national campaigns and supported the Chinese Revolution through this framework, while continuing to retain close links with the broader pro-Beijing group. In the case of Asan, it was this continued contact with the broader pro-Beijing group that helped him to survive the killings.

On the other side of the ideological divide was the pro-Kuomintang group. As Hong Liu has observed, a large proportion of Indonesia’s ethnic Chinese population were actually long-term opponents of the Peoples’ Republic of China. Unfortunately, no figures are available for the early 1960s, or for Aceh specifically, but Kuomintang membership in Indonesia during the 1950s was the largest in the world outside of Taiwan, with approximately thirty per cent of Chinese residents in Indonesia reportedly pro-Kuomintang (Liu 2011: 157).

Asan was born around 1932, most likely in Singapore. His father was killed fighting in Malaya against the Japanese and, at four or five years of age, Asan moved with his mother to Meulaboh, West Aceh. His mother worked as a teacher at an *Asosiasi* affiliated middle school. Asan joined the PKI in Sigli, northern Aceh, in 1957. Prior to this time, he had served as secretary for the *Asosiasi* and was involved with Baperki. He joined the PKI for ideological reasons. As he has recalled, “I had read many books in Chinese about the Communist struggle [...] I thought, if I can’t join the revolution in China, if I have the chance to join the struggle in Indonesia, that is also good [...]” (Asan 2011a: 1 and 2011b: 1, 3).

The animosity between the pro-Beijing and the pro-Kuomintang groups had its roots in Chinese politics, however, this animosity also took on more domestic manifestations. From February to August 1958, for example, the pro-Kuomintang group supported the PRRI’s (Revolutionary Government of the Republic of Indonesia) rebellion, led by dissident military generals in West Sumatra, with Taiwan funnelling weapons to the rebels through Aceh (Kahin and Kahin 1995: 121). Once the rebellion was put down, members of the pro-Kuomintang group were not offered places in Sukarno’s government and pro-Kuomintang schools

---

6 “Asan” is a pseudonym. Due to the continued discrimination and intimidation experienced by former members of the PKI in Indonesia, Asan’s real name has been withheld.

were shut down (Chan 2011). These bans fostered resentment within the pro-Kuomintang group, whose support for the rebellion also demonstrated that it was willing to side with the national military leadership over Sukarno.

It is not clear how this situation played out within Aceh. The overtly religious character of the Darul Islam rebellion, which was courted by the PRRI leadership (Sjamsuddin 1985: 296–297), may have tempered this alliance in the province, although it is clear that the pro-Kuomintang group had little sympathy for Sukarno and was ideologically opposed to the PKI. Thus, it would appear that the ethnic Chinese community in Aceh did not consider itself to be a homogenous group, but was divided along sharp and irreparable ideological lines.

## How Did China and the Ethnic Chinese Community Become Implicated in the Military’s Attack against the PKI?

The implication of “China” and “Chinese people” with the events of 1 October 1965 occurred within the first few days of the military’s post-1 October campaign. However, the drawing of links between members of the ethnic Chinese community and these events was not an automatic process. After all, the PKI itself had to be retrospectively implicated. China and later members of the ethnic Chinese community more generally, were implicated in a similar manner. This process of implication occurred in three distinct waves that gradually implicated larger sections of the ethnic Chinese community in Aceh.

When news of the 30<sup>th</sup> September Movement first broke, the national Indonesian military leadership and its Western allies were caught off guard and unsure exactly who was behind the movement. The confusing nature of the movement meant that it was not immediately apparent how the military leadership could blame the PKI, let alone explain the PKI’s motivation for involvement in such a movement (Roosa 2006: 61–81).<sup>7</sup> It was within this climate that China first began to enter the discussion.

As US Secretary of State Dean Rusk mused in his assessment of the events of 1 October in a telegram to the US Embassy in Jakarta on 2 October,

---

7 Roosa has convincingly argued that from the morning of 1 October 1965 the military used the actions of the 30<sup>th</sup> September Movement as a pretext to launch its long-anticipated attack against the PKI (Roosa 2006: 221).

Like Indo Army, we have long assumed that at what it considered appropriate time the PKI would make overt bid for power. We were surprised that PKI chose present period for open assault re Army [...] Only tenable conclusion we have been able [to] reach [...] is that Aidit and PKI were under heavy pressure from Chicoms [Chinese Communists] to produce abrupt and prompt victory for Chicom interests in Asia (cited in US State Department 1965: 332).

The “proof” that the US presented for China’s alleged involvement in the actions of the 30<sup>th</sup> September Movement included its timing to allegedly coincide with China’s National Day (Green 1990: 52). However, this did not explain why the movement was actually named, and apparently meant to be launched, on 30<sup>th</sup> September. Further “proof” was provided by two claims. The first, that “2,000 Chinese weapons” had been distributed “to communist youth and women’s groups on October 1, 1965” (Green 1990: 59), was later denied by Brigadier General Soetjipto (Coppel 1983: 55). The second claim, meanwhile, that “the only embassy in Jakarta that was not flying its flag at half-mast” on 5 October, the day of the state funeral for the assassinated Generals “was the Chinese” (Green 1990: 56), was qualified on 16 October by the US Ambassador to Indonesia Marshall Green, when he explained to US State Department officials that “most missions, including the Soviets” and Thailand did not fly their flags at half-mast or send representatives to the funerals, as the “FonOff [Foreign Office] failed to notify missions here” (Green to US State Department 1965: 2).

The manufactured nature of the US’s attempt to implicate China in the actions of the 30<sup>th</sup> September Movement is perhaps best captured in Green’s observation to the US State Department on 19 October 1965. As Green explained: “We have bonanza chance to nail chicoms (Chinese Communists) on disastrous events in Indonesia”, with a “continuation [of] covert propaganda” recommended as the “best means of spreading [the] idea of chicom complicity” (cited in Simpson 2008: 180). The US hoped to implicate China and the PKI in one hit. However, the Indonesian military leadership took a more tentative approach. In a report sent to the US State Department on 17 October, an unidentified Indonesian military general is believed to have reported to Green: “We already have enough enemies. We can’t take on Communist China as well” (cited in US Department of State 2001: 325).

Explicitly accusing China of involvement in the actions of the 30<sup>th</sup> September Movement could have exposed the new military regime to actual Chinese intervention. This intervention may have included a severing of diplomatic ties, the withdrawal of much-needed development

funds, or the actual arming of a communist insurgency movement, all of which would have been a realisation of the military's worst nightmare at the time. Likewise, overt Chinese support for the 30<sup>th</sup> September Movement's "coup attempt" may have exposed the Chinese government to US-led intervention. Indeed, it may have been this apparent deadlock that prevented the "1965 Affair" from escalating into an international stoush.

