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The Decline of the Chinese Council of Batavia

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Cover Page



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THE DECLINE OF THE CHINESE COUNCIL OF BATAVIA

Cover photo: Major Khouw Kim An and Captain Tio Tek Soen, 1908
Source: Private collection of L. N. Goei
Cover design by Uji Nugroho

THE DECLINE OF THE CHINESE COUNCIL OF BATAVIA:
THE LOSS OF PRESTIGE AND AUTHORITY OF THE
TRADITIONAL ELITE AMONGST THE CHINESE
COMMUNITY FROM THE END OF THE NINETEENTH
CENTURY UNTIL 1942

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Baperki	Badan Permusjawaratan Kewarganegaraan Indonesia Indonesian Citizenship Consultative Body
CAB	Chinese Advisory Board Established in the Straits Settlements in 1889
CCP	Chinese Communist Party (China), founded in 1921
CHH	Chung Hwa Hui Chinese Association in the Dutch East Indies, founded in 1928
Gerindo	Gerakan Rakyat Indonesia Indonesian People's Movement, founded in 1937
HBS	Hoogere Burgerschool Secondary School. The Koning Willem III (Kawedri) in Batavia, established in 1860, was the first HBS in the Dutch East Indies
HCS	Hollandsch-Chineesche School Dutch Chinese School, established in 1908
KITLV	Koninklijk Instituut voor Taal-, Land-, en Volkenkunde Royal Netherlands Institute of Southeast Asian and Caribbean Studies
KMT	Kuo Min Tang Chinese Nationalist Party (China), founded in 1912
LPKB	Lembaga Pembina Kesatuan Bangsa Institute for the Promotion of National Unity
NIVB	Nederlandsch Indische Voetbalbond Dutch Indies Football Union, formed in 1919
Partindo	Partai Indonesia

Indonesian Party, founded in 1931

PKI Partai Komunis Indonesia

Indonesian Communist Party, grew out of the Indies Social Democratic Association in 1924

PNI Partai Nasional Indonesia

Indonesian Nationalist Party, founded in 1927

PNI (Baroe) Pendidikan Nasional Indonesia Baroe

(New) Indonesian Nationalist Training, political party founded in 1931 by Mohammad Hatta

PPPKI Permoefakatan Perhimpoean-Perhimpoean Politik Kebangsaan Indonesia

Federation of Political Associations of the Indonesian Nation, brought together by Sukarno in 1927

PTI Partai Tionghoa Indonesia

Chinese Indonesian Party, founded in 1932

THHK Tiong Hoa Hwee Koan

First modern Chinese organisation in the Dutch East Indies, founded in 1900

VOC Vereenigde Oost Indische Compagnie

Dutch East India Company, 1602–1799

GLOSSARY

<i>Adat</i>	Customary law
<i>Afdeeling</i>	Administrative division in a residency
<i>Anak Kong Koan</i>	Children whose school tuition was paid by the Chinese Council
<i>Assistent-resident (voor de politie)</i>	Assistant-resident, directly accountable to the resident
<i>Assistent-wedana</i>	Assistant of the native district chief
<i>Ati Soetji</i>	Organisation that sheltered women and neglected children
<i>Barongsai</i>	Lion dance
<i>Bedelaarskolonie</i>	Organisation that provided shelter for the poor and disabled
<i>Bedrijfsbelasting</i>	Corporate tax
<i>Binnenlandsch Bestuur</i>	Department of Internal Affairs
<i>Boekoe hongsoeij</i>	Account book for <i>koeboeran hongsoeij</i>
<i>Boekoe sioehek</i>	Account book for <i>koeboeran sioehek</i>
<i>Bouw</i>	Area measure. One <i>bouw</i> equals 0,7 hectares
<i>Buitengewesten</i>	Outer regions of the Indonesian Archipelago, as opposed to Java and Madoera
<i>Buku daftar kelahiran</i>	Birth record book
<i>Boepati</i>	Regent, the highest official in rank in the native administrative corps
<i>Burgemeester</i>	Mayor
<i>Burgerlijke Stand</i>	Dutch Registry of Births, Deaths, and Marriages

<i>Cabang Atas</i>	Peranakan Chinese elite
<i>Cantonese</i>	Chinese ethnic group originating from the south Chinese province Guangdong
<i>Chineesch bestuur</i>	Chinese Administration
<i>Chineesche Kamp</i>	Chinese settlement, Chinese neighbourhood
<i>Collecteloon</i>	Part of the tax collection (8 percent) that the neighbourhood official could keep
<i>College van Boedelmeesteren</i>	Board of Curators
<i>College van Heemraden</i>	District Council in the Ommelanden
<i>College van Schepenen</i>	Bench of Aldermen
<i>Contingent</i>	Tax imposed by the landlord, amounting to a proportional part of the estimated crops before harvest
<i>Controleur voor de politie</i>	Inspector, accountable to the assistant-resident
<i>Delman</i>	Horse and carriage
<i>Dessa hoofd</i>	Village head
<i>Djaksa</i>	Native prosecutor
<i>Dwangschrift</i>	Tax enforcement order
<i>Effectieve Kong Koan officieren</i>	Chinese officers and official members of the Chinese Council
<i>Eigendomsperceel</i>	Compound
<i>Erfpacht</i>	Long lease
<i>Europeesch bestuur</i>	European administration
<i>Feng Shui</i>	Literally wind (<i>feng</i>) and water (<i>shui</i>). Chinese geomantic rules for choosing sites positioned in harmony with the spiritual forces of wind and water

<i>Forum Privilegiatum</i>	Privileged justice system for certain members of the elite
<i>Gantang</i>	Measurement. One <i>gantang</i> equals 3 kilos
<i>Gelijkgesteld/Gelijkstelling</i>	Attainment of equal status (with Europeans)
<i>Gemeente</i>	Municipality
<i>Gie Oh</i>	Free school, free education
<i>Gouvernementsbesluit</i>	Governmental decree
<i>Grondhuur</i>	Land rent, imposed by the landlord
<i>Haji</i>	Devoted Muslim who has made the pilgrimage to Mecca
<i>Hakka</i>	A Chinese ethnic group mostly concentrated in northeastern Guangdong, southwestern Fujian, and southeastern Jiangxi
<i>Heeren XVII</i>	Gentlemen Seventeen, central board of the Dutch East India Company
<i>Hokkien</i>	Chinese ethnic group originating from the region of coastal Fujian province colloquially known as Minnan
<i>Hong In</i>	Ceremony during which the minute book was symbolically sealed to close the year of activities of the Chinese Council, a few days before the end of the traditional Chinese lunar calendar
<i>Hoofdgeld</i>	Per capita poll tax levied on every Chinese
<i>Hoofdplaats</i>	Centre of the residency, inner city
<i>Hoofd der Mooren en Bengaleezen</i>	Headman of the Moors and Bengalis
<i>Hoofd van gewestelijk bestuur</i>	Head of local administration

<i>Hormat</i>	Forms of respect and honour used in the native civil service by subordinates to superiors
<i>Imlek</i>	Chinese New Year
<i>Im tee</i>	Free burial grounds
<i>Indië Weerbaar</i>	Defense of the Indies
<i>Inlandsch bestuur</i>	Native Administration
<i>Inlandsche kommandant</i>	Native Commander
<i>Kampong</i>	Neighbourhood, village
<i>Kapitein der Arabieren</i>	Arab captain
<i>Kapitein der Chineezen</i>	Chinese captain
<i>Kamitoewa</i>	Head of hamlet
<i>Kantoor voor Chineesche Zaken</i>	Office for Chinese Affairs
<i>Kapitan Peranakan</i>	Community leader of Chinese Muslims
<i>Keris</i>	Dagger
<i>Koeboeran hongsoeij</i>	Burial site bought for someone who had passed away
<i>Koeboeran sioehék</i>	Burial site bought before someone was deceased
<i>Koei In</i>	Ceremony during which the minute book of the Council was unsealed to open the new year
<i>Kong Koan</i>	Chinese Council
<i>Kota</i>	Old Batavia, Old Jakarta
<i>Kraton</i>	Palace
<i>Kretek</i>	Clove
<i>Landdrost</i>	Sheriff
<i>Landgerecht</i>	Court with jurisdiction over all population groups that only handled relatively minor criminal offences

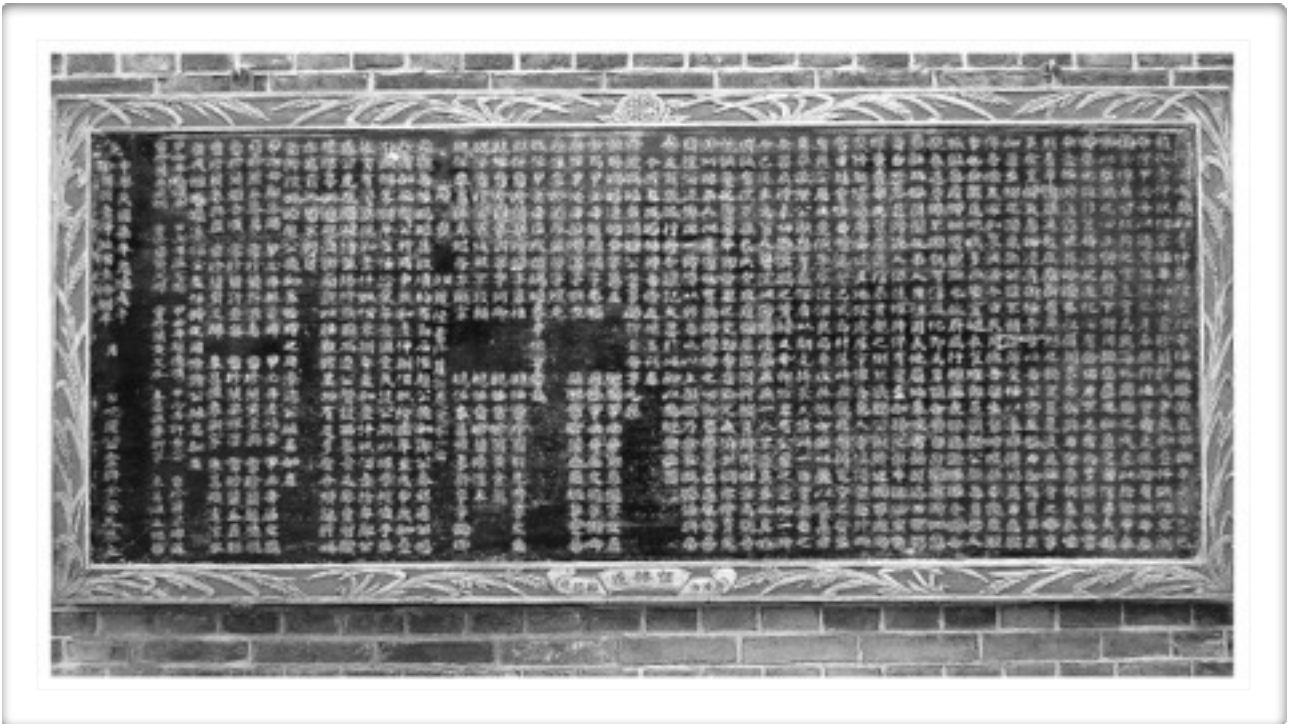
<i>Landraad</i>	Native court of justice
<i>Loerah</i>	Village head
<i>Luitenant der Chineezen</i>	Chinese lieutenant
<i>Majoor der Chineezen</i>	Chinese major
<i>Manchu</i>	Ethnic group from Manchuria that reigned over China from 1644–1912 (the Qing dynasty)
<i>Mandoer</i>	Overseer
<i>Mardijkers</i>	Slaves and descendants of manumitted slaves from the Indian subcontinent
<i>Moors</i>	Muslim “Keling” originating from Kalinga, on the Coromandel Coast of India
<i>Nanyang</i>	Literally meaning “southern ocean”, the Chinese term that denotes the geographical region south of China
<i>Nederlandsch onderdaan</i>	Dutch subject
<i>Nusantara</i>	Indonesian term for the Indonesian Archipelago
<i>Oesaha recht/landheerlijke rechten</i>	Semi-feudal rights of the landowner
<i>Ommelanden</i>	Surroundings of Batavia city—namely, Tangerang, Meester-Cornelis, Krawang, and Buitenzorg
<i>Opium regie</i>	Government control over the production and distribution of opium
<i>Oppasser</i>	Servant
<i>Padjeg</i>	Tax, imposed by the landlord, amounting to a fixed proportion of the products harvested by a tenant. The amount was set for a period of five or ten years

<i>Pamerintahan-familie</i>	Elite peranakan Chinese families who have produced a considerable number of Chinese officers
<i>Particuliere landerijen</i>	Private lands
<i>Pasar Gambir</i>	Annual fair
<i>Pasar malam</i>	Evening fair
<i>Pasisir</i>	Java's northeast coast
<i>Passenstelsel</i>	Pass system that required the Chinese to carry travel passes when traveling out of their neighbourhoods
<i>Patih</i>	Chief administrative officer of the boepati
<i>Peranakan</i>	Indonesia-born Chinese who have adapted to the language and culture of Indonesian society
<i>Pergerakan</i>	Emancipation of the non-European population groups in the Dutch East Indies
<i>Perintah halus</i>	Gentle command; giving orders in polite and indirect language
<i>Personeele belasting</i>	Tax assessed on material possessions such as furniture, vehicles, and horses
<i>Politierol</i>	Police court
<i>Priyayi</i>	Governing elite of Java, aristocrat, or official
<i>Raad van Indië</i>	Indies Council, advisory organ for the governor-general
<i>Raad van Justitie</i>	Council of Justice. The courthouse for the Europeans and those with equal status
<i>Regentschap</i>	Regency, administrative division for native administration

<i>Residentie</i>	Residency, administrative division in the Dutch East Indies
<i>Residentiegerecht</i>	Residency Council of Justice
<i>Rijksdaalder</i>	Rix dollar
<i>Roedjak</i>	Salad made of different kinds of fruit or vegetables, served with a sweet-and-spicy sauce
<i>Roemah bitjara</i>	Meeting hall
<i>Rumah abu</i>	House of ashes
<i>Sado</i>	Horse and carriage
<i>Sarean</i>	Messenger of the Chinese Council
<i>Singkeh</i>	Chinese newcomer
<i>Sombreel</i>	Ceremonial parasol for dignitaries
<i>Stad en Voorsteden</i>	City and suburbs of the Residency Batavia
<i>Suku</i>	Ethnic group
<i>Syahbandar</i>	Harbour master
<i>Tjengbeng</i>	Tomb Sweeping Day
<i>Tjioko</i>	Hungry Ghost Festival
<i>Tjoeke</i>	Tax imposed by the landlord, amounting to a proportional part (usually $\frac{1}{5}$) of the actual crops harvested
<i>Toelage</i>	Compensation that Chinese officers received for fulfilling their duties
<i>Toko</i>	Shop
<i>Totok</i>	Indonesia- or China-born Chinese who have preserved the language and culture of their ancestral country

<i>Tuinhuur</i>	Tax imposed by the landlord, amounting to $\frac{1}{5}$ of the products or a fixed sum of money
<i>Twidies</i>	Writers of the Chinese Council
<i>Vaandrig</i>	Ensign
<i>Verponding</i>	Ground tax
<i>Volkshoofden</i>	Native chiefs
<i>Volksraad</i>	People's Council
<i>Vreemde Oosterlingen</i>	Foreign Orientals; that is, non-native Asians like Chinese, Arabs, Moors, and Bengalis
<i>Waarnemend</i>	Acting
<i>Wachtgeld</i>	Reduced pay after being dismissed from office
<i>Wayang</i>	Shadow play
<i>Wedana</i>	Native district chief
<i>Wees- en Boedelkamer</i>	Chamber of Orphans- and Estate
<i>Wijk</i>	Neighbourhood
<i>Wijkenstelsel</i>	Residence system that required the Chinese to live in certain neighbourhoods of the residency
<i>Wijkmeester</i>	Neighbourhood chief
<i>Wingewest</i>	Area of gain

INTRODUCTION



Wooden panel of Major Khouw Kim An, 1918

Since 1910, I have held the office of *majoor der Chineezen*. I have devoted my limited talents and abilities to society. As an official, I represent my overseas countrymen and all these years I have fulfilled my duty with great dedication. When I was appointed to this office, social unrest dominated the world: in our ancestral country the revolution overthrew the autocratic regime and in Java the young generation rebelled against the old order. The confrontation between the old and young had a big impact on society. But in all modesty, I dare to say that I, with the assistance of my staff, have succeeded in maintaining safety and order so that all my countrymen were able to live peacefully.¹

¹ This fragment is taken from the Kong Koan panels, which once decorated the walls of the Kong Koan building in Batavia. Now these inscribed wooden panels can be found in the Sinological Institute of Leiden University.

The fragment above is taken from a wooden panel inscribed in 1918 on the orders of the last Chinese major of Batavia, Khouw Kim An. Wooden panels and stone tables with inscriptions are quite common in areas where Chinese people reside. They are often hung in or around buildings to indicate business affairs or the names of temples and other buildings, to commemorate certain events², or to express blessings or aphorisms. Throughout the period during which the Chinese Council functioned as the chief office of administration for the Chinese community of Batavia, eight wooden panels were made. Three panels contain aphorisms while the other five panels relate to important events throughout the three hundred years' history of the Chinese Council, including the names of all the officers who served from the time of the first *kapitein der Chineezzen*, Souw Bing Kong. The inscriptions are a mixture of classical Chinese and vernacular Hokkien, as the majority of the Chinese officers originated from Fujian province in South China.³ The panels used to decorate the office of the former Chinese Council of Batavia, but since 2001 they have been displayed in the inner courtyard of the Sinological Institute of Leiden University.⁴

The panel dedicated by Major Khouw Kim An refers to the turbulent social and political events that were taking place in the Netherlands Indies and East Asia in the early twentieth century. With Khouw looking back on a tumultuous period, the primary aim of this study is revealed: to follow the Chinese officers in the twentieth century, in particular the period during which Khouw Kim An was successively promoted from lieutenant (in 1905) to captain (1908) and finally major (1910). When Khouw was appointed as a Chinese officer he saw that the world was changing: in the early twentieth century, Dutch rule over the archipelago intensified; in 1911 the Qing Empire was overthrown by the Chinese Revolution, ending centuries-long of dynastic rule in China; and the emergence of Chinese and indigenous nationalist movements were challenging the established order

² Such as the reconstruction of a temple.

³ Only the transcriptions of Dutch terms were written out in Hokkien (in Chinese characters).

⁴ H. S. Liem and Chen Menghong, "De Kong Koan Panelen", *Nieuwsbrief van de Stichting Vrienden van het Kong Koan Archief* 3 (November 2002): 3–5.

in the Dutch East Indies. In the midst of these momentous developments, the Chinese Council of Batavia struggled to survive as the chief institution of community leadership for the Chinese inhabitants of this west Java coastal city. For the first time the Chinese officers faced the threat of losing their prominent position in the Chinese community, one they had occupied since the early seventeenth century.

The institution of Chinese officers and its councils

The Chinese Council (better known as the *Kong Koan* among the Indies Chinese) played an important governmental and social role in the Chinese communities of Batavia, Semarang, and Soerabaja from the eighteenth until the twentieth century. It was a semi-autonomous ethnic organisation that collaborated with the Dutch colonial government in administering the Chinese community by collecting taxes, explaining, and passing on government rules, and settling disputes. Other activities included the supervision and coordination of social and religious matters, including education, marriage registration, cemeteries, public ceremonies, and temple management.

The Council consisted of carefully selected members appointed by the governor-general. These members were given the quasi-military titles *luitenant*, *kapitein*, and *majoor*. Collectively they were known as the Chinese officers. They were assisted by neighbourhood chiefs, secretaries, clerks, and messengers. Only wealthy Chinese from the local elite were eligible for an officer post. Therefore, membership of the Council guaranteed authority, influence, and prestige. Lower positions such as neighbourhood chief (*wijkmeester*), secretary, or clerk were also attractive as the Chinese Council was widely regarded as a prestigious organisation.

The establishment of Chinese Councils in Batavia, Semarang, and Soerabaja in the eighteenth century was the result of the wish to better organise the activities of the Chinese officers. Shortly after Jan Pieterszoon Coen established Batavia as the general rendezvous of the Dutch East India Company (VOC) in 1619, the governor-general appointed a wealthy Chinese merchant as the

first headman, or *kapitein der Chineezen*, with responsibility for the small Chinese community in the newly conquered city. As the Company's territorial base on Java broadened, more Chinese captains were appointed to administer the Chinese communities living under the authority of the VOC. Steady population growth in the Chinese communities of Batavia and other substantial cities like Semarang and Soerabaja resulted in the appointment of additional Chinese officers of various ranks. With the increasing and progressively varying administrative and social tasks of the officers in these cities, it was deemed necessary to institutionalise the activities of the Chinese officers in one administrative body. Chinese officers could be found in a number of cities in Java and the outer islands, but Chinese Councils were only established in Batavia, Semarang, and Soerabaja.

For nearly three centuries, the institution of Chinese officers was an integral part of the system of indirect administration that the Dutch applied to the indigenous population and other non-indigenous Asians in the Indies. The Chinese officers were the undisputed leaders of the Chinese people and most activities in the Chinese community centred on the Chinese Council. This changed in the twentieth century when the prestige and authority of the Chinese Council and its officers were challenged owing to several developments. First of all, the Dutch colonial administration intensified its direct rule over the archipelago, taking over several core activities from the Council and making the latter gradually more and more redundant. The Council was attacked by emerging Chinese nationalist interest groups. Influenced by the nationalist movement in China, Java's leading Chinese-Malay newspaper, *Sin Po*, accused the Chinese officers of serving the colonial administration like lackeys, and successfully pleaded for doing away with the Council. Ironically, shortly after its proposed dissolution, the Chinese Council of Batavia was resurrected because the colonial government's decision to terminate the institution was greeted with a storm of protest. Apparently the Chinese community of Batavia could not do without the Chinese Council's social tasks.

Aim of this study: research questions, period of focus, and methodology

The institution of the Chinese officers is a subject in need of further exploration. Some scholars mention the Chinese officers in passing, while others have produced some excellent case studies. B. Hoetink, who served as an official for Chinese affairs, has written a number of articles on the institution, but his work is limited to the VOC period and written from the point of view of a colonial administrator. Some authors have highlighted the prominent officers' families and their great stake in government revenues. Ong Hok Ham and James Rush have shown that there was a direct link between the Chinese officers and the tax-farming system in east and central Java in the nineteenth century. The acquisition of tax farms—opium in particular—and the appointment as Chinese officer often went hand in hand. Through intermarriage an influential *peranakan*⁵ Chinese elite, or *cabang atas*, came into being, who for generation after generation dominated trade, held the most lucrative revenue farms, and brought forth a respectable number of Chinese officers.⁶

More extensive research into the institution of Chinese officers has been done only recently. Mona Lohanda's 2001 monograph on the Chinese officers of Batavia examines the relationship between the Chinese officers and the colonial government and how the Chinese Council was

⁵ It has become conventional for writers about the Indonesian Chinese to draw a distinction between the *peranakan* and *totok*. Originally the terms were race-specific: *peranakan* referred to an Indonesian Chinese of mixed ancestry, whereas a pure-blood Chinese was designated a *totok*. Later on, the usage was based on the place of birth: a *peranakan* was a Chinese born in Indonesia and a *totok* was born in China. The most common usage of the terms now is based on sociocultural factors: *peranakan* Chinese are Indonesia-born Chinese who have been influenced by the culture and language of indigenous society. *Totok* Chinese remain China-orientated and preserve the culture and language of their ancestral country. See C. A. Coppel, "Mapping the *Peranakan* Chinese in Indonesia", in *Studying Ethnic Chinese in Indonesia*, edited by C. A. Coppel (Singapore: Singapore Society of Asian Studies, 2002), 106–107.

⁶ J. R. Rush, *Opium to Java: Revenue Farming and Chinese Enterprise in Colonial Indonesia 1860–1910* (Singapore: Equinox, 2007), 88–89; Ong Hokham, "The *Peranakan* Officers' Families in Nineteenth Century Java", in *Papers of the Dutch-Indonesian Historical Conference held at Lage Vuursche, the Netherlands, 23–27 June 1980*, edited by G. Schutte and H. A. Sutherland (Leiden: Bureau of Indonesian Studies, 1982), 282–83.

embedded in the administrative framework of Batavia in the period between 1837 and 1942.⁷ She also examines the relationship between the Chinese officers and the Chinese community. By pointing out the inconsistencies in the policy implemented by local governments with regard to the Indies Chinese and their immediate leadership, she concludes that an overall and comprehensive policy towards the Indies Chinese was lacking. Because her research relies mainly on Dutch archival records, her focus is on the administrative framework of the Chinese officer system and Dutch policy towards the Indies Chinese from a Dutch point of view. The Chinese side of the story is somewhat lacking.

Someone who has made extensive use of non-Dutch sources is Chen Menghong. Her monograph deals with the term of office of the first *majoor der Chineezen* of Batavia, Tan Eng Goan (1843–65), and his reaction to the changing colonial policies after the Dutch parliament increasingly took control of colonial affairs.⁸ Unlike Lohanda, Chen had access to the Kong Koan Archive—the voluminous store of documents that the Chinese Council of Batavia accumulated during its existence. With this unique material, which I will discuss later, she was able to provide the reader a glimpse of life in the Chinese community of Batavia in the mid-nineteenth century. Not only did she thoroughly analyse the functioning of the Chinese Council, she also gave a detailed account of the family and business life of the Batavian Chinese. She concludes that under the leadership of the Chinese officers, Chinese society in Batavia was highly organised and structured, and overall remained very Chinese.

From the 1850s onwards, the colonial government intensified its control over its subjects, including the Chinese. This resulted in increased government involvement in certain spheres of Chinese economic and social life, which not only altered the traditional relationship between the

⁷ M. Lohanda, *The Kapitan Cina of Batavia, 1837–1942: A History of Chinese Establishment in Colonial Society* (Jakarta: Djambatan, 2001).

⁸ Chen Menghong, *De Chinese Gemeenschap van Batavia, 1843–1865: Een Onderzoek naar het Kong Koan-Archief* (Leiden: Leiden University Press, 2011).

Chinese people and the colonial government but also changed the position of the Chinese officers within the Chinese community as their authority in judicial matters became more and more restricted and they lost some of their elite prerogatives. Even so, throughout the nineteenth century leadership of the Chinese community remained firmly in the hands of the Chinese officers.

This was to change in the twentieth century when the tide turned against the Chinese officers. The developments in the mid-nineteenth century mentioned by Chen heralded the transformation of colonial society some decades later. In a break from the past, starting in the late nineteenth century the Dutch adopted an increasingly “hands-on” style of colonial governance. Whereas expansion of Dutch authority in the Indies previously had been a matter of business, the twentieth century saw the consolidation of Dutch power in every sense of the word. After territorial expansion was secured, the Dutch extended direct control throughout the archipelago. In addition to keeping a tighter grip on the colony’s economy, the Dutch started to pay close attention to the welfare of its subjects (the indigenous people in particular) when they adopted the Ethical Policy in 1901. This deeply affected Chinese society. Modern state formation altered the traditional collaborative structure between the Dutch and Chinese as the tax farms, for instance, which hitherto had been in the hands of the Chinese, were now taken under Dutch control. The Ethical Policy was not just a welfare program for the indigenous people, it also aimed to curtail Chinese economic activities, which were increasingly perceived as being harmful to the welfare of the indigenous population. The increased government involvement in the lives of its subjects had consequences for the Chinese administration and left the Chinese officers unsure of their fate.

The transformation of Chinese society in the Indies was not only caused by modern state formation in the Dutch colony. The overwhelming influx of totok Chinese, which started in the late nineteenth century and continued after the foundation of the Chinese Republic, also had long-lasting consequences. The totok Chinese remained China-orientated and turned to the newly emerging Chinese organisations that quite often were subject to the influence of the Qing regime.

Totoks felt that the Chinese officers, mostly of rich peranakan origin, failed to look after the interests of the newcomers. According to these same critics, by the beginning of the twentieth century the Malay-speaking Chinese elites were no longer able to read and write Chinese like their fathers and grandfathers. Thus, they were not the appropriate persons to assume leadership over the Chinese. The revolution in China did not change the totoks' dislike of the Chinese officers. In fact, the revolution also initiated a new sense of self-awareness amongst the peranakan youth, who considered the traditional law abiding attitude of their parents and grandparents a feudal phenomenon. To them, the Chinese Council represented an out-dated colonial system based on ethnicity unsuited to this new era. Therefore also the young peranakans increasingly turned to the leaders of the newly emerging Chinese organisations for guidance.

Although he limited himself to the first sixteen years of the twentieth century, and fails to distinguish between the different situations in Batavia, Semarang, and Soerabaja, Lea Williams' study of the Pan-Chinese Movement in Indonesia includes a thorough analysis of developments in Chinese community leadership.⁹ He addresses the delicate position of the Chinese officers when nationalist organisations spread their activities in the Indies. Most officers were torn between their duty of reporting (suspicious) activities to the colonial authorities and rendering aid to the nationalists. Yet, in general he characterises the Chinese officers as puppets of the Dutch who were wealthy and conservative, illiterate in the Chinese language, knew little of Chinese culture, and were not much concerned with the well-being of their countrymen. According to Williams, only a few officers with the exceptional will to act as real spokesmen of their community were not averse to the Pan-Chinese Movement.

With this background of the early twentieth century in mind, the following questions could be asked: How did the colonial government attempt to incorporate Chinese administration into its

⁹ L. E. Williams, *Overseas Chinese Nationalism: The Genesis of the Pan-Chinese Movement in Indonesia, 1900–1916* (Glencoe: Illinois: The Free Press, 1960).

new vision of a modern colonial state? How did Dutch colonial administrators respond to the increasing criticism directed at the Chinese officers? How did the Chinese officers respond to the social changes within their community, and how did they cope with the turbulent political developments in the Dutch East Indies? How was Chinese criticism of the Chinese officers expressed and did the Chinese officers ultimately have to make way for new leaders in the Chinese community? Like most authors, Williams points out the speed with which nationalist leaders wrested the leadership of the Chinese community from the Chinese officers. This may be applicable for Semarang and Soerabaja, but should Batavia be included in this analysis? In addition, was it only in exceptional cases that Chinese officers marched with the times and showed genuine interest in their community? In this study, I argue that the Chinese officers were not merely yes-men of the colonial government and that the struggle for leadership of the Chinese community in Batavia was not easily won by the Chinese nationalists.

This study concentrates on the final years of the Chinese Council of Batavia. It focuses on the decline of the traditional Chinese elite represented by the institution of Chinese officers in a period of increased Dutch direct rule and a burgeoning Chinese nationalist movement. I have chosen the end of the nineteenth century as the starting point for this study because social developments (such as the termination of the tax farms and increased Chinese immigration) in this period led to the critical evaluation of the Chinese officer system in the early twentieth century. The end date, 1942, is when Japanese troops invaded the Indies and suspended the activities of the Chinese Council. My focus on Batavia can be justified in several ways. With the first officer appointed in 1619 and the Chinese Council still more or less in charge of the Chinese community in the early decades after Indonesia's independence, Batavia has the longest history of the Chinese officer system of any city in Indonesia. In addition, the fact that the Chinese Council of Batavia was the only one that survived all the attacks in the twentieth century gives rise to the question whether Batavia's circumstances were exceptional, compared to those of Semarang and Soerabaja. From a

practical point of view, lack of sufficient primary sources has prevented me from thoroughly examining the councils of the latter cities. The abundance of archival holdings of the Batavian council evidently invites further research.

Although the discussion on the institution of Chinese officers constitutes the main focus of this study, other developments also deserve close attention. The social changes in the Chinese community will be analysed against a background of crucial developments that occurred in colonial society in the twentieth century, including direct Dutch rule over the archipelago, modern state formation, the emancipation of non-Western population groups, and indigenous nationalism. An interesting parallel can be drawn between the rebellious *peranakan* youth and the Javanese nationalists who rebelled against the traditional elite (*priyayi*) in the early twentieth century. And it is important to note that in the 1930s, the colonial authorities sought to partly rehabilitate both traditional elite groups in an attempt to thwart the nationalist movement. This study will also give significant attention to increasing racial antagonism between certain ethnic groups, in particular the Chinese and native Indonesians. Despite similar ideas about community leadership, their relationship deteriorated because of colliding interests.

Finally, another aim of this study is to reconstruct Chinese society in the Dutch East Indies and in particular contribute to the historiography of the overseas Chinese community of Batavia. Leonard Blussé's "travel guide" into old Batavia deals with the seventeenth and eighteenth century, the period during which the city grew from a small staple town into the thriving centre of VOC activities known as the "Queen of the East".¹⁰ In his pioneering work, Blussé analyses the process of interaction between the VOC and the Chinese and their interdependence in commerce. Batavia was founded for the purpose of trade. The Company envisaged the town as a port where its ships could be serviced, goods collected, and its employees could rest. It soon flourished as the

¹⁰ J. L. Blussé, *Strange Company: Chinese Settlers, Mestizo Women and the Dutch in VOC Batavia* (Dordrecht: Foris, 1986).

headquarters to a mainly intra-Asian maritime trading company. In the course of the seventeenth century, the town became increasingly linked to the hinterland as European and Asian exploiters opened up its surroundings (*Ommelanden*) after the region had been pacified. The Chinese played a dominant role both in the development of Batavia as a port town and the cultivation of its hinterland. The VOC heavily depended on the merchandise from East Asia brought in by Chinese junks, but the Chinese were also skilled labourers and agriculturists. Their contribution to building up the city and opening the virgin lands of the Ommelanden was so evident that Blussé characterises Batavia as basically a Chinese town under Dutch protection. It was here that the first Chinese headman was appointed by the VOC administration. When after more than a hundred years of peaceful coexistence and cooperation the Chinese massacre in 1740 demonstrated that the Chinese officers had lost firm control over their people, the High Government of Batavia decided that measures had to be taken to institutionalise the leadership system. It was after these horrific events that a head office was established to coordinate all the activities of the officers.