Recognising the volatility of the situation, the Indonesian military leadership's response was more cautious than that of its American backers. On 4 October, Suharto delivered a speech in Jakarta in which he implicated the Air Force, Pemuda Rakjat (Peoples' Youth: the PKI's youth group) and Gerwani (the PKI's women's group) in the actions of the 30<sup>th</sup> September Movement, but made no public mention of China (cited in *Indonesia* 1966: 159). On 5 October in Medan, however, the Inter-Regional Military Commander for Sumatra, Lieutenant-General A. J. Mokoginta, delivered a speech condemning the 30<sup>th</sup> September Movement as "counter-revolutionary" and describing it as a "tool of a foreign nation", in reference to China (Mokoginta 1966: 172). The following day, in line with Mokoginta's more aggressive stance, the Aceh Pantja Tunggal<sup>8</sup> issued a statement describing the 30<sup>th</sup> September Movement as being "in the service of Foreign Subversives" (*Keputusan Bersama* 1965: 1). Mokoginta and the Aceh Pantja Tunggal's claim that China was somehow behind the 30<sup>th</sup> September Movement was meant to condemn the PKI rather than the ethnic Chinese community per se.

## Three Waves of Violence

It is possible to identify three specific waves of violence within the 1965–66 violence in Aceh that affected members of the ethnic Chinese community. As will be outlined in detail throughout the remainder of this article, this schematisation, which is supported by the documentary evidence now available, expands upon the current identification of two phases of violence (Cribb and Coppel 2009: 450).

---

8 The Pantja Tunggal was formed in March 1964 as the "top executive board" at the provincial level. It included five representatives (Hind. *pantja*): the provincial military commander, the police chief, the public prosecutor, the governor, and a representative from the Front Nasional. (Sundhaussen 1982: 185–186). The Pantja Tunggal would play a central role as a means for the military to effectively subsume civilian government under military control in Aceh during the genocide (Melvin 2014: 35).

To provide an overview of these three waves of violence, during the first wave of violence, ethnic Chinese members of the PKI, such as Asan, were treated in the same way as non-ethnic Chinese members of the PKI. This first wave of violence prompted sections of the pro-Beijing group to secretly mobilise in order to help protect fellow members of the pro-Beijing group with links to the PKI, or non-ethnic Chinese Indonesians whose connections with China made them targets for violence. This mobilisation was largely successful in its short-term goals, but also exacerbated existing splits within the ethnic Chinese community.

During the second wave of violence in the province, Baperki members were targeted because of their alleged association with the PKI. In this manner, Baperki members were part of the primary target group of the 1965–66 mass killings. The military placed great pressure on the organisation to dissolve itself and assist the military in its campaign of violence, with Baperki members becoming a target for extra-judicial arrests, beatings and killings during this period. Although Baperki members were part of the primary target group of the killings nationally, the interviewees for the present study recalled this violence against Baperki members in Aceh occurring as a distinct wave of violence which chronologically followed the attack against the PKI leadership. This pattern was different to what occurred in neighbouring North Sumatra, where the targeting of members of the ethnic Chinese community acted as a prelude to attacks against the PKI (Tsai and Kammen 2012: 141).

During the third wave of violence in the province, meanwhile, with the primary target of the killings (the PKI and its “affiliated organisations”) either dead or in hiding, ethnic Chinese people in general, starting with those affiliated with the *Asosiasi* and the pro-Beijing group, became the scapegoats and targets for violence in Aceh, culminating in the expulsion order of 8 May 1966. During this period, members of the ethnic Chinese community in Aceh were pressured to pledge their loyalty to the Indonesian state. An initial distinction was made between members of the pro-Beijing group (seen as pro-PKI) and members of the pro-Kuomintang group (seen as anti-PKI). By early 1966, however, this wave of violence had spilt over and affected the ethnic Chinese community as a whole, and, disturbingly, began to parallel the outbreak of mass killings of members of the PKI. One could argue that this third wave of violence was only brought to a close by the personal intervention of Aceh’s Military Commander Ishak Djuarsa. This move was not made out of sympathy for the victims of this violence but to secure the military’s new grip on power.

## The First Wave of Violence

On 5 October, Mokoginta delivered a speech in Medan condemning the 30<sup>th</sup> September Movement as counter-revolutionary and describing the Revolutionary Council as a “tool of a foreign nation” (Mokoginta 1966: 172). The following day, the Aceh Pantja Tunggal issued a “Joint Statement” with eight of the province’s political parties, describing the 30<sup>th</sup> September Movement as being “in the service of Foreign Subversives” (*Keputusan Bersama* 1965: 1). This sentiment travelled quickly throughout the province, and posters allegedly appeared at the Lhokseumawe train station on 7 October that read:

PKI is replaying its old story/Madiun, attempting to change 17 August 1965 [the anniversary of Indonesian Independence] with a Peking proclamation. Aidit is the puppet master: Kidnapping is to be responded to with kidnapping, chopping up is to be responded to with chopping up. Destroy the PKI, Allahu Akbar (*Chronologis* 1966: 3).

The reference to a “Peking proclamation” raised the spectre of Chinese sovereignty over Indonesia. It also threatened violence through “retaliatory” kidnappings and the threat to “chop up” those accused of being involved. However, the main target of threats at this stage was still the PKI, which the poster claimed had received support from the Chinese Government to launch the 30<sup>th</sup> September Movement.

On the same day, an anti-PKI rally was held in Banda Aceh, which called for the PKI to be disbanded. Tjut Husin Fatly, a non-ethnic Chinese Indonesian from Tangerang and head of the PKI’s Provincial Secretariat in Aceh, was singled out by protesters because he had travelled to Beijing for medical treatment (*Chronologis* 1966: 2). Husin’s house was ransacked in his absence and then burnt (*Chronologis* 1966: 2). His wife and preschool age daughter were subsequently detained at a “concentration camp” (*kamp-konsentrasi*) at Mata Ie, where an “executioner” killed his wife upon being released (Asan 2011b: 29).