As mentioned before, Chen Menghong portrays Chinese communal life in nineteenth-century Batavia, when the Chinese community was highly organised and the Chinese Council was firmly embedded in the colonial administration. With the judicial reforms implemented from the 1850s onwards, the Chinese officers slowly had to relinquish their juridical power. Chen also points out that the opening up of China after the Treaty of Nanjing was signed in 1842—marking the end of the First Opium War—was followed by an influx of Chinese immigrants into the Indies. The arrival of substantial numbers of totok newcomers also put pressure on the established peranakan Chinese communities in the Dutch East Indies.

My study of the challenges faced by Chinese society in twentieth century Batavia is a sensible continuation of the works by Blussé, Chen, Lohanda, and Williams. When talking about the historiography of the overseas Chinese, another important author must not be forgotten. Leo

Suryadinata has written numerous works on the overseas Chinese in the Nanyang,¹¹ in particular Indonesia. His meticulous analysis of *peranakan* Chinese politics in Indonesia is especially pioneering. With regard to the institution of Chinese officers, he limits himself to a quite general description of the system. Although he is not as sarcastic as Williams when referring to the traditional Chinese leaders, Suryadinata also quite simply concludes that after 1900 the Chinese officers were defeated by the leaders of the Pan-Chinese Movement.¹² In this study I argue that closer attention to developments in Chinese community leadership will provide new theories about *peranakan* politics, in particular the three political streams and their strongholds (Sin Po Group in Batavia, Chung Hwa Hui in Semarang and Partai Tionghoa Indonesia in Soerabaja), which Suryadinata discerns.

In sum, the principal aim of this research is to study Chinese community leadership in a changing colonial state. The underlying themes are change and continuity within the Chinese community; the special characteristics of Batavia which influenced patterns of social interaction between certain population groups; and social change in the Indies, specifically the observation of the dynamics of social interaction between the Dutch, Chinese, and Indonesians in the first four decades of the twentieth century.

Source material

During its long existence as a semi-official colonial institution, the Chinese Council of Batavia amassed sizeable archival holdings with demographic data on marriages and funerals, account books of religious organisations and temples, documents connected with the immigration office and

¹¹ Nanyang, literally meaning “southern ocean”, is the Chinese term that denotes the geographical region south of China. It is commonly used to refer to Southeast Asia.

¹² See for example L. Suryadinata, *Peranakan Chinese Politics in Java 1917–1942* (Singapore: Marshall Cavendish International, 2005).

educational institutions, and the monthly minutes of the Council's board meetings.¹³ These sources, both in Malay and Chinese, constitute a unique and almost complete archival collection for gaining a better understanding of the inner-workings of the Chinese Council. In addition, these primary sources help scholars delineate the process of interaction between the Chinese Council and the colonial authorities and the relationship between the Council and the Chinese community. The archives also offer insight into the social, economic, and political changes in the Chinese community of Batavia in the first half of the twentieth century, when Indonesian and Chinese nationalist movements emerged.

The Kong Koan Archive constitutes the most complete archival deposit of a large urban Chinese community in Southeast Asia. In 1995, Leonard Blussé found the badly neglected remains of the archive in a warehouse next to the Wanjiesi temple at Jalan Laotze in the Gunung Sahari district of Jakarta. To offer a good home and preserve these extremely valuable sources, the archive was donated to Leiden University. It is now treasured in the East Asian Library of Leiden University. Since then, numerous scholars have put effort into opening up these rich and unique sources to gain a better understanding of Chinese society in Batavia and the institution of Chinese officers. Although part of the archive is damaged or lost, what remains covers a fairly substantial period (1772–1979) and embodies the only surviving archive of an urban Chinese society in Southeast Asia. The archives of the Soerabaja and Semarang councils are unfortunately lost. Only Liem Thian Joe was still fortunate enough to have access to the archives of the Semarang council when he compiled his chronicle on Semarang in 1931.¹⁴

Research on the basis of the exclusive materials of the Kong Koan Archive has started only recently. Chen Menghong has completed her dissertation on the first Chinese major, Tan Eng Goan, using the Chinese minutes of the Council's board meetings (*Gong'an Bu*), which have been edited

¹³ L. Blussé and Chen Menghong, *The Archives of the Kong Koan of Batavia* (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 3.

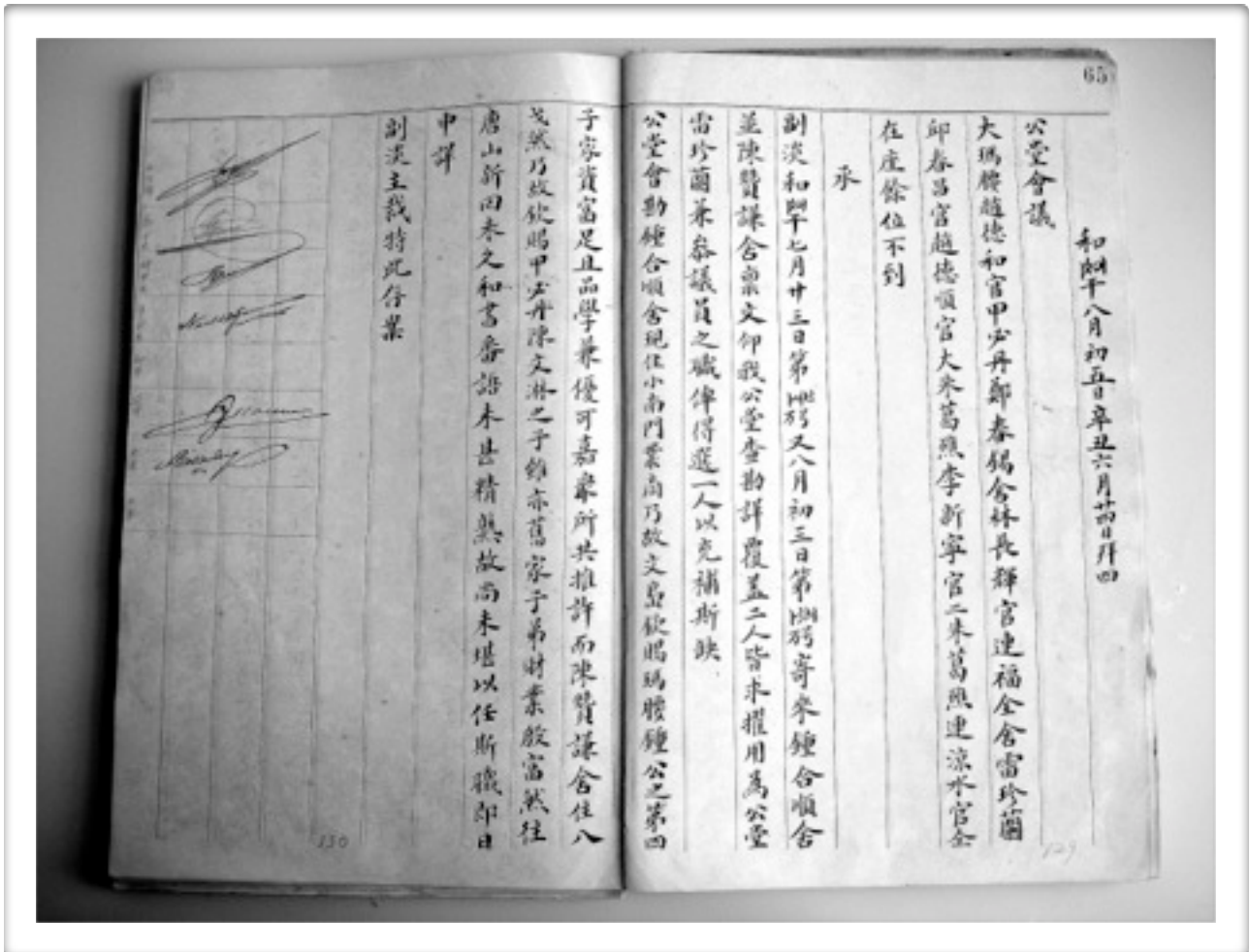
¹⁴ Liem Thian Joe, *Riwayat Semarang*, 2nd ed. (Jakarta: Hasta Wahana, 2004). The first edition was published in 1931.

and published by herself, Leonard Blussé, Nie Dening, Wu Fengbin, and various other staff members of the Nanyang Research Institute of Xiamen University.¹⁵ The Malay minutes have only once been the subject of an essay written by Giok Bwee Hesselting-Tjan, in the introductory volume on the Kong Koan Archive edited by Leonard Blussé and Chen Menghong.¹⁶

The Chinese and Malay minutes of the Council's board meetings covering the period 1890–1964 serve as the basis for this study. Data from other documents of the Kong Koan Archive like marriage and funeral registers, documents connected with educational institutions, immigration papers and work permits, complement the records of board meetings. It is remarkable that approximately one decade into the twentieth century a change of language occurred in the minutes. For almost a century and a half (from 1772 until 1909), the minutes of the board meetings were written in Chinese, but between 1909 and 1920 the minutes were written in both Chinese and Malay, and from 1920 onwards the secretary of the Chinese Council used only Malay to record the meetings. The change of language in the twentieth century may be simply explained by the fact that fewer and fewer Chinese officers could read, speak, or write Chinese. Another reason could be that the colonial authorities, increasingly involving themselves with their subjects, demanded that the minutes be written in Malay so they were able to check the Council's affairs. Malay was also increasingly becoming the most common language in daily speech among all groups in Batavia. The Chinese minutes are almost entirely written in classical Chinese, but also contain Hokkien terms and Dutch and Malay words transcribed into Chinese characters. The Malay texts are a more complex mix of *Dines Melayu* (the language used by civil servants) and *Pasar Melayu* or *Contact Maleis*, with quite a lot of Javanese and Betawi (*Jakartaans*) influence.

¹⁵ Wu Fengbin, L. Blussé, Chen Menghong, and Nie Dening, *Gong An Bu (Minutes of the Board Meetings of the Chinese Council)* (Xiamen: Xiamen Daxue Chubanshe, 2005).

¹⁶ Giok Bwee Hesselting-Tjan, "The Kong Koan in Crisis: A Case Study of the Malay minutes of 1918–1921", in *Archives of the Kong Koan of Batavia*, edited by L. Blussé and Chen Menghong (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 106–24.



Chinese minutes of the Chinese Council's board meetings

It must be noted that the minutes of the nineteenth century are the most extensive and detailed, and the content of the twentieth-century minutes is a bit disappointing. The minutes clearly reveal that the Chinese Council was losing authority in juridical and civil matters. Whereas the nineteenth-century minutes contain detailed discussions about business and inheritance conflicts over which the Chinese officers had to decide, these are absent from the twentieth-century minutes. The Chinese officers were only consulted when criminal or civil cases involving Chinese were tried at the *Landraad* or *Raad van Justitie*, but they were not empowered to decide over these cases. The officers had a role in matrimonial matters until the Dutch Civil Registry was applied to the Chinese in 1919. The minutes show that by this time the Chinese officers were merely authorised to manage the Council's burial sites, collect a few taxes, and handle smaller affairs such as the neighbourhood

watch, maintaining hygiene in the wards, enforcing vaccination rounds, organising festivities, and so on. But even though the nineteenth-century minutes are richer in content and far more exciting, there is still enough interesting material to analyse the institution of Chinese officers and to depict Chinese society in the early decades of the twentieth century. This archival material will complete the reconstruction of life in the Chinese community of Batavia and portray the nature of the Chinese officer system. Having access to the archive of the Semarang council, Liem Thian Joe was also able to give a detailed account of Chinese life in Semarang. It is unfortunate that he did not discuss the Chinese officers in more detail.

The sources from the Kong Koan Archive are supplemented by Dutch archival and newspaper sources, in particular the Sino-Malay press, in the Nationaal Archief in The Hague, and the Arsip Nasional and Perpustakaan Nasional in Jakarta, together with printed materials at the KITLV in Leiden. Using these and the aforementioned primary sources, this study will be the first complete work to explain the challenges that the Chinese Council of Batavia faced in the early twentieth century from a Dutch and Chinese point of view.

Organisation of this study

This study is divided into seven chapters to offer full scope for the analysis of developments in the Chinese community of Batavia, developments that had far-reaching implications for the elite status of the Chinese Council and its officers. In the first chapter, a historical overview of Chinese migration to the Nanyang, the Chinese in Batavia and the start of the officer system will be given for the purpose of providing a contextual framework. A brief account of Batavia and its surroundings will serve the same purpose. Chapter 2 serves as a detailed introduction to the inner workings of the Chinese Council. Chapter 3 deals with the intensification of Dutch colonial rule in the Netherlands Indies and its effect on the Chinese community and the Chinese Council. Chapter 4 looks back on Chinese nationalism and analyses how new ideas about community leadership began

to threaten the position of the Chinese Council and its officers in the Chinese community. Comparable sentiments with regard to community leadership also emerged among the Arabs and Indonesians, and this chapter also considers the dissatisfaction that arose in other ethnic communities with regard to traditional leadership structures. Chapter 5 analyses the response of the colonial government to the social changes within the Chinese community in particular and colonial society in general. The chapter shows that the colonial government officials were quite disconcerted in dealing with the problems in the Chinese administration. Eventually the assistance of an outsider (the Dutch envoy in Peking, W. J. Oudendijk) had to be called in. The lively debates on reforming Chinese administration give a clear picture of how ignorant most Dutch officials were with regard to the affairs of their Chinese subjects. Chapter 6 evaluates the surprising Chinese response to the plans of the colonial government to abolish the institution of Chinese officers. Finally, chapter seven deals with the final years of the Chinese Council of Batavia and shows how the Chinese officers resumed their tasks after a period of great confusion and uncertainty.

Spelling

To remain in the sphere of the period under study, the names of geographical locations in the Netherlands Indies and the rest of Asia are written according to the spelling and names current at the time. Thus Batavia is used for Jakarta, Soerabaja for Surabaya, and Peking for Beijing. The same goes for the names of Indonesian people and organisations like Soekarno and Boedi Oetomo. In the late 1940s, a slight change occurred in the spelling of Bahasa Indonesia. Therefore in the last chapter, which deals with the final years of the Chinese Council, Tanjung is written not Tandjoeng but Tandjung, and Goenoeng Sahari is written Gunung Sahari.

Since the majority of the Chinese immigrants of Batavia originated from Fujian province in South China, their names are written in the Hokkien spelling. If we look at the Malay minutes of the Chinese Council's board meetings, we encounter the same Hokkien spelling for people's names. So

instead of Xu Jin'an, the Hokkien spelling of Khouw Kim An is used. The same goes for Chinese organisations that were founded in the early twentieth century: Tiong Hoa Hwee Koan instead of Zhong Hua Hui Guan, and Siang Hwee instead of Shang Hui. With regard to Chinese individuals other than emigrants from southern Chinese provinces, the most common spellings are used to avoid misunderstandings. Therefore in this study the names of Emperor Yongle, Grand Admiral Zheng He, Kang Youwei, Liang Qichao, and so on, are spelled according to *pinyin*, the system of transliterating Chinese characters into the Roman alphabet that was officially adopted by the People's Republic of China in 1979. But as Sun Zhongshan is more commonly known as Sun Yat-sen, the latter spelling is used.

Khouw Kim An: the last *Majoer der Chineezen*

It is now appropriate to return to the wooden panel with which I opened this introduction, and introduce the man behind it.¹⁷ As the last Chinese major, Khouw Kim An was a prominent figure in the Chinese community and held in high regard in Dutch government circles. The period under study covers his entire term of office and this research will show how he manifested himself as a community leader and how he confronted the problems that came to envelop the Chinese Council.

Khouw Kim An came from a prominent Chinese family in Batavia with roots in Zhangzhou, a region in southern Fujian province. In the late eighteenth century, there were four Khouw brothers in Zhangzhou. The oldest brother stayed, but the other three ventured across the South China Sea and ended up in the Indonesian archipelago. The Khouws were not without means, but like other families in the region they smelled the opportunity to become wealthy. One of the brothers, Khouw Tjoen, first headed to Tegal, but later went to Batavia where he began trading in a small way. His son, Khouw Tian Sek started as a moneylender and pawnbroker. From the usurious interest rates he

¹⁷ My utmost gratitude goes to Mrs. L. N. Goei-Khouw, granddaughter of the late Khouw Kim An, for sharing the family history of the Khouws. This piece on Khouw Kim An is mostly based on interviews I had with her.



Portrait of Major Khouw Kim An

charged, he began to build up the family fortune. He started to buy land, first in the business quarter of the city (*Kota*), but later also in the hinterland of Batavia (Ommelanden). Khouw Tian Sek rapidly evolved from a comparatively well-to-do man into an exceedingly successful and wealthy entrepreneur. He possessed rice fields, indigo, and sugar plantations in Tangerang and Bekasi, cultivated peanuts, and produced coconut oil. Upon his death, his property was divided among his sons who carried on the family businesses. In a later stage, the Khouw family even owned its own bank: the Bataviaasche Bank.¹⁸

Towards the end of the nineteenth century, the three sons of Khouw Tian Sek lived in three mansions on Molenvliet (now Jalan Gajah Mada).¹⁹ They were Khouw Tjeng Tjoan, Khouw Tjeng Khe, and Khouw Tjeng Po. The eldest, Khouw Tjeng Tjoan, lived in the middle house with his wife, ten concubines, and offspring.²⁰ Khouw Kim An, born on 5 June 1875, was the only son of the ninth concubine, a peranakan Chinese woman. After the death of Khouw Tjeng Tjoan, the house was inherited by his oldest son. On 18 November 1893 Khouw Kim An married the only daughter of the influential Phoa Keng Hek (president and founder of the Tiong Hoa Hwee Koan) at eighteen years of age. He lived with his family at Prapatan in Weltevreden. Later on Khouw Kim An moved with his family to the big mansion on Molenvliet. It is not known where the eldest brother went after Khouw Kim An and his family took up residence in the big mansion. Khouw Kim An's wife, Phoa Tji Nio, gave birth to four sons and two daughters.

Khouw Kim An advanced rapidly as a member of the Chinese Council: in 1905 he was appointed Chinese lieutenant, in 1908 he was promoted to captain, and two years later in 1910, he

¹⁸ See A. Wright and O. T. Breakspear, *Twentieth Century Impressions of Netherlands India: Its History, People, Commerce, Industries and Resources* (London: Lloyd's Greater Britain Publishing Company, 1909), 481, and S. Abeyasekere, *Jakarta: A History* (Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1989), 62.

¹⁹ It is not known whether the houses were built by Khouw Tian Sek or by his three sons.

²⁰ Khouw Tjeng Tjoan had twenty-four children, two of which died at a young age. These children were all brought forth by his concubines. His official wife did not give birth to any children.

was raised to the rank of major to become head of the Chinese community of Batavia. He was an intelligent and well-read man, who, educated at a Hokkien school, spoke Hokkien fluently. He was also proficient in Mandarin Chinese and Hakka. Eager to learn, he hired private tutors to educate him in a number of foreign languages including English, French, and German. He was also well versed in Malay and Dutch. As a father and grandfather, he saw to it that his children and grandchildren were raised in a Chinese way. Although he often found himself in Dutch circles thanks to his *majoorschap*, he attached great value to Chinese customs and traditions. Yet, he understood that a successful life in colonial society depended on good education, which is why all his children and grandchildren were sent to Western schools to learn Dutch.

The Khouws lived as an aristocratic family in the grand mansion on Molenvliet. They associated with families of European and indigenous high society, as well as other Chinese officers and their families. The stately mansion, built in the nineteenth century, had a typical Chinese architectural style with all the characteristics of a house owned by a rich and distinguished Chinese family during the colonial era. Because Khouw Kim An was the *majoor der Chineezen*, the mansion was widely known as the “house of the *majoor*”.²¹ Behind the mansion was the *Petak Majoor*, a small living quarter of fifty houses which the major had built for his employees. The grand feasts with luxurious dining in the mansion during Chinese New Year were memorable events. As *majoor der Chineezen*, Khouw Kim An hosted three separate parties for the Chinese turn of the year. At the first party he welcomed his esteemed guests of the indigenous aristocracy; on the second day the European high society attended the banquet in his house, which was usually followed by a ball; and on the third day celebrations were prepared for the distinguished members of the Chinese community. He was a well-respected man among the Dutch, indigenous, and Chinese people in Batavia, and by Royal Decree of 26 August 1920, no. 69, *Majoor-titulair* Khouw Kim An received

²¹ N. W. Priyomarsono, *Rumah Mayor China di Jakarta* (Jakarta: Subur Jaringan Cetak Terpadu, 2008), 16.

the ‘*Officier der Orde van Oranje Nassau*’.²² In 1927, Queen Wilhelmina received Khouw in audience when he visited the Netherlands. At his twenty-five-year jubilee as a Chinese officer on 10 February 1930, Khouw Kim An was awarded the *Groote Gouden Ster voor Trouw en Verdienste* (Great golden star for loyalty and merit).

As the Dutch-appointed head of the Chinese community in twentieth-century Batavia, Khouw Kim An held a delicate position, which may be why the Japanese arrested him in 1942. When the truck with (most probably) Japanese soldiers stopped in front of his house, Khouw, still wearing his pyjamas, was buying refreshments for his grandchildren from a street vendor. In the assumption that the men on the truck only wanted to inform him of current events, he gave one of his grandchildren the food he bought and told him to take it inside. He then went to the backyard where his wife and grandchildren were playing and told them he would be back in a few minutes. But his family never saw him again. Khouw Kim An was detained in a Japanese internment camp in Tjimahi, where he died on 13 February 1945. He was buried in the Khouw family cemetery at Jati Petamburan (central Jakarta). The family never found out the reason of his internment. One of Khouw Kim An’s sons tried to get into the camp, but his numerous attempts were fruitless. After the war, the other former detainees told the family that Khouw Kim An never talked about his arrest to anyone.

The mansion might also have been a reason for his arrest. After Khouw was picked up, the Japanese soldiers ordered the family to clear the house and move out because the Japanese army wanted to make use of its vast space. In the end the Japanese army never used it, and after the Japanese occupation the mansion was handed back to the family. However, none of the family members wished to return to the house and it was then leased to Sin Ming Hui (New Light Association), a *peranakan* Chinese organisation that contributed to the social well-being of the

²² “Officer in the Order of Orange-Nassau”.

Chinese community.²³ The other two houses, located left and right of the mansion were sold: the house on the left came to function as a Chinese temple (*klenteng*) and the house on the right was sold to the Chinese embassy.²⁴ During the riots in the late 1960s, these two houses were destroyed, but the mansion in the middle was left undisturbed. Siti Hartinah (also known as Ibu Tien), wife of President Suharto, took an interest in the mansion for her theme park, Taman Mini Indonesia Indah. But she refused to recompense the family and the Khouws did not want to simply donate the house to her. President Suharto confiscated the properties of the Khouws in Menteng:²⁵ houses which Khouw Kim An left to his children.²⁶ The Suharto family took residence in a street called the Villalaan (now Jalan Cendana). Only the mansion on Gajah Mada Street was not taken. Twenty years later, the Suharto family recompensed the Khouw family for taking the houses in Menteng, but for far less than their actual value.

In the 1990s, the Suharto family made another attempt to acquire the house, this time making a bid on the building, but in 1993 the Khouws sold it to a Chinese conglomerate and the Sin Ming Hui (now named Candra Naya) moved to Jembatan Besi.²⁷ The left and right wings of the house were demolished to make way for the development of a hotel, which was to be built over the

²³ Sin Ming Hui was founded on 26 January 1946 and rendered the foundation of a polyclinic and the organisation of sport and hobby clubs. It also facilitated education for the Chinese by establishing institutions ranging from an elementary and high school to the Tarumanagara University. The organisation changed its name to Perhimpunan Sosial Tjandra Naja in 1962 and later adjusted its spelling to Candra Naya. See Priyomarsono, *Rumah Mayor China di Jakarta*, 20.

²⁴ Priyomarsono, *Rumah Mayor China di Jakarta*, 14.

²⁵ Menteng was an upperclass residential area built by the Dutch. It was occupied by Dutch officials and by other (not necessarily Dutch) members of the upperclass.

²⁶ The Khouw family lost a lot of landed properties after Indonesia's independence. The long lease of seventy-five years had expired and all the land became property of the Indonesian state. The long lease had to do with the Agrarian Law of 1870 which prohibited non-natives from buying new land, but permitted long-lease tenure for seventy-five years.

²⁷ Priyomarsono, *Rumah Mayor China di Jakarta*, 21.

middle part of the mansion, but the project failed during the Asian financial crisis in the 1990s.²⁸ Nowadays, the house is part of a new project of PT Wismatama Propertindo, a subsidiary of the Hong Kong-based property company Ie Siu Chung. The project involves the building of “Star City”, a complex of twenty-four–floor apartment towers and a twenty-one–floor hotel. It is expected to become a residential area for Jakarta’s high society and celebrities. As for the remains of Khouw Kim An’s once stately mansion, there are plans to turn it into a restaurant, supposedly one with international allure.

²⁸ *Perhimpunan Sosial Candra Naya d/h Sin Ming Hui 1946–2006: Dahulu, Sekarang & Yang Akan Datang* (Jakarta: Perhimpunan Sosial Candra Naya (PSCN) d/h Sin Ming Hui, 2007), 73.



Remaining part of the grand mansion on Molenvliet of Khouw Kim An



Project Star City

CHAPTER 1

BATAVIA AND CHINESE SETTLEMENT

Apart from serving as the headquarters of the Dutch East India Company, Batavia also came to function as an important trade emporium in Southeast Asia and an urban centre to an agrarian hinterland.²⁹ The industrious Chinese played an important role in the construction of the town and its further expansion. This chapter gives a brief overview of the Chinese settlement in Batavia and its surroundings in order to provide a historical and contextual background for the rest of the chapters. Close attention is also given to the early days and development of the Chinese officer system and its forerunners throughout Southeast Asia.

1.1 Modern Chinese emigration to the Nanyang and early structures of ethnic community leadership

The seven vast maritime expeditions led by Zheng He in the early fifteenth century can be seen as precursors of modern Chinese emigration to the Nanyang. Between 1405 and 1433, Zheng He's seagoing junks, carrying thousands of soldiers, sailors and courtiers set sail from China to the Southeast Asian waters, then cruised westward across the Indian Ocean as far as the Persian Gulf. The epic voyages were commissioned by Ming Emperor Yongle who wished to incorporate the states of South and Southeast Asia into China's tribute system. But more important to China's modern emigration history was the knowledge of trade routes and potential markets brought back

²⁹ Blussé, *Strange Company*, 19.

by the sailors.³⁰ The great Ming expeditions sparked the interest of merchants in the coastal provinces of South China who smelled new trading opportunities with the outer world. Powerful merchant families went abroad with large ships and bartered Chinese luxury goods such as silk, porcelain, and tea against silver, the currency for long-distance trade and payment of taxes.³¹

The Ming imperial court was not pleased with the foreign trade of its subjects, fearing that it would intervene with the tribute relations. Moreover, allowing free contact with foreigners could lead to conspiracy to overthrow the dynasty. Therefore the Ming emperors issued bans on private maritime trading, although with varying effectiveness. Yet, provincial officials and the local elite who understood that prosperity of the coastal provinces depended on the overseas trade and who also had vested interests in maritime commerce implored the imperial court to revoke the trade bans, which the court reluctantly agreed to do in 1567. When the Manchus conquered China and established the Qing dynasty, maritime trade bans were again imposed. As the Manchus were still struggling to control Taiwan and the southeastern coast during the early decades of their rule, they feared that free contact between Ming loyalists outside mainland China and dissident subjects could lead to plots against the new dynasty.³² The bans on private trade with Southeast Asia and emigration also had to do with the traditional Chinese prohibition against the desertion of one's family and ancestral graves.³³ As an extra incentive to stay in mainland China, the court imparted an ideology that imputed moral and social superiority to agriculture over overseas trade. But this attitude of anti-commercialism and the preference for farming had everything to do with fiscal interests because the court derived most of its revenue from taxes it imposed on people in its

³⁰ It must be noted that Zheng He followed well-established trading routes on his expeditions. However, the size of his fleet and the impact of the expeditions were unprecedented.

³¹ Blussé, *Strange Company*, 99; J. K. Fairbank and E. O. Reischauer, *China: Tradition and Transformation* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1989), 197–99; P. A. Kuhn, *Chinese Among Others: Emigration in Modern Times* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 2008), 8–10.

³² Kuhn, *Chinese Among Others*, 8–9.

³³ R. L. Irick, *Ch'ing Policy toward the Coolie Trade 1847–1878* (Taipei: Chinese Materials Center, 1982), 390.

interior realm. Farming required people to stay in one place, where they could be registered and taxed. Commerce was associated with human movement and appeared a less reliable tax base, especially when merchants set out to sea. But the economic reality of coastal China could not be ignored and after the Manchus had solidified their position they allowed foreign trade again in 1684.³⁴ Between 1717 and 1727 bans on private trade with the Nanyang were reimposed for security reasons, but these were met with opposition from merchants, officials, and literati from the southern Chinese provinces.³⁵

The commercialisation of the south China coastal provinces of Fujian and Guangdong was unstoppable. The biggest junks carried 200 to 300 sailors and dozens, sometimes hundreds, of merchants with a wide range of Chinese merchandise to trade, ranging from bulk to luxury goods. The import and export of handicrafts and locally cultivated cash crops provided thousands of people with work in the shipping business and other sectors of the south Chinese economy. The maritime trade with Southeast Asia was an important stimulus to the region's economy, so important that the income of China's coastal population became dependent upon trade with the Nanyang.³⁶ Soon merchant junks began to carry passengers to port cities in Southeast Asia as more and more members of poor families sought a livelihood far from their crowded homeland. The Southeast Asian trade routes provided opportunities for farmers who, driven by poverty, tried their luck overseas as craftsmen and labourers.³⁷ It was their intention to earn sufficient financial means during their temporary stay overseas in order to create a better livelihood after returning to China. For many, however, the odds of returning to their homeland were slim as inadequate resources forced them to stay. Many of these sojourners became unintended emigrants and married local women with whom they established second families. Upon arrival in the Southeast Asian ports the

³⁴ Kuhn, *Chinese Among Others*, 17–22.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 87–89.

³⁶ Blussé, *Strange Company*, 97–100

³⁷ Kuhn, *Chinese Among Others*, 12.

merchants and fortune-hunters were normally received by (mostly non-native) harbour masters appointed by local rulers to collect dues and maintain order. These *syahbandars* were part of a system of ethnic community leadership that was applied to many groups of foreign traders that settled in important trading centres in the Southeast Asian kingdoms.³⁸ The *syahbandar* functioned as a go-between and operated on the margins of two realms: that of the local rulers and that of the foreign traders. In the Malay Archipelago for instance, the *syahbandar* functioned as the representative of the king and dealt with foreign visitors, trade, transactions, and diplomatic relations. He was the first person the foreign traders encountered upon arrival and he was also often the head of customs.³⁹ He allotted them warehouses, dispatched their merchandise, and provided them with lodging.⁴⁰ If the *syahbandar* was of foreign origin or descent, he became the representative of his countrymen who had settled in town for mercantile activities. He was in charge of settling internal disputes and maintaining order, while he also became the channel of communication between them and the local authorities.⁴¹ In the Siamese capital of Ayutthaya several quarters for Chinese, Burmese, Japanese, Malays, Moors⁴², Portuguese and, sporadically other European merchants were established, and each under the authority of its own leader. These

³⁸ Smaller communities of foreign traders without a settlement area clustered around the group that appeared to be the most familiar or advantageous. Upon arrival in an area unknown to them, most of these foreign traders chose to attach themselves to a community with whom they felt the greatest affinity and from whom they could expect the most support and patronage. Usually this was a community from the same region, or at least with the same religion. See U. Bosma and R. Raben, *Being "Dutch" in the Indies: A History of Creolisation and Empire, 1500–1920* (Singapore: NUS Press, 2008), 6.

³⁹ Lohanda, *The Kapitan Cina of Batavia*, 54–55.

⁴⁰ A. Reid, "The Origins of Revenue Farming in Southeast Asia", in *The Rise and Fall of Revenue-Farming*, ed. J. G. Butcher and H. W. Dick (New York: St. Martins Press, 1993), 71.

⁴¹ Lohanda, *The Kapitan Cina of Batavia*, 66.

⁴² The Moors referred to the Muslim "Keling", i.e. the inhabitants of Kalinga, a state along the Coromandel Coast in India. Today Kalinga corresponds to northern Andhra Pradesh, most of Orissa, and a portion of Madhya Pradesh in central-eastern India.

headmen were commonly chosen by their own community, and after approval of the king they were given Thai noble titles. The court regarded them as Siamese functionaries and they were accountable to the Thai official in charge of foreign and commercial affairs. Similar arrangements in the organisation of community leadership could be found in other parts of Southeast Asia.⁴³

After the arrival of European colonists in Southeast Asia, the leadership system was continued. Impressed by the efficiency of such coordination, the Portuguese, Spanish, Dutch, British, and French adopted similar systems for controlling the Asian traders in their newly conquered territories. Among the many nationalities that served as middleman were the Chinese. In most Southeast Asian colonies collaborative structures existed between the Chinese and the Western colonists. Although the Europeans were able to subdue important trading centres, they were ill-equipped to keep their colonies profitable. Backed by armed force but lacking the skills or manpower to control a foreign region with native populations of whose language and customs they knew little, the colonists depended on the Chinese who were familiar with the region and trading system due to their long-term presence in the region. As tax farmers they helped the colonial masters extract revenue from the indigenous population. The Chinese thus fulfilled a variety of important intermediary roles and were indispensable collaborators in the Europeans' colonial empires.⁴⁴ To administer the growing Chinese communities in the colonies, the European colonists appointed headmen to govern their own communities. Although their titles differed from place to place throughout Southeast Asia, the most widely used term was "captain", from the Portuguese practice of naming the Asian headman in Malacca *capitão* after they subdued the Muslim sultanate in 1511.⁴⁵ Implementation of the captain system depended on the composition of the Chinese community. In Batavia, Semarang, Soerabaja, and Manila for example, the Chinese community was

⁴³ G. W. Skinner, "Overseas Chinese Leadership: Paradigm for a Paradox", in *Leadership and Authority: A Symposium*, edited by G. Wijeyewardene and R. F. Khan (Singapore: University of Malaya Press, 1968), 191.

⁴⁴ Kuhn, *Chinese Among Others*, 57–62.

⁴⁵ Skinner, "Overseas Chinese Leadership", 192.

quite homogeneous because it could trace its origins back to Fujian province, and usually one leader was appointed to administer the entire Chinese community. The Chinese populations in Malaya, Singapore, and Phnom Penh, on the other hand, were heterogeneous, as various dialect groups from China had settled in these regions, and different headmen were appointed for each ethnic subgroup within the Chinese community.⁴⁶ Thus, the Dutch practice of appointing headmen to govern the Chinese community was hardly unique, but the system in the Dutch East Indies (especially Batavia) stands out for its longevity and the importance the Dutch and Chinese attached to it.

1.2 The Chinese in Batavia

On the orders of Governor-General Jan Pieterszoon Coen (1619–23, 1627–29), the town of Jayakarta was razed in May 1619 so that the Dutch East India Company could establish its long-desired headquarters. Although this mission was completed, the Dutch were by no means secure of their possession, as they had to fight off two large-scale offensives by the Sultanate of Mataram (1628–29) and they were threatened continuously by the Banten Sultanate. The Dutch decided to build a walled city in the shadow of the castle's ramparts to ward off further attacks. From the walled town, the Company activities were run. Soon it was realised by the governor-general that, to transform the fortification into the heart of the intra-Asian trading network, the town needed more manpower to support the Company servants. Following the overthrow of Jayakarta, the native Javanese inhabitants fled the town or were chased away by the Dutch, who feared an insurrection, leaving the town quite isolated. Coen first proposed the idea of turning Batavia into a European colony, but soon had to let go of his dream because the *Heeren XVII* (Gentlemen Seventeen) would not allow private trade by European free citizens. With little incentive to make the long and arduous

⁴⁶ Skinner, "Overseas Chinese Leadership", 192; Yen Ching-hwang, *A Social History of the Chinese in Singapore and Malaya 1800–1911* (Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1986), 124–25; C. F. Yong, *Chinese Leadership and Power in Colonial Singapore* (Singapore: Times Academic Press, 1992), 292; E. Wickberg, *The Chinese in Philippine Life 1850–1898* (Quezon City: Ateneo De Manila University Press, 2000), 36–37.

trip to the East, few Europeans were willing to plunge into an oriental adventure. The town was then populated with people from all over Asia: free traders, soldiers and slaves were brought in from India, Japan, the Philippines and from within Nusantara.⁴⁷ But the most attractive to the governor-general were the Chinese.

When the Dutch besieged Jayakarta, they encountered a sizeable Chinese presence of approximately 400 to 500 people. Most Chinese settlements were concentrated on Java's north coast from which the Chinese mainly served as intermediaries in the intra-Asian wholesale trade of Indies and Chinese goods. Exports from the Indies included cloves, nutmeg, mace, pepper, sandalwood, gold, gems, and tin. The main commodities brought from China were silk, porcelain, lacquer ware, copper ware, paper, sugar, and medicinal goods.⁴⁸ Their skills did not go unnoticed by Coen. Realising he needed the Chinese to build the economy and infrastructure of Batavia, Coen induced large numbers of Chinese merchants, farmers and craftsmen to make a living in the newly conquered city. When not enough people accepted his "kind invitations", he simply ordered the Company's officers to kidnap Chinese men, women and children aboard the junks sailing in the Nanyang or on the China coast and bring them to Batavia:

Meanwhile in the Indies they thought that there were not nearly enough Chinese, and when they attempted to intercept the trade of the Spanish and Portuguese settlements in 1620 and the years after, for which among others Chinese junks had to be seized that were headed to or came from those settlements, the commanding officers were repeatedly ordered to try capture as many Chinese prisoners as possible and to ship them to the Indies.

⁴⁷ B. Kanumoyoso, "Beyond the City Wall: Society and Economic Development in the Ommelanden of Batavia, 1684–1740" (PhD diss., Leiden University, 2011): 47–49. Nusantara is the Indonesian term for the Indonesian archipelago.

⁴⁸ J. C. van Leur, *Eenige Beschouwingen Betreffende den ouden Aziatischen Handel* (Middelburg: Den Boer, 1934), 160.

That order was explicitly repeated when in 1622 an expedition headed to China to willy-nilly open the trade with that country. If it were to come to hostilities, as was written in the instruction of the admiral, he had to ‘take in as many people, men, women and children as possible to populate Batavia, Amboyna, and Banda.’⁴⁹

To avoid the danger of undermining the Company’s trade monopoly, Europeans were in theory not allowed to trade privately, but because the goods brought by the Chinese were useful to the local population and to the Company’s trade with Europe, the Chinese were permitted and even encouraged to trade.⁵⁰ To stimulate the Chinese money-making activities, the Company exempted the Chinese from *diensten voor het Kasteel* (service as labourers in building the settlement of Batavia) and the *schutterij* (civic guard duty).⁵¹ To compensate for this, each Chinese inhabitant had to pay a monthly *hoofdgeld* (poll tax) of 1.5 *reals*.⁵² With the arrival of the Company, the focus of Chinese commercial activity shifted from the intra-Asian trade to the domestic market. This change was prompted by Coen, who opined that the Company should limit its trade to that of a mighty wholesaler, whilst retail trade was to be left to the Chinese. As a result, the Chinese increasingly became a link between East and West, between European and indigenous society, between the indigenous cultivator and the foreign export apparatus, and between foreign enterprise and the indigenous consumer.⁵³ Despite his aggressive efforts to populate Batavia, the Chinese enjoyed a

⁴⁹ W. P. Groeneveldt, “De Chineezzen-questie in Nederlandsch-Indië”, *Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant*, 13 March 1879. Groeneveldt, who started his official career as a Chinese interpreter, was considered a specialist on Chinese affairs in the Indies.

⁵⁰ Abeyasekere, *Jakarta*, 23–24.

⁵¹ *Nederlandsch-Indisch Plakaatboek*, vol. 1, 1602–42 (Batavia: Landsdrukkerij, 1885–1900): pp. 76–77, 547.

⁵² *Plakaatboek*, vol. 1, 1602–42: pp. 76–77.

⁵³ W. J. Cator, *The Economic Position of the Chinese in the Netherlands Indies* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1936), 7; Phoa Liong Gie, “De Economische Positie der Chineezzen in Nederlandsch-Indië”, *Koloniale Studiën* 5–6 (1936): 101–2.

fair, if not favoured treatment under Coen, who did not tolerate any arbitrariness by the Company's officials towards them. The Chinese served the Company well: as contractors they recruited wage labourers and craftsmen and supplied bricks and timber for buildings and the city wall, and as tax farmers they collected revenues from the native population. They also catered to the needs of Batavia's inhabitants: they kept taverns for sailors and soldiers, they were industrious in many crafts, being good smiths and carpenters, and they were also indispensable in agriculture. Not only did they ensure that everything was available all year round, they also were engaged in market gardening and horticulture.⁵⁴

After Coen's death, no major changes occurred in the favoured treatment of the Chinese, leading the Dutch middle-class to protest to the States-General in Holland about the High Government's protection of Chinese mercantile activities. In 1647 and 1652, 270 free burghers submitted complaints against the monopolistic practice of the Company, which increasingly restricted their overseas trade, while allowing Chinese junks to trade freely within the archipelago and overseas as far as China and Japan. The Dutch traders found this situation utterly unfair, but their complaints were fruitless. The Chinese junks traded with ports that were otherwise inaccessible to the Company, but the free burghers' traded in the same places as the VOC, thereby putting them in direct competition with the Company.⁵⁵ Hence, the Chinese remained dominant in and around Batavia.

In order to transform the town into a self-sufficient agricultural colony, it was essential to pacify the hinterland and open it up for cultivation. Gardens had to be laid out, trees planted, and factories built to supply the town with fruits, vegetables, wood, and so on. The gardens abandoned when the city was razed needed care before they reverted to wilderness.⁵⁶ But it was not an easy

⁵⁴ Abeyasekere, *Jakarta*, 24.

⁵⁵ Blussé, *Strange Company*, 83.

⁵⁶ W. de Veer, *Particuliere Landerijen en de Openbare Veiligheid in de Residentie Batavia* (Batavia: Javasche Boekhandel & Drukkerij, 1904), 14.

task to find volunteers. Land was distributed as fiefs to Europeans (first to men who had fulfilled their duty with the Company)⁵⁷, Chinese, *Mardijkers*,⁵⁸ and the headmen of the indigenous population groups. These plots of land could ultimately be transferred into landownership.⁵⁹ But Batavia was still militarily challenged by Banten and natives of Jayakarta who roamed the hinterland and threatened the walled town. The marshy and thickly forested region and tropical climate discouraged Dutch farmers from cultivating the area,⁶⁰ and in general the Dutch rarely set foot out of the walled town.⁶¹ After an armistice was concluded with Banten and a line of defence works was constructed, more reconnaissance trips were undertaken to the hinterland and land was granted to anyone who was willing to cultivate it.⁶² But there was more to it than putting hands to the plough. Landowners were also responsible for maintaining peace and order, they were expected to build and maintain the infrastructure necessary to transport their agricultural products to markets,⁶³ and they were responsible for the welfare of the indigenous population living on their lands.⁶⁴ Nevertheless, the distribution of land was quite successful; order and stability returned and more

⁵⁷ L. van der Hoek, "De Particuliere Landerijen in de Residentie Batavia", *Koloniaal Tijdschrift* 11 (1922): 37.

⁵⁸ The *Mardijkers* were slaves and descendants of manumitted slaves from the Indian subcontinent who had been brought to the Indonesian archipelago by the Dutch. Most of them came from the Coromandel Coast and Bengal, regions dominated by the Portuguese in the sixteenth century. Because of their Indian and Portuguese origins, they spoke a Portuguese Creole patois. After being freed in the Indonesian archipelago they adopted Portuguese or Dutch names and started to dress in a European fashion, which was permitted because of their conversion to Christianity.

⁵⁹ "Geschiedkundig Onderzoek naar den Oorsprong en den Aard van het Partikulier Landbezit op Java", *Tijdschrift voor Nederlandsch-Indië* 1:11 (1849): 245.

⁶⁰ E. von Zboray, *De Particuliere Landerijen Bewesten de Tjimanoeek* (S.I.: s.n., 1948), 18.

⁶¹ De Veer, *Particuliere Landerijen en de Openbare Veiligheid*, 17.

⁶² From 1686 onwards, land could only be sold through taxation or public sale, although small plots of land were still granted unofficially to people from time to time. See *Encyclopaedie van Nederlandsch-Indië* ('s Gravenhage: Martinus Nijhof, 1919), vol. 3:345.

⁶³ Von Zboray, *De Particuliere Landerijen*, 19.

⁶⁴ D. Mulder, *De Terugbrenging der Particuliere Landerijen tot het Staatsdomein: Praeadvies van D. Mulder* (Weltevreden: Albrecht, 1917), 19–20.

agricultural adventurers arrived, taking the pressure off the increasingly crowded walled town.

Populating Batavia's environs also bolstered the Company's finances, as the people in the Ommelanden were required to pay taxes and deliver *contingenten* (a proportion of their crops) to the Dutch.⁶⁵ Yet with very few exceptions, Europeans remained uninterested in agricultural entrepreneurship. Most of the Dutch burghers were only interested in grabbing riches in the easiest possible way before returning home to the republic. Committing themselves for a while to stabilise Batavia was not in their interests.⁶⁶ They leased their lands to natives, *Mardijkers*, and the Chinese, and it was these last, in particular, who were responsible for developing the Ommelanden.

Just as they were encouraged to trade, the Chinese were encouraged to farm the hinterland by exemptions from paying the poll tax, guaranteed purchase of products by the Company, and fixed minimum prices.⁶⁷ In short order, the Chinese were zealously engaged in market gardening, growing fruits and turning land into paddy fields. But above all, they controlled the sugar industry. Many Chinese officers were engaged in sugar cultivation, but rich Chinese merchants from the sugar-producing province of Fujian also owned sugar plantations and ran sugar mills.⁶⁸ Soon sugar plantations were spreading across the Ommelanden. Of the 130 sugar mills owned by 84 entrepreneurs in 1710, no less than 79 were owned by the Chinese.⁶⁹ The success of the sugar industry and the opening up of new land resulted in a rush of Chinese labourers seeking work on the plantations and in the mills.⁷⁰ The influx of coolies coincided with the peace treaty concluded with Banten in 1683, the same year that Taiwan was finally brought under Qing control. This was followed by a relaxation of the maritime trade restrictions the Manchu regime had imposed during

⁶⁵ De Veer, *Particuliere Landerijen en de Openbare Veiligheid*, 21–22.

⁶⁶ J. G. Taylor, *The Social World of Batavia: European and Eurasian in Dutch Asia* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1983), 9.

⁶⁷ Blussé, *Strange Company*, 84.

⁶⁸ Kanumoyoso, "Beyond the City Wall", 148–49.

⁶⁹ Blussé, *Strange Company*, 90.

⁷⁰ Abeyasekere, *Jakarta*, 25.

its struggle to capture the island. The consolidation of power in South and Southwest China by the Manchus in the 1680s also induced many Ming loyalists to flee mainland China in order to escape persecution. These simultaneous developments resulted in a steady flow of Chinese immigrants into Batavia and its surroundings and the Chinese presence became dominant. In fact, as Leonard Blussé has observed, Batavia was basically a Chinese colonial town under Dutch protection: “Batavia castle with its warehouses functioned as the “keystone” in the system of Dutch trading posts all over Asia, while Batavia town operated as a “cornerstone” of the Chinese trade network in Southeast Asia. These two aspects coexisted harmoniously and peacefully for a considerable period.”⁷¹

Phoa Liong Gie described the VOC period as “the golden age of Chinese settlement in the Netherlands Indies”. The Siauw Giap agrees with him that the era of the Company, in particular the period before 1740, was the “heyday” of the Chinese community on Java.⁷² Likewise, Kwee Hui Kian regards the eighteenth century as the “Chinese century” thanks to the dominant economic exploits by the Chinese along Java’s northeast coast. And all along the Pasisir Chinese traders were essential to the Company’s trade network. From the late 1670s Chinese trade activities along Java’s northern coast expanded explosively at the Company’s instigation. After ousting other undesired European and Indian traders from the region, the Company authorities encouraged Chinese traders to fill the economic vacuum because the Company itself was still not capable of engaging in small-scale trade. European and Indian traders who managed to adapt to the local economy posed a serious threat to the Company’s domain of intra-Asian trade and its pursuit of a monopoly over the spice trade. The Chinese did no trespassing and had a wealth of practical knowledge. They helped the Company sell imported products on the local market and to purchase the goods needed to

⁷¹ Blussé, *Strange Company*, 74.

⁷² Phoa Liong Gie, “De Economische Positie”, 107; The Siauw Giap, “The Socioeconomic Role of the Chinese in Indonesia 1820–1940”, in *Economic Growth in Indonesia 1820–1940*, edited by A. Maddison and G. H. A. Prince, (Dordrecht: Foris, 1989), 1.

provision its personnel and supplement Batavia's supplies of cash crops. They also helped finding new taxation opportunities and assisted the Company in transporting its goods. The Company in turn gave the Chinese a free hand in trade and helped them eliminate commercial rivals. The Chinese were involved in practically every domain of the economy along the Pasisir: they leased lands from the regents for the cultivation of agricultural products, dominated the trade in rice, salt, and timber, engaged successfully in tax farming, and were feverishly active in shipping activities. Without doubt, these were the glory days of the Chinese.⁷³

Whereas Chinese immigration was highly encouraged in the seventeenth century, a different attitude was displayed by the High Government of Batavia when it witnessed the dramatic increase of Chinese immigrants flooding the Ommelanden in the early decades of the eighteenth century. The steady influx of Chinese immigrants was at the expense of law and order, which was aggravated when the sugar market collapsed after 1710 and numerous sugar mills had to be closed. Many Chinese labourers lost their jobs. An obscure Chinese society emerged in the Ommelanden with thugs and thieves roaming the region. The Company became alarmed by this and sought to curb the number of Chinese immigrants entering Batavia. In 1706, the number of Chinese immigrants arriving in big junks was limited to one hundred, and small junks were only allowed to transport eighty. Still many Chinese immigrants kept entering the region because lower-ranking Company officials did not enforce the rules set to protect the China trade and their own interests. In 1727 another attempt was made to reduce the number of Chinese immigrants, in particular the "useless subjects" among them. Every Chinese living in Batavia and the Ommelanden, including those who already had been living there for a longer period, had to apply to the Chinese officers for a residence permit (*permissie briefje*) costing two *rijksdaalders*. Only those who were useful citizens in the eyes of the government could obtain such a permit. Those who were denied a

⁷³ Kwee Hui Kian, *The Political Economy of Java's Northeast Coast, c. 1740–1800: Elite Synergy* (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 31–33, 162–68.

residence permit were chained and deported back to China. As this rule also turned out to be unsuccessful, the High Government issued an edict on 25 July 1740, ordering all jobless Chinese in the Ommelanden who had fallen into banditry and other illegal activities, to be chained and deported to Ceylon. Soon the rumour spread that, while en route to Ceylon these deportees would be thrown overboard. This led to a rebellion in the Ommelanden and shortly afterwards the Chinese rebels attacked Batavia. Fearing that the Chinese living in the city would side with their rebellious countrymen, Dutch officials and citizens killed more than 8000 Chinese citizens and burnt down their houses.⁷⁴

After this horrific incident, the relationship between the Chinese and Dutch was tainted by mutual distrust and the Dutch felt uncomfortable with the Chinese living close by. Therefore the High Government decided to confine the Chinese to special quarters outside the walled town. Before the massacre, the Chinese were permitted to live freely within the city walls. But Batavia's dependence on the Chinese became painfully clear when the surviving Chinese fled the town during the disturbances, leaving it without food and services. Commercial interests encouraged the Chinese to return to the city. Blussé has also shown that both parties perceived the massacre as a tragic accident at variance with the normal course of events. Although the incident represented a severe crisis in their collaboration, this breakdown was by no means of a lasting nature. Gradually Chinese immigration resumed, although it was not until the nineteenth century that it reached high levels again.⁷⁵

⁷⁴ See "De Oorzaken van den Opstand der Chineezzen in 1740", *De Chineesche Revue* 2:3 (July 1928): 24–34. For more information on the Chinese massacre of 1740 see R. Raben, "Uit de Suiker in het Geweer: De Chinese Oorlog in Batavia in 1740", in *Het Verre Gezicht: Politieke en Culturele Relaties tussen Nederland, Azië, Afrika en Amerika. Opstellen Aangeboden aan Prof. Dr. Leonard Blussé*, ed. J. T. Lindblad and A. Schrikker (Franeker: Van Wijnen, 2011), 106–23.

⁷⁵ Abeyasekere, *Jakarta*, 27; Blussé, *Strange Company*, 96.

After the VOC period more land was sold. During the term of Governor-General Herman Willem Daendels (1808–1811) and the British interregnum (1811–16) public land sales occurred on a large scale. The large number of private landholdings made Batavia unique among the cities of Java. By a resolution of 1 May 1855, the governor-general was no longer allowed to sell land for private ownership. The government was only permitted to sell small plots of land for city development and the construction of public infrastructure.⁷⁶ Of the 304 private estates in Batavia, Meester-Cornelis, Tangerang, and Buitenzorg a century later (in 1904), 101 were in the hands of the Europeans and 203 were owned by “Foreign Orientals” (*Vreemde Oosterlingen*)—Chinese, Arabs, and other Asians—the Chinese accounting for 169. Buitenzorg, south of Batavia was mostly occupied by the Dutch and other Europeans. Chinese landowners were in the majority in Meester-Cornelis, and Tangerang was almost entirely in the hands of the Chinese, who numbered 300.000 and owned more than 150.000 *bouws* (150.000 hectares) of land.⁷⁷ It was certainly no exaggeration to call Tangerang a Chinese city.⁷⁸

The Dutch continued to rely on the Chinese in the retail trade. As the Dutch monopolised the wholesale trade and the indigenous trading class had not yet emerged, the Chinese were the ones to fill the gap. As shopkeepers, holders of eateries, and owners of soap-, cigarette- and ice factories, arrack distilleries, sugar- and rice mills, tanneries, and other industries, the Chinese not only assisted the Dutch in the sale of export products for the world market, but also managed to work their way up to a stable middle-class. Thanks to their good business sense, diligence, frugality, and their aspiration to move forward, the Chinese succeeded in consolidating their economic power.⁷⁹

The authorities depended almost exclusively on the Chinese to run the revenue farms, because they

⁷⁶ Van der Hoek, “De Particuliere Landerijen in de Residentie Batavia”, 41–42; Von Zboray, *De Particuliere Landerijen*, 21–22.

⁷⁷ De Veer, *Particuliere Landerijen en de Openbare Veiligheid*, 44.

⁷⁸ M. van Till, *Batavia bij Nacht: Bloei en Ondergang van het Indonesisch roverswezen in Batavia en de Ommelanden, 1869–1942* (Amsterdam: Aksant, 2006), 35.

⁷⁹ J. L. Vleming, *Het Chineesche Zakenleven in Nederlandsch-Indië* (Weltevreden: Landsdrukkerij, 1925), 10–11.

were willing to invest considerable sums of money for lucrative tax-farming contracts. Given that state resources were still too poor to support a large bureaucracy that could introduce and carry out a new and efficient tax system, it seemed plausible to hire Chinese businessmen to collect the taxes. The Chinese had the numbers, the organisational network, and the capital, and in most cases they did not pose a military threat. Moreover, as Asians who did not belong to the dominant ethnic group, they were able to maintain closer relations with the indigenous people than the Dutch.⁸⁰ Thus, as in other European colonies in Southeast Asia, there was a business alliance between the Chinese settlers and the colonial rulers. The alliance was successful for two reasons because the Chinese did not seek an empire of their own, but were willing to become collaborators in the empires of others,⁸¹ and because the interests of the Chinese and the Dutch complemented each other. Both groups were engaged in the pursuit of optimal profits from overseas trade.⁸²

1.3 The institution of Chinese officers and the Chinese Council of Batavia

Under the rule of the Dutch East India Company, local administration in Batavia and the Ommelanden was based on a two-tier system. The highest authority lay in the hands of the High Government, which took all important decisions with regard to its subjects. Those decisions were usually determined by colonial interests. Typical Dutch urban institutions like the Bench of Aldermen, Board of Curators, and the Orphan Chamber were established to handle the important civil affairs of the people. In daily life, administration was entrusted to indigenous or Foreign Oriental headmen who governed their communities on basis of their own *adat* and traditions. This

⁸⁰ De Heer W. P. Groeneveldt in de *Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant* over “de Chineezenquaestie in Ned.-Indië”, *De Indische Gids*, 19:1 (1897): 521–24; Reid, “The Origins of Revenue Farming”, 72. The leasing of monopoly rights to collect a specific tax commenced in the VOC period. The leases were sold on public farm auctions, usually to the highest bidders for a number of years. For more on Chinese revenue farming, see Chen, *De Chinese Gemeenschap van Batavia*, chap. 3.

⁸¹ Kuhn, *Chinese Among Others*, 58.

⁸² Blussé, *Strange Company*, 95.

form of local administration was run at a lower level by leaders who headed a neighbourhood (*kampong*) in which their countrymen were grouped together. As long as there were no urgent administrative affairs that required direct government intervention, the *kampong* leaders had a free hand to administer the people according to their own laws. This system of ethnic community leadership, adopted by the Dutch, was quite common in Southeast Asian settlements.⁸³

On 11 October 1619, a few months after the conquest of the port town, Governor-General Coen appointed the wealthy merchant Souw Bing Kong, more familiar to the Dutch as Bencon, as the first headman of the Chinese community in Batavia. The resolution of his appointment stated that Souw Bing Kong was expected to settle all civil affairs among his countrymen and to maintain law and order in the Chinese community. Six years later, in 1625, he was awarded the title of *capitein* (captain).⁸⁴ Although this title indicated a military rank, the Chinese headman was not responsible for military affairs. As mentioned previously, members of the Chinese community were exempted from *diensten voor het Kasteel* and the *schutterij* and paid 1.5 real *hoofdgeld* per month to compensate for these exemptions. This poll tax was collected by the Chinese headman from October 1620 onwards.⁸⁵ In the Chinese chronicle of Batavia, the *Kai Ba Lidai Shiji*, it is mentioned that in 1633 the successor of Souw Bing Kong, Phoa Beng Gam (Bingam to the Dutch) asked Governor-General Hendrik Brouwer for permission to hoist a flag in front of his house every first day of each month of the Roman calendar to remind the Chinese people to fulfil their tax

⁸³ Kanumoyoso, "Beyond the City Wall", 61–71.

⁸⁴ B. Hoetink, "So Bing Kong: Het Eerste Hoofd der Chineezzen te Batavia (1619–1636)", *Overdruk uit de Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde van Nederlandsch-Indië* 73 (1917): 13–14.

⁸⁵ *Plakaatboek*, vol. 1, 1602–1642: pp. 76–77, 547.

obligation.⁸⁶ The exemption from corvée labour and military service was inspired by considerations to give the Chinese a free hand in trade, but it might also have been a precautionary measure to keep the Chinese unarmed.⁸⁷ In 1620 the *College van Schepenen* (Board of Aldermen) was set up to exercise justice over all people not employed by the Dutch East India Company—that is, the free citizens and foreigners living in Batavia. As head of the Chinese community, Souw Bing Kong was given a seat in this body.⁸⁸

Chinese captains were appointed by resolutions of the governor-general until 1666. When Captain Gan Dji Ko (Siqua) died in that year, Governor-General Joan Maetsuycker was reluctant to appoint another captain, and he did not appoint a Chinese member to the Bench of Aldermen either. According to J. Th. Vermeulen, Maetsuycker was one of the few governor-generals who was not well-disposed towards the Chinese and intended to end their more or less privileged position.⁸⁹ For twelve years the leadership activities over the Chinese community were carried out by Gan Dji Ko's surviving Balinese concubine. Because of growing resistance within the Chinese community against this female leadership, Governor-General Rijckloff van Goens appointed a new Chinese

⁸⁶ “Chronologische Geschiedenis van Batavia door een Chinees”, *Tijdschrift voor Nederlandsch-Indië*, vol. 3:2 (1840): 16. The accuracy of this Chinese chronicle is questioned by B. Hoetink, who has shown that details of this chronicle are not consistent with the data in the archives of the Dutch East Indies. Hoetink argues that Souw Bing Kong had served at least sixteen years as Chinese captain (from 11 October 1619 to 3 July 1636). Hence, Phoa Beng Gam could not have had succeeded him as a captain in 1633. Hoetink also claims that Phoa Beng Gam was the third person to take over the post of captain in 1645. The second person who filled this position was Lim Lacco. He served eight years (1636–45). See Hoetink “So Bing Kong”, 42–43.

⁸⁷ Blussé, *Strange Company*, 81.

⁸⁸ G. L. Balk, F. van Dijk and D. J. Kortlang, *The Archives of the Dutch East India Company (VOC) and the Local Institutions in Batavia (Jakarta)* (Jakarta: Arsip Nasional Republik Indonesia and Leiden: Brill, 2007), 67; *Plakaatboek*, vol. 1, 1602–1642: pp. 59–60.

⁸⁹ J. Th. Vermeulen, “Eenige Opmerkingen over de Rechtsbedeeling van de Compagnie in de 17^{de} en 18^{de} Eeuw voor de Chineesche Samenleving”, a lecture given at the China Institute in Batavia, on 11 October 1939, p. 11.

captain in 1678.⁹⁰ As the Chinese population had grown significantly over the years and the scope of their activities had increased accordingly, the captain needed assistance in managing the Chinese community. Thus in 1678 a lieutenant and a *vaandrig* (ensign) were appointed as well, and in 1685 Chinese neighbourhood chiefs (*wijkmeesters*) were tasked with assisting the staff of the captain, though they were *not* part of the captain's staff.⁹¹ With the appointment of the Chinese captain and lieutenant as community leaders, the term "Chinese officer" must have come up.⁹² From then on, more Chinese officers were appointed in Batavia and elsewhere on Java. In 1729, there were six lieutenants. After Captain Nie Hoe Kong was banished to Amboina for his alleged role in the Chinese rebellion, which was suppressed by the horrific Chinese massacre of 1740, the post of captain remained vacant for three years, and the six lieutenants were also removed. In 1743 Governor-General G. W. Baron van Imhoff decided to restore the institution of Chinese officers and appointed a new captain and two lieutenants.⁹³ During the whole period of VOC supremacy, twenty-two captains and seventy-three lieutenants were appointed to administer the Chinese community in Batavia.⁹⁴ Beside the collection of taxes, the administration of civil affairs, and keeping order in the Chinese community, the officers were given additional tasks to maintain the social well-being of the Chinese people, including service in the *College van Boedelmeesteren* (Board of Curators) and the Chinese Hospital. The High Government attached great importance to the administration of the estates of its Chinese subjects and it established a board of curators after it

⁹⁰ P. de Roo de la Faille, "De Chineesche Raad te Batavia en het door dit College Beheerde Fonds", *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde van Nederlandsch-Indië* 80 (1924): 308.

⁹¹ Lohanda, *The Kapitan Cina of Batavia*, 12–13. The Chinese chronicle of Batavia however mentions that as early as 1633, Captain Phoa Beng Gam was already granted the assistance of a lieutenant and a secretary, after he had submitted a request to Governor-General Hendrik Brouwer for more aid in managing the affairs of the Chinese community. See "Chronologische Geschiedenis van Batavia door een Chinees", *Tijdschrift voor Nederlandsch-Indië* 3:2 (1840): 15–16.

⁹² Chen, *De Chinese Gemeenschap van Batavia*, 7.

⁹³ B. Hoetink, "Chineesche Officieren te Batavia onder de Compagnie", *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde van Nederlandsch-Indië* 78 (1922): 3–4.

⁹⁴ Hoetink "Chineesche Officieren te Batavia onder de Compagnie", 8–9.

noticed an increase in insolvent Chinese estates and continuous problems between creditors and debtors. The fees for administering the inheritances of the Chinese was used to finance the founding of the Chinese Hospital and an orphanage. It was evident that the High Government wished to maintain stricter control over the estates of the Chinese, their healthcare, and social well-being. From 1717 onwards, the Chinese officers were authorised to register the marriages and divorces of Chinese citizens.⁹⁵

It is not known in what year exactly the Chinese Council was established. Some historians claim 1678 as the year of establishment, because it was in this year that the captain was officially assisted by a lieutenant and an ensign (*vaandrig*).⁹⁶ P. de Roo de la Faille gives 1678 as the beginning of the Chinese Council as well, but in the same article he also claims that the Chinese Council was officially established in 1742, when the Chinese officers were given permission to accommodate a *roemah bitjara* (meeting hall) on Tiang Bendera (Flag Street) in Kampong Malacca⁹⁷: “and from this moment on—the establishment of this Roemah Bitjara—Chinese local history dates the existence of the Chinese Council, the so-called Kongkowan.”⁹⁸ Myra Sidharta suggests that the Chinese Council became official in 1717, when the officers received the authority to sanction marriages and divorces.⁹⁹ Anyhow, with the appointment of lieutenants, neighbourhood

⁹⁵ Chen, *De Chinese Gemeenschap van Batavia*, 7.

⁹⁶ Liem Ting Tjay, “Het Instituut der Chineesche Officieren”, *De Chineesche Revue* 2:3 (July 1928): 67–68; Vermeulen, “Eenige Opmerkingen over de Rechtsbedeeling van de Compagnie”, 11.

⁹⁷ In 1866 the Roemah Bitjara was moved to the Tongkangan area. Blussé and Chen, *Archives of the Kong Koan of Batavia*, 3.

⁹⁸ Roo de la Faille, “De Chineesche Raad te Batavia”, 313.

⁹⁹ M. Sidharta, “On the Remnants of the ‘Gong Goan’ Archives in Jakarta: A Preliminary Study”, in *Collected Essays on Local History of the Asian-Pacific Region: Contribution of Overseas Chinese*, edited by Lin Tien-Wai (Hong Kong: University of Hong Kong, Centre of Asian Studies, 1991), 515.

chiefs and two secretaries,¹⁰⁰ and the increasing variety in responsibilities over the Chinese people, Chinese administration became more and more regulated. However after the Chinese massacre of October 1740, the VOC administration realised it had to reorganise the Chinese affairs and measures were taken to institutionalise the Chinese officer system and to strengthen its ties to the colonial administration.

Chinese officers lacked authority beyond the city wall as landowners in the Ommelanden were supposed to arrange their own safety and security. They appointed village heads and *mandoers* (overseers), who henceforth received an official appointment from the colonial government. In this respect, the organisation of police matters in the Ommelanden differed from that in the rest of Java, where local police affairs were woven into the colonial administrative framework.¹⁰¹ To enforce more administrative control in the region, colonial institutions such as the *College van Heemraden* (district council) and the *landdrost* (sheriff) were introduced, but their actual control over the region was limited in terms of budget and potential since they were dealing with a quickly expanding territory and population. Therefore the region's administration also greatly relied on the *kampong* heads and the neighbourhood chiefs.¹⁰² Prior to 1740 the Chinese people were not organised in a *kampong* in the Ommelanden. Their dwellings could be found anywhere within and beyond the city wall. After the horrific events of 1740, the Chinese were no longer permitted to live within the city walls and were obliged to settle in an area outside the city. Their confinement to a specific quarter was more rigidly enforced in 1816 and 1835 when passes and zoning systems were implemented.