Meanwhile, the actual treatment of ethnic Chinese members of the PKI in Aceh during the first wave of violence does not appear to have been significantly different to that experienced by non-ethnic Chinese members of the PKI in the province. In the days immediately following 1 October 1965, as protests began to grow against the PKI in the provincial capital, Asan was sheltered by members of the pro-Beijing group, before reporting himself to police in the hope that he would receive protection (Asan 2011b: 2). It soon began apparent, however, that the

police did not intend to protect him, and, after a miraculous escape,<sup>9</sup> Asan again received shelter from members of the pro-Beijing group (Asan 2011b: 4). He was targeted because of his membership in the PKI, not his ethnicity, although it does appear that his ongoing connections with the close-knit pro-Beijing group in Banda Aceh assisted his survival. Regardless of this group's thoughts about the actions of the 30th September Movement, the military's attack against the PKI and Baperki increasingly polarised the ethnic Chinese community to either support the military's attack, attempt to somehow remain neutral, or, through covert means, attempt to support friends, comrades and family members who were being attacked for their alleged association with the PKI or Baperki.

## The Second Wave of Violence

The military implicated Baperki in the actions of the 30th September Movement in the same manner as it implicated the PKI itself. This is why Baperki is best understood as being part of the primary target group of the 1965 mass killings, while forming a secondary wave of violence within the killings. It appears that Baperki members, like members of other organisations accused of being affiliated with the PKI, were targeted after the PKI leadership was targeted.

Although it was not until 20 October that the military in Aceh explicitly named Baperki as one of the mass organisations the military accused of being affiliated with the PKI (*Surat Keputusan*: 2), and thus a target to be “annihilated”<sup>10</sup> (*Surat Keputusan*: 2), this process had started to occur informally in Banda Aceh from 8 October. At 4 p.m. on that day:

---

9 Upon surrendering himself to the police, Asan was transferred to Military Police headquarters, where he was threatened and told he would not be allowed to return home. Asan was then placed in a military jeep with two police men than Asan understood to be “executioners” (*algojo*), who would release Asan at his house in order to discover where he lived, before returning during the night to murder him, as was a common practice at the time. Instead of directing the police men to his house, Asan asked to be released in a backstreet, before running for his life (Asan 2011b).

10 At midnight on 1 October 1965, Mokoginta had declared “it is ordered that all members of the Armed Forces resolutely and completely annihilate” the 30<sup>th</sup> September Movement. (Mokoginta 1966: 152).

a riotous demonstration by the people attacked the Pelangi shop,<sup>11</sup> Baperki office, Chung Hua Chung Hui office [presumably “Chung Hua” is “*Tionghoa*” or “Chinese” and “Chung Hui” is an abbreviation of “*Hua Cbiao Tsung Hui*” (Siauw 1999: xii), the “*Perkumpulan Orang Tionghoa Perantauan*” or “Association of Overseas Chinese”, otherwise referred to as the “*Asosiasi Huakiao*”], IPETI Stadium<sup>12</sup> and the houses of several Baperki leaders (*Chronologis* 1966: 3).

This attack against Baperki, the *Asosiasi* office, and other presumably Baperki or Chinese associated targets, was then followed half an hour later by a “wild demonstration” that ransacked and burnt the house of PKI leader Samikidin, before a mass meeting of ten thousand people was held at 8 p.m. outside the Baiturrahman Mosque (*Chronologis* 1966: 3). There, an unnamed person provided an “explanation” regarding the “30<sup>th</sup> September Movement and other matters related to this movement” (*Chronologis* 1966: 3). Thus, the attack against Baperki appears to be part of a general mobilisation against the PKI and the groups that were becoming associated with it as targets of the military’s campaign of terror and violence in the province.

The next recorded attack against Baperki occurred at 3 p.m. on October 9 in Sigli, when a demonstration was held by “members of political parties/organisations and the people” in the town. These demonstrators:

demanded that the PKI and its affiliated organisations be disbanded, before continuing with the destruction of shops, including the Pah On, Ping Ping, Kim Kie, Rimbaraja shops,<sup>13</sup> the GPTP office,<sup>14</sup> the Baperki office, PKI office, Lekra, Pemuda Rakjat office and Gerwani office, a KBM car<sup>15</sup> [...] was also burnt (*Chronologis* 1966: 4).

Again, it would appear Baperki and Chinese owned businesses were being targeted for their perceived connection with the PKI, and that this attack occurred within the context of the general outbreak of violence against the PKI and organisations considered to be close to the PKI. At this time, the military in the province was also pressuring Baperki to

---

11 It is not known which shop this refers to.

12 It is not known what ‘IPETI’ stands for.

13 It is not known which shops these refer to, though it is likely they were attacked because of their known or perceived ownership by members of the ethnic Chinese community.

14 It is not known what ‘GPTP’ stands for.

15 It is not known what ‘KBM’ stands for.

disband, and it condemned the PKI and national Baperki organisation for its alleged involvement in the 30<sup>th</sup> September Movement.

## Intimidation of the Baperki Leadership in Langsa

A rare insight into the kind of pressure Baperki members in Aceh were facing at this time can be found in a declaration signed by the Baperki leadership in Langsa, East Aceh, on 18 October 1965. This declaration explains how during the early evening of 11 October 1965, the Baperki leadership in Langsa received:

explanations from the Commandant of Kodim-0104 [East Aceh], acting as Commandant of the Defence Sector for East Aceh, Major Iljas Mahmud [...] in the Kodim-0104 Canteen [...] [about] the coup attempt by ex-Lieut. Col. Untung [...] which was masterminded by the godless P.K.I. and its covers and also, it keeps being mentioned, Baperki, which has become involved with these barbaric actions (*Pernyataan* 1965: 1).

Somewhat strangely, the declaration also refers to a radio broadcast from Jakarta allegedly made by Sukarno, which called for:

the complete annihilation down to the roots of that which calls itself the ‘30<sup>th</sup> September Movement’ and members of the P.K.I. and its covers which have carried out barbaric deeds, until [they are] wiped from the face of the earth of Indonesia (*Pernyataan* 1965: 1).

Such a broadcast was never made.<sup>16</sup> The purpose of this fake broadcast, or “interpretation”, perhaps by Major Iljas Mahmud at the 11 October meeting, was clearly intimidation. The President, or someone who dared to speak on his behalf, was calling for the extermination of the PKI and all those associated with it, including Baperki; this was a clear incitement to murder members of this group with the aim of destroying it.