The fact that the Chinese revolt in the Ommelanden evolved into the Chinese massacre in Batavia can also be attributed to the waning authority of the Chinese officers vis-à-vis their own

¹⁰⁰ The first secretary was appointed in 1747, see Vermeulen, "Eenige Opmerkingen over de Rechtsbedeeling van de Compagnie", 11. The second secretary was appointed in 1766, see Blussé and Chen, *Archives of the Kong Koan of Batavia*, 3.

¹⁰¹ Van Till, *Batavia bij Nacht*, 37–38.

¹⁰² Kanumoyoso, "Beyond the City Wall", 65–71.

people as well as the Company. Blussé has shown that many Chinese of the countryside fell victim to usurers inside the city, the place where the official Chinese community heads supposedly were in control. The Chinese captain was also increasingly bypassed by Company officials when problems arose. As the urban Chinese leaders and the Company showed themselves unable to enforce strict supervision in the region a power vacuum was left in the Ommelanden.¹⁰³

Thus, in order to keep a close eye on the Chinese and administer them more efficiently, the Chinese Council of Batavia had to become an instrument of stricter control over the Chinese community. The High Government in Batavia granted the Chinese Council more administrative power over the Chinese community and starting in 1743—when Governor-General Van Imhoff restored Chinese administration—the Council functioned as a semi-autonomous organisation with a wide range of duties, including the registration of marriages and divorces; tax collection; the management of temples and burial grounds and organisation of religious ceremonies; the registration of the dead; the organisation and supervision of Chinese education; mediation in civil disputes in the Chinese community; maintaining public order; issuing travel passes; providing advice to the colonial government and its institutions; and the provision of translation services to the colonial authorities. The Chinese Council also registered births, but the only (incomplete) birth records I found in the Council's archive date from the Japanese occupation and after. Liem Thian Joe also mentions the existence of a *buku daftar kelahiran* (birth record book) in Semarang.¹⁰⁴ After the demise of the VOC in 1799 the system of Chinese community leadership was continued. The position of *majoor der Chineezen*, who functioned as the leader of the Chinese community and became the chairman of the Chinese Council was created in 1837. In the history of the Chinese

¹⁰³ Blussé, *Strange Company*, 89–90.

¹⁰⁴ Liem, *Riwayat Semarang*, 316.

Council of Batavia there were five majors: Tan Eng Goan (1837–65), Tan Tjoen Tiat (1865–79), Lie Tjoe Hong (1879–96), Tio Tek Ho (1896–1908), and Khouw Kim An (1910–19 and 1927–42).¹⁰⁵

Official recognition of the institution of Chinese officers was laid down in article 96 of Constitutional Regulation no. 87 of 1818: “Chinese, Moors, Arabs, and other foreigners, not belonging to the Europeans, who have settled in one of the towns of the Netherlands Indies, are, as much as possible, to be placed under the headmen of their nations, all in accordance with the regulations which already exist or which yet have to be formulated”.¹⁰⁶ This article was maintained in subsequent Constitutional Regulations of 1827, 1830, and 1836. Article 96 was amended in the Constitutional Regulation of 1854, requiring the Foreign Orientals to live in separate quarters. Article 73 stated: “Foreign Orientals who have settled in the Netherlands Indies are to be placed as much as possible in separate quarters, under the leadership of their own headmen. The governor-general sees to it that these headmen will be provided with the required instructions.”¹⁰⁷ The Chinese Council was not officially recognised until the *Gouvernementsbesluit* (governmental decree) of 10 February 1868, no. 10, which stated that the Chinese Council of Batavia should consist of one chairman, the *majoor der Chineezen*, and ten members, of which two carry the title of captain and eight the title of lieutenant, and two secretaries.¹⁰⁸ By *Gouvernementsbesluit* of 20 May 1871, no. 37, the composition of the Chinese Council was amended to one major, four captains, six lieutenants, and two secretaries.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁵ Major Tio Tek Ho passed away in January 1908. Captain Nie Hok Tjoan acted as ad interim major from 1908–1910. In 1910, Captain Khouw Kim An assumed the post of major. Nine years later, in 1919, Major Khouw Kim An officially retired from his post because it was the colonial government’s intention to abolish the institution of Chinese officers. In 1927 Khouw Kim An was reappointed after the colonial government dismissed the plans to do away with the Chinese Council. This will be discussed in the chapters 5 and 6.

¹⁰⁶ *Indisch Staatsblad* 1818-87.

¹⁰⁷ *Indisch Staatsblad* 1855-2.

¹⁰⁸ *Gouvernementsbesluit* of 10 February 1868, no. 10; *Indisch Staatsblad* 1868-24.

¹⁰⁹ *Indisch Staatsblad* 1871-70.

1.4 Conclusion

The institution of Chinese officers in Batavia was almost as old as Dutch rule in the city itself. The governance of the Chinese people was an administrative fusion between the Dutch and the Chinese officers. The latter ruled over their countrymen according to their own laws and customs, while at the same time running the typical Dutch institutions that were established to officially manage the affairs of the Chinese population. This type of indirect administration was also applied to other non-European groups in the region, but it was the general interdependence of the Dutch and Chinese that made the institution of Chinese officers stand out. Close cooperation between the Chinese and Dutch also existed in other spheres. When the first Dutch East India Company anchored in the region, the Chinese were already present, making a living for themselves as traders and farmers. As they appeared highly skilful and industrious, the founder of Batavia J. P. Coen immediately understood that the development of the newly conquered city and its immediate surroundings depended on the Chinese. Therefore the Chinese were given a free hand in trade and were encouraged to cultivate the lands surrounding the walled city. It is no exaggeration to claim that Batavia and the Ommelanden were opened up and built by the Chinese. A relationship of mutual dependence in administration, trade, and agricultural exploitation soon lasted several centuries, and it was this relationship that strongly determined the position of the Chinese officers not only in the eyes of the colonial administrators but also in their own community, as we shall see in the following chapters.

CHAPTER 2

THE CHINESE COUNCIL OF BATAVIA: ORGANISATION AND STRUCTURE

Dutch officials in official attire were present when the captain-to-be arrived at the city hall in his sedan chair, carried by eight bearers and preceded by hundreds of slaves bearing flags and lanterns, and hundreds of Chinese bearing the different symbols for his authority. After the future captain got out from his chair, his letter of appointment was announced to the public.¹¹⁰

The fragment above illustrates the formal introduction of a Chinese captain to the public during the period in which the Dutch East India Company expanded its territorial power in the Indonesian archipelago. The appointment of a captain was proclaimed to the Chinese community by his official presentation to the public. On this day the appointee was escorted to the town hall in ceremonial procession where he was received by the governor-general. After the latter handed over his letter of appointment, the document was read out loud by government officials in the Dutch and Chinese language.¹¹¹ This distinguished ceremony shows that the installation of a Chinese officer went hand in hand with a display of great splendour indicative of the prestige and stature of the position.

Indeed, the institution of Chinese officers was a prestigious and eminent system of communal leadership in the Indies. It was the local elite of the Chinese community that worked together to coordinate and oversee social and religious matters. The organisation in which these

¹¹⁰ Sidharta, "On the Remnants of the 'Gong Goan' Archives in Jakarta", 514 (text modified).

¹¹¹ Hoetink, "Chineesche Officieren te Batavia onder de Compagnie", 2.

activities were institutionalised was the Chinese Council. For nearly three centuries this organisation collaborated with the Dutch colonial government in governing the Chinese community on a semi-autonomous basis. The organisation was semi-autonomous in that the Dutch for practical reasons had delegated a significant amount of authority to the Chinese officers to govern their countrymen, although the officers ultimately remained subordinate to the Dutch. The Chinese officers fulfilled an important intermediary role between the Dutch authorities and their community, a role which they largely owed to their wealth. In the course of the twentieth century new standards were introduced with regard to officialdom that favoured competence and suitability over wealth and influence. This development was widely approved by the Chinese community, which had started to resist the institution of Chinese officers. As a result, the traditional Chinese community leaders increasingly lost authority over their countrymen and the institution was drowned in a wave of fierce criticism and outright ridicule. In order to analyse how the traditional Chinese community leaders lost respect from their co-citizens, the following questions need to be answered:

How did the system of Chinese community leadership become embedded in the local administrative framework? Why had the post of Chinese officer become a privilege of the rich? And what was the nature of the relationship between the Chinese officers and the Dutch administrators?

2.1 The organisation of Chinese administration in the Residency Batavia

The institution of ethnic community leadership was not reserved only for the Chinese community in the Dutch East Indies. Although the institutionalisation of communal authority was much stronger in the Chinese community, the same system also applied to the Arabs (*kapitein der Arabieren*) and the Moors and Bengalis (*hoofd der Mooren en Bengaleezen*). The “foreign Indonesians”—that is, indigenous people whose origins lay outside Batavia—were also subject to communal leadership.¹¹²

¹¹² J. C. van Leur, *Indonesian Trade and Society: Essays in Asian Social and Economic History* (Dordrecht: Foris, 1983), 139.

As such, Ambonese, Balinese, Bandanese, Buginese, Banjarese, Makassarese, and Timorese each had a *kommandant* in charge of their communities. Unlike the Chinese officers, these *kommandanten* were required to supply manpower in times of war. This policy of strict segregation stemmed from a general feeling of fear that was inherent among the Company rulers. “Colonial anxiety” sprang from the painful awareness that the Company and its entourage only formed a small segment in colonial society. Non-Europeans made up the overwhelming majority of people in colonial society. The presence of so many people and so many groups with very divergent customs, laws, and religions were constant reminders of the potential danger to the VOC’s profit-making activities. To deal with this inherent fear and safeguard the achievement of its aims, the Company enforced the rule of separating the ethnic groups.¹¹³ Just like the non-native, non-European communities, indigenous ethnic groups were required to live in separate quarters under the supervision of their own headmen.¹¹⁴ However, Bondan Kanumoyoso has shown that in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, people lived in their own *kampong* and under their own leaders, but enjoyed a relative degree of freedom in choosing their religion, observing their own customs, and also in moving from one *kampong* to another. Thus, while Company officials adhered to the official policy of confining ethnic groups in separate quarters for the purpose of administering them easily and keeping them apart, in reality the various ethnicities interacted quite closely with one another.¹¹⁵

When Dutch rule was re-established on Java after the Napoleonic Wars, the institution of ethnic community leadership was officially continued. Segregation remained a pragmatic affair to guarantee stability in peacetime and facilitate administration and military recruitment in times of

¹¹³ R. Raben, “Batavia and Colombo: The Ethnic and Spatial Order of Two Colonial Cities 1600–1800” (PhD diss., Leiden University, 1996), 161–62.

¹¹⁴ W. E. van Mastenbroek, *De Historische Ontwikkeling van de Staatsrechtelijke Indeling der Bevolking van Nederlandsch-Indië* (Wageningen: H. Veenman & Zonen, 1934), 23–24.

¹¹⁵ Kanumoyoso, “Beyond the City Wall”, 71–75.

war.¹¹⁶ However, in 1829 the Dutch found that the “foreign Indonesians” had been integrated into native Batavian society to such an extent that they did not need their own headmen anymore. From then on the indigenous people of the Indonesian archipelago were administered by the same *kommandant*.¹¹⁷ The system of indirect rule over indigenous subjects and non-indigenous, non-European communities, the so-called Foreign Orientals, was incorporated into the colonial administrative framework. Executed through the apparatus of the Department of Internal Affairs (Binnenlandsch Bestuur), the indigenous administration (*Inlandsch bestuur*) ran on parallel lines with the Foreign Orientals administration, which was responsible for the Chinese, Arabs, Moors, and Bengalis. The Chinese officers carried out the local administration over the Chinese, which was called the *Chineesch bestuur*. On Java and Madoera, the institution of Chinese officers served as a counterpart to the indirect rule of the indigenous population, both of which were placed under European administration (*Europeesch bestuur*).¹¹⁸

In the early twentieth century the Residency Batavia consisted of five divisions (*afdeelingen*): *Stad en Voorsteden* (city and suburbs; also referred to as the *hoofdplaats*) in the northern-central part, Tangerang in the western part, Meester-Cornelis and Krawang in the eastern part, and Buitenzorg as the southern division. The *Stad en Voorsteden* was the centre of Batavia. Tangerang, Meester-Cornelis, Krawang, and Buitenzorg together formed the Ommelanden, a large region of private estates in the outskirts of the city Batavia, most of them owned by Dutch and Chinese. The residency was headed by the resident.¹¹⁹

As the core of local Chinese administration and most Chinese activities were concentrated in the *Stad en Voorsteden*, I will focus on this part of the Batavia residency where the building of the

¹¹⁶ Raben, “Batavia and Colombo”, 182.

¹¹⁷ M. Lohanda, *Sejarah Para Pembesar Mengatur Batavia* (Jakarta: Masup Jakarta, 2007), 177, and Regeerings-almanak voor Nederlandsch-Indië 1829 (Batavia: Landsdrukkerij, 1865–1942): 41.

¹¹⁸ Lohanda, *The Kapitan Cina of Batavia*, 73–74.

¹¹⁹ Lohanda, *Sejarah Para Pembesar Mengatur Batavia*, 195–96.

Chinese Council, the main temple, schools, the Chinese Hospital, commercial houses, Chinese cultural associations, and political organisations could be found.¹²⁰ The Stad en Voorsteden was divided into two districts: Batavia and Weltevreden. The *assistent-resident voor de politie* (assistant-resident), assisted by a *controleur voor de politie* (inspector), was in charge of the division and responsible for police affairs and security. The Gouvernementsbesluit of 4 January 1913, no. 27, determined that the Chinese Council of Batavia consist of eight members (two captains and six lieutenants) under the *majoor der Chineezzen*, who chaired the Council.¹²¹ Batavia and Weltevreden were each under one Chinese captain and three lieutenants.¹²² Within these districts, they administered the following six important Chinese neighbourhoods (*wijken*): Tanah Abang, Pasar Baroe, Pasar Senen, Pendjaringan, Mangga Besar and Jakatra.¹²³ Administration of the indigenous population followed the same pattern, though with different nomenclature. Regencies (*regentschappen*) were run by a regent (*patih*), whose position was equivalent to that of a Chinese major. He supervised two district heads (*wedana*), in charge of the districts Batavia and Weltevreden, and four subdistrict heads (*assistent-wedana*).¹²⁴ These were equal to the Chinese captains and lieutenants.

¹²⁰ Lohanda, *The Kapitan Cina of Batavia*, 80.

¹²¹ The chairman and *majoor der Chineezzen* was Khouw Kim An; Tio Tek Soen and Nio Hoeij Oen were the two captains; and Khoe A Fan, Khouw Keng Liong, Lie Tjian Tjoen, Oeij Kim Liong, Oh Sian Tjeng, and Liong A Tjan were the six lieutenants. See the Chinese (nos. 21024–21025) and Malay (no. NM2) minutes of the monthly board meetings of the Chinese Council for the year 1913, Kong Koan Archive, Leiden.

¹²² See confidential letter of the Resident of Batavia to the Governor-General, 18 October 1912, no. 319/C, in Gouvernementsbesluit, 4 January 1913, no. 27, Arsip Nasional Republik Indonesia (ANRI), Jakarta.

¹²³ Tanah Abang, Pasar Baroe and Pasar Senen were officially recognised as Chinese neighbourhoods (*wijken*); Pendjaringan, Mangga Besar and Jakatra were sub-districts (*adjudantschappen*) in which large concentrations of Chinese resided. See confidential letter of the Resident of Batavia to the Director of Internal Affairs, 18 October 1912, no. 319/C, in Gouvernementsbesluit, 4 January 1913, no. 27, ANRI, Jakarta.

¹²⁴ See *Het een en ander over het Binnenlands Bestuur op Java en Madoera* (Masman & Stroink, 1947), 3–4; Regeerings-almanak voor Nederlandsch-Indië 2 (1913): 157–58.

2.2 The Chinese officers: appointment and dismissal

In the three principal cities of Java (Batavia, Semarang, and Soerabaja) Chinese Councils had been established in which, according to hierarchical order, one major and several captains and lieutenants were seated. The major was the chairman of the Council and therefore also head of the Chinese community. He usually chaired the board meetings of the Chinese Council and had the most influential vote in the decision making on issues that concerned the Council or the Chinese community.¹²⁵ Consequently, he carried most of the responsibility for his countrymen. The second officer in hierarchical order was the captain. In the absence of the major, he chaired the board meetings of the Chinese Council and signed official letters on behalf of the major. He also attended the frequent meetings in the office of the resident or assistant-resident.¹²⁶ The lieutenants were the lowest officers in rank. They had the most frequent contacts with members of the Chinese community, either personally or through the neighbourhood chiefs. The neighbourhood chiefs usually submitted complaints and requests from the Chinese people to the lieutenants.¹²⁷ Official members of the Chinese Council were regarded as “effective” officers, as they were responsible for the daily administration of the Chinese population. In addition to these, there was a group of “non-effective” officers who were not members of the Chinese Council. These “non-effective” officers were granted the title of titular major, captain, or lieutenant for outstanding performances valuable to the Chinese community. Chinese functionaries who were employed by government agencies, such as the *Wees- en Boedelkamer* (Chamber of Orphans- and Estates) were also given a titular rank, as long as they were in office. Titular ranks were also given to retired effective officers who had performed their duties satisfactorily.¹²⁸

¹²⁵ Decisions of the Chinese Council were taken by vote in the monthly board meetings.

¹²⁶ Usually the most senior captain—the one appointed first—replaced the major in his absence.

¹²⁷ Lohanda, *The Kapitan Cina of Batavia*, 75–76.

¹²⁸ Chen, *De Chinese Gemeenschap van Batavia*, 37.

On Java and Madoera, the post of Chinese officer was honorary and thus an unpaid position. The officers were only compensated for expenses made while fulfilling their duties as major, captain or lieutenant. This compensation was called a *toelage*. Chinese officers who sat in several governmental committees (such as those dealing with immigration and taxation) or the *Landraad* (the indigenous court of justice) received a monthly compensation for their services. Because their positions were unpaid, most positions in the Chinese Council were filled by members of the Chinese elite. In the *Buitengewesten* (outer regions) of the Dutch East Indies, the post of Chinese officer was a paid position.¹²⁹

Chinese officers were appointed and dismissed by the governor-general, who also provided the officers with the required instructions.¹³⁰ Although these were actually drafted by the *hoofd van gewestelijk bestuur* (head of local administration—usually the resident) because he was more familiar with the situation in his locality. The instructions were published in the newspaper *Javasche Courant*.¹³¹ The secretaries of the Chinese Council were also directly appointed by the governor-general but unlike the Chinese officers they were given an official salary. Knowledge of the Chinese language was an important prerequisite for the job. The secretaries recorded the board meetings of the Chinese Council. As mentioned in the introduction, from 1920 onwards, the meetings were only documented in Malay. The reason why Chinese was never used again seemingly had to do with the fact that most Chinese officers had lost their command over the Chinese language by that time. In the meeting of 5 May 1916, acting Lieutenant Tan Tjin Bok asked why the minutes were still recorded in Chinese since the majority of the officers were unable to read Chinese characters. Major Khouw Kim An acknowledged that most officers were incapable of

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ *Indisch Staatsblad* 1855–2, article 73.

¹³¹ Liem, “Het Instituut der Chineesche Officieren”, 70. See also letter of the Resident of Batavia to the Director of Internal Affairs, 18 May 1920, no. 363/C, Binnenlandsch Bestuur, no. 1935, ANRI, Jakarta and *Indisch Staatsblad* 1882-232.

reading the Chinese characters, but he maintained that it was important to honour their Chinese heritage and officers having trouble reading through the minutes could ask the secretary to translate.¹³² The major's answer represented the situation of most peranakan Chinese in the Indies, who tried to sustain their Chinese identity by upholding the Chinese language, religion, and traditional Chinese celebrations. But in the long run, their social environment made it difficult and peranakan culture was a distinctive mix of Chinese heritage overlaid with Dutch and Indonesian influences. Already in the second half of the nineteenth century the majority of the peranakan Chinese on Java read the Chinese classics and other popular works in Malay translations.¹³³ When the institution of Chinese officers came under attack in the twentieth century, critics cited their inability to speak Chinese as evidence that they had lost their sense of "Chineseness" and were unable to connect to the waves of Chinese immigrants who had begun arriving en masse in the late nineteenth century. The neighbourhood chiefs were appointed by the local authorities (the assistant-resident).¹³⁴

In most cases only the post of lieutenant was open to new applicants because the vacant positions of captain and major were usually filled by lieutenants and captains who were in office at the time. Only in rare cases were people directly appointed to a higher position than lieutenant. On 26 September 1879 for instance, Tan A Kauw was instantly appointed as captain.¹³⁵ People interested in the position of lieutenant wrote an application letter directly to the governor-general. The application letters normally contained information about the applicant's age, place of residence,

¹³² Malay minutes of the monthly board meetings of the Chinese Council, no. NM3, 5 May 1916, Kong Koan Archive, Leiden: p. 158 (hereafter shortened as Malay minutes).

¹³³ Rush, *Opium to Java*, 91.

¹³⁴ Liem, "Het Instituut der Chineesche Officiëren", 70; Chinese minutes, no. 21025, 30 December 1914: p. 147. See also Malay minutes, no. NM2, 30 December 1914: p. 327.

¹³⁵ Regeerings-almanak voor Nederlandsch-Indië (1880): 180.

profession, and family background, especially if he was related to an officer.¹³⁶ In the twentieth century, applicants also included their educational background.¹³⁷ This probably had to do with the growing criticism against the common practice of recruiting only wealthy men for the position of Chinese officer instead of judging applicants on their skills. (This issue is discussed at greater length in the following chapters.) After receiving the application letters, the governor-general sought the advice of the resident of the residency where the applicants resided. If the applicant lived in Batavia, Semarang, or Soerabaja, the resident ordered the officers of the Chinese Councils to evaluate the candidates. After having ascertained that the information given in the application letters was truthful, a further evaluation of the applicants was conducted in the board meetings. The foremost requirement was wealth; chances were very slim that people without sufficient financial means were selected. The officers also paid special attention to the following criteria: a candidate was supposed to be of irreproachable conduct (civilised and well-mannered) and was not to have had any negative encounters with the police. The usage of opium contributed to a negative assessment of the candidate. The officers also inquired whether the applicants were respected members of the Chinese community and familiar with the morals and customs of their countrymen. Another important consideration of the officers was the family background of the applicants. Preference of the Council members usually went out to candidates who came from officers' families.¹³⁸ Finally, the Chinese officers also preferred colleagues who were born in the Indies and

¹³⁶ Application letters enclosed with the confidential letter of the Resident of Batavia to the Governor-General, 24 July 1883, no. La.X1, Gouvernementsbesluit, 18 August 1883, no. 9, ANRI, Jakarta.

¹³⁷ See the application letters included with the confidential letter of the Resident of Batavia to the Governor-General, 18 October 1912, no. 319/C, Gouvernementsbesluit, 4 January 1913, no. 27, ANRI, Jakarta.

¹³⁸ Confidential Letter of the Resident of Batavia to the Governor-General, 24 July 1883, no. La.X1, Gouvernementsbesluit, 18 August 1883, no. 9, ANRI, Jakarta; Confidential letter of the Resident to the Governor-General, 6 August 1884, no. La.C3, Gouvernementsbesluit, 31 August 1884, no. 20, ANRI, Jakarta.

were of Hokkien descent.¹³⁹ Candidates who were born in China or whose ancestors were of non-Hokkien descent (such as Hakka or Cantonese)¹⁴⁰ were usually rejected. This changed in 1878 when the colonial government decided that as a rule the Chinese Council should be composed of members from the various Chinese population groups (see chapter 3). It was obvious that desired requirements for aspirant European officials, such as ability and competency, were not applicable to the Chinese officers.¹⁴¹ After they had evaluated the candidates, the officers sent their conclusions to the resident, who in turn sent his list of nominees to the governor-general. Once a Chinese officer was appointed, he was sworn in by the resident (or in the absence of the resident, by the assistant-resident or controleur).¹⁴²

In principle, the appointment of a Chinese officer was permanent, vacancies opened only in case of death, forced dismissal, or when an officer resigned. Lawsuits, bankruptcy, or illegal activities were reasons why an officer could be dismissed.¹⁴³ Sickness, old age or a return to China were reasons for an officer to voluntarily withdraw himself from office.¹⁴⁴ Another reason why an officer would ask for dismissal was the feeling of embarrassment when being passed over at

¹³⁹ The Hokkien originated from the region of coastal Fujian province colloquially known as Minnan (south of the Min River). Before 1878 most Chinese officers were of Hokkien descent.

¹⁴⁰ The Hakka (literally ‘guest people’) originated from the Central Plain in China (which covers modern-day Henan and parts of Hebei, Shanxi and Shandong province) and had in a series of migrations moved to South China (in particular the south Chinese provinces Fujian and Guangdong) but also to countries abroad. The Cantonese originated from the south Chinese province Guangdong. Hakka and Cantonese people were generally considered to be uncivilised and ill-mannered by the Hokkien and Dutch.

¹⁴¹ Letter of the Resident of Batavia to the Governor-General, 13 August 1872, no. 5650, Gouvernementsbesluit, 31 October 1872, no. 11, ANRI, Jakarta.

¹⁴² See “Proces Verbaal van Beëdiging van Majoor Khouw Kim An, 29 Augustus 1910”, in Certificates of the appointments of Khouw Kim An (Batavia) and Tan Siau Lip (Semarang), private collection of the Friends of the Kong Koan Archive Foundation, Leiden.

¹⁴³ Letter of the Resident of Batavia to the Director of Internal Affairs, 28 September 1871, no. 5940, Gouvernementsbesluit, 3 February 1872, no. 26, ANRI, Jakarta.

¹⁴⁴ Chen, *De Chinese Gemeenschap van Batavia*, 38.

promotions. On 24 December 1877 Lieutenant Gouw Eng Hoei asked to be discharged after having been passed over twice during his career.¹⁴⁵ In 1912 the advisor for Japanese and Chinese affairs feared that Lieutenant Khoe A Fan would feel offended over the nomination of Lieutenant Nio Hoey Oen to the rank of captain, as both officers had been appointed by the Gouvernementsbesluit of 9 February 1905, no. 8. Anticipating that Lieutenant Khoe A Fan would turn in his resignation, he urged the resident of Batavia to reconsider the nomination. Apparently Lieutenant Khoe A Fan was not a man whose pride was easily hurt, because he promised the assistant-resident that he would not withdraw from office if his colleague was promoted to the rank of captain instead of him.¹⁴⁶

2.3 Tasks and responsibilities of the Chinese Council

Until 1907 no clear official determination was given out with regard to the tasks and responsibilities of the Chinese Council. The resolution by which Souw Bing Kong was officially appointed as the first Chinese headman in 1619 determined that it was his duty to maintain law and order in the Chinese community and to handle all civil affairs that concerned his countrymen.¹⁴⁷ The resolution of 8 July 1729 indicated that the lieutenants were appointed to assist the captain in settling minor disputes between members of their community. Whether the rank of lieutenant was otherwise subordinate to the rank of captain was not mentioned.¹⁴⁸ During the eighteenth century, the institution of Chinese officers became firmly embedded in colonial society after a meeting room was allocated to the officers and secretaries were added to the staff. The officers made sure that

¹⁴⁵ Confidential letter of the Resident of Batavia to the Governor-General, 14 February 1878, no. 2047, Gouvernementsbesluit, 13 March 1878, no. 39, ANRI, Jakarta.

¹⁴⁶ Confidential letter of the Advisor for Japanese and Chinese Affairs to the Resident of Batavia, 1 August 1912, no. 248; Confidential letter of the Assistant-Resident to the Resident of Batavia, 22 October 1912, no. 199; Confidential letter of the Resident of Batavia to the Governor-General, 18 October 1912, no. 319/C. All three letters can be found in Gouvernementsbesluit, 4 January 1913, no. 27, ANRI, Jakarta.

¹⁴⁷ Hoetink, "So Bing Kong", 13.

¹⁴⁸ Hoetink, "Chineesche Officieren te Batavia onder de Compagnie", 4.

government regulations were carried out by their fellow countrymen and advised the government in matters that involved the Chinese, and they were the spokesmen of the Chinese community. They also administered justice in minor offences and small disputes between their countrymen in accordance with Chinese law.¹⁴⁹ In 1907 the official regulation for the Chinese Council of Batavia was laid down in *Residentsbesluit* (resident decree) of 20 August 1907, no. 15548/36. This official regulation stipulated the tasks and responsibilities of the Chinese Council as follows: “The Chinese Council looks after the interests of the Chinese community of Batavia, provides as much as possible free education for children of impecunious Chinese, arranges and funds the annual religious ceremonies, and manages the Chinese cemeteries, which are situated on the landed properties of the Chinese Council.”¹⁵⁰ This description of course gives a rather general overview of the tasks and responsibilities of the Chinese Council. A more elaborated analysis of the Council’s activities will be given now.

¹⁴⁹ Vermeulen, “Eenige Opmerkingen over de Rechtsbedeeling van de Compagnie”, 11–12. Chinese law as utilised by the Chinese officers to settle disputes and offences, but also marital affairs and inheritance issues was not entirely based on traditional Chinese law as practiced in China. The Chinese law that was used as a norm among the Chinese people in the Dutch East Indies was basically a blend of the Qing Code (*Da Qing lüli*—the great Qing legal code) and customary law (traditional Chinese standards and values). See Chen, *De Chinese Gemeenschap van Batavia*, 63.

¹⁵⁰ See article two of chapter 2 of the official regulation for the Chinese Council, *Residentsbesluit*, 20 August 1907, no. 15548/36, *Binnenlandsch Bestuur*, no. 1935, ANRI, Jakarta.



Former office of the Chinese Council of Batavia on Jalan Tongkangan, c.1930



Meeting room in the former Tongkangan office, c.1930

The meetings

The Chinese Council usually convened once a month to discuss the affairs of the Chinese community. As a rule the Council convened on the third day of each month provided it did not fall on a Sunday or a European, Chinese, or indigenous holiday. Why meetings were not supposed to be scheduled on Sundays is not entirely clear, but the colonial authorities may have committed the Council to follow the Christian rule that Sundays were days of rest. Although participants were expected to gather in the building of the Chinese Council at 9 a.m., most meetings did not begin until the late morning or afternoon.¹⁵¹ Chaired by the major, the gatherings were attended by the officers, secretaries, and neighbourhood chiefs of Batavia and Weltevreden, and sometimes by Dutch officials when important affairs such as taxation or the combat of epidemic diseases needed to be discussed. When a Dutch official was newly appointed (either a resident, an assistant-resident or controleur, but also a tax commissioner or police official), he also came to the Council meeting to introduce himself to the Chinese officers, secretaries and neighbourhood chiefs.¹⁵²

After the chairman opened the meeting, the secretary read aloud the minutes of the previous board meeting. After the minutes were approved by the Council members, the items on the agenda were discussed.¹⁵³ One recurring topic was the inspection of the tax collection. The neighbourhood chiefs turned in their tax assessment registers the last Saturday of the month for inspection.¹⁵⁴ The Dutch abolished revenue farming at the end of the nineteenth century, and following the unification of taxes in the first decade of the twentieth century, the head tax was replaced by the income tax for Chinese non-agriculturalists. The kind of revenue the neighbourhood chiefs were supposed to collect was not specified, but the minutes probably refer to the income tax and perhaps the property

¹⁵¹ Chinese minutes of the monthly board meetings of the Chinese Council, no. 21024, 4 November 1912: pp. 93–94, Kong Koan Archive, Leiden (hereafter shortened as Chinese minutes).

¹⁵² Chinese minutes, no. 21026, 5 May 1917: p. 157.

¹⁵³ Chinese minutes, no. 21025, 3 May 1913: p. 1; Malay minutes, no. NM4, 14 April 1920: p. 129.

¹⁵⁴ Chinese minutes, no. 21023, 13 November 1908: p. 126.