It is not known whether the Baperki leadership in Langsa believed in the authenticity of this broadcast, though this may have been irrelevant. Under threat of being “wiped from the face of the earth” and under the watchful eye of Major Iljas Mahmud, the Baperki leadership in East Aceh proceeded to produce a list of eight resolutions based on its

---

16 Sukarno made three announcements between 1–18 October 1965, two on 3 October, when he urged the population to remain calm and avoid jumping to conclusions, and the third on 14 October, when he announced he would “formulate a political solution” to the crisis (cited in *Indonesia* 1966: 152–155).

acceptance “of the involvement of the Baperki Organisation” in the 30<sup>th</sup> September Movement (*Pernyataan* 1965: 1). Among these eight resolutions were the following:

1. That we do not want to be implicated and do not know anything about [the actions of the group] calling itself the 30<sup>th</sup> September Movement [...] we demand that they are treated resolutely and firmly in accordance with Revolutionary law.
5. We call upon [Sukarno] that the P.K.I. and its covers be disbanded and not be given the right to live again in this Nation of the Republic of Indonesia which is based on the “PANTJASILA” and punish those involved in G30S [the 30<sup>th</sup> September Movement] in accordance with Revolutionary law.
6. We urge the Commandant of Kodim-0104 as Commandant of the Defence Sector for East Aceh and the East Aceh Pantja Tunggal to freeze all activities of the P.K.I. and its covers in East Aceh including punishing those [a word is unclear] who are involved in the G30S.
7. As a result of the act of barbaric terror which calls itself the G30S which was masterminded by the P.K.I. and its covers, “We the members of BAPERKI Langsa” which number [...] one hundred and forty-eight people, declare that we have left the BAPERKI Langsa Organisation, and declare that the BAPERKI Langsa Organisation is dissolved as of 18 October 1965, anything involving the BAPERKI Organisation from the date of this declaration is not our responsibility, in connection with this we have attached a list of the names of the members of BAPERKI [in Langsa] which is already dissolved.<sup>17</sup>
8. We stand behind [Sukarno] and are prepared to carry out various tasks to help ABRI [the Indonesian Armed Forces ...] (*Pernyataan* 1965: 1–2).

These resolutions are a clear attempt by the Baperki leadership in Langsa to distance itself from Baperki as a national organisation and suggest that Baperki in Langsa was under significant pressure to condemn the national organisation, with any wavering in this regard open to be interpreted as support for the “barbaric actions of the 30<sup>th</sup> September Movement”.

---

17 This list remains attached to Baperki’s declaration. The fate of these one hundred and forty-eight individuals is unknown. It is possible that this list, as occurred elsewhere in the province at the time of the genocide, was used as a “death list” by the military or military-sponsored death squads to identify these individuals for arrest, detention and murder.

Meanwhile, the two resolutions that support that those allegedly involved in the 30<sup>th</sup> September Movement be dealt with “in accordance with Revolutionary law” would appear to indicate “support” for the extra-judicial measures that were being implemented or supported by the military at the time. It is clear that the East Aceh District Military Commander and the armed forces generally were in control of this campaign.

During the period in which this declaration was prepared, the Baperki leadership in Langsa was subjected to two physical attacks. According to the military’s chronology, the first attack occurred at 6 a.m. on 14 October in Kuala Simpang when:

15,000 people from NU, Perti, IPKI, Marhaenis Youth, Putri Alwaslijah [‘Daughters of Alwaslijah’], Putri Marhaenis [‘Marhaenist Daughters’] and Wanita Muhammadiyah [Muhammadijah Women’s group] carried out a demonstration and destruction/burning of the equipment/furniture in the PKI, Baperki office.<sup>18</sup>

The second recorded attack against Baperki occurred “simultaneously” on Pulo Tiga, when:

a demonstration [was] carried out by the Pemuda Pantjasila<sup>19</sup> to destroy the office of the Baperki PKI office and several BTI owned houses. ABRI immediately carried out prevention because the demonstration went so far as to attack foreign owned shops (*Chronologis* 1966: 7).

In both cases, the destruction of Baperki offices is portrayed as part of the attack against the PKI itself, as evidenced in the conjoining of the terms PKI and Baperki; a practice that was not followed by either the PKI or Baperki, but rather appears intended to portray the two organisations as indistinguishable as targets for attack. These attacks may have been directly linked to the military’s discussions with the Baperki leadership in the district, with the intention of showing that force would be used if the Baperki leadership refused to comply. The interesting intervention of the military at the protest in Pulo Tiga, which is portrayed as an attempt to “prevent” attacks against Chinese-owned shops, may have been intended to demonstrate that it was within the military’s power to call off the attacks should Baperki decide to comply.

---

18 (*Chronologis* 1966: 7). It is not known whether any particular significance was attached to the involvement of women in this attack.

19 The Pemuda Pantjasila was a military affiliated militia group that was particularly active during the genocide in neighbouring North Sumatra, where it operated under the direction of the North Aceh Military Command through the framework of the Komando Aksi (Oppenheimer 2004: 35).

The first deaths of members of the ethnic Chinese community in Aceh after 1 October are also recorded as occurring on 14 October in South Aceh. According to information recorded about these events by the military, these killings occurred as part of two separate events in the district. In the first case, in Blang Pidie, five people were reported killed by “the people”; of these, four were “Chinese people [...] whose belongings were also seized” (*Chronologis* 1966: 8). In the second case in Sama Dua, a total of ten people were killed, of whom four were ethnic Chinese. The identities of the ethnic Chinese victims are listed as Hap Tjok, Min On, Bun Tok Seng and Sio Nam, all from Blang Pidie (*Chronologis* 1966: 8). Further information about why and how these fatal attacks may have occurred is not detailed (*Chronologis* 1966: 8).<sup>20</sup>

## Djuarsa Freezes Baperki in Aceh

The attack against the ethnic Chinese community in Aceh came to a head on 29 October, when Ishak Djuarsa acting as Pepelrada (the Regional Authority to Implement *Dwikota*<sup>21</sup>), issued a decree, said to be retrospectively active since 20 October (*Surat Keputusan* 1965: 3), to “freeze and temporarily halt” the activities of “PKI political organisations and mass organisations”, including Baperki (*Surat Keputusan* 1965: 2). The decree also expelled the members of these organisations from “all government bodies” in Aceh (*Chronologis* 1966: 9) and forbade members of these organisations from “leaving their place” (presumably their place of residence). Most forebodingly, the decree announced that it was “mandatory for all leaders of these Political Parties/Mass Organisations [...] to report themselves to the Pepelrada/CPM<sup>22</sup>/local Police by 25 October 1965 at the latest” (*Surat Keputusan* 1965: 2).<sup>23</sup>

- 
- 20 Twenty-one individuals from the ethnic Chinese community are listed as having been killed in Aceh in the Aceh Military Chronology (*Chronologis* 1966: 1–21). This figure does not include victims whose bodies were not left on public display, and should therefore not be considered to be a final total.
- 21 The position of Pepelrada was established in September 1964 to organise and supervise all activities concerning or affecting the anti-Malaysia campaign (Sundhaussen 1982: 186). The Pepelrada and the KOTI command, under which this position existed, would play a central role in initiating and implementing the genocide in Aceh (Melvin 2014: 32–36).
- 22 It is not known what ‘CPM’ stands for; it may refer to the Military Police.
- 23 The subsequent reporting by members of these organisations was used by the military to identify members of these organisations, some of whom were detained directly before being transported to military-controlled killing sites to be murdered, while others were subsequently “released” (like Asan) before being

Djuarsa claimed to have received authority to make this announcement from the “Joint Statement of the Pantja Tunggal/National Front on 6 October” and the “letter from the political parties in Aceh” issued on the same day. These documents were the result of military pressure, and an example of the military attempting to have civilian and semi-civilian groups be seen to be taking the first steps against the PKI and, by extension, Baperki and the pro-Beijing group (*Surat Keputusan*: 2).