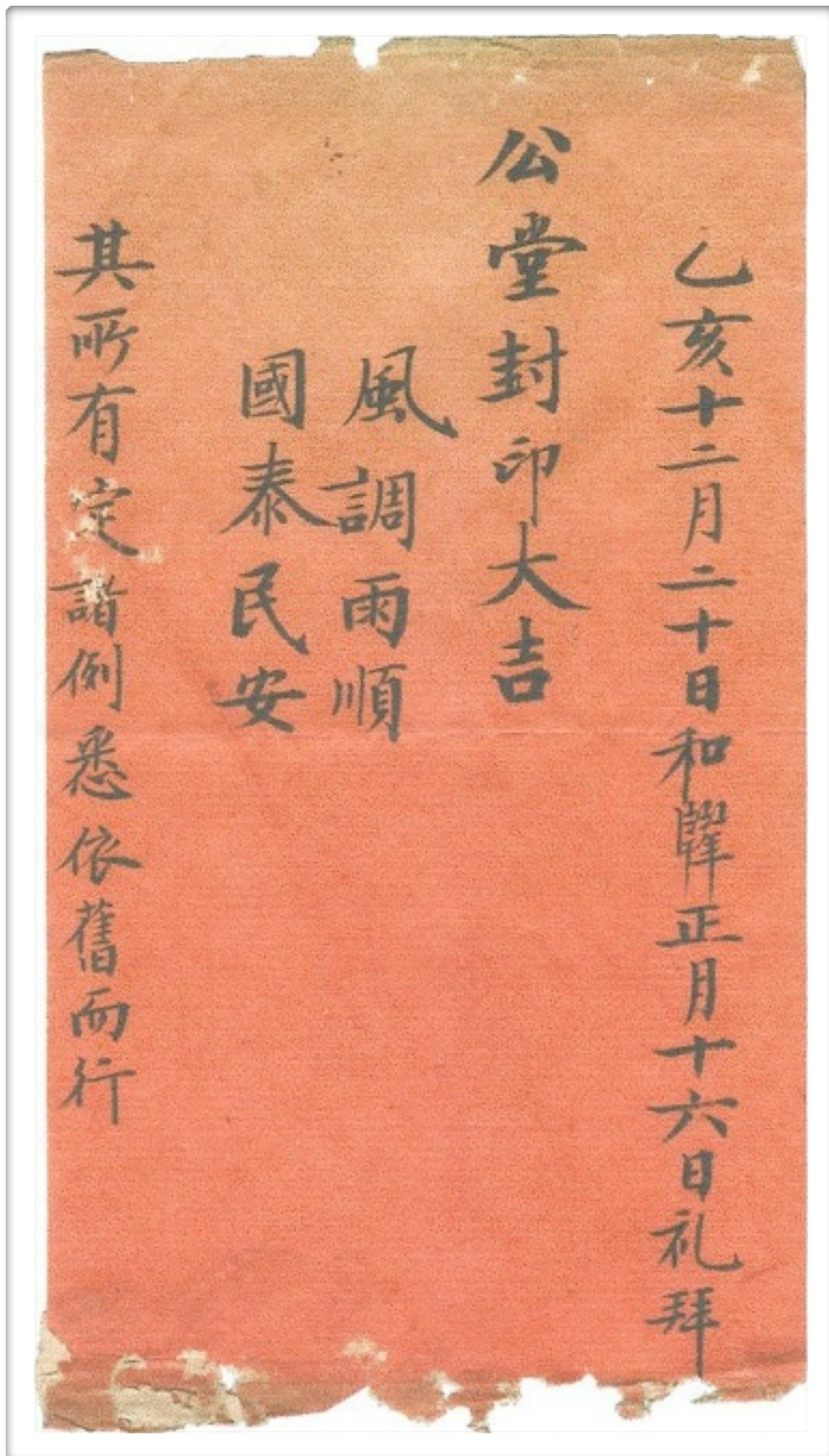
tax (*personeele belasting*), which was assessed on material possessions such as furniture, vehicles and horses. In the meeting of June 1918 it was mentioned that neighbourhood chiefs were allowed to collect ground tax (*verponding*) not exceeding twenty guilders.¹⁵⁵ Each month the neighbourhood chiefs also had to report to the Dutch inspectors, usually the tax commissioner or the controleur, how much tax they had collected and how much was still awaiting payment. When not enough tax was yielded, the neighbourhood chief was strongly urged to call in the remaining tax shortages. Continuous shortages in tax money could lead to the dismissal of a neighbourhood chief.¹⁵⁶ The people most often unable to fulfil their tax obligation in time were petty merchants, small shop owners, and cashiers; employees of printing companies; carpenters; and poor coolies. Sometimes those in arrears were brought to the meeting for a confrontation with the Dutch officials. Usually after being questioned these people were given time to pay their remaining debts in instalments. In case this term expired and the taxpayers were still in arrear, the neighbourhood chief was ordered to issue enforcement orders (*dwangschrift*) or carry out confiscation. People who could no longer bear the tax burden asked for confiscation themselves. Others simply ran away. In extraordinary cases, such as extreme poverty or severe illness, tax exemption was granted. For these cases, the neighbourhood chief had to present ample evidence.¹⁵⁷

Each year, a few days before the end of the traditional Chinese lunar calendar, the Council closed its doors for a ten days' recess. In this last meeting of the lunar year, the minute book of the Council was symbolically sealed to close the year of activities of the Council (*Hong In*). The following phrases were read by the secretary to conclude the ceremony:

¹⁵⁵ Hesselting-Tjan, "The Kong Koan in Crisis", 118; Malay minutes, no. NM4, 4 June 1918: pp. 47–48.

¹⁵⁶ Chinese minutes, no. 21024, 3 August 1912: pp. 60–61.

¹⁵⁷ Malay minutes, no. NM1, 30 October 1909: pp. 14–20 and 28 April 1910: pp. 45–48.



Phrases that were read by the secretary to conclude the *Hong In* ceremony

The Chinese Council officially closes the year;

May the coming year bring us prosperity;

May our people live in peace.¹⁵⁸

Provided it did not fall on a Sunday, the Chinese officers, secretaries and neighbourhood chiefs gathered in the building of the Chinese Council to “unseal the minute book” and open the new year (*Koei In*) on the fourth day of the first month of the Chinese lunar calendar (*Tjia Gwee Tje Sie*).¹⁵⁹ During this ceremony the major usually delivered a New Year’s speech in which he wished everybody a happy New Year and expressed his gratitude for being able to meet with his officers, secretaries and neighbourhood chiefs in peace and good health. Then he thanked heaven for giving everyone the opportunity to come together again and perform their duties for state and society. He also thanked the officers, secretaries, neighbourhood chiefs and other staff members for all their efforts in the previous year, and expressed his hope that they would continue to show the same dedication in the coming year. Then everyone raised their glass and cheered:

Long live Queen Wilhelmina!

Long live the Republic of China!

Long live the Netherlands Indies!

After that the major asked the secretary to conclude the ceremony by reading the following phrases that were written in Chinese characters on red paper:

¹⁵⁸ Chinese minutes, no. 21024, 30 January 1913: p. 136.

¹⁵⁹ Chinese minutes, no. 21024, 10 February 1913: p. 137.

The Chinese Council officially opens the New Year;

May this year bring us prosperity;

May the people live in peace.¹⁶⁰

While inspecting the Chinese and Malay minutes of the Council's board meetings, one can imagine how the distinguished gentlemen came together in the early twentieth century to discuss the various important affairs that were current in the Chinese community. The meetings seem to have been reasonably orderly, with every item on the agenda being discussed point by point. Yet it is sometimes hard to suppress a feeling of amusement while going over the minutes, because the meeting room of the Chinese Council apparently also resembled a hen house. Acting Lieutenant Tan Tjin Bok frequently complained about the disorderly behaviour of the participants during the meetings and called for a code of conduct in the meeting room. People seemed to have paced back and forth chatting with each other and not paying attention to the meeting, talking through one another and talking out of turn, or just walking out of the meeting when it suited them. In the Council meeting of 12 February 1912 the major addressed himself to one of the neighbourhood chiefs but it turned out that the chief in question had already gone home. Acting Lieutenant Tan Tjin Bok urged everyone to remain seated during discussions and announcements, for the meetings would be pointless if nobody paid attention.¹⁶¹ In the Council meeting of 3 September 1912 acting Lieutenant Tan Tjin Bok tried to set everybody straight again: "During the meetings everybody should wait for his turn to speak and not talk through one another. Just now Mr Major was speaking about something, but neighbourhood chief Jo Kim Eng suddenly started to talk about something else which created confusion among the other participants. If this happens all the time the meetings are a waste of time!"¹⁶²

¹⁶⁰ Chinese minutes, no. 21025, 29 January 1914: pp. 83–84; Chinese minutes, no. 21028, 17 March 1920: pp. 3–4.

¹⁶¹ Chinese minutes, no. 21024, 12 February 1912: pp. 7–8.

¹⁶² Chinese minutes, no. 21024, 3 September 1912: p. 82.

The committees

Each year the officers were assigned monthly and daily tasks. The division of tasks usually took place when the minute book of the Chinese Council was sealed in the last meeting of the year and unsealed at the opening of the New Year.¹⁶³ Among officers' assignments were their duties in the various government committees and institutions, for which they were given financial compensation.¹⁶⁴ Two officers were on duty at the *Landraad*, which convened three times a week, where they were assigned by the judge to render advice in cases involving Chinese. The Chinese Council was also responsible for bringing in witnesses who had been summoned by the *Landraad*. These witnesses were tracked down by the neighbourhood chiefs for which they were given restitution.¹⁶⁵ Two officers had to attend the proceedings at the *Politierol* (police courts) that also convened three times a week.¹⁶⁶ Two officers were appointed by the resident to be seated in the local tax assessment committees, and another two were assigned to the immigration committee.¹⁶⁷ Chinese newcomers (*singkehs*, literally meaning "new guests") were first sent to the Chinese Council for inspection after disembarkation. The Chinese officers examined applications for employment permits of Chinese nationals and judged requests to enter or stay in Batavia from Chinese nationals and Dutch subjects who had returned to China.¹⁶⁸ Ultimately the immigration committee decided

¹⁶³ Chen, *De Chinese Gemeenschap van Batavia*, 59.

¹⁶⁴ Chinese minutes, no. 21025, 18 December 1913: p. 73.

¹⁶⁵ Chinese minutes, no. 21024, 3 August 1912: p. 64; Chinese minutes, no. 21026, 4 January 1917: p. 130; Letter of the Resident of Batavia to the Director of Internal Affairs, 18 May 1920, no. 363/C, Binnenlandsch Bestuur, no. 1935, ANRI, Jakarta.

¹⁶⁶ Letter of the Resident of Batavia to the Governor-General, 13 August 1872, no. 5650, in: *Gouvernementsbesluit*, 31 October 1872, no. 11, ANRI, Jakarta.

¹⁶⁷ Letter of the Resident of Batavia to the Director of Internal Affairs, 18 May 1920, no. 363/C, Binnenlandsch Bestuur, no. 1935, ANRI, Jakarta.

¹⁶⁸ See the applications for employment (MM05I-000009–MM05I-00011/11A) and entry permits (MM05I-00011/11A–MM05I-00018), the Kong Koan Archive, Leiden.

whether a person could stay in the Netherlands Indies or not.¹⁶⁹ Finally, two officers were on duty in the Chinese Council, and responsible for granting marriage licenses and received complaints and reports of criminal offences from the neighbourhood chiefs. They also informed the colonial authorities about the Chinese inheritance law and gave advice regarding new applicants for vacancies in the Council and newly-arrived Chinese immigrants. In addition, the officers assessed the financial capacity of persons who applied to the Chinese Council for loans, as well as their guarantors. Pawnshops also frequently asked the Council to assess applicants for loans and their guarantors.¹⁷⁰ When organisations, private persons, or the government wished to buy land from the Council, the officers on duty were ordered to inspect the requests, assess the value of the land, and advise the Council on what price should be asked from the potential buyers.¹⁷¹

The registration of marriages and divorces

From 1717 onwards, the officers and, after its establishment, the Chinese Council were given the authority (and obligation) to register the marriages of the Chinese.¹⁷² From that year on, a Chinese marriage left the domestic realm and entered the Dutch official system of civil registration.¹⁷³ In the period under study, Chinese marriages were registered until 1919, when the Dutch Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages (*Burgerlijke Stand*) was applied to the Chinese, thus bringing an end to the two-centuries-long practice of registering and judging civil affairs by the Chinese officers. From 1900 until 1919, 1539 marriages were registered by the Chinese Council. This number does not indicate the total amount of registered marriages in this period, as the data for the years 1909–11 are missing.¹⁷⁴

¹⁶⁹ Chinese minutes, no. 21023, 21 February 1908: p. 100; Chinese minutes, no. 21024, 3 April 1912: pp. 19–20.

¹⁷⁰ Chinese minutes, no. 21023, 13 October 1902: p. 67 and 8 May 1909: p. 146.

¹⁷¹ Malay minutes, no. NM4, 8 April 1922: p. 309; Malay minutes, no. NM5, 13 October 1923: p. 137.

¹⁷² *Plakaatboek*, vol. 4, 1709–1743: pp. 93–94.

¹⁷³ Vermeulen, “Eenige Opmerkingen over de Rechtsbedeeling van de Compagnie”, 7.

¹⁷⁴ The duplicates of marriage certificates from 12 March 1909 until December 1911 are missing.

On a fixed day of the week, the officers on duty in the Chinese Council received and inspected the notifications of marriage. These notifications were given out by the neighbourhood chiefs and brought to the Council by the witnesses of couples that wished to get married. If an intended marriage was in some way not in accordance with Chinese (customary) law, the officers could refuse to give permission to the couple. A marriage between people bearing the same family name, for instance, was strictly forbidden.¹⁷⁵ When a marriage was approved, a marriage certificate was issued. In the twentieth century, the Council maintained the fees for marriage certificates as determined in article 64 of the regulation of the commissioner-general of 31 May 1828: children of Chinese officers were required to pay forty guilders, children of well-off families twenty guilders, and common people five guilders.¹⁷⁶ The marriage certificate was usually issued at the office of the Chinese Council, although the officers were sometimes asked to give out the certificate in the house where the wedding was celebrated. After the officers complained about having to wait too long in people's houses before they could issue the certificate, the Chinese Council announced in 1914 that couples only needed to pay one guilder for this official document, provided they were willing to come to the Chinese Council to collect their marriage certificate.¹⁷⁷ From 1914 onwards, the Chinese Council never gave out marriage certificates on public holidays or days of official mourning, such as *Tjengbeng* (Tomb Sweeping Day) and the commemoration of Confucius' death.¹⁷⁸ The married couple was given the original certificate and the secretaries kept a duplicate in the marriage register of the Chinese Council. Until February 1913, the marriage registers were written in Chinese. From February 1913 until 1919 the registers were bilingual (Chinese and

¹⁷⁵ Chen Menghong, "Between the Chinese Tradition and Dutch Colonial System: Chinese Marriages in Batavia in the Nineteenth Century", in *Archives of the Kong Koan of Batavia*, edited by L. Blussé and Chen Menghong (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 59; Chen, *De Chinese Gemeenschap van Batavia*, 43–45.

¹⁷⁶ Chinese minutes, no. 21023, 26 May 1909: p. 150.

¹⁷⁷ Chinese minutes, no. 21024, 3 April 1913: pp. 155–157; Chinese minutes, no. 21025, 29 January 1914: p. 86.

¹⁷⁸ Chinese minutes, no. 21025, 4 May 1914: pp. 101–102. The *Tjengbeng* festival usually falls on the fifth or sixth day of April and gives people the opportunity to mourn and honour their ancestors at their graves.

Malay). The information about the bride and groom recorded in the marriage certificate included their names, age, birthplace, the neighbourhood in which they lived, and the names of their parents. For the registration of a marriage, two witnesses—one for the bride and one for the groom—were required. These witnesses could be fathers, mothers, grandfathers, grandmothers, brothers, sisters, uncles, aunts, and cousins—as long as they were related to the bride and groom. The name of the matchmaker was also mentioned on the certificate, as well as the officers and secretaries on duty.¹⁷⁹

Also from the year 1717, Chinese couples who wished to divorce had to ask the Chinese officers for permission.¹⁸⁰ After the husband or wife had filed for divorce, the Chinese officers conducted a thorough investigation in the course of which officers interviewed both parties and possible witnesses. If one of the parties lived far away, he or she sent a letter to the Council which contained his or her statement. The final decision was made in the monthly board meetings of the Council. Judging from the divorce cases in the period 1900–19, most divorce requests were granted. In a few cases the Chinese officers urged for reconciliation if they did not see sufficient reasons for a legal separation, or if one of the parties did not agree with a divorce because he or she still loved his or her spouse. When the Council did grant a divorce, both parties were required to sign the registry for divorces. In the period 1900–19, the Council handled 238 divorce cases.¹⁸¹ Lea E. William's observation that the Chinese officers only handled a few divorce cases a year is therefore incorrect.¹⁸²

A woman usually filed for divorce when her husband refused to give her money, had chased her away, or had taken in a concubine. A woman might also seek a separation out of shame, if her husband was involved in criminal activities, for instance, or if she was openly accused of adultery

¹⁷⁹ In the bilingual registers, the date of birth of the couple (based on the Chinese lunar calendar) was also added.

¹⁸⁰ *Plakaatboek*, vol. 4, 1703–1743: pp. 94–95.

¹⁸¹ This number should be higher as the officers sometimes decided not to include discussions on divorce cases in the minutes.

¹⁸² Williams, *Overseas Chinese Nationalism*, 125.

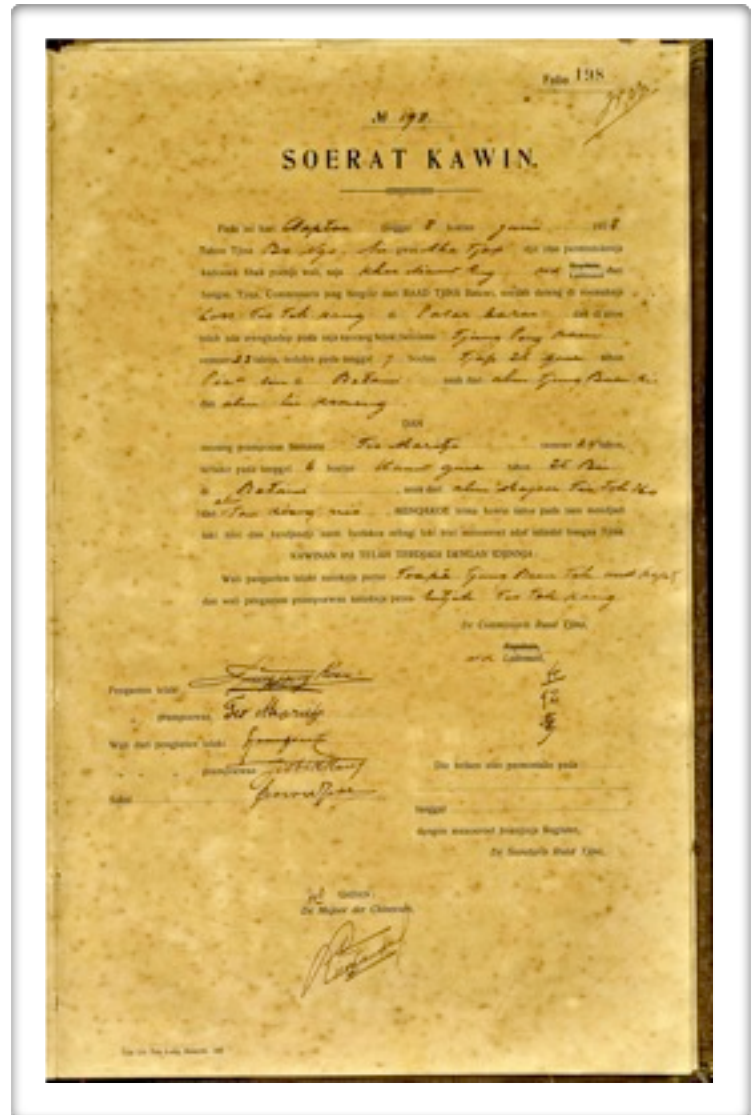
or unchaste behaviour. In a divorce case of November 1908, a woman was accused of parading in a horse carriage looking for illicit sexual relations.¹⁸³ Neglect, physical abuse, and not showing filial piety to her parents were other reasons for a woman to leave her husband. Finally, a woman might see no other option than divorce if her husband left for China and showed no sign of returning. In December 1912 such a case was presented to the Chinese Council. After the woman had been interviewed, her brother-in-law appeared before the officers declaring that his brother would return from China the next month. The officers decided that the woman had to wait three months for her husband to return. Until then, his younger brother was required to give his sister-in-law fifteen guilders per month to support her child. After four months, the younger brother reappeared before the Council saying he had not heard from his brother and he could no longer bear the financial burden of supporting his sister-in-law and nephew. The Council then decided to grant a divorce.¹⁸⁴

A man filed for divorce when he suspected that his wife had committed adultery or if she had run away with another man. Showing improper conduct, such as not keeping her chastity or being a bad housewife or daughter-in-law were other reasons. In addition, when a man could not get along with his parents-in-law or when his wife had run away to her parental home and refused to come back, he asked the Chinese Council to grant him a divorce. Sometimes a couple filed for divorce together, when both agreed that the marriage was over. Usually these proceedings were scandal free. In one exceptional case, the parents of a young married woman initiated divorce proceedings to prevent their daughter from following her husband to Probolinggo in East Java, fearing maltreatment of their daughter by her husband and his parents.¹⁸⁵

¹⁸³ Chinese minutes, no. 21023, 13 November 1908: pp. 124–125.

¹⁸⁴ Chinese minutes, no. 21024, 3 December 1912: pp. 121–122 and 3 April 1913: pp. 154–155.

¹⁸⁵ Malay minutes, no. NM4, 4 June 1918: pp. 52–53.



A duplicate of a Chinese and Malay marriage certificate

The provision of free education and other charitable ends

Before the twentieth century, colonial authorities never showed any interest in educating the Chinese, who had to establish their own schools. The official regulation of the Chinese Council stipulated the Council's responsibility for providing free education for the children of poor Chinese families. In 1775 the Beng Seng Sie Wan was opened on the initiative of the Chinese officers.¹⁸⁶ It was the first school for Chinese orphans and children of poor families, which was established with money donated from the Chinese community. A school providing free education as such was better known as the *Gie Oh* among the Chinese people. The school was located in Petak Sembilan (Glodok), in the yard of the main temple, Kim Tek Ie, built in 1650.¹⁸⁷ The school's curriculum was based on the traditional Chinese education system, in which the focus lay on reciting the Confucian classics. After the Chinese Council was established, the school became its responsibility.¹⁸⁸ Most private schools were run by Chinese officers or other wealthy Chinese. In 1901 the first modern Chinese school was opened in Batavia by the first modern Chinese organisation, the Tiong Hoa Hwee Koan (THHK). Many Chinese officers were on the board of directors of the THHK and as its schools proved to be better, it wound up absorbing the *Gie Oh*. The remaining finances of the school were divided among the THHK schools.¹⁸⁹ The Chinese Council gave the THHK a monthly subsidy of 275 guilders to cover the costs of free education for the children who were sent to the THHK schools by the Council.¹⁹⁰ These children were known as the *anak Kong Koan* (children of

¹⁸⁶ According to F. de Haan, the Beng Seng Sie Wan was already established in 1729; see F. de Haan, *Oud Batavia: Gedenkboek uitgegeven door het Bataviasch Genootschap van Kunsten en Wetenschappen naar aanleiding van het driehonderdjarig bestaan van der stad in 1919*, 4 vols. (Batavia: Kolff, 1922), 1:506. The Chinese chronicle of Batavia mentions 1690 as the year of establishment.

¹⁸⁷ The temple still exists and is now named Wihara Dharma Bhakti.

¹⁸⁸ Nio Joe Lan, "De Eigen Onderwijsvoorziening der Chineezzen", *Koloniale Studiën* 23:1 (1939): 69–71.

¹⁸⁹ Nio Joe Lan, "Bij het 40-jarig Jubileum van de Tiong Hoa Hwe Koan-Batavia", *Koloniale Studiën* 24:3 (1940): 296. Chinese minutes, no. 21023, 13 April 1908: p. 110.

¹⁹⁰ Kwee Tek Hoay, *The Origins of the Modern Chinese Movement in Indonesia* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Modern Indonesia Project, Southeast Asia Program, Cornell University, 1969), 23; Malay minutes, no. NM4, 1 October 1921: pp. 262–64.

the Chinese Council).¹⁹¹ Usually the neighbourhood chiefs looked for children of poor families in their neighbourhoods and informed them of the possibility of obtaining a free education at the THHK schools. When parents showed interest in educating their children, the neighbourhood chief reported the children to the Chinese Council for further arrangements. In 1921 eighty-four *anak Kong Koan* were enrolled in the THHK schools.¹⁹²

The Council also supported other schools financially. Some schools were given a fixed amount per month, while other schools were given money for each child who was enrolled through mediation of the Council.¹⁹³ In 1929 it was decided that each school receiving a subsidy from the Council had to hand in a financial account every three months. Schools that failed to do so would no longer receive subsidy.¹⁹⁴ Aware of the importance of education, the Chinese Council was also generous in selling plots of land at a reduced price if the purchasers intended to build a school on these lands, even if they were not intended exclusively for Chinese students. The Kartini School, a primary school for Javanese girls, only paid 1.5 guilders per square meter for a plot of land in Goenoeng Sahari, in spite of objections of one lieutenant who suggested reserving the land for the Chinese. The other Council members reminded him that the establishment of a school, even though primarily intended for Javanese girls, was a matter of public interest. Thus it was appropriate to sell the land at a reduced price.¹⁹⁵ The Council sold another property in Goenoeng Sahari for the same price to the municipality of Batavia, which intended to build a Hollandsch-Chineesche School

¹⁹¹ Nio, "Bij het 40-jarig Jubileum van de Tiong Hoa Hwe Koan-Batavia", 296.

¹⁹² Chinese minutes, no. 21024, 3 August 1912: pp. 62–63; Malay minutes, no. NM4, 1 October 1921: pp. 262–64.

¹⁹³ Chinese minutes, no. 21026, 3 August 1916: p. 110.

¹⁹⁴ Malay minutes, no. NM5, 12 April 1929: p. 420.

¹⁹⁵ Chinese minutes, no. 21027, 3 September 1917: p. 12 and 3 October 1917: pp. 18–19. Depending on the location and condition of the plots, most prices varied between three and six guilders per square meter.

(Dutch-Chinese School, HCS).¹⁹⁶ One school in Pasar Baroe, the Tiong Hoa Hak Tong, was even given ownership of the land on which it was built for the symbolic price of only ten guilders.¹⁹⁷

The Chinese officers were responsible for the regular inspection of Chinese schools. The captain conducted four inspections per year, checking which subjects were taught and verifying the backgrounds of teachers and prospective teachers—their reputation, whether they paid their taxes on time, and whether their teaching would unsettle colonial society.¹⁹⁸ Candidates who applied for a licence to teach in the Dutch East Indies had to submit a form with their personal information, their education (including a copy of their diploma), and the subjects they intended to teach and in which language; they were also expected to submit an official certificate of good conduct from the police chief and their residence permit.¹⁹⁹

The Chinese Council also donated money to victims of fire and flood, as well as to organisations set up to help the poor and needy. The Council provided an amount of 40,000 guilders for the building of Ati Soetji, an organisation that sheltered women and neglected children,²⁰⁰ and it donated a plot of land to the *Bedelaarskolonie*, an organisation that provided shelter for the poor and disabled.²⁰¹ In the meeting of October 1924, a request for financial support from a thirty-eight-year old woman was discussed. Because of her young age, the Council declined financial support, but since the woman had lost both of her hands and she also had the care of a young child, the

¹⁹⁶ Malay minutes, no. NM4, 14 April 1920: pp. 131–138.

¹⁹⁷ Chinese minutes, no. 21027, 3 September 1917: p. 11 and 3 October 1917: p. 18.

¹⁹⁸ See the inspection reports of Chinese schools, the Kong Koan Archive, MR6a 000-6, Leiden and Govaars-Tjia, *Dutch Colonial Education*, chap. 6.

¹⁹⁹ See the applications for obtaining a licence to teach in the Netherlands Indies, the Kong Koan Archive, MM05I-00020 and MM05I-00021, Leiden.

²⁰⁰ Chinese minutes, no. 21026, 3 April 1916: p. 93 and 3 June 1916: pp. 103–104. Ati Soetji was founded by Captain Lie Tjian Tjoen and his wife Ouw Tjoei Lan. See L. Suryadinata, *Prominent Indonesian Chinese: Biographical Sketches* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1995), 85.

²⁰¹ Chinese minutes, no. 21024, 20 August 1912: p. 77; Chinese minutes, no. 21026, 3 July 1915: p. 36.

Formulier 1.

PEMBERI-TAHOEAN.

Oraetok memberi pengajaran sekolah (art. 1 dari ordonantie pengamatan sekolah partikulir Sbl. 1932 No. 494, dieubah di Sbl. 1933 No. 372).

Formulier ini sesudah di-ini dan diboa-
hoeki tanda tangan oleh yang berperlewan
misti di kiriskan ke seboeah dari pada
kantor-kantor yang ditentokan oleh ke-
pala pemerintah kerésidén (hoofd van ge-
wontelijk bestuur) bagi negeri yang masoek
pembagian yang baharoe, oleh toean re-
sident (resident-afdeelinghoofd).

Diperingatken, bahwa barang siapa yang mengisikan kebenaran
jang ta'benar dalam formulier ini akan dihokoem penjoera selama-lama-
nja 8 hari atau dikensakan denda sebanjak-banjaksja f 25,— maseoret
art. 16 dari ordonantie jang tersebut diatas, kalau pelanggaran diatas
diebelong lagi akan dihokoem penjoera selama-lamanja 1 boelan atau
dikensakan denda sebanjak-banjaksja f 300.—

Pegawai pemerintah jang ditentokkan boeat menerima soerat pemberi
tahoean ini haroes memberikan satoe soerat tanda trima kepada jang
memasoekkan soerat pemberi tahoean; soerat pemberi tahoean muna di
bikin rangkap tiga.

**Boeat tiap-tiap perobahan jang diadakan: seperti
perobahan dalem peladjaran atau tempat mengadjar
misti dimasoekkan soerat pemberi tahoean baharoe.**

Jang bertanda taagan dibawah ini menerangkan disini bahwa segala
ketawaan jang diberikan diebelah benar belaka.

Batavia, tanggal 17 Januari 1940
Tanda tangan,

陳東明 Jan Tong Beng



An application for a teaching position in Batavia

T A R I K H

陳東明

1940.

Batavia, Hindia.

Tjjoelanghoofd Kanton 18, Batavia.

Stasiun: Hoeng a College of
South China Panchow-26, 27, 1934.

Kagan Meisikhoehoert, art. 15, 16, 18
1934.

Pengantar van Hoetingang P. A. Hoetingang
van Hoek van 18/11-30. - 1.

[P. A. HOETINGANG, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60, 61, 62, 63, 64, 65, 66, 67, 68, 69, 70, 71, 72, 73, 74, 75, 76, 77, 78, 79, 80, 81, 82, 83, 84, 85, 86, 87, 88, 89, 90, 91, 92, 93, 94, 95, 96, 97, 98, 99, 100, 101, 102, 103, 104, 105, 106, 107, 108, 109, 110, 111, 112, 113, 114, 115, 116, 117, 118, 119, 120, 121, 122, 123, 124, 125, 126, 127, 128, 129, 130, 131, 132, 133, 134, 135, 136, 137, 138, 139, 140, 141, 142, 143, 144, 145, 146, 147, 148, 149, 150, 151, 152, 153, 154, 155, 156, 157, 158, 159, 160, 161, 162, 163, 164, 165, 166, 167, 168, 169, 170, 171, 172, 173, 174, 175, 176, 177, 178, 179, 180, 181, 182, 183, 184, 185, 186, 187, 188, 189, 190, 191, 192, 193, 194, 195, 196, 197, 198, 199, 200, 201, 202, 203, 204, 205, 206, 207, 208, 209, 210, 211, 212, 213, 214, 215, 216, 217, 218, 219, 220, 221, 222, 223, 224, 225, 226, 227, 228, 229, 230, 231, 232, 233, 234, 235, 236, 237, 238, 239, 240, 241, 242, 243, 244, 245, 246, 247, 248, 249, 250, 251, 252, 253, 254, 255, 256, 257, 258, 259, 260, 261, 262, 263, 264, 265, 266, 267, 268, 269, 270, 271, 272, 273, 274, 275, 276, 277, 278, 279, 280, 281, 282, 283, 284, 285, 286, 287, 288, 289, 290, 291, 292, 293, 294, 295, 296, 297, 298, 299, 300, 301, 302, 303, 304, 305, 306, 307, 308, 309, 310, 311, 312, 313, 314, 315, 316, 317, 318, 319, 320, 321, 322, 323, 324, 325, 326, 327, 328, 329, 330, 331, 332, 333, 334, 335, 336, 337, 338, 339, 340, 341, 342, 343, 344, 345, 346, 347, 348, 349, 350, 351, 352, 353, 354, 355, 356, 357, 358, 359, 360, 361, 362, 363, 364, 365, 366, 367, 368, 369, 370, 371, 372, 373, 374, 375, 376, 377, 378, 379, 380, 381, 382, 383, 384, 385, 386, 387, 388, 389, 390, 391, 392, 393, 394, 395, 396, 397, 398, 399, 400, 401, 402, 403, 404, 405, 406, 407, 408, 409, 410, 411, 412, 413, 414, 415, 416, 417, 418, 419, 420, 421, 422, 423, 424, 425, 426, 427, 428, 429, 430, 431, 432, 433, 434, 435, 436, 437, 438, 439, 440, 441, 442, 443, 444, 445, 446, 447, 448, 449, 450, 451, 452, 453, 454, 455, 456, 457, 458, 459, 460, 461, 462, 463, 464, 465, 466, 467, 468, 469, 470, 471, 472, 473, 474, 475, 476, 477, 478, 479, 480, 481, 482, 483, 484, 485, 486, 487, 488, 489, 490, 491, 492, 493, 494, 495, 496, 497, 498, 499, 500, 501, 502, 503, 504, 505, 506, 507, 508, 509, 510, 511, 512, 513, 514, 515, 516, 517, 518, 519, 520, 521, 522, 523, 524, 525, 526, 527, 528, 529, 530, 531, 532, 533, 534, 535, 536, 537, 538, 539, 540, 541, 542, 543, 544, 545, 546, 547, 548, 549, 550, 551, 552, 553, 554, 555, 556, 557, 558, 559, 560, 561, 562, 563, 564, 565, 566, 567, 568, 569, 570, 571, 572, 573, 574, 575, 576, 577, 578, 579, 580, 581, 582, 583, 584, 585, 586, 587, 588, 589, 590, 591, 592, 593, 594, 595, 596, 597, 598, 599, 600, 601, 602, 603, 604, 605, 606, 607, 608, 609, 610, 611, 612, 613, 614, 615, 616, 617, 618, 619, 620, 621, 622, 623, 624, 625, 626, 627, 628, 629, 630, 631, 632, 633, 634, 635, 636, 637, 638, 639, 640, 641, 642, 643, 644, 645, 646, 647, 648, 649, 650, 651, 652, 653, 654, 655, 656, 657, 658, 659, 660, 661, 662, 663, 664, 665, 666, 667, 668, 669, 670, 671, 672, 673, 674, 675, 676, 677, 678, 679, 680, 681, 682, 683, 684, 685, 686, 687, 688, 689, 690, 691, 692, 693, 694, 695, 696, 697, 698, 699, 700, 701, 702, 703, 704, 705, 706, 707, 708, 709, 710, 711, 712, 713, 714, 715, 716, 717, 718, 719, 720, 721, 722, 723, 724, 725, 726, 727, 728, 729, 730, 731, 732, 733, 734, 735, 736, 737, 738, 739, 740, 741, 742, 743, 744, 745, 746, 747, 748, 749, 750, 751, 752, 753, 754, 755, 756, 757, 758, 759, 760, 761, 762, 763, 764, 765, 766, 767, 768, 769, 770, 771, 772, 773, 774, 775, 776, 777, 778, 779, 780, 781, 782, 783, 784, 785, 786, 787, 788, 789, 790, 791, 792, 793, 794, 795, 796, 797, 798, 799, 800, 801, 802, 803, 804, 805, 806, 807, 808, 809, 810, 811, 812, 813, 814, 815, 816, 817, 818, 819, 820, 821, 822, 823, 824, 825, 826, 827, 828, 829, 830, 831, 832, 833, 834, 835, 836, 837, 838, 839, 840, 841, 842, 843, 844, 845, 846, 847, 848, 849, 850, 851, 852, 853, 854, 855, 856, 857, 858, 859, 860, 861, 862, 863, 864, 865, 866, 867, 868, 869, 870, 871, 872, 873, 874, 875, 876, 877, 878, 879, 880, 881, 882, 883, 884, 885, 886, 887, 888, 889, 890, 891, 892, 893, 894, 895, 896, 897, 898, 899, 900, 901, 902, 903, 904, 905, 906, 907, 908, 909, 910, 911, 912, 913, 914, 915, 916, 917, 918, 919, 920, 921, 922, 923, 924, 925, 926, 927, 928, 929, 930, 931, 932, 933, 934, 935, 936, 937, 938, 939, 940, 941, 942, 943, 944, 945, 946, 947, 948, 949, 950, 951, 952, 953, 954, 955, 956, 957, 958, 959, 960, 961, 962, 963, 964, 965, 966, 967, 968, 969, 970, 971, 972, 973, 974, 975, 976, 977, 978, 979, 980, 981, 982, 983, 984, 985, 986, 987, 988, 989, 990, 991, 992, 993, 994, 995, 996, 997, 998, 999, 1000]

Soerat tanda terima.