This general pattern of targeting members of the ethnic Chinese community primarily for their alleged association with Baperki also emerged in the testimony of my informants. Ho Fui Yen, for example, recalls that during this period:

the Head of Baperki in Banda [Aceh], Jan Sun Ming, was beaten on the beach until he was badly injured. He was taken to hospital, and I was able to see him in the hospital. He was completely covered [in bandages], only his eyes were visible [...] On the second day, he was taken away [...] he disappeared. I don’t know where he was taken [it was assumed he was murdered], his corpse was also not found (Ho, Xie, and Wak 2011: 5).

Jan had been attacked because he was a leader of Baperki. Although it is not known who attacked him or took him away, it can be assumed that the attack had the blessing of the military. Xie Jie Fang has also recalled how one of his friends, a former classmate and member of Baperki, was killed during this period along with three of his associates. As Xie recalled, “one was pushed out to sea [where he died], one was burnt, dead, and one was stabbed” (Ho, Xie, and Wak 2011: 22). Furthermore, one of his students was:

arrested and then [...] thrown out to sea; he wasn’t dead yet, but he was tied up and then thrown out to sea, “feeding the fish” is what was said. He was taken out in a small boat (Ho, Xie, and Wak 2011: 13).

Another of his friends, who had come from Simeulue to “study from Baperki” at a school in Banda Aceh, was participating in a singing lesson with Xie when he was arrested and “taken home”, before being killed due to his perceived affiliation with Baperki (Ho, Xie, and Wak 2011: 22). As Xie has remarked, being friends with a Baperki person was sufficient “for you to be thought to be a Baperki person” and to therefore become targeted (Ho, Xie, and Wak 2011: 13). These attacks also occurred in

---

rearrested by the military or military sponsored death squads before being killed directly or transported to military-controlled killing sites to be murdered.

other districts in Aceh, including Meulaboh, Tapaktuan and Blangpidie, as well as in other “small towns” (Ho, Xie, and Wak 2011: 6), which suggests that such violence was widespread.

However, Ho, Wak and Xie made a point of explaining that this violence against ethnic Chinese members of the PKI and Baperki should be understood as a lead-up to a very focused attack against the pro-Beijing ethnic Chinese community in general in Aceh; this third wave of violence has yet to be identified in the literature. As Xie elaborates, “after people arrested [the] PKI, [they] arrested Baperki; after that they began to arrest [pro-Beijing] Chinese people” (Ho, Xie, and Wak 2011: 4). This third wave of violence included the harassment and murder of members of the ethnic Chinese community in Aceh and culminated in the “expulsion” or forcible transfer of at least ten thousand members of the ethnic Chinese community from Aceh between 8 May and 17 August 1966.

## The Third Wave of Violence

My interviewees recall that one night in “early 1966”, the houses of members of the pro-Beijing Chinese community in Banda Aceh were marked with signs made with red paint (Ho, Xie, and Wak 2011: 9). Although the interviewees did not know exactly who made these marks, they believed they were made with the blessing of the military based on information from the pro-Kuomintang group (Ho, Xie, and Wak 2011: 7–9). The next day, the marked houses were targeted by violent demonstrators led by students involved with the “KAMI/ KAPPI” youth militias,<sup>24</sup> “who created chaos by throwing rocks at the houses that had been marked with this code” (Ho, Xie, and Wak 2011: 7). The demonstrators then proceeded to break into the houses, including that of Ho Fui Yen, whose parents were threatened and told to leave Aceh and her father beaten (Ho, Xie, and Wak 2011: 8).

According to Xie Jie Fang, this type of intimidation continued over the next month or two, increasing in severity until, in the days before the 8 May announcement, “it started to happen every day, at night time [and] those whose houses had been marked were arrested. My father and my older brother were beaten until they bled” (Ho, Xie, and Wak 2011: 10). Xie’s family was also told to flee the province. The pro-Beijing Chinese

---

24 KAMI (Indonesian Students Action Front) was established with the blessing of the military in Jakarta on 25 October 1965 (Sundhaussen 1982: 230), KAPPI (Action Front for High School Students) was established with the blessing of the military on 9 February 1966 (Crouch 2007: 184–185).

community became “scared and not brave enough to go outside” (Ho, Xie, and Wak 2011: 10).

The arrests were allegedly conducted by KAMI/KAPPI members, with those who were arrested taken to KAMI/KAPPI offices, which were used as interrogation centres with the blessing of the military (Ho, Xie, and Wak 2011: 25). Xie’s older brother was taken to one of these offices, where he recalled “being hit and kicked until he bled” (Ho, Xie, and Wak 2011: 25).

Xie also recalls a “death car” that would circle the neighbourhood at the time, which was used to arrest members of the pro-Beijing group off the street. Xie described his own disturbing encounter with this car as he walked along the street early one morning during the beginning of 1966,

[O]ne of my friends told me not to go out, [but] my clothes were filthy; I only went home every five to six days to bathe. There may have been someone who had seen [me return] from the Taiwan Kuomintang side who told the military. When I arrived at my house, at almost two in the morning, there was a car that stopped at the side of the road. I was scared and startled; I became on guard [and] I immediately started to flee, [to] run. The reason was that car. Before Chinese were killed, crushed [...] one of my friends who was a teacher told me when we had come home from school riding together on a bike [...] He asked me, “Do you know what this car is for? This is the one that arrests people, cuts them up. Have a look, inside there’s a long box, do you know what’s in it?” He said, “a spear, a knife, to cut people up with”. That’s why I ran that night when the car came. If I hadn’t run, I may have disappeared (Ho, Xie, and Wak 2011: 23).

The pro-Beijing community was terrified and many started making arrangements to travel in groups by road to Medan, where they were told a ship from China would come to meet them (Ho, Xie, and Wak 2011: 10, 12).

## Escalation of Violence in North Aceh

This intensification of violence and intimidation of the pro-Beijing Chinese community in Aceh may have been part of a national upswing in violence against the ethnic Chinese community. The formal transfer of power to Suharto occurred on 11 March 1966 and, as Coppel observes, with “the prime scapegoats [now removed from office, killed or in detention], there was, on a national scale, what appeared to be a natural

tendency [...] to seek out other scapegoats [...] and the Chinese fitted the bill perfectly” (Coppel 1983: 63).

In Jakarta, on 15 April 1966, a large number of members of the ethnic Chinese community were called together to pledge their loyalty to the Indonesian state (Coppel 1983: 67). On the same day, a similar rally was held at the Reuleut sports field in Bireuen, North Aceh, where “Indonesian citizens of Chinese descent” pledged their loyalty to the Indonesian state in front of military and government representatives (*Perkembangan* 1966: 1). Following this rally, an “anti-RRT” (Peoples’ Republic of China) rally was held by unidentified demonstrators who marched around the town holding banners reading, “Cut Relations with RRT”, “Seize RRT property”, “Long live ABRI”, “Long Live Leiut. Gen. Soeharto”, “Crush the RRT”, “Crush those Wrecking the Economy”, “Crush those Stealing the Economy” and “Lower Prices” (*Perkembangan* 1966: 1). This demonstration then marched to the Subdistrict Office in Djeumpa to “report to the Tjatur Tunggal”,<sup>25</sup> where it was “welcomed and given advice” by the Deputy Commandant of the Third Infantry Battalion “on behalf of the Bireuen Tjatur Tunggal” (*Perkembangan* 1966: 1). Not only was “China” now being made a scapegoat for the failing Indonesian economy, but this rising anti-Chinese sentiment and violence received the official sanction of the local military command.

On 18 April, the student activists held another “anti-RRT demonstration” in Bireuen, which escalated into a campaign to arrest “RRT Chinese”, who were “brought together and surrendered” to the Bireuen Pantja Tunggal (*Perkembangan* 1966: 1). A detainee named Jun Sin was beaten and forced to scream abuse regarding the Pantja Tunggal (*Perkembangan* 1966: 1). The next day, the demonstrations spread to the neighbouring areas of Samalanga, Matangglumpangdua and Geurugok, where students seized control of forty Chinese-owned shops and “assembled RRT Chinese” to “surrender” to the Bireuen Pantja Tunggal (*Perkembangan* 1966: 1).

On the same day, a “loyalty rally” was held in Lhokseumawe, where three hundred “Indonesian citizens of Chinese descent” pledged their loyalty to the Indonesian state in front of the North Aceh Military Commander Lieutenant Colonel Mohd. Sjakur (*Perkembangan* 1966: 2). As was the case in Bireuen, the ceremony was followed by “citizens and students” marching around the town, carrying banners with anti-Chinese slogans (*Perkembangan* 1966: 2). However, when the demonstrators at-

---

25 The Tjatur Tunggal is an earlier variation of the Pantja Tunggal (Sundhaussen 1982: 185–186). It appears to have been retained at the subdistrict level in Aceh during the period of the genocide.

tempted to destroy Chinese-owned shops, the military stepped in to “guard the whole town” (*Perkembangan* 1966: 2).<sup>26</sup> This rebuke upset the student protesters. The next day, students who had attended the rally on the previous day attempted to hold a new rally, but were held back by the military (*Perkembangan* 1966: 2). The ensuing scuffle climaxed when Lieutenant Colonel Sjakur struck a student named Rusli AD on the head with his baton, drawing blood (*Perkembangan* 1966: 2). This enraged the students, which prompted the military to fire warning shots (*Perkembangan* 1966: 3).

After rushing their comrade to hospital, the demonstrators again began attacking Chinese-owned shops in the town (*Perkembangan* 1966: 3). In response, the military fired a second round of “shots above the students”, hitting and fatally wounding a junior high school student named Iskandar; this further enraged the crowd (*Perkembangan* 1966: 3). After a second trip to the hospital, the student demonstrators then marched on the North Aceh Military Command’s headquarters, with some demonstrators allegedly calling for the shooter to be hanged, while others continued to destroy Chinese-owned shops “without making a distinction if the shop belonged to a Chinese [citizen] or an Indonesian citizen of Chinese descent” (*Perkembangan* 1966: 3). The demonstration then spread and spilled over into the neighbouring subdistrict of Muara Dua, with non-students joining in (*Perkembangan* 1966: 3). Although the demonstration was outwardly anti-Chinese in nature, demonstrators appeared to be equally frustrated with the military itself and expressed this frustration by refusing to accept the military’s demands that they desist or respect the military’s differentiation between members of the pro-Beijing group and the pro-Kuomintang group. In this quickly deteriorating situation, it appears that the military leadership made the calculation that it was more important to retain control over the protestors than to protect its ally the pro-Kuomintang group. It was vital for the military that these demonstrations maintained their anti-Chinese focus in order to divert the protestors’ attention away from their earlier anger with the military and the possible loss of control that this presented to the military.

On the evening of 18 April, a delegation of KAPPI students from Bireuen was detained by the North Aceh Pantja Tunggal as it attempted to enter Lhokseumawe to join the demonstrations (*Perkembangan* 1966: 4). An all-night meeting was then held between the student demonstrators and the North Aceh Pantja Tunggal to determine whether the students

---

26 It is not explained in the document why the military acted in this manner. It may have been that these shops belonged to members of the pro-Kuomintang group who were considered an ally by the military leadership.

should be allowed to “gather together RRT people and surrender them to the [North Aceh] Dan Sekhan [Military Commander]” and “visit their comrade [...] at the Lhokseumawe Hospital” (*Perkembangan* 1966: 4). This permission was granted and, immediately following the meeting,

the students began to carry out the detention of RRT Chinese who were brought together on the front yard of the Bupati [Regent]’s office [...] with pressed faces/ their bodies naked except for their underpants (*Perkembangan* 1966: 5).

The fate of these individuals, who are recorded as numbering three hundred and four people, is not known, except that they were “surrendered to the North Aceh Military Commander to be given supervision and what was needed” (*Perkembangan* 1966: 5). Such actions are eerily reminiscent of the rounding-up of suspected members and sympathisers of the PKI to be killed during the first month of the killings in the province (Melvin 2014: 121–156). They also clearly demonstrate the systematic nature and role of the military behind this violence.