Jang bertanda taagan dibawah ini menerangkan disini bahwa ia telah menerima soerat
pembetulansoeran jang ditentokkan di art. 6 dari ordonantie tanggal 17 September 1932 Sbl.
No. 494, dieubah dalam Sbl. 1933 No. 372 dan

dibekalkan di _____

Diperboet di _____

Atas nama toean Resident Batavia

By: _____
Assistent Resident

Council decided to have the woman admitted to the *Bedelaarskolonie* and her child to *Ati Soetji*.²⁰² The Council also supported people who could not make a living in Batavia; a group of twelve poor Chinese women without any relatives in Batavia were given 500 guilders for their return to China. One poor couple with health problems was given money for medicine and a trip back to their hometown Pamekasan (Madoera).²⁰³ In times of economic hardship the Council did not hesitate to provide help; when the First World War resulted in increased prices of food and other commodities, the Chinese Council granted a bonus of 10 percent for its employees. On top of this bonus, the Council donated two *gantang* of rice per month to each employee.²⁰⁴ For the same reason, monks and caretakers of Chinese temples were also given additional financial support and rice.²⁰⁵

Recurrent financial support was given to elderly women without relatives. It was Major Khouw Kim An who submitted the proposal to grant a monthly stipend of three guilders for Chinese widows and widowers, orphans, and poor Chinese without family, to help with living expenses.²⁰⁶ In principle, only elderly women without financial means and no family to rely on were considered for monthly support. To assess a request for financial support, the Council relied on the reports of the neighbourhood chiefs, though in some cases women were summoned to appear before the Council to be interviewed.²⁰⁷ If a woman appeared to have family after all, the allowance was withdrawn at once. In one case, a woman was removed from the donation list because her granddaughter had been taken in as a concubine by a wealthy man.²⁰⁸ In exceptional cases men were also given a monthly allowance; in the meeting of November 1915 the Council decided to

²⁰² Malay minutes, no. NM5, 25 October 1924: pp. 180–81.

²⁰³ Chinese minutes, no. 21023, 15 January 1909: pp. 131–132; Malay minutes, no. NM4, 27 May 1920: pp. 155–156.

²⁰⁴ One *gantang* equals three kilos.

²⁰⁵ Malay minutes, no. NM3, 17 January 1917: p. 224; Malay minutes, no. NM4, 8 July 1919: pp. 93–94 and 14 April 1920: pp. 145–147.

²⁰⁶ Chinese minutes, no. 21023, 13 March 1909: p. 138.

²⁰⁷ Chinese minutes, no. 21026, 3 April 1915: p. 19.

²⁰⁸ Chinese minutes, no. 21024, 3 May 1912: pp. 34–35.

grant a blind and disabled man three guilders per month.²⁰⁹ In the Council meeting of October 1920 it was decided to raise the allowance to four guilders per month because food prices had increased after the First World War.²¹⁰ This amount was lowered in 1924 when the Council faced cutbacks and had difficulty meeting the increasing requests for allowances. In March of that year, allowances were reduced to f 3.50 for people already receiving support, while new applicants for welfare received the original amount of three guilders.²¹¹ In 1925 it was decided to limit the number of people receiving monthly allowances from the Chinese Council to no more than 150 people. When this number was reached, people were put on a waiting list. Normally, when a person receiving allowance passed away the first name on the list would take his or her place.²¹² It appears that widows of former neighbourhood chiefs, caretakers, and messengers received a higher allowance, varying from f 5.00 to f 7.50 per month.²¹³ Around Chinese New Year, the elderly women were given a supplement worth one month of their monthly allowances in the form of money, clothes and rice.²¹⁴ In 1933 poor elderly men and women who did not have a place to stay were accommodated in temples and the Chinese Council paid for the renovation of the empty rooms in the temples to make these habitable.²¹⁵

Temple management and annual public ceremonies

The Chinese Council was responsible for the management and maintenance of four temples in Batavia: Kim Tek Ie (Glodok), Wan Kiap Sie (Goenoeng Sahari), Klenteng Antjol, and Klenteng

²⁰⁹ Chinese minutes, no. 21026, 20 November 1915: p. 61.

²¹⁰ Malay minutes, no. NM4, 23 October 1920: p. 202.

²¹¹ Malay minutes, no. NM5, 8 February 1924: pp. 162–63.

²¹² Malay minutes, NM 5, 18 August 1925: pp. 220–22.

²¹³ Chinese minutes, no. 21025, 3 June 1914: p. 104; Malay minutes, no. NM4, 17 March 1920: p. 16 and 1 October 1921: pp. 267–68.

²¹⁴ Chinese minutes, no. 21027, 5 February 1918: p. 36; Malay minutes, no. NM4, 21 January 1922: p. 291.

²¹⁵ Malay minutes, no. NM6, 12 December 1933: pp. 149–151.

Tandjoeng Grogol.²¹⁶ The most important building in a Chinese neighbourhood, the Chinese temple functioned as a centre of religion and culture and was also a reflection of the community that supported it.²¹⁷ The Chinese temple was the place where people came for worship, bringing offerings to ancestors, gods, and spirits, and burning incense on the altar. Chinese public holidays such as Chinese New Year (*Imlek*), Tomb Sweeping Day (*Tjengbeng*) and the Hungry Ghost festival (*Tjioko*) were celebrated in the temples,²¹⁸ as were anniversary days of Chinese gods. The Chinese Council provided funds for these ceremonies, but neighbourhood chiefs also collected donations from ordinary citizens.²¹⁹ Special religious ceremonies were also conducted in temples during Dutch public holidays. In 1913 the major ordered the secretaries of the Chinese Council to supervise prayers in the temples of Glodok and Goenoeng Sahari in honour of the celebrations for the centennial of the Kingdom of the Netherlands' independence from French rule.²²⁰

The Chinese Council recruited and supervised the monks, priests and abbots of the temples. The abbots were responsible for the temple's possessions and ensured that monks and priests performed the religious ceremonies correctly and behaved properly. When a temple needed renovation or a new interior, the Council set up a committee of officers to assess the expenses. After the total costs were determined, the Council provided the funds for the renovation but also asked the Chinese community to donate money. Then the Council contracted out the renovation job.²²¹

²¹⁶ Malay minutes, no. NM5, 16 January 1928: pp. 316–17.

²¹⁷ C. Salmon and D. Lombard, *Klenteng-klenteng dan masyarakat Tionghoa di Jakarta* (Jakarta: Yayasan Cipta Loka Caraka, 2003), 93.

²¹⁸ The *Tjioko* festival takes place on the 15th day of the seventh month of the lunar calendar. On this day offerings are made to the hungry and neglected ghosts and souls that roam the world seeking for prayers and offerings, as they had not received these tokens of respect from their families.

²¹⁹ Chinese minutes, no. 21023, 31 December 1907: p. 93.

²²⁰ Chinese minutes, no. 21025, 3 November 1913: pp. 52–55.

²²¹ Malay minutes, no. NM5, 16 October 1922: p. 36 and 11 May 1926: pp. 247–48.



Chinese temple in Batavia c.1900



Chinese priests, presumably in Batavia, c.1900

The Chinese Council also looked after arrangements for annual public ceremonies and festivities. Chinese New Year was always celebrated exuberantly with fireworks display, *wayang* (shadow) plays, lion dances (*barongsai*), card games, an evening fair (*pasar malam*), and other forms of entertainment. For every form of entertainment, permission needed to be obtained from the resident, especially for setting off fireworks, which was strictly forbidden in Batavia. After permission was given, people were allowed to set off fireworks in the courtyards of their houses or temples from 6 p.m. until midnight.²²² Another annual fair was the Pasar Gambir that took place at the Koningsplein (present day Medan Merdeka), from the end of August until the beginning of September. This bazaar had a more official character, as it was organised by the colonial authorities to enhance local trade and industry. After the festive opening of the fair, which was attended by representatives of the local colonial government and various dignitaries, people flocked into the market to enjoy a great variety of local refreshments and visit the various exhibitions and a kind of *galérie du travail*, in which merchants and craftsmen displayed their goods and handicrafts to the public. After a week or so, the Pasar Gambir was officially closed.²²³ In 1921, the assistant-resident asked Major Khouw Kim An and the neighbourhood chief of Pasar Baroe, Yo Kim Thaij, to become members of the committee that organised the fair as members of the Chinese community. Chinese merchants interested in renting a stand on the Pasar Gambir could sign up with Yo Kim Thaij or the secretary of the Chinese Council.²²⁴ Festivities in honour of Dutch public holidays, such as the birth of Princess Juliana on 30 April 1909, the centennial of Dutch independence in 1913, and the twenty-fifth anniversary of Queen Wilhelmina's reign in 1923 were organised by the Chinese Council. The Council also depended in part on donations from the Chinese community for these

²²² Chinese minutes, no. 21026, 28 January 1916: pp. 79–80 and 17 January 1917: pp. 136–137; Malay minutes, no. NM5, 12 June 1925: pp. 191–92 and 6 February 1926: pp. 237–38.

²²³ C. M. Pleyte, *Verslag nopens de Pasar-Gambir: gehouden op het Koningsplein te Weltevreden van 28 augustus–2 september 1906* (Batavia: Landsdrukkerij, 1907).

²²⁴ Malay minutes, no. NM4, 16 July 1921: p. 234; Malay minutes, no. NM5, 12 June 1925: p. 216.

celebrations. The Dutch holidays were celebrated in the Chinese neighbourhoods and temples with great enthusiasm; special ceremonies were organised in the Chinese temples, as was entertainment such as music, *wayang* performances, and other kinds of theatre. The Chinese neighbourhoods were cheerfully decorated with flags and lanterns. In 1913 the assistant-resident sent a letter to the Chinese Council to say how impressed the governor-general was to see the enthusiasm of the Chinese people in preparing the festivities for celebrating the centennial independence of the Kingdom of the Netherlands.²²⁵



Special gate erected to celebrate the marriage of Queen Wilhelmina at Pasar Baroe, 1901

²²⁵ Chinese minutes, no. 21023, 13 March 1909: pp. 137–138; Chinese minutes, no. 21025, 3 November 1913: pp. 52–55 and 3 December 1913: pp. 58–59; Malay minutes, no. NM5, 3 February 1923: pp. 65–66.

The welfare of the Chinese neighbourhoods: safety, hygiene and healthcare

The neighbourhood chiefs were in charge of a group of night watchmen, appointed to patrol in the Chinese neighbourhoods at night and paid for with money the chiefs collected from the Chinese people.²²⁶ The neighbourhood chiefs also assisted the police in criminal investigations. They accompanied the police when house searches were carried out in their neighbourhoods, and tracked down illegal opium sellers and illegal female immigrants who had been forced into prostitution by women traffickers.²²⁷ The Chinese Council did not maintain a separate police force, as asserted by James Rush.²²⁸



Chinese on the way to Pasar Baroe, c.1900

²²⁶ Chinese minutes, no. 21024, 12 February 1912: p. 2; Chinese minutes, no. 21025, 30 December 1914: pp. 148–50.

²²⁷ Malay minutes, no. NM1, 3 December 1910: pp. 64–65; Chinese minutes, no. 21026, 18 October 1915: pp. 55–56; Malay minutes no. 21024, 21 January 1922: pp. 286–89.

²²⁸ Rush, *Opium to Java*, 87.

Twice a year the residents of Batavia were summoned to carry out the “biannual cleaning of their houses and properties”. According to official instructions, houses had to be made dust free; walls plastered, coated with tar, and painted; and broken fences repaired. The neighbourhood chiefs saw to it that everyone in their wards followed orders. People resisting to the clean-up faced one to four days in prison or a fine that could reach up to twenty-five guilders.²²⁹ The Chinese Council was jointly responsible for the infrastructure and communal facilities in the Chinese neighbourhoods. The municipal government asked the Chinese Council to make a financial contribution for the repair of roads, the instalment of street lighting, the drainage of marshes, and the construction and maintenance of sewers, gutters, and public toilets. The Council also donated land for the common good, such as for the construction of a bridge over the Krekot Channel in front of the train station of Tanah Abang.²³⁰

The Chinese Council supervised the Chinese Hospital. Intended primarily for “poor and unattended Chinese”, the hospital was built in the seventeenth century on deserted land that was bestowed by the Company. The hospital was funded by levies on funerals, marriages, the immigration permits of Chinese, and Chinese *wayang* performances, but also by fines imposed on illegal *wayang* performances and the fees that were levied on the certificate of appointment of a Chinese officer. Donations from the Chinese community also contributed to the hospital’s funds. The hospital was administered by the *College van Boedelmeesteren*. Even though the name implied the hospital was exclusively for Chinese patients, the hospital also took in other non-Christians, such as Foreign Orientals and indigenous Indonesians, the name merely indicated that the hospital was run and financed by the Chinese people.²³¹ Batavia, Semarang, and Soerabaja each had a

²²⁹ Chinese minutes, no. 21024, 3 June 1912: pp. 37–38.

²³⁰ Chinese minutes, no. 21023, 13 March 1908: p. 103; Chinese minutes, no. 21024, 3 May 1912: pp. 28–29; Chinese minutes, no. 21026, 3 May 1915: p. 26 and 3 August 1916: p. 108. The Krekot Channel mentioned in the archive of the Chinese Council refers to the Banjir Barat Channel in Jakarta today.

²³¹ Roo de la Faille, “De Chineesche Raad te Batavia”, 306–23.

Chinese Hospital until 1912.²³² Officers on duty in the Chinese Council paid regular visits to the hospital for inspections. Irregularities were reported to the assistant-resident. In one case, patients complained about the poor quality of care in the hospital, as they were only given a little bit of rice porridge every day.²³³

Outbreaks of pestilence or tropical disease such as cholera, smallpox, or typhoid occurred frequently in the first three decades of the twentieth century. Such epidemics not only caused personal discomfort, but also paralysed daily life. In 1912 the Dragon Boat Festival and a number of weddings had to be cancelled after an outbreak of cholera.²³⁴ To minimise the risk of an outbreak, the neighbourhood chiefs instructed the inhabitants of their wards to clean their houses, gardens, and the sewers in their immediate vicinity. Street vendors were prohibited from selling *roedjak*²³⁵ and fruit that had been peeled. The secretary of the Chinese Council frequently went into the Chinese neighbourhoods for inspection rounds. People who failed to keep their houses clean faced criminal charges. If a neighbourhood chief discovered people who were infected with a certain disease, he had to report the infection straight away to the Chinese Council, the indigenous district head (*wedana*) or the bureau of health care. People who were infected and members of their immediate family were placed in quarantine.²³⁶ Another preventive measure against the outbreak of diseases was the organisation of vaccination rounds, which took place mostly in the houses of the neighbourhood chiefs. The Chinese Council even financed the training of a female vaccinator, who

²³² The hospitals in Batavia and Semarang carried the name *Chineesch Hospitaal* and the hospital in Soerabaja was called *Semaroonggesticht*. In 1912, the Chinese Hospital in Semarang was closed. The hospitals in Batavia and Soerabaja were retained, but under new names: *Hulpstadsverband* and *Leprozengesticht Semaroong*. See *Indisch Staatsblad* 1911-585.

²³³ Chinese minutes, no. 21023, 29 March 1908: p. 108; Chinese minutes, no. 21024, 3 April 1913: p. 154.

²³⁴ Chinese minutes, no. 21024, 22 February 1912: p. 10.

²³⁵ *Roedjak* is a salad made of different kinds of fruit or vegetables, served with a sweet and spicy sauce.

²³⁶ Malay minutes, no. NM1, 24 January 1911: p. 104; Chinese minutes, no. 21024, 3 Augustus 1912: pp. 63–64; Chinese minutes, no. 21025, 3 September 1914: pp. 128–29.

took care of the immunisation of females and children. The men were vaccinated by an indigenous vaccinator, hired by the Council.²³⁷ Newly arrived immigrants from China also had to be vaccinated, but this turned out not to be so easy. Lack of knowledge probably resulted in their resistance against the vaccinations. Only the threat of being sent back to China or the closing down of their shops made the Hakka and Macao Chinese give in.²³⁸ Neighbourhood chiefs who failed to report a case of infection, or failed to bring in a considerable number of people for the vaccination rounds were fired.²³⁹



Chinese neighbourhood, presumably in Batavia, 1920

²³⁷ Chinese minutes, no. 21025, 18 December 1913: pp. 70–71, 3 June 1914: p. 103, and 6 October 1914: pp. 133–34.

²³⁸ Malay minutes, no. NM2, 4 December 1911: pp. 21–23.

²³⁹ Chinese minutes, no. 21025, 3 December 1913: p. 63.

The management of burial grounds and other landed properties

The Chinese Council can be regarded as a corporate body that not only looked after the interests of the Chinese people, but also managed considerable estates. At the beginning of the twentieth century, the Council owned fourteen *particuliere landerijen* (private lands) in and around Batavia, including the building that was its headquarters. Furthermore, the Council managed four *eigendomsperceelen* (that is, compounds), three in the name of Chinese temples, and one in the name of the Chinese officers. Its yearly income was derived from biannual land leases, payments of mortgages, interests on mortgages, the selling of land for public interest, the sale of burial grounds, and so on.²⁴⁰

The Council registered the deaths of the Chinese people and managed the burial grounds and funeral fund. During the first decades of Company rule, Chinese civilians were buried in a public cemetery designated by the Company, while the Chinese captains were buried on their private lands. In 1660 the Chinese people asked permission to construct a new graveyard beyond the *fort Jacatra* because the old one “was filled with graves and bodies”. Eight years later, the Chinese community purchased property rights to this burial site for 400 *rijksdaalders*. To safeguard the cemetery from plundering, permission was given to dig a moat around the plot.²⁴¹ In the centuries afterwards, the Chinese community purchased more land for the construction of cemeteries. In 1745, on the initiative of Captain Liem Beng Kong, a Japanese pavilion and a garden reaching up to Kemajoran were purchased. In close consultation with his lieutenants, Captain Liem Tjip Kong made the decision to buy another burial plot in Goenoeng Sahari in 1762. In 1809 Governor-General Daendels considered the Chinese graves that rapidly turned into “stinking pits” in the most elegant and healthy part of Batavia’s suburbs a health risk for the European population. For this reason a new plot named Tandjoeng, located in the Ommelanden west of the city, was

²⁴⁰ “Opgaaf van de Bezittingen van den Chineschen Raad te Batavia, 1917”, enclosed with the letter of the Resident of Batavia to the Governor-General, 5 November 1917, no. 22168/6, in *Binnenlandsch Bestuur*, no. 1935, ANRI, Jakarta.

²⁴¹ Roo de la Faille, “De Chinesche Raad te Batavia”, 307–308.

allotted to the Chinese to construct a graveyard.²⁴² In 1828 the Chinese Council purchased Slipi to expand the cemetery of Tandjoeng, which lay to the north. Probably in the same year, the Council took over the management of Tandjoeng. In 1855 the Chinese Council bought Djati, located east of Tandjoeng and Slipi. In Gouvernementsbesluit of 17 February 1856, no. 23 the governor-general approved the regulation for the management of the Chinese funeral fund in Batavia, and the management of the three burial grounds in Tandjoeng, Slipi, and Djati was officially delegated to the Chinese Council,²⁴³ which later purchased additional burial plots in Djelambar and Tjidang.

When someone wished to purchase a plot for erecting a tomb, he or she sent a written request to the Chinese Council.²⁴⁴ Each month the officer on duty was assigned to examine the requests and measure the requested plots. After thorough examination the officer reported his findings at the monthly board meetings of the Chinese Council. If the officer saw no objection to the sale, and the other Council members agreed with him, the chairman gave permission for the sale and received the purchase price. Then the secretary gave out a receipt, signed by the chairman of the Council or his official substitute.²⁴⁵ If the deceased was someone without means, the chief of the neighbourhood where he or she lived submitted a statement affirming that the deceased person was indeed needy. This statement had to be signed by the Chinese officer assigned to the area in question. After this, the secretary of the Council gave permission for a free funeral.²⁴⁶ Chinese officers, secretaries, neighbourhood chiefs, and other staff members were also allocated free burial grounds (*im tee*), provided they had served the Chinese Council for at least four years and had been

²⁴² Roo de la Faille, “De Chinesche Raad te Batavia”, 316–17.

²⁴³ Chen, *De Chinese Gemeenschap van Batavia*, 48–49.

²⁴⁴ The Chinese Council drew a distinction between burial grounds that were bought before someone was actually deceased (*koeboeran sioehék*) and those bought after someone had passed away (*koeboeran hongsoeij*). The *koeboeran sioehék* were bought in advance to prepare a long resting place for someone.

²⁴⁵ “Reglement voor den Chineschen Raad te Batavia”, articles 3 and 4, in Binnenlandsch Bestuur, no. 1935, ANRI, Jakarta.

²⁴⁶ “Reglement voor den Chineschen Raad te Batavia”, article 3, in Binnenlandsch Bestuur, no. 1935, ANRI, Jakarta.

honourably discharged. The rank of a person determined which category grave was given, but usually the best positions in the graveyard were reserved for the Council members and their immediate staff. First-class graves were granted to the officers and secretaries; the Council's inspectors got second-class graves; the neighbourhood chiefs were given third-class graves; and the assistant neighbourhood chiefs, messengers, and other staff members had to settle with fourth-class graves.²⁴⁷

Each month the officer on duty visited the Chinese graveyards for inspection. He was accompanied by the overseer of the cemeteries (*mandoer*). They saw to it that the graves and the roads leading to the cemeteries were maintained and that no graves were desecrated. He also checked whether everyone complied with the regulations regarding the measurements of the graves. If the grave was too big, the purchase price was doubled.²⁴⁸ The secretary kept the registers of people who had been allotted free graves and the funeral books, the so-called *boekoe hongsoeij* or *boekoe sioehék*, in which the secretary recorded which plots of land had been purchased for the purpose of constructing a grave, as well as the name of the purchaser, descriptions and measurements of the plot, and its location.²⁴⁹

The Chinese people always selected the location of their graves carefully. Their choice for a location has to be understood within a context of mystical beliefs and how they viewed the world. In selecting the location of their final resting-place, they always followed the geomantic rules of *feng shui* (*hong soeij*). According to the precepts of *feng shui*, sites are chosen and tombs positioned so as to be in harmony with the spiritual forces wind (*feng, hong*) and water (*shui, soeij*). The Chinese believed that if situated properly the dead would not be disturbed by unfavourable

²⁴⁷ Malay minutes, no. NM5, 3 April 1925: pp. 206–207, 3 August 1927: pp. 285–86, and 18 July 1928: p. 344; Malay minutes, no. NM6, 21 March 1931: p. 73.

²⁴⁸ “Reglement voor den Chineeschen Raad te Batavia”, articles 4 and 12, Binnenlandsch Bestuur, no. 1935, ANRI, Jakarta.

²⁴⁹ “Reglement voor den Chineeschen Raad te Batavia”, article 5, Binnenlandsch Bestuur, no. 1935, ANRI, Jakarta.

influences of wind and water, while the right location would also bring comfort and fortune to all descendants.²⁵⁰ However in the twentieth century it often happened that these traditional practices had to give way to the rapidly modernising society of Batavia. The Chinese Council frequently had to turn over sites containing Chinese graves to the municipality for industrial development. Sometimes conflicts arose between the Chinese Council and the municipality when the Council resisted selling sites that contained many old Chinese graves or when the municipality did not offer enough financial compensation for the relocation of graves. This was the case in 1920 when one of the municipal departments planned to build a slaughterhouse and a cold store on a site owned by the Chinese Council. The municipal department answered the Council's objections with a threat to expropriate the site. After months of haggling, the Council yielded to the municipality's wishes.²⁵¹ In the meeting of January 1923 the Council enacted rules for the relocation of Chinese graves. A tomb was only allowed to be relocated for public interests and only after permission was given by the relatives. The Chinese Council did not have the right to relocate a grave at will. When the municipality wished to do so, it had to place an advertisement in the Chinese and Malay newspapers for three months to inform the relatives of the deceased and to ask them for permission. When permission was given by the family, the municipality had to negotiate about the expenses of relocation, which included the performance of religious ceremonies and the urns in which the bones were kept during the relocation.²⁵²

The lands of the Chinese Council containing many Chinese graves were used exclusively as graveyards, and the Council did not expect that the land would yield revenues. Lands that could still

²⁵⁰ Li Minghuan, "A Portrait of Batavia's Chinese Society Based on the Tandjoeng Cemetery Archives", in *Archives of the Kong Koan of Batavia*, edited by L. Blussé and Chen Menghong (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 80; J. J. M. de Groot, *De Lijkbezorging der Emoy-Chineezzen* ('s-Gravenhage: Nijhoff, 1892).

²⁵¹ Malay minutes, no. NM4, 14 July 1920: pp. 170–73, 18 September 1920: pp. 193–94, and 22 December 1920: pp. 204–204.

²⁵² Chinese minutes, no. 21025, 25 September 1913: pp. 37–38; Malay minutes, no. NM5, 3 January 1923: pp. 55–56.

bring in revenues and did not contain (many) graves were leased out by the Council for a period of six years. Such leases were set by auctions announced in the daily papers a few months before the lease of the current tenant expired. On the day of the auction, potential tenants and their guarantors gathered to bid on the leases. The Chinese officers followed the auction closely and observed the potential tenants. When the auction was over, the officers convened to discuss the results, comparing the bids and examining the financial background of the bidders and their guarantors. Based on the outcome of this discussion, a decision for a new tenant was made. Usually the officers chose the highest bidder, provided he and his guarantors were financially strong and stable. After the decision was made, the chairman of the Council and the secretary went to the notary who had conducted the auction to draw up the papers.²⁵³ If the land in question contained Chinese graves, the tenant was ordered to keep a watchful eye so that these graves were left undisturbed.²⁵⁴

The Chinese Council also leased out its own compounds.²⁵⁵ For the leasing out of these buildings, the Council placed advertisements in the newspapers. Anyone who wished to lease the buildings could send his bid to the Chinese Council. The officers discussed all the incoming bids in the monthly board meeting. After a decision for a tenant was made, the lease contract was drawn up at the notary.²⁵⁶ The Council also sold lands which were not suitable for the construction of cemeteries, and from which no revenues could be yielded. Once a year, in February, the Chinese Council had to submit a financial report to the resident.²⁵⁷ (The choice for February might have to do with the end of the Chinese lunar year, which normally falls in the months of January and February.) A few days before the end of the lunar calendar the Chinese Council officially concluded its activities for the year.

²⁵³ Malay minutes, no. NM5, 25 April 1927: pp. 271–72 and 12 July 1927: pp. 282–84.

²⁵⁴ “Reglement voor den Chineeschen Raad te Batavia”, article 7, Binnenlandsch Bestuur, no. 1935, ANRI, Jakarta.

²⁵⁵ The rented houses of the Chinese Council were leased out for a period of three years.

²⁵⁶ Chinese minutes, no. 21024, 3 September 1912: pp. 80–81.

²⁵⁷ “Reglement voor den Chineeschen Raad te Batavia”, articles 7 and 14, Binnenlandsch Bestuur, no. 1935, ANRI, Jakarta.

2.4 The elite status of the Chinese officers

On Java and Madoera the post of Chinese officer was honorary and thus an unpaid position.

Therefore in most cases only wealthy Chinese from the local elite such as landowners, owners of sugar mills and rice paddies, and influential merchants could afford to take the position. The Dutch reasoned that it was wealth, which gave a member of the Chinese elite influence in his community and made him an effective middleman between the Dutch authorities and the Chinese people.²⁵⁸

Indeed, in the Chinese community where business played an integral role, wealth and exceptional economic power were essential for leadership status.²⁵⁹ Until the twentieth century the post of Chinese officer was a much sought after position as the Chinese Council dealt with the daily affairs of the Chinese community and because there were financial perquisites attached to the job. To compensate for their unpaid activities, collection of most of the government revenues were farmed out to the Chinese officers. In the seventeenth and eighteenth century the annual auction for revenue farms in Batavia took place at the beginning of every year at the Company headquarters. Historian Liem Thian Joe compared the auctions in Semarang with battles between kings (*peperangan antara raja-raja*) as the bidding resembled close combat between participants, all of whom were members of the local elite.²⁶⁰ The Chinese played a major role in these auctions and the Chinese officers were involved in most of the farms. Success at the auctions meant control over the most lucrative of the government tax farms and the prestige and patronage that went with it. By 1644, the Chinese operated seventeen of the twenty-one revenue farms, such as gambling, markets, import and export tolls, and *wayang* plays.²⁶¹ These sources of income not only compensated the unpaid position of the Chinese officers, but made them even wealthier. Evidence of this wealth is shown in the gifts European and indigenous nobility usually received from the officers on special occasions, such as

²⁵⁸ Ong Hok Ham, "The Peranakan Officers", 281–82.

²⁵⁹ Skinner, "Overseas Chinese Leadership", 195.

²⁶⁰ Liem, *Riwayat Semarang*, 170.

²⁶¹ Reid, "The Origins of Revenue Farming", 74–75.

New Year's, or upon their appointment. Until 1797, the governor-generals received 400 rixdollars *tafelgeld* (table money) per month from the Chinese captains and 1000 rixdollars each year as a New Year's gift.²⁶² The elite status of a Chinese officer was manifested by his presence at official ceremonies and the lavish feasts he organised, as well as by the luxurious gifts he gave to high-placed Dutch officials, his disposal of carriages and the use of a *sombreel* (ceremonial parasol); the last was a privilege requiring Company approval.²⁶³ It signified that the officers were figures of respect and dignity.²⁶⁴ In the introduction to this chapter we saw that the appointment of a Chinese captain went hand in hand with a display of majestic grandeur, and the funeral of a captain was no less spectacular: "When this Captain Wanjok passed away, the Government graced his funeral in October 1684 with "Company soldiers of this Castle", adorned with mourning-bands and sashes for wear, "marching with entailing guns" and more ceremony, as though the man had been a member of the High Government."²⁶⁵

The collaborative structure between the Dutch authorities and the Chinese officers worked well in time. By appointing Chinese headmen, the government gained access to Chinese society without having to worry about the administration over the Chinese community. Language barriers and unfamiliarity with Chinese customs made the Dutch less than keen to directly administer the Chinese community. The leasing of taxes to the Chinese officers not only generated vast sums for the state coffers but also filled the officers' pockets. In this way, the officers who held various tax licences were in effect not only administrative assistants, but also important business partners of the Company and, after the Company's demise, the colonial regime. As licence holders of various revenue farms, they were partners in a business arrangement that was designed to deliver financial

²⁶² Liem, "Het Instituut der Chineesche Officieren", 71. See also *Plakaatboek*, vol. 12, 1795–1799: p. 445, and Haan, *Oud Batavia*, 1:498.

²⁶³ Haan, *Oud Batavia*, 1:499; Vermeulen, "Eenige Opmerkingen over de Rechtsbedeeling van de Compagnie", 10–11.

²⁶⁴ Rush, *Opium to Java*, 86.

²⁶⁵ Haan, *Oud Batavia*, 1:498.

profits to both parties. Thus it was important for the government to find licence holders who not only had a strong financial background, but who were also involved in an organisation that would guarantee their ability to collect taxes.²⁶⁶

These requirements were met by the Chinese officers who were directly appointed by the governor-general and who were authority figures in their community. Their authority also spread to the villages, as the officers were regarded as government officials by the indigenous people, who as a result did not dare to resist paying their taxes. They were the economic arms of government in rural areas.²⁶⁷ Moreover, the officers had everything to gain actively carrying out the tax collection (of which they were entitled a percentage of the revenues), to compensate for their unpaid administrative activities.²⁶⁸ They were trustworthy as state agents and business partners also because they benefited from the status quo and were little inclined to press for radical alterations in this arrangement. With their governmental position, connections, and wealth, the officers (and their families) were influential people in their community. Membership in the Council, even though unpaid, guaranteed authority and prestige and was therefore very appealing. The institution of Chinese officers was clearly a stronghold of the Chinese property-owning class.²⁶⁹

That the position of Chinese officer was reserved for the upper crust (*cabang atas*) of Chinese society is also shown by the fact that the post was generally closely held in family circles.²⁷⁰ In the major cities of Java the position was in essence hereditary or at least it had come to be considered the prerogative of certain wealthy *peranakan* families, in the early twentieth century

²⁶⁶ Skinner, "Overseas Chinese Leadership", 195.