On 22 April, anti-Chinese violence, combined with anti-military sentiment, spread to the neighbouring town of Lhoksukon and was considered serious enough for Aceh’s Military Commander Ishak Djuarsa to travel to Bireuen and Lhokseumawe on 23 April to “see up close” what had been happening in the area (*Perkembangan* 1966: 5). Djuarsa was apparently disturbed by developments and, at a meeting held in North Aceh on 24 April, ordered officials to “take serious action and investigate what has happened including those who are believed to be involved” (*Perkembangan* 1966: 5). Subsequently, several of the students who had been involved in the demonstrations and arrests were arrested and taken to Banda Aceh for further questioning (*Perkembangan* 1966: 5). It was in this context that, on 8 May, Djuarsa issued his order that “all alien Chinese” must leave the province.

## Flight from Banda Aceh

The pro-Beijing community in Banda Aceh was initially concerned that the military and militia groups would exploit any attempt to flee the province as an opportunity to attack them as they made the long and exposed trip down Aceh’s east coast towards Medan (Ho, Xie, and Wak 2011: 10, 12). In an attempt to ascertain the risk of such a trip, it was requested by members of the pro-Beijing community that a soldier accompany the first convoy; this request was granted and a group of soldiers were assigned to travel ahead of the convoy that travelled in three trucks (Ho, Xie, and Wak 2011: 10, 12). As the convoy reached Meu-

reudu, between Sigli and Bireuen, a group of “bandits” appeared and attempted to attack the convoy. However, the soldiers kept their word and protected the convoy until it reached Medan (Ho, Xie, and Wak 2011: 10, 12). When news reached Banda Aceh that the first convoy had arrived safely in Medan and had indeed received military protection, further convoys began to leave the province (Ho, Xie, and Wak 2011: 10, 12). However, the community was warned that this protection would only be afforded until 17 August (Ho, Xie, and Wak 2011: 10, 13). Eventually, ten thousand people fled Aceh in this manner (Coppel 1983: 69).<sup>27</sup>

Upon their arrival in Medan, the new refugees faced further intimidation and violence, where North Sumatra’s Military Commander Brigadier General Sobiran “did nothing to subdue the anti-Chinese militancy of the students” in the province (Coppel 1983: 92). As Coppel explained, “The presence of the Chinese refugees from Aceh acted as an irritant in an already inflamed situation”, and many of these refugees were victims of new waves of violence there (Coppel 1983: 92). Approximately four thousand of these refugees, including Ho, Xie, Wak and Asan’s wife and children, were able to board the Chinese ship the *Kuang Hua*, which made four trips to the port in Belawan, just out of Medan, carrying approximately one thousand refugees with it each time it departed (Coppel 1983: 93). The arrival of the *Kuang Hua* in port sparked violent attacks by KAMI and KAPPI members in Medan, prompting Mokoginta to announce on 13 November that stern measures would be taken against “actions aimed at disturbing society” and that the attempts of “Chinese desiring to be repatriated should not be hampered” (Coppel 1983: 93).

Mokoginta may not have approved of Djuarsa’s decision to order the expulsion of “alien Chinese” from Aceh; in a speech on 21 April, he declared that “actions which are racialist” should be avoided (Mokoginta 1966: 243). However, Mokoginta was unable or unwilling to stop Djuarsa following through with the exodus. It is possible that Djuarsa, in the face of escalating violence in the province, felt that he had no choice but to attempt to remove the focus of this violence, which threatened to

---

27 All members of the pro-Beijing group were forced to leave the province during this time. Some members of the pro-Kuomintang group, however, were permitted to remain in the province (Ho, Xie, and Wak 2011: 11). The pro-Kuomintang families that Ho, Xie and Wak identify as being permitted to remain in the province owned shops in Banda Aceh. It is possible that the military had a stronger presence in the provincial capital than in North Aceh, where members of the pro-Kuomintang group had been attacked with the support of the local military commander, allowing it to offer protection to specific families in Banda Aceh that had proven their loyalty to the new military regime.

destabilise the new military regime and in doing so, he may have helped avoid a new wave of mass killings in the province. This was not done out of concern for the victims of this violence, but rather to protect the gains achieved through the military's earlier waves of genocidal violence. The exact nature of the violence perpetrated during this third wave of violence, and, in particular, the fate of the at least three hundred and four "RRT Chinese" who were "surrendered" to the North Aceh Military Command requires further investigation.

## Conclusion

The patterns of violence perpetrated against members of the ethnic Chinese community in Aceh between 1 October 1965 and 17 August 1966 suggest that the military leadership's primary motivation was to physically destroy its major political opponent the PKI. This included the targeting of ethnic Chinese members of the PKI and the large-scale murder of members of Baperki who were alleged to be associated with the PKI.

Once this violence that was launched in order to achieve the military's objective of physically destroying the PKI and all those accused of being associated with it, including Baperki members and members of the pro-Beijing community in Aceh, became counter-productive by threatening to destabilise the new regime, the military acted to bring this violence to an end. One of the ways in which the military leadership in North Aceh sought to achieve this was to authorise the wholesale rounding-up of members of the ethnic Chinese community in the district, regardless of political orientation, to be "surrendered" to the military.

The extent of the killings that eventuated from this process before the expulsion order took effect requires further investigation. If it can be proven that such killings occurred, the classification of these killings must certainly be genocide. The killing of members of the pro-Beijing group during the third wave of violence in the province may also be classified as genocide.

Given the severe shortage of data that was previously available about these events it is understandable that it was once believed there was insufficient evidence to conclude that the Indonesian killings as an event should be understood as genocide. Further research is also clearly required, including in other provinces such as North Sumatra where new evidence has come to light, in order to more fully understand the extent to which the explicit ethnic-based violence found in Aceh can also be found elsewhere in Indonesia. Based on the evidence that we now have, however, it would appear that a categorical insistence that discrete cases

of genocidal violence did not occur is not supported by this evidence, and, that, following in the footsteps of the Cambodian example, it is premature to conclude that the 1965–66 killings as a whole should not be characterised and understood as genocide.