²⁶⁷ A. Reid, "Entrepreneurial Minorities and the State", in *Essential Outsiders: Chinese and Jews in the Modern Transformation of Southeast Asia and Central Europe*, edited by D. Chirot and A. Reid (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1997), 45.

²⁶⁸ P. Tjiok-Liem, *De Rechtspositie der Chinezen in Nederlands-Indië 1848–1942: Wetgevingsbeleid tussen Beginsel en Belang* (Leiden: Leiden University Press, 2009), 43–46.

²⁶⁹ Blussé, *Strange Company*, 87.

²⁷⁰ Rush, *Opium to Java*, 89.

scornfully called the “government-families” (*pamerintahan-familie*).²⁷¹ In Batavia, the Khouw family included many important landowners and moneylenders, and it also produced the last Chinese major of Batavia, Khouw Kim An. The Tio family was also influential: from 1899 until 1907 the brothers Tio Tek Ho and Tio Tek Soen were members in the Chinese Council, holding the positions of major, captain and lieutenant. In Semarang there were the Be, Liem, Tan, and later the Oei and Hoo families, while the Han, The, Tjoa, and Kwee families dominated Soerabaja. The Be family in Semarang and the The family in Soerabaja produced four to five generations of officers and revenue farmers before the officer and revenue farm systems were abolished in the early twentieth century. In Central and East Java, especially, the post of Chinese officer evolved and expanded together with the revenue farms.²⁷² By the late nineteenth century these *peranakan* families had accumulated great wealth and immense local power, which even transcended district and regional borders, and through intermarriage and nepotism they were able to consolidate their *cabang atas* status. Elite families lobbied to get their sons or sons-in-law officer positions and lucrative tax farms in other towns and districts.²⁷³ But it was not impossible for newcomers to work their way into the elite. In 1884 a certain Oei Tjie Sien, a refugee of the Taiping rebellion in China arranged for his son Oei Tiong Ham—the “sugar lord” and the last and wealthiest of the opium farmers of Java—to marry into the Goei family, a wealthy and respected Chinese family of officers and tax farmers. Two years later, Oei Tiong Ham’s entrance into the elite world was confirmed by his appointment as *luitenant der Chineezen* in Semarang. In 1901 he was appointed *titulair majoor* and by the time of his death in June 1924 Oei Tiong Ham’s firm had—thanks to his business genius

²⁷¹ *Warna Warta*, 16 June 1914; “Chineesche Officieren”, *De Indische Gids* 36:1 (1914): 885–87.

²⁷² Ong Hok Ham, “Chinese Capitalism in Dutch Java”, in *Oei Tiong Ham Concern: The First Business Empire of Southeast Asia*, edited by K. Yoshihara (Kyoto: Center for Southeast Asian Studies, Kyoto University, 1989), 57; G. W. Skinner, “Creolized Chinese Societies in Southeast Asia”, in *Sojourners and Settlers: Histories of Southeast Asia and the Chinese*, edited by A. Reid (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2001), 80–81.

²⁷³ Ong Hok Ham, “Chinese Capitalism in Dutch Java”, 57–58.

—become the largest Chinese conglomerate in the Dutch East Indies.²⁷⁴ The Han family in Soerabaja produced an extraordinarily large number of majors, captains and lieutenants who held office in Soerabaja and other cities of East Java such as Djoewana, Gresik, Bangil, Pasoeroean, Probolinggo, Kediri, Malang, Kertosono, Djombang, and Koetaradja. It was a family of prominent entrepreneurs that owned agricultural companies and plantations on which paddy, sugarcane, maize, indigo, and coconut palms were grown. The Han family managed to become a new “aristocracy” that succeeded in controlling the local Chinese communities by virtue of its economic assets.²⁷⁵ The Han family had close connections with the The family in Soerabaja, a family of sugar mill owners that had an almost unbroken succession of Chinese officers in the family and produced four majors. Intermarriage was a common practice to preserve the wealth within the most powerful families.²⁷⁶

Since the foremost criterion for the position of Chinese officer was wealth, the institution seemed to be less professional and institutionalised than the administrative structures of the Company and the colonial government, which set great store by competency. The Company and the Indies government possessed bureaucratic and hierarchical structures that guaranteed them a certain political and administrative continuity that was not linked to a specific group of persons.²⁷⁷ Yet Jean Gelman Taylor has shown that family relationships were crucial in the appointments and promotions of Dutch government officials as well, women playing a key role in this. Ambitious

²⁷⁴ H. Dick, “Oei Tiong Ham”, in *The Rise and Fall of Revenue Farming: Business Elites and the Emergence of the Modern State in Southeast Asia*, edited by J. Butcher and H. Dick (New York: St. Martins Press, 1993), 272–73; Regeerings-almanak voor Nederlandsch-Indië (1908): 181. According to the Regeerings-almanak, Oei Tiong Ham was appointed lieutenant on 7 June 1886. He became captain on 16 November 1891, and on 12 June 1901 he was awarded the title of honorary major.

²⁷⁵ “Chineesche Officieren”, in *De Indische Gids* 36:1 (1914): 885–86, quoted in Williams, *Overseas Chinese Nationalism*, 125; C. Salmon, “The Han Family of East Java: Entrepreneurship and Politics (18th–19th centuries)”, *Archipel* 41 (1991): 78–79; for a list of Chinese community heads in East Java, see pp. 79–80.

²⁷⁶ Ong Hok Ham, “The Perankan Officers”, 287.

²⁷⁷ Blussé, *Strange Company*, 89.

men used marriage to prominent women to cement alliances that ultimately placed them in important government posts.²⁷⁸ In the case of Chinese administration, the appointment of a Chinese officer was based on wealth, personal preference, and bribes. The first Chinese Captain Souw Bing Kong, for example, was a personal friend of J. P. Coen, who not only appointed him, but also gave him two plots of land (coconut plantations in Mangga Doea) on 1 February 1623 for the construction of his houses, which were built of brick and paid for by the Company. To protect Souw Bing Kong and his family, Coen also arranged for a night patrol near his residence.²⁷⁹ Other nominees for the post would send gifts to the governor-general and other high-placed Dutch officials, and these often proved decisive. It was said that Nie Hoe Kong, the unfortunate captain during the Chinese massacre of 1740, had bought his way into the officer system. On 6 February 1733, he followed in his father's footsteps and was appointed a lieutenant, a post which he apparently had bought.²⁸⁰ Three years later he was promoted to captain. According to a Chinese source, Nie paid a cartload of silver to the governor-general for the privilege. Possibly with the same objective, he also donated 500 rixdollars for the benefit of Dutch and Malay churches.²⁸¹ On 11 September 1736, he was promoted "considering that apart from the required qualifications he possesses, he also is a man of means".²⁸²

For three centuries, the practices with respect to the appointment of Chinese officers remained untouched. Wealth, bribes, family relations, and personal preference were important

²⁷⁸ Taylor, *The Social World of Batavia*, 71–72.

²⁷⁹ B. G. Setiono, *Tionghoa dalam Pusaran Politik* (Jakarta: Elkasa, 2003), 96.

²⁸⁰ B. Hoetink, "Ni Hoekong, Kapitein der Chineezzen te Batavia in 1740", *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde van Nederlands-Indië* 74:4 (1918): 447n6.

²⁸¹ In a clarification on account of the capital of the Dutch and Malay churches over the year 1735 (R. 10 January 1736) the following post appears under one of the receipts: from sundries to a pious generous gift: of the Chinese Lieutenant Nie Hoekong 500 rixdollars." See Hoetink "Ni Hoekong", 448n1 (text and punctuation modified). The "R" in "R. 10 January 1736" is an abbreviation for "Resolution".

²⁸² Hoetink "Ni Hoekong", 447–48.

prerequisites for becoming a Chinese officer, although from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries attention was increasingly paid to proper conduct and suitability as well. The institution of Chinese officers befitted the alliance between the Dutch and Chinese; both were in the archipelago in pursuit of commercial gain and they had mutual need for each other in gaining optimal profits. The Chinese officers, who had vested interests in the alliance, served as important protectors of this partnership.



A well-to-do peranakan family: Captain Tjung Boek Tek and his wife and children

2.5 Conclusion

The institution of Chinese officers came into being for pragmatic reasons. For nearly three centuries Company and colonial government officials were only interested in gaining optimal profits from the overseas colonies and were not much concerned with the people they ruled. It was sufficient to establish cooperative relations with indigenous rulers and the Chinese population to secure their trade activities. In their pursuit of mercantile profits, they found “a partner in trade” in the Chinese, who assisted the Dutch in their exploitation of commercial opportunities. Establishing a system of Chinese headmen appeared a simple and practical way to maintain order and avoid administrative “hassle”. Simultaneously the headmen served as a middleman between the Dutch and Chinese. As overseers of the Chinese community, the headmen were not empowered with the right to make administrative decisions, nor were they entrusted with vested legislative power.²⁸³

The institution of Chinese officers was a product of the segregation policy which the Dutch implemented in order to keep their vulnerability in the conquered areas to a minimum by a system of divide and rule. The institution was not a colonial innovation per se as the system was a continuation of earlier Asian forms of separate communal leadership systems, but it was colonial in so far as the Dutch gave the institution more formal weight. The same goes for setting boundaries between the various groups and incorporating individuals into discrete communities. The Dutch did not invent the concept of a plural society, which was an offshoot from an earlier world with its own patterns and mechanisms of separation and fusion. Yet the Dutch adopted the system, restricted interracial mingling, and formalised pluralistic administrative and juridical structures.²⁸⁴

Surrounded by a majority of population groups of Asian origin, the Dutch realised their position in colonial society was weak. Threats to their exploitative activities constantly lay in wait. To reduce

²⁸³ Ph. Kleintjes, *Staatsinstellingen van Nederlandsch-Indië* (Amsterdam: J. H. de Bussy, 1933), 82; Williams, *Overseas Chinese Nationalism*, 124–25.

²⁸⁴ Bosma and Raben, *Being “Dutch” in the Indies*, 1–21.

the risks engendered by this cohabitation, the Dutch created separate spheres within the colonial community and implemented an institutional structure of cooperation and delegation of powers.²⁸⁵

The Chinese officers were chosen and appointed on the basis of such criteria as wealth, social relations, and favouritism. That is why the elite of the Chinese property-owning class gained a strong grip on this office. This does not mean that the headmen were only interested in gaining the title of Chinese officer while neglecting the responsibilities attached to the post. The minutes of the board meetings show that the Chinese community was very organised, with the Chinese Council at its centre. All the tasks were clearly divided among the Chinese officers and supporting staff, and most officers took their role seriously. The evaluation of a candidate was also a thorough process in which different candidates' strengths and weaknesses were carefully weighed. But it must still be concluded that overall, the institution of Chinese officers perpetuated the business alliance between the Dutch and Chinese. The Chinese officers, themselves merchants and tax farmers, had everything to gain in the Dutch-Chinese collaboration and eagerly contributed to sustaining this relationship. It was only in the early twentieth century that the Dutch-Chinese alliance seriously weakened, with severe repercussions for the Chinese Council and its officers.

²⁸⁵ Raben, "Batavia and Colombo", 162.

CHAPTER 3

CREATING THE MODERN COLONIAL STATE: THE INTENSIFICATION OF COLONIAL RULE AND ITS EFFECT ON THE CHINESE AND THE INSTITUTION OF CHINESE OFFICERS

In the Council meeting of November 1913 Major Khouw Kim An reprimanded one of his officers and secretaries as follows: “Yesterday I learned that one officer and one secretary went out to draw up a marriage certificate. They left using a motorcar but went back by *sado* or *delman* (horse and carriage). Such actions are appalling and beneath our dignity as member or clerk of the Chinese Council. . . . May I remind you gentlemen to refrain from such derogatory actions in the future and rent a motorcar or automobile instead!”²⁸⁶ By reprimanding his staff not to use vehicles that were unworthy of their status, the *majoer der Chineezen* gave the impression that in the twentieth century the post of Chinese officer—and supporting staff—still carried a lot of prestige. The question is whether this impression corresponded to reality. At the turn of the twentieth century, there was a change of course in Dutch policy towards its colonial possession in the East. The Dutch abandoned their long-term exploitation practices and instead gave primary importance to providing for the moral and material welfare of the natives. This shift had serious implications for the relationship between the Dutch and the Chinese and, consequently, the position of the Chinese officers. Small cracks began to appear in the system of Chinese community leadership that hitherto seemed quite solid. Public opinion and even some members of Chinese officialdom began to note that the Chinese officers were losing ground as authority figures in the Chinese community. Thus it might be safe to conclude that the impression the *majoer der Chineezen* gave was false, at least in part.

²⁸⁶ Chinese minutes, no. 21025, 3 November 1913: p. 52.

This chapter will analyse the intensification of colonial rule over the Indies archipelago and show how this affected the Chinese people and the institution of Chinese officers.

3.1 The late colonial state

For more than two centuries, the Dutch presence in the East Indies focussed on the optimal exploitation of local resources. When the Dutch East India Company extended its influence over the region in the seventeenth century, apart from the large kingdom of Mataram the archipelago consisted of various small indigenous kingdoms (*negeri*) ruled by indigenous rulers (*rajas*). None of these kingdoms had enough power to exercise absolute authority in the archipelago. Keeping a low profile administratively, the Dutch built a network of diplomatic relations with indigenous rulers to secure their trade activities, and during the two centuries of Company rule, they never established an effective European bureaucracy; the VOC was primarily a business enterprise and limited its interactions with the indigenous people to commercial matters. For a variety of reasons—the Fourth Anglo-Dutch war (1780–84), the French invasion of the Netherlands (1795), and corruption and mismanagement—the Company closed in 1798, leaving behind enormous debts. The VOC was formally dissolved on 31 December 1799 and one day later the Dutch Republic took over its debts and remaining possessions.²⁸⁷

During the period of the Napoleonic Wars, political upheaval, and declining trade, all Dutch overseas possessions in Asia—excluding the Deshima factory in Japan—fell into English hands. After a British interregnum of five years, Dutch administration in Java was restored in 1816. The massive colonial debts and the expensive Java War (1825–30) forced King Willem I to take bold action. He sent Johannes van den Bosch to Java to take over the post of governor-general and to drag the colony out of its great financial despair. Van den Bosch's proposal to partly return to the

²⁸⁷ L. Nagtegaal, *Riding the Dutch Tiger: The Dutch East Indies Company and the Northeast Coast of Java 1680–1743* (Leiden: KITLV Press, 1996), 15–16.

Company's system of compulsory deliveries was introduced in 1830 as the Cultivation System (*Cultuurstelsel*). Forcing a large part of Java's agricultural population to devote a fifth of its labour and a fifth of its cultivable land to the production of tropical export crops, this system created a virtual state monopoly, but enforcement was uneven. The burden of the compulsory system was carried by inhabitants of East Java, the northern coastal regions, and the Preanger regencies in West Java, whereas in the rest of West Java and the Principalities in Central Java private plantations constituted a parallel system of production for the world market. In West Java, private estates were situated mainly in the outskirts of Batavia (the Ommelanden) and were mostly owned by the Dutch and Chinese. The landlords enjoyed quasi-feudal rights over the resident population and virtual autonomy from the colonial administration. They collected land rent in the form of (export) crops and/or other labour services.²⁸⁸ The Cultivation System proved to be highly profitable: large deficits were soon turned into larger surpluses on the balance sheet of the Dutch East Indies. Within one year the colonial budget was balanced and old debts of the Company were paid off in the years that followed. Thereafter, enormous remittances were sent to the Netherlands, the so-called Batig Slot.²⁸⁹

From 1850 onwards the simple and straightforward Cultivation System gradually began to lose public support in the Netherlands after news arrived from Java that the population suffered immensely from the forced system. Accounts in books, newspapers, magazines, and official reports painted a dark picture of the condition of the Javanese population under the system of cultivation, corvée labour, and land rent. The Cultivation System had placed a heavy burden on the people and instead of bringing them prosperity, it had impoverished them year by year. Mismanagement of the arable land, crop failure, famines, abuse of power by the native chiefs, and greed on the part of European entrepreneurs involved in the system had led to extreme poverty, starvation, and massive

²⁸⁸ A. Claver, "Commerce and Capital in Colonial Java: Trade Finance and Commercial Relations between Europeans and Chinese, 1820s–1942" (PhD diss., VU University Amsterdam, 2006), 38–39.

²⁸⁹ M. C. Ricklefs, *A History of Modern Indonesia since c. 1200* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2001), 143–60.

mortality.²⁹⁰ At the same time, the Cultivation System increasingly showed signs of commercial stagnation. Government tea, tobacco and indigo cultivations suffered considerable losses in the 1850s. Coffee and sugar were among the few crops that still showed a clear growth in production. Liberals and private entrepreneurs argued that the development of Java should now come from private agricultural enterprise without government intervention.²⁹¹

By allowing private initiative to partly take over the system of government exploitation, the Dutch government set the stage for a more liberal system in the Indies. This change in policy gave a whole new meaning to the Indies for people in the Netherlands, especially private entrepreneurs. Private entrepreneurs now viewed the Indies not only as a source of tropical raw materials, but also as a market for European manufactured goods, and one that could grow ever larger if the living standards of the prospective consumers were raised. The need for a labour force suitable for modern enterprises stimulated interest—partly humanitarian, partly economic—in native welfare.²⁹² With this fervour of uplifting native welfare in the interests of Dutch industry, private entrepreneurs hinted at a different role for the colonial government to fulfil in the Indies. When the colonial government enforced the Cultivation System on Javanese peasants in 1830, it adhered to the official policy of *onthouding* (abstinence). Fearful that the arrival of private planters in the outer islands would require a costly enlargement of the local administrative apparatus and that it would be unable to guarantee the safety of these widely dispersed men and their properties, the government considered private entrepreneurial activities and the establishment of Dutch settlements outside Java undesirable. Yet private capitalists became nonetheless involved in the economic development of the outer regions by securing rights for mining and estate agriculture from local rulers. Private

²⁹⁰ C. Fasseur, *The Politics of Colonial Exploitation: Java, the Dutch, and the Cultivation System* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Southeast Asia Program, Cornell University, 1992), 102–25. See also J. L. van Zanden and A. J. Marks, *An Economic History of Indonesia 1800-2010* (London: Routledge, 2012): 46-72.

²⁹¹ Fasseur, *The Politics of Colonial Exploitation*, 162–165.

²⁹² J. S. Furnivall, *Netherlands India: A Study of Plural Economy* (Cambridge: University Press, 1944), 226–27.

enterprise was thus exploring commercial opportunities in the East before 1870, and a gradual process of territorial expansion was already evident in the mid-nineteenth century.²⁹³

This expansion became more visible when private investments amplified after Dutch policy welcomed free enterprise in the Indies with passage of the Agrarian Law in 1870, which not only opened the door to private business in the Netherlands Indies but also allowed private entrepreneurs to take the lead in the Indies economy.²⁹⁴ Free enterprise became feverishly active on Java, while the number of private planters in the outer islands also increased thanks to the development of a network of shipping lines connecting the different islands of the archipelago. More infrastructural developments took place when planters wanted schools for their children and subordinates, medical care for their families and coolies, irrigation systems for their fields and railways to move their produce from the hinterland plantations to the ports.²⁹⁵ With these developments in commercial expansion and state formation in the Indies, the colonial government more and more relinquished its role as planter and merchant and increasingly limited itself to the role of sovereign, which bore more responsibility for the people in the colony. Once such responsibility was the formation of a modern and sovereign colonial state.

The security of clearly defined borders was imperative for the formation of a sovereign colonial state. Technological advances and the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869 stimulated the economically powerful countries of Europe to scramble for new territorial possessions around the world. The Dutch government already possessed extensive colonial territories, but it was insecure in terms of power politics. Increasing demands from the Dutch middle class for economic liberalism in the East had forced the Dutch state to abandon its monopoly in the Indies economy and to open the door for private entrepreneurs not only from the Netherlands but also from other countries.

²⁹³ Claver, "Commerce and Capital in Colonial Java", 91–92.

²⁹⁴ It must be noted that the transition from the Cultivation System to private enterprise was gradual, as the government retained control over some crops, such as cinchona, coffee and sugar (until the Sugar Law was passed in 1870).

²⁹⁵ Furnivall, *Netherlands India*, 175.

Keeping foreign entrepreneurs out of the Indies economy could lead to military intrusion by other colonial powers and it would be just a matter of time before they would knock on the door. The Dutch therefore welcomed foreign investors to their colony.²⁹⁶

Securing the borders also meant abandoning the official policy of abstinence. Fearing that expensive military expeditions in still independent outer regions would drain the profits of the Cultivation System, The Hague had dictated a policy of abstinence from expansion of colonial rule. Yet Dutch policy in the Indies balanced between imperialism and the official policy of abstinence in the second half of the nineteenth century.²⁹⁷ This had to do with an increasing fear of international intervention: “Traditionally The Hague frustrated imperialist ambitions in the East. There was only one exception to this rule, that was when lack of action could create an unclear situation offering to other states the possibilities or a pretext for intervention. Then for a short moment prudence and parsimony had to give way to ‘affirmative action’.”²⁹⁸

Another reason for the “unauthorised” expansion of Dutch colonial rule in the Indies archipelago was the emergence of a group of overzealous Dutch officials with new idealistic ideas of how to govern the colony. In 1860, a forty-year old disillusioned former assistant-resident of Lebak, Eduard Douwes Dekker, better known by his pseudonym, Multatuli, published his magnum opus *Max Havelaar*, in which he denounced both the tyranny and extortion exercised by the indigenous rulers upon their subjects and his ideological differences with his superiors. Inspired by this work, a new generation of enthusiastic Dutch officials went to the Indies to bring justice, welfare, and civilisation to the indigenous population. It was their declared mission to save the

²⁹⁶ P. J. Drooglever, *De Kolonie en Dekolonisatie: Nederland, Nederlands-Indië en Indonesië: Een Bundel Artikelen, Aangeboden bij het Afscheid van het Instituut voor Nederlandse Geschiedenis* (Den Haag: Instituut voor Nederlandse Geschiedenis, 2006), 58.

²⁹⁷ V. Houben, *Van Kolonie tot Eenheidsstaat: Indonesië in de Negentiende en Twintigste Eeuw* (Leiden: Vakgroep Talen en Culturen Zuidoost Azië en Oceanië, 1996), 38.

²⁹⁸ H. L. Wesseling, “British and Dutch Imperialism: A Comparison”, in *South East Asia: Colonial History*, edited by P. H. Kratoska (London: Routledge, 2001), 56.

native people from their own corrupt and tyrannical regents (*boepatis*) and rulers. Hence, in order to bring improvement and create direct rule, more administrative power was necessary. This resulted in the establishment of more intensive, often coerced relations with the indigenous rulers who were required to formally recognise the sovereignty of the Indies government. Lack of cooperation from the indigenous rulers was answered with direct military action, without awaiting the approval of the Dutch government in The Hague.²⁹⁹

Local resistance to colonial rule resulted in the official authorisation of “defensive measures” by The Hague as well. From 1890 onwards, the Dutch government, bearing the ongoing Atjeh War in mind, loosened the strict rules of the official policy of abstinence, eventually abandoning it after the Lombok expedition of 1894. The final victory of the colonial troops, after the troops had first been ambushed by Lombok guerrilla warriors, causing the death of ninety-seven Dutch soldiers, triggered an outburst of patriotism in the Netherlands, and not only in The Hague. On the streets, the following song was sung in the Netherlands:

En we gaan naar Lombok toe
 En we zijn de vrede moe
 Wij schieten met kruit en lood
 De Balineezen dood.³⁰⁰

²⁹⁹ E. Locher-Scholten, “Dutch Expansion in the Indonesian Archipelago around 1900 and the Imperialism Debate”, *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 25:1 (March 1994): 96, 105–106.

³⁰⁰ Translation:

And we are going to Lombok
 And we no longer want peace
 We will shoot with powder and lead, and kill the Balinese.

J. van Goor, *Imperialisme in de Marge. De Afronding van Nederlands-Indië* (Utrecht: HES, 1986), 50, quoted in Houben, *Van Kolonie tot Eenheidsstaat*, 54.

The song describes how people glorified the Dutch forces on their way to Lombok, armed with gunpowder and lead to kill the Balinese troops on Lombok. It illustrates Dutch public opinion on the situation in the Indies: Dutch superiority was undermined by local resistance against the expansion of Dutch rule. Therefore, the Dutch government considered it now justified to openly extend its territory. In 1898, a uniform *Korte Verklaring* (Short Declaration)³⁰¹ drafted by Snouck Hurgronje was imposed on the nominally independent rulers, who henceforth had to swear loyalty to the Dutch crown. Those who resisted faced Dutch military action. The result was a weakening of indigenous rule in various polities, in some cases to the polities themselves. By 1910 all regions in the archipelago had been willingly or unwillingly incorporated under Dutch control and Dutch territory in the Indies was clearly defined for the first time.

Territorial expansion and state formation—or modern imperialism—was also brought about by fiscal requirements of the Indies government. J. T. Lindblad has shown that the reorientation of Dutch policy after 1870 had a profound impact on colonial revenues: the traditional surplus on the budget of the Netherlands Indies turned into a deficit in 1878. The deficit grew larger as government revenues declined with the dismantling of the Cultivation System, whereas the arrival of private planters led to an increase of public expenditure in the colony. The decline in state profits from Java and ever more demanding commitments in the outer islands forced the colonial government to look for new sources of revenue. One obvious means of combatting the deficit was through a revamped tax system based on direct taxation. The colonial government tried to enhance the tax-paying capacity in the outer regions by stimulating private exploitation of natural resources. This encouragement was manifested in two ways: by reacting to signals from private investors and by inviting pioneers to settle in previously neglected regions. The second approach was in

³⁰¹ The Short Declaration was a three-point contract that stipulated the sovereignty of the Indies government, forbade indigenous rulers from having international contacts, and required strict obedience to Indies government regulations.

especially sharp contrast with the government's attitude prior to 1870 and shows that the initiative for expansion was explicitly tied to the fiscal aspirations of the colonial government.³⁰²

The next step concerned the welfare of the native population. In September 1901, Queen Wilhelmina proclaimed at the annual opening of parliament the inauguration of the Ethical Policy, which aimed to create a better standard of living for the indigenous population of the Netherlands Indies by investing in sweeping infrastructural programs such as irrigation projects, migration policies and education. This new approach towards colonial policy found its origins in the nineteenth century when Western state formation coincided with increasing social consciousness in the political field. The former “night watchman state” in Europe—concerned only with the safety of its subjects—was replaced by modern state structures that shouldered more authority and responsibility over the lives of its citizens. This did not stop at the borders of Western countries. Political parties' growing interest in promoting the welfare of their electorate was extended to the colonised people abroad.³⁰³ In 1879, in his manifesto for the Anti-Revolutionary Party, Dutch politician Abraham Kuyper stated the moral obligation of the Netherlands to improve the welfare of the indigenous population in the Indies:

Therefore there is nothing left for us but to—after terminating this compulsive system [Cultivation System]—choose the system of freedom with calm consciousness, and not ask ourselves: what can Java give to us? But only ask: what does God want us to be for Java? . . .

. . . Thence nothing else remains but the only good, acceptable system that we can offer because of our Christian faith: the system of guardianship. A guardianship,

³⁰² J. T. Lindblad, “Economic Aspects of the Dutch Expansion in Indonesia, 1870–1914”, *Modern Asian Studies* 23 (1989), 1-23.

³⁰³ Houben, *Van Kolonie tot Eenheidsstaat*, 59; Locher-Scholten, “Dutch Expansion in the Indonesian Archipelago around 1900”, 105–107.

mind you, not to keep these people in a permanent state of tutelage, but to take them for who they are—that is, minors—and to accept on behalf of these unemancipated nations the following three ethical obligations, as any other guardian would do for his child in care, namely a) to educate; b) to manage his properties on his behalf; and c) to enable him in the future—if God pleases—to take up a more independent position.³⁰⁴

Twenty years later, in 1899, Kuyper's views were shared by the liberal lawyer C. Th. van Deventer when he published the famous article “Een Eereschuld” (A debt of honour) in the magazine *De Gids*.³⁰⁵ In 1901, journalist P. Brooshooft published the brochure *De Ethische Koers in de Koloniale Politiek* (The ethical course in colonial policy), which announced the new moral direction in colonial politics.³⁰⁶ Both liberal thinkers protested against the hardships suffered by indigenous people and argued that all colonial revenues should be returned to the Indies through investments in education and social welfare programs. Dutch public opinion shifted, too; the old practice of extracting as much revenue as possible from the colonial possessions without giving something back was no longer justifiable. Prevailing sentiments no longer approved of these “excesses” and called for an ethical and humane mission in the Indies. Thus, when Prime Minister Abraham Kuyper formed his cabinet in 1901, a colonial policy was introduced based on ethical and moral principles. A new era of humanitarian colonialism had begun: schools were opened to provide education to the indigenous people; public health care was set up to provide (Western) medical treatment; and special aid programs were designed to combat extreme poverty. Special attention was given to improving infrastructure: bridges, railways and dams were built, as well as factories

³⁰⁴ Fragments taken from Dr. A. Kuyper, *Ons Program* (Amsterdam: J. H. Kruyt, 1880), 328, 333 (punctuation and text are modified).

³⁰⁵ C. Th. van Deventer, “Een Eereschuld”, *De Gids* 63 (1899): 205–57.

³⁰⁶ P. Brooshooft, *De Ethische Koers in de Koloniale Politiek* (Amsterdam: De Bussy, 1901).

and offices to generate employment. In addition, the government cautiously expanded press freedom and even encouraged certain political organisations.³⁰⁷

Was the introduction of the Ethical Policy merely a result of Christian considerations and a sense of responsibility for the welfare of the indigenous people? In his article on the ethical program and the Chinese of Indonesia,³⁰⁸ Lea Williams provides us with some analytical theories to assess the meaning of humanitarian colonialism, a phenomenon that took place in virtually all the colonies in the final years before national freedom. Sincere altruism may have played a role, yet he claims that it is also plausible to believe that the welfare measures were also motivated by imperial selfishness:

In British, French, Dutch, Japanese, American, and even Belgian areas a measure of humanitarian concern was injected into the thinking of colonial administrators. Clearly the pattern was not the same everywhere. Local circumstances in the colonies and pressures from the metropolitan governments gave rise to almost limitless variety in the application of the new imperialist ethic, yet humanitarianism became at least the slogan of colonial regimes from Taiwan to Congo. Indeed expressions of good will and high purpose often mixed with and disguised imperialism's death rattle.³⁰⁹

Thus according to Williams, Dutch altruism and philanthropic thought found its place in the rising tide of global humanitarianism in the colonial territories. The development of humanitarian or

³⁰⁷ S. M. Moon, *Technology and Ethical Idealism: A History of Development in the Netherlands East Indies* (Leiden: CNWS Publications, 2007), 1–7; M. Bloembergen and R. Raben, *Het Koloniale Beschavingsoffensief: Wegen naar het Nieuwe Indië, 1890–1950* (Leiden: KITLV, 2009), 10.

³⁰⁸ L. E. Williams, “The Ethical Program and the Chinese of Indonesia”, *Journal of Southeast Asian History* 2:2 (July 1961): 35–42.

³⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 35.

philanthropic administrations in other colonies may also have caused the Dutch to adopt a similar policy. When the Dutch parliament in The Hague took the initiative to adopt the ethical program, Holland's international credibility and position as a colonial power was at stake. Henceforth, the colonies needed to be administered properly, not dominated, much less exploited. Van Deventer issued the warning in his article "Een Eereschuld": "It is not too late yet, the majority of the natives are content, at least not discontent, under Dutch rule; they do not know any better than that it is supposed to be like this. But—*les idées marchent*—even in the Indies and among the indigenous population!"³¹⁰

Kees van Dijk has argued that the ethical program was related to changes in international power politics and a growing realisation of the inherent weakness of the colonial state. The Dutch believed that an effective administration that advocated economic development and gradual emancipation of the indigenous population would guarantee the loyalty of the Indonesian people to Dutch authority. Misgovernment would not only lead to dissatisfaction and revolt, but it would also invite intervention by other powerful nations if the Dutch failed to observe their obligations as a colonial power. Spain was a case in point. After its defeat by the newly emerging superpower of the United States of America, Spain was forced to part with its remaining colonial possessions in Asia (the Philippines) and America (Cuba) in 1898. The Dutch saw the Spanish defeat as a result of mismanagement and negligence of her colonies. Therefore, Van Dijk argued, the slogan "Remember the Philippines" was bluntly used to justify the introduction of the Ethical Policy, which signified increasing Dutch concern with the lives of the colonial subjects in the early twentieth century.³¹¹

Dutch humanitarianism fit in well with the common aspiration of colonial powers to bring civilisation to non-Western societies. Sincere concern for the welfare of their indigenous subjects was mixed with political opportunism—that is, the wish to assure the lasting and undisturbed

³¹⁰ W. H. van den Doel, *De Stille Macht: Het Europese Binnenlands Bestuur op Java en Madoera: 1808–1942* (Amsterdam: Bakker, 1994), 167.

³¹¹ Cornelis (K.) van Dijk, "Een Kolonie in Beweging", *Leidschrift* 21:2 (Sept. 2006): 60–61.

possession of the colony. So when the Dutch introduced their version of *la mission civilisatrice* or “the white man’s burden”, they were in effect advocating the establishment of a peaceful, righteous and enlightened administration that would bring indigenous people in contact with Western civilisation as a key to maintaining power in the Indies. Linking the ethical program to modern Dutch expansion, Locher-Scholten defines the Ethical Policy as: “A policy aimed at bringing the whole Indonesian archipelago de facto under effective Dutch rule and the development of the country and people of this region towards self-government under Dutch guidance and according to Western terms.”³¹²

As the borders of the colony were being secured, the Dutch continued building up the colonial state. The creation of a modern colonial state required a growing administrative sophistication. The implementation of programs to achieve total sovereignty and the modernisation of society called for decentralisation and the abandonment of the centralised government structure, laid down in the Constitutional Regulation of 1854. A beginning was made in 1866, when the colonial government cautiously began to introduce decentralisation in the administrative framework. More officials were sent to the colony, and to curtail the responsibilities of the all-powerful Binnenlandsch Bestuur (Department of Internal Affairs), four departments began to operate on 1 January 1867: education and worship, industry, civil public works, and finances. The *residenten*, who had run the large state-operated plantation that was called the Netherlands Indies during the period of the *Cultuurstelsel*, now could focus more on administrative tasks: they were in charge of the European (*assistent-residenten*, controleurs, and regional secretaries) and indigenous administrators (*boepatis*, or regents; *patihs*, or assistant regents; *wedanas*, or district heads; and *assistent-wedanas*), and were directly accountable to the governor-general. Gradually, independent jurists took over the presidency of the residency’s courts and indigenous courts of justice

³¹² E. Locher-Scholten, *Ethiek in Fragmenten: Vijf Studies over Koloniaal Denken en Doen van Nederlanders in de Indonesische Archipel, 1877–1942* (Utrecht: Hes, 1981), 201.

(*Landraad*) from the residents. The assistant-residents were put in charge of the police courts (*Politierol*).³¹³

The Decentralisation Law of 1903 paved the way for a state bureaucracy responsible for creating, reforming, and overseeing infrastructure, agricultural, and industrial enterprises; educational institutions; court and penal systems; and so on. In 1905, the *gemeente*, or municipality, was introduced in the main cities, represented by the city council and headed by the mayor, who was in charge of all matters concerning city government. By 1911 more activities and responsibilities had been clearly distinguished, and delegated to the following seven departments: Internal Affairs (*Binnenlandsch Bestuur*); Finance; Justice; Civil Public Works; Industry and Trade (*Nijverheid en Handel*); Government Enterprises (*Gouvernementsbedrijven*); Agriculture; and Education and Worship (*Onderwijs en Eeredienst*). And so the transformation of state structures was in progress; the newly established government apparatus, either aimed at controlling or benefiting the people, touched almost every aspect of everyday life.³¹⁴

3.2 The Chinese and the modern colonial state

The Chinese minority in the Indies had been quite comfortably established. Lacking political aspirations, the Chinese focussed on improving their economic position. From top to bottom, commerce marked the Chinese community. They were shippers, warehousemen, and labour contractors; they were tinsmiths, leather tanners, and furniture makers; they were shopkeepers and moneylenders; they bought and sold real estate and speculated in the plantation economy; they were owners of sugar, tapioca and rice mills and processed natural products such as copra, cotton, and vegetable oil in their factories. As revenue farmers, they ran ferries, abattoirs, and the retail outlets of the Dutch opium monopoly. With the intensity and variety of this quest for livelihood, the

³¹³ Van den Doel, *De Stille Macht*, 80–89.

³¹⁴ Lohanda, *The Kapitan Cina of Batavia*, 280; M. Lohanda, *Growing Pains* (Jakarta: Yayasan Cipta Loka Caraka, 2002), 8–9.



A Chinese fruit seller, c.1919-1930



A Chinese pharmacy, c.1910-1926

Chinese managed to occupy the middle rungs of the socio-political and economic ladder in the Indies.³¹⁵ Much of their economic success can be attributed to the special position in the colonial scheme given to them by the Dutch when, as we have seen in the previous chapter, the Dutch consolidated their control in the region of Batavia in the seventeenth century.

In the nineteenth century, the colonial government increasingly started to show its ambivalence towards its Chinese subjects. In legal terms, the Chinese were classified as Foreign Orientals,³¹⁶ a position between the Europeans and the natives that subjected them to a complex structure of rules. Dutch civil law applied to the Chinese in commercial and business affairs, and such cases were tried in the Council of Justice. In these matters, the Chinese were treated as equal with the Dutch and superior to the natives. But if a Chinese were subject to a criminal proceeding, he was persecuted in the *Landraad*, the same courthouse in which natives had to stand trial. Family law (marriages, divorces, inheritance, adoption, and so on) was delegated to the Chinese officers who ruled according to Chinese customary law.³¹⁷ In 1816 the pass system (*passenstelsel*) was introduced as a way to control the movement of the Chinese and natives. The system required each Chinese inhabitant who wanted to travel outside the district of his residence to apply for a pass. The passes were issued by the Chinese officer or neighbourhood chief. Each applicant had to provide the following details: destination, means of transportation, duration of travel, accompanying persons, and the purpose of travel. Once arrived at his destination, the applicant had to report to the local authorities for inspection of his travel document. The pass system is usually mentioned in one breath with the residence system (*wijkenstelsel*) which was implemented in 1835. This system

³¹⁵ J. R. Rush, "Placing the Chinese in Java on the Eve of the Twentieth Century", *Indonesia* 5 (1991): 17–18; Williams, "The Ethical Program and the Chinese of Indonesia", 37.

³¹⁶ Laid down in *Regeeringsreglement* 1854.

³¹⁷ Tjiiook-Liem, *De Rechtspositie der Chinezen in Nederlands-Indië*, 94, 150–54. Chinese customary law was based on traditional Chinese customs and values. These traditional standards were usually combined with official rules from the Qing Code (*Da Qing lüli*—the great Qing legal code).

obliged Foreign Orientals to take up residence in specific quarters of the town under the leadership of their headmen. Later on this obligation was laid down in Article 73 of the Constitutional Regulation of 1854. The residence system was introduced to support separate local administration of Foreign Orientals.³¹⁸ Both systems primarily intended to restrain entanglement between the Chinese and the natives. But in practice the colonial government was quite lenient in enforcing these preventive measures.

During the Cultivation System the Chinese were very welcome as contractors and as import- and export traders. The colonial government also depended on Chinese retail trade activities to distribute European goods to villages. In addition, most tax farms were leased to the Chinese. All these activities required free travel to the hinterland and the establishment of intensive contacts with the indigenous population. As a result, the Dutch maintained a contradictory policy on travel and residence, which resulted in the regulations never being effectively enforced. The Agrarian Law of 1870 increased Chinese access to rural areas and offered new opportunities for Chinese tax farmers, who joined European entrepreneurs in investing their capital in plantation agriculture. Using their tax farm licences, they accessed the countryside and invested their money in local businesses to expand their trading networks. As a result, Chinese tax farmers managed to build up enormous business empires in various strategic economic fields, ranging from agriculture to newly developed industries and the service sector.³¹⁹

But in the last decades of the nineteenth century, the dominant role of the Chinese in the Indies economy was weakened by a number of factors. Increasing Dutch concern for the welfare of the indigenous population had serious consequences for the Chinese. Creating a modern colonial

³¹⁸ M. Lohanda, “The ‘Passen- en Wijkenstelsel’: Dutch Practice of Restriction Policy on the Chinese”, paper given to the Seminar on Indonesian Social History, held at Jakarta/Depok, 8–11 December 1997. For more details on the pass- and residence systems, see Tjiiook-Liem, *De Rechtspositie der Chinezen in Nederlands-Indië*, chap. 5.

³¹⁹ A. Wahid, “Turning Java into a Modern Fiscal State: The Abolition of Chinese Revenue Farming and the Creation of a Modern Taxation System in Colonial Java, 1870s–1920s” (MPhil thesis, Leiden University, 2009), 76–79.

state based on humanitarian principles called for an increase in state expenditures on public welfare, and the Netherlands Indies government now found itself more and more concerned with raising revenues for the implementation of the expensive ethical program. Money had to come from the Chinese, too.³²⁰ One means for the colonial government to reserve finances for the ethical program was the introduction of direct taxation and the phasing out of the Chinese-dominated revenue farms. But foremost, in the 1880s and 1890s the colonial administration became seriously worried about the increasing influx of Chinese into the heartland of Java. It was suspected that the activities of the revenue farmers were undermining the authority of the government and the credibility of the legal system. Also, the Javanese seemed to suffer from exploitation by the Chinese. Responding to these suspicions, it was decided to conduct an investigation of Chinese economic activities and their impact on the native people. The investigation was first assigned to Willem Groeneveldt, a Chinese and Japanese language expert and member of the Indies Council (Raad van Indië). When he became vice-president of the Indies Council, the investigation was turned over to Fokko Fokkens, an inspector of plantation affairs known for his commitment to promoting the well being of the Javanese people.³²¹

After his inspection tour in Java and Madoera in 1893, Fokkens formulated his findings in a detailed report. It came as no surprise that his conclusions were unfavourable to the Chinese. He concluded that they controlled almost all economic sectors in rural Java, ranging from petty trade to large-scale businesses. The indigenous people did not reap the fruits of the economic activities of the Chinese. In fact, he concluded that the indigenous people suffered the most from the revenue-farming and money lending activities dominated by the Chinese:

³²⁰ Williams, "The Ethical Program and the Chinese of Indonesia", 40.

³²¹ Wahid, "Turning Java into a Modern Fiscal State", 79–83.

With their poor understanding of morality the Chinese tax farmers ensure the support of indigenous officials and community heads, and sometimes even the support of European officials. In the opium farms they show no reluctance in forcing the indigenous people to buy a fixed amount of opium every month; in the slaughter farms they fool the people so that they will deliver skins of the slaughtered cattle for a mere pittance; in the tax farms of river passage [that is, tolls], they levy more than is prescribed.³²²

Fokkens pointed out that the opium and slaughter farms especially harmed the indigenous population. The right to levy tax over the slaughtering of horses and cattle was in most cases also in the hands of opium farmers, which brought along uncontrolled Chinese penetration in the interior and illegal opium smuggling. As the pass system did not apply to revenue farmers, many Chinese were eager to obtain the tax licences so they could move freely into the interior. This encouraged Chinese smuggling activities. It was also in the tax farmer's interest that cattle and horses be slaughtered on a regular basis. In order to encourage the slaughter of animals, he turned to unlawful methods, including cattle rustling. Fearing exposure of the theft, people tried to dispose of the stolen cattle by slaughtering the animals immediately, over which the revenue farmer would levy tax. Another method was hiring people to poison the cattle. Sometimes hundreds of cattle a year were poisoned by the tax farmers' accomplices, who smeared a mixture of arsenic, salt, and plaster on the mouths of the cattle. Owners discovering the symptoms of poisoning had no choice but to quickly slaughter the animals.³²³ For all these reasons, the Dutch felt it was better to do away with the tax farms and to introduce a system of direct taxation.³²⁴

³²² "Rapport betreffende het Onderzoek naar den Economischen Toestand der Vreemde Oosterlingen op Java en Madoera en Voorstellen ter Verbetering" (The Fokkens Report), part 1, NA, The Hague: pp. 455–56.

³²³ The Fokkens Report, part 1, NA, The Hague: pp. 458–63.

³²⁴ The Fokkens Report, part 2, NA, The Hague: pp. 773–838.

Fokkens' conclusions about the revenue farming system and the Chinese money lending activities were not new, as some Dutch officials had complained about the Chinese extortion practices a century before. Governor-General P. G. van Overstraten (1796–1801), for example, designated the Chinese as *de bloedzuigers der Javanen* (the bloodsuckers of the Javanese). Minister of Colonies P. Mijer repeated this in the Dutch parliament in The Hague a few decades later.³²⁵ In 1851, L. Vitalis, an old inspector of the plantations, discussed the excessive and abusive practices connected with the tax farms. Abuses in the *bazaarpacht* (market tax) for instance, reduced the profits of Javanese peasants selling their products on the markets, as the Chinese revenue farmers also took possession of the roads leading to the bazaar, later extending to the roads in the whole district. The Javanese peasants not only had to pay the *bazaarpacht* but they were also liable to the transit tax the Chinese imposed on these roads.³²⁶ It must be noted that not all Chinese revenue farmers were able to sustain their riches. The revenue farm business offered the prospect of making a fortune, but it also involved a lot of risk. Many opium farmers went bankrupt because their sublessees defaulted on their payments or for failing to keep up with the colonial government's constantly changing rules. Tax farmers of river passes, toll bridges, and markets could unexpectedly suffer great losses due to bad harvests or natural disasters, such as heavy flooding in the rain season.³²⁷

In most cases, Chinese revenue farmers also engaged in retail trade and money-lending practices. Chinese revenue farmers would send their henchmen to the village to collect taxes and offer imported European goods, which were often sold on credit. This in turn opened the way to money-lending practices. Not only were the high interests of 100 to 200 percent objectionable to the

³²⁵ *Tijdschrift voor Nederlandsch-Indië* 1 (1857): 169–71; *Tijdschrift voor Nederlandsch-Indië* 2 (1859): 58–61.

³²⁶ The *bazaarpacht* was abolished in 1855. L. Vitalis, "Over de Pachten in het Algemeen, de Onzedelijkheid van Sommige, en de Verdrukking waaraan de Overmatige Misbruiken van Andere de Javaanse Bevolking Blootstellen", *Tijdschrift voor Nederlandsch-Indië* 2 (1851): 365–86.

³²⁷ For more on Chinese revenue farming, see Chen, *De Chinese Gemeenschap van Batavia*.

Dutch, but they also deplored the moneylenders' practice of "confiscating" their borrowers' land to satisfy debts. Moneylenders usually took advantage of the borrower's inability to read or write. When the borrower brought the money to settle his debt, the creditor would not accept the money under one or another false pretext. The borrower would then be coerced into agreeing to additional terms, which eventually would cost him his rice field or garden. The provisional report of the Dutch parliament concerning the state budget of 1856 warned for increasing Chinese possession of rural estates such as rice paddies, reducing the former indigenous rice paddy owners to day labourers (*boedjang*).³²⁸ Although Arabs excelled above anyone else in this practice of money lending, the Chinese received most of the blame.³²⁹

Laws to protect the Javanese farmers (and labourers) from the malpractice of revenue farmers were poorly enforced by the indigenous officials, who were only interested in protecting their own interests. District heads who had to support their many hungry relatives with their meagre incomes were especially sensitive to abusive practices. Their involvement in cattle theft was conspicuous and they were unwilling to even listen to farmers' complaints without gifts of presents such as fruit or poultry. If they had nothing to offer, the district heads demanded compulsory labour, which often led the farmers to withdraw their complaints. The Dutch residents and assistant-residents turned a blind eye to these oppressive practices because diminished revenues would damage their position. As long as the colonial authorities were able to increase their annual revenues, they refrained from action.³³⁰ It was therefore also important for the residents that the auctioning off of tax farms went successfully: "To the presiding Dutch official, the resident, the auction of tax farms meant that if the bidding went well, a hearty contribution to the State coffers

³²⁸ *Tijdschrift voor Nederlandsch-Indië* 2 (1855): 416–17.

³²⁹ Lohanda, *Growing Pains*, 26–28; The Siauw Giap, "The Socioeconomic Role of the Chinese in Indonesia", 11.

³³⁰ Vitalis, "Over de Pachten in het Algemeen", 368–69.

from his Residency could be realised, which indirectly was an indication of the success of his administration”³³¹

It was intended to publish the Fokkens report for public consumption, but several political considerations led to cancellation of this plan. One of the report’s embarrassing conclusions was that Dutch officials exploited the indigenous people and therefore they shared the blame for their unfavourable economic condition.³³² During a meeting of the Indisch Genootschap (Indies Society) on 2 February 1897, Fokkens took the opportunity to present part of his findings in public. Again he advocated closing down of the revenue farms and the implementation of a new unified taxation system. Fokkens acknowledged that the Indies’ economy owed a lot to the Chinese: they were the ones who transformed local agricultural products into commercial goods, and as capable, diligent, and energetic craftsmen they set an example for the indigenous people. But there can be too much of a good thing, especially when there were drawbacks to Chinese trade activities that harmed the indigenous people. Now it was time for the government to protect their indigenous subjects who did not stand a chance against the ruthless Chinese, as “practicing usury and smuggling run in their blood”.³³³

It seems that an era of anti-Chinese sentiments had begun. Takeshi Shiraishi points out that Dutch anti-Sinicism stemmed from the view that the Chinese formed a major obstacle to the progress of the Indies by the Dutch Indies reformist government. In order to transform the Indies from a “medieval” to a modern bureaucratic state, a “native awakening” was needed, to undermine

³³¹ The Siau Giap, “The Socioeconomic Role of the Chinese in Indonesia”, 4 (text modified).

³³² Tjiook-Liem, *De Rechtspositie der Chinezen in Nederlands-Indië*, 338–39.

³³³ F. Fokkens, “Afschaffingen van Pachten op Java en Madoera en in Verband daarmee Verscheping van het Toezicht op de Beweging der Vreemde Oosterlingen”, *Verlagen der Vergaderingen van het Indisch Genootschap* 2 (Februari 1897): 16, 19.

the privileged position of the Chinese that kept the natives in a backward position all this time.³³⁴ It is indeed plausible that the Dutch wanted to do away with all the features of the old colonial order to create a new order that could facilitate a “native awakening”, but it should be stressed that the change in the Dutch attitude towards the Chinese may have been fostered by a nagging anxiety about a group that might become rich or powerful at their expense as well. When the Chinese were needed to support the colonial exploitation apparatus, the Dutch never thwarted them in any way. But now that Chinese dominance in the colonial economy was more and more palpable, colonial government officials grew increasingly fearful and jealous. The opium farm was a case in point. The debate on the opium farms began by focusing on reforming the system so that smuggling activities could be curtailed. Simultaneously attention was given to the addictive nature of the drug and its effects on public health and welfare. But soon critics identified the opium farm as an *imperium in imperio* with the Chinese farmers poisoning village society and disrupting the rural economy.³³⁵

The Dutch-language press became the government’s vehicle for the dissemination of anti-Chinese propaganda, which depicted the Chinese as scapegoats and portrayed them as aggressive, selfish, and without conscience. The Chinese only cared for their own interests and mercilessly extorted the Javanese with their usurious practices: “As regards debauchery, they strongly corrupt the indigenous; they make him wise in degeneracy, dumb in his actions, all the better to bleed him dry”.³³⁶ Dutch newspapers also criticised the generous immigration policy in the Indies, which had caused the massive influx of Chinese migrants in the archipelago for the last thirty years of the nineteenth century. They called for more restrictions on Chinese immigration. Some even wanted to

³³⁴ T. Shiraishi, “Anti-Sinicism in Java’s New Order”, in *Essential Outsiders: Chinese and Jews in the Modern Transformation of Southeast Asia and Central Europe*, edited by D. Chirot and A. Reid (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1997), 190.

³³⁵ Rush, *Opium to Java*, 198–99.

³³⁶ “Insulinde over de Chineezzen in Indië”, *De Indische Gids* 18:1 (1896): 365.

dispose the Indies of the Chinese with one stroke of a pen, declaring that all Java-born descendants of Chinese should be officially recognised as indigenous.³³⁷ Fokkens also believed that Java was swamped by Chinese immigrants. At the meeting of the Indisch Genootschap in 1897, he claimed that “too many of them arrive and this has to be countered”. He also argued that in the previous ten years an average of 31.000 Chinese had migrated to Java and Madoera,³³⁸ and he anticipated that in the following decade this number would increase significantly due to the restrictions on Chinese immigration to the United States of America and Australia. This would pose a major political threat. Therefore, following the examples of America and Australia, Fokkens strongly urged for a more restrictive immigration policy for Chinese who wished to enter the Indies.³³⁹ Author Isaac Groneman went even further than Fokkens. In a number of novels and newspaper articles, he warned against the uncontrolled immigration of Chinese newcomers who flooded town and countryside on Java to aggressively carry out their businesses. Javanese society under Dutch rule was deteriorating fast thanks to the exploitation by the ruthless Chinese. But the future of the Dutch on Java was also in danger, according to Groneman. The hard-working, bright, ever-adaptable, and highly self-interested Chinese were the “people of the future”, and if the Dutch government did not curtail Chinese immigration and dismantle the revenue farms, Java shall, in an as yet undetermined period of time, become a Chinese colony.³⁴⁰

³³⁷ P. H. Fromberg, “De Chineesche Beweging op Java (1911)”, in *Verspreide Geschriften* (Leiden: Leidsche Uitgeversmaatschappij, 1926), 406; W. P. Groeneveldt, “De Chineezzen-quaestie in Nederlandsch-Indië”, *Nieuwe Rotterdamse Courant*, 13 March 1897. See also Fokkens, “Afschaffing van Pachten op Java en Madoera”, 19–25.

³³⁸ Fokkens, “Afschaffing van Pachten op Java en Madoera”, 19–25.

³³⁹ The Siauw Giap, “The Socioeconomic Role of the Chinese in Indonesia”, 12.

³⁴⁰ Rush, *Opium to Java*, 203–204.

In his brochure *De Chineesche Beweging op Java* (The Chinese movement on Java), Mr P. H. Fromberg³⁴¹ vehemently rejected Dutch hypocrisy and the government's argument that the Chinese race, which supposedly lacked any moral compass, was a major obstacle to the progress of the Indies:

The list of sins of the Chinese on Java has been exposed in all sorts of works, usually with great prejudice, which is repeated over and over again. But because inequality in law is sometimes justified with the assertion that there exists a difference in morality, we wish to point out, with one stroke of a pen that what we blame the Chinese for are no race deficiencies.

Supposedly it could be true that the Chinese have profited from the circumstances. But to do so is a characteristic trait of businessmen in general; regardless of which nationality they are. One should not expect that the Chinese of all people would behave as pure philanthropists when dealing with the natives.

Likewise, European traders prefer cheap labourers and less production costs over a better economic situation for the natives. Mind you, their morality is none other than that of a public limited company that strives to achieve the most possible profits with minimal costs.³⁴²

³⁴¹ Born in Amsterdam in 1857, Mr Pieter Hendrik Fromberg was a Leiden educated lawyer who had a number of juridical positions in the *Landraden* and *Raden van Justitie* in the Netherlands Indies. In 1894 he was given the important task of reviewing Chinese civil law. In 1896 he became a member of the Council of Justice in Batavia and the year after he taught law in the Gymnasium Willem III in Batavia. In 1903 he became a member of the Supreme Court. Five years later, in 1908, he requested to be honourably discharged. Back in the Netherlands he committed himself to fervently defending the Indies Chinese and also became a father figure to the Indies Chinese students in the Netherlands. His brochure *De Chineesche Beweging op Java* remains a classic and an overt expression of his support for the Indies Chinese. He died on 2 January 1924.

³⁴² Fromberg, "De Chineesche Beweging op Java", 407–408.

Fromberg's arguments were to no avail. It seemed like the tide had turned against the Chinese. The government's concern for the welfare of the natives coincided with a clamp down on the financial dealings of the Chinese. During the period 1894–1912, the colonial government gradually took control over the production and distribution of opium (*opium regie*). From 1905 onwards, the government took over operation of pawnshops from the revenue farmers. The slaughter tax farms (on cattle, buffaloes, horses, and pigs) were abolished during the period 1898–1922. The revenue farm for gambling was abrogated in 1914, and a year later the revenue farm for bridge and ferry tolls disappeared from Java. More tax farms followed. In order to counteract the often ruthless Chinese moneylenders, the government established agricultural credit banks for the indigenous peasants.³⁴³ The pass- and residence systems were also more rigidly enforced.³⁴⁴

Changes in landownership also occurred. The introduction of the Agrarian Law of 1870 brought an end to the acquisition of *particuliere landerijen* or private lands in the Ommelanden of Batavia. As mentioned in the first chapter, nearly the entire residency Batavia consisted of private lands, which had been sold either unofficially or through public auctions at the turn of the nineteenth century. The Chinese were practically dragged by the Company's officials to cultivate the regions of Batavia and were allowed to own the land they cultivated. Chinese notables such as Phoa Beng Gam, the second *kapitein der Chineezen*, owned especially big plots of land, including the lands of Mangga Doea and Tanah Abang in Batavia. During H. W. Daendels' term of office (1809–11) when the Batavia government was thrown back on its own resources, more public land sales occurred to restore the large deficits on the financial balances of the Batavia administration. As the Low Countries were pulled into the Napoleonic Wars, Daendels faced problems exporting

³⁴³ F. W. Diehl, "Revenue Farming and Colonial Finances in the Netherlands East Indies, 1816–1925", in *The Rise and Fall of Revenue Farming: Business Elites and the Emergence of the Modern State in Southeast Asia*, edited by John Butcher and Howard Dick (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1993), 206. It must be noted that these figures account for the Netherlands Indies as a whole and not Java in particular.

³⁴⁴ Tjiok-Liem, *De Rechtspositie der Chinezen in Nederlands-Indië*, 341.

Java's tropical crops and was thus compelled to sell more public land to fill the empty treasury. Most buyers were Europeans, but the Chinese also bought land, particularly in the regions west of the Tjimanoek River (West Java). From the early days, most Chinese had settled in this part of Batavia. Chinese settlement later expanded throughout the western part of the region as far as Tangerang and two centuries later, most private land in Tangerang was in Chinese hands.³⁴⁵ Purchase of private lands—usually consisting of farmland and residential areas—also included semi-feudal rights on these lands (the so-called *oesaha-recht* or *landheerlijke rechten*), such as the right to levy taxes³⁴⁶ on the plots and the right to demand compulsory public labour from tenants.³⁴⁷

Chinese landownership had a slow start but grew steadily in the nineteenth century. In 1811 the Chinese owned seven private estates in the western district.³⁴⁸ In 1899 the Chinese owned 137 lands out of 339 private estates throughout the whole Batavia region.³⁴⁹ As mentioned in chapter 1, in 1904 the Chinese owned 169 of the 304 plots of land in Batavia and the Ommelanden, which was approximately 55 percent of the total landownership in the Batavia residency.³⁵⁰ It took less than a century for Chinese landownership in Batavia to become an integral part of the Chinese economy, making the financial position of the Chinese in Batavia stronger than in the rest of Java. In contrast to the vast *particuliere landerijen* of the Europeans, the Chinese private estates mostly comprised

³⁴⁵ European landownership was concentrated in the eastern district of the Batavia region, from Meester-Cornelis–Buitenzorg up to Krawang. See Lohanda, *The Kapitan Cina of Batavia*, 247–67.

³⁴⁶ The tax levied on the lands could be *tjoeke* (a proportional part of the actual crops harvested), *contingent* (a proportion of the estimated crops before harvest), *padjeg* (a fixed share of the products harvested, as determined in consultation with the tenant and fixed for a period of five or ten years), *tuinhuur* (one-fifth of the products or a fixed sum of money), and *grondhuur* (land rent). In addition, tax was levied on fish farming in fish ponds. See Van der Hoek, “De Particuliere Landerijen in de Residentie Batavia”, 45–52, and Mulder, *De Terugbrenging der Particuliere Landerijen tot het Staatsdomein*, 13–18.

³⁴⁷ Vleming, *Het Chineesche Zakenleven in Nederlandsch-Indië*, 216.

³⁴⁸ Lohanda, *The Kapitan Cina of Batavia*, 251.

³⁴⁹ *Koloniaal Verslag 1900*, Bijlage XX.

³⁵⁰ De Veer, *Particuliere Landerijen en de Openbare Veiligheid*, 44.

smaller plots on which rice, sugar, nuts, coffee, tobacco, and indigo was cultivated. The Dutch suspected that usury practices of the Chinese revenue farmers often led the indigenous people into ever increasing debts and that these debts would then be paid off by disposing their land to the Chinese. This could be one of the explanations why Chinese private land consisted of smaller plots.³⁵¹

The Agrarian Law of 1870 prohibited the selling of private land to non-indigenous people, which prevented the expansion of Chinese-owned land. However, the law did allow the Chinese to obtain land on long lease (*erfpacht*), and the indigenous landowner was not prevented from renting out land to the Chinese.³⁵² In 1910 the colonial government passed a law to repurchase private lands.³⁵³ The reasons were political. It had come to the attention of the authorities that the indigenous inhabitants on private lands were suffering from landowners' arbitrary actions. In 1836, the government published an official regulation (*Indisch Staatsblad* no. 19 of 1836)³⁵⁴ to formalise the rights and responsibilities of landlords and tenants in the private lands west of Tjimanoeck. Among other things, the code specified that the land was owned by the landlord and the tenant was entitled to a long lease on the land he cultivated. The tenant had to perform corvée labour, and he was also obliged to devote a maximum of one-fifth of his crops to the landlord and pay rent. Yet, lack of direct government control in the Ommelanden led landlords to flout the 1836 law and treat their tenants as they pleased. Although the village heads and local police were officially appointed

³⁵¹ Lohanda, *The Kapitan Cina of Batavia*, 247–67.

³⁵² The Agrarian Law of 1870 permitted long lease tenure of 75 years. The Siauw Giap, “The Socioeconomic Role of the Chinese in Indonesia”, 6. See also *Indisch Staatsblad* 1871–163.

³⁵³ Law of 7 November 1910 (*Indisch Staatsblad* 1911-38). The Royal Decree of 12 August 1912 (*Indisch Staatsblad* 1912-480) instructed how the expropriation of private lands should be conducted. See Mr. F. C. Hekmeijer, *Onteigeningsordonnantie: Terugbrenging van Particuliere Landerijen op Java tot het Staatsdomein, Zoomede het bij Minnenlijke Overeenkomst Overnemen van Gronden en andere Onroerende Goederen Benoodigd voor de Uitvoering van Burgerlijke Openbare Werken* (Batavia: Kolff, 1923).

³⁵⁴ This code was revised in *Indisch Staatsblad* 1912-422.

by the government, they were chosen and paid by the landowners themselves, which left their performance open to manipulation. By repurchasing private lands, the Batavia authorities hoped to free the tenants from their arbitrary landlords and create better circumstances for them.³⁵⁵ It must be noted that the law was not aimed at the Chinese landowners in particular. Although many Dutch were appalled by the usury practiced by the Chinese (and Arab) landlords, the law applied to all private lands in the archipelago. And it must also be noted that in general native tenants preferred living and working on lands owned by the Chinese—with whom they often maintained friendly relations—than on European-owned lands.

Another reason for land repurchase was the fear of losing land to foreign agricultural enterprises. The 1870 Agrarian Law prohibited land purchase by non-natives but permitted long lease tenure up to seventy-five years. Agricultural industries were thus not hindered by the law and Western plantations continued to expand. The English consortia were especially eager in building rubber plantations. Fear of foreign intrusion in the Indies led the government to implement an expropriation law that entitled the authorities to expropriate or repurchase private lands.³⁵⁶ Finally, industrial development also called for clearing private lands, and before 1917 the government avidly repurchased land for the expansion of railways and harbours.³⁵⁷ Batavia was a rapidly expanding city that needed more infrastructure in the form of roads, railways, and bridges. Land was repurchased when the government, after meticulous investigation into the land and its owner, offered a price the landowner was willing to accept. If the landowner refused the bid, the government could issue an enforcement warrant to expropriate the land with compensation

³⁵⁵ F. Fokkens, *De Beteekenis van den Terugkoop der Particuliere Landerijen op Java* ('s-Gravenhage: s.n., 1910), 1–5; A. van Houtum, *De Partikuliere Landerijen (Bewesten de Tjimanoeck) op Java* (Amsterdam: J. H. de Bussy, 1905), 6–7; “De Particuliere Landerijen in en om Batavia”, *Koloniaal Tijdschrift* 1:2 (1912): 803–804; Van der Hoek, “De Particuliere Landerijen in de Residentie Batavia”, 55.

³⁵⁶ Fokkens, *De Beteekenis van den Terugkoop der Particuliere Landerijen op Java*, 4–5.

³⁵⁷ Van der Hoek, “De Particuliere Landerijen in de Residentie Batavia”, 60.

determined by the court. The municipalities also purchased private lands within their jurisdiction for the construction of residential buildings.³⁵⁸

As a result of the government's policy on private lands, Chinese landownership decreased, although some managed to transfer their private lands into enterprises operating as limited agricultural companies thanks to the introduction of private enterprise in the Indies economy. This partly explains why the Batavia Chinese still managed to maintain their economic position after the revenue farms had been abolished and even though Chinese landownership had dropped to 10 percent of all the private estates in the region by 1920.³⁵⁹

The loss of the revenue farms and the rigid enforcement of the pass- and residence systems were severe blows to the Chinese, particularly in East and Central Java. Thousands of Chinese who were directly or indirectly involved in revenue farms or the money-lending business lost their livelihoods. Many elite tax farmers never recovered from the drastic government intervention, and some even died in poverty. But in general these former tax farmers managed to start new businesses. Reinvestment of Chinese capital was directed to mainly new sectors. By the time the revenue farms were abolished and replaced by state-owned monopolies, as in the case of the *opium regie*, the Chinese found economic niches in sectors like banking, insurance, and mining.³⁶⁰ But they also invested their money in various medium-sized and small-scale industries such as food and beverage, batiks, furniture, cigarette factories, rice mills, and so on, thereby stepping into industries dominated by Arabs, Sumatrans, and Javanese. This soon led to friction between the Chinese on the one hand and the Arab and indigenous businessmen on the other.³⁶¹

³⁵⁸ Van der Hoek, "De Particuliere Landerijen in de Residentie Batavia", 61–62.

³⁵⁹ Djie Ting Ham, "Enkele Opmerkingen over den Economischen Toestand van de Chineezzen op Java", *De Chineesche Revue* 2:3 (October 1928): 49; Lohanda, *The Kapitan Cina of Batavia*, 251–52.

³⁶⁰ Wahid, "Turning Java into a Modern Fiscal State", 114–16.

³⁶¹ The Siauwi Giap, "The Socioeconomic Role of the Chinese in Indonesia", 14.

Overall, the Chinese became more and more isolated from the colonial government, and were increasingly relegated to the position of second-class citizens. Sincere concern for the welfare of the indigenous population had officially driven the Dutch to these measures, but the ostentation of wealthy Chinese revenue farmers and moneylenders living in big mansions outside the Chinese compounds, displaying their wealth and behaving insufficiently submissive towards their colonial overlords also contributed to the growing Sinophobia.³⁶²

3.3 The institution of Chinese officers and the modern colonial state

The institution of Chinese officers was a prominent feature of colonial life in the Indies, but even though the administrative system was codified in a succession of laws,³⁶³ it lacked any basic fundamental principle because it came into being for purely pragmatic