## References

- Agreement Between the United Nations see *Agreement Between the United Nations and the Royal Government of Cambodia ...*
- Agreement Between the United Nations and the Royal Government of Cambodia Concerning the Prosecution Under Cambodian Law of Crimes Committed During the Period of Democratic Kampuchea* (2003), as signed by Sok An, Senior Minister in Charge of the Council of Ministers and Hans Correll, Under-Secretary-General for Legal Affairs of The Legal Council, 6 June 2003.
- Asan (2011a), Interview with “Asan”, Hong Kong, 31 October 2011.
- Asan (2011b), Written personal account by “Asan”, ‘Asan’s Story of Escape’ [kindly translated into Indonesian by Chan Chung Tak], given to author, Hong Kong, 31 October 2011.
- Berenbaum, Michael (ed.) (1990), *A Mosaic of Victims: Non-Jews Persecuted and Murdered by the Nazis*, US: New York University.
- Chan (2011), Discussion with Chan Chung Tak, Hong Kong, 1 November 2011.
- Chronologis* see Chronologis Kedjadian2 Jang Berhubungan ...
- Chronologis Kedjadian2 Jang Berhubungan Dengan Gerakan 30 September Didaerah Kodam-I/Atjeh, in: *Laporan Tabunan Lengkap: Tabun 1965* (Banda Aceh: Kodam-I, 1966).
- Coppel, Charles A. (1983), *Indonesian Chinese in Crisis*, Malaysia: Oxford University Press.
- Cribb, Robert, and Charles Coppel (2009), A Genocide That Never Was: Explaining the Myth of Anti-Chinese Massacres in Indonesia, 1965–66, in: *Journal of Genocide Research*, 11, 4, December, 447–465.
- Cribb, Robert (2010), Political Genocide in Postcolonial Asia, in: *The Oxford Handbook of Genocide Studies*, US: Oxford University Press, 445–465.
- Crouch, Harold (2007, originally 1978), *The Army and Politics in Indonesia*, Jakarta: Equinox Publishing.
- Green, Marshall (1990), *Indonesia: Crisis and Transformation 1965–1968*, US: The Compass Press.
- Ho, Xie, and Wak (2011), Group interview with Ho Fui Yen, Xie Jie Fang and Wak Tin Chaw, Hong Kong, 1 November 2011.

- Indonesia* (1966), Selected Documents Relating to the “September 30<sup>th</sup> Movement” and its Epilogue, April, Issue 1, 131–204.
- Kahin, Audrey R., and George McT. Kahin (1995), *Subversion as Foreign Policy: The Secret Eisenhower and Dulles Debauch in Indonesia*, US: The New Press.
- Keputusan Bersama No.Ist-1/Kpts/1965*, 6 October 1965.
- Kiernan, Ben (1990), The Genocide in Cambodia, 1975–79, in: *Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars*, 22, 2, 35–40.
- Liu, Hong (2011), *China and the Shaping of Indonesia 1949–1965*, Japan: Kyoto University Press.
- Melvin, Jess (2014), *Mechanics of Mass Murder: How the Indonesian Military Initiated and Implemented the Indonesian Genocide, The Case of Aceh*, PhD thesis, The University of Melbourne, forthcoming.
- Mokoginta, Letdjen A.J. (1966), *Koleksi Pidato 2/Kebidjaksanaan Panglima Antar Daerah Sumatera*, Medan: Koanda Sumatera.
- Oppenheimer, Joshua (2012), *The Act of Killing*, directed by Joshua Oppenheimer, Denmark, Final Cut for Real.
- Oppenheimer, Joshua (2004), *Show of Force: Film, Ghosts and Genres of Historical Performance in the Indonesian Genocide*, PhD dissertation, London: University of the Arts London.
- Perkembangan see Perkembangan Di Bidang Politik/ Keamanan ...*
- Perkembangan Di Bidang Politik/ Keamanan: Mengenai Apel Setia WNI Keturunan Tionghoa dan Demonstrasi Para Peladjar/ KAPPI Jang Terdjadi di Dalam Kabupaten Atjeh Utara Sedjak Tanggal 15 s/d April 1966* (1966), in: *Laporan Bupati Kepala Daerah T. Ramli Angkasab dalam memimpin Pemerintah Kabupaten Aceh Utara mulai April 1965 s/d Mai 1966 disampaikan dalam Sidang Paripurnake 1/1966 DPRD-GR Kabupaten Aceh Utara di Lbokseumawe*, 15 June 1966.
- Ratner, Steven R., Jason S. Abrams, and James L. Bischoff (2009), *Accountability For Human Rights Atrocities in International Law: Beyond the Nuremberg Legacy*, US: Oxford University Press.
- Ringkasan Eksekutif see *Ringkasan Eksekutif: Hasil Penyelidikan ...*
- Ringkasan Eksekutif: Hasil Penyelidikan Tim Ad Hoc Penyelidikan Pelanggaran HAM yang Berat Peristiwa 1965–1966* (2012), as signed by Nur Kholis, Ketua Tim Ad Hoc Penyelidikan Pelanggaran Hak Asasi Manusia yang Berat Peristiwa 1965–1966.
- Rome Statute see *Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court*
- Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court* (2002), 1 July, online: <[www.un.org/law/icc/index.html](http://www.un.org/law/icc/index.html)> (15 February 2014).

- Roosa, John (2013), Who Knows? Oral History Methods in the Study of the Massacres of 1965–66 in Indonesia, in: *Oral History Forum d'histoire orale*, 33, Special Issue “Confronting Mass Atrocities”.
- Roosa, John (2006), *Pretext for Mass Murder: The September 30<sup>th</sup> Movement & Subarto's Coup D'Etat in Indonesia*, US: University of Wisconsin Press.
- Siauw Tiong Djin (1999), *Siauw Giok Tjban: Perjuangan Seorang Patriot Membangun Nasion Indonesia dan Masyarakat Bhineka Tunggal Ika*, Jakarta: Hasta Mitra.
- Simpson, Bradley R. (2008), *Economists with Guns: Authoritarian Development and U.S.–Indonesian Relations, 1960–1968*, US: Stanford University Press.
- Sjamsuddin, Nazaruiddin (1985), *The Republican Revolt: A Study of the Acehnese Rebellion*, Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies.
- Sundhaussen, Ulf (1982), *The Road to Power: Indonesian Military Politics, 1945–1967*, Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press.
- Surat Keputusan No:Kep/Pepehrada-29/10/1965*, 29 October 1965.
- Tsai, Yen-ling, and Douglas Kammen (2012), Anti-communist Violence and the Ethnic Chinese in Medan, North Sumatra, in: Douglas Kammen and Katharine McGregor (eds), *The Contours of Mass Violence in Indonesia, 1965–68*, Singapore: National University of Singapore, 131–155.
- US Department of State (2001), *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1964–1968, Volume XXVI, Indonesia; Malaysia–Singapore; Philippines*, US: Government Printing Office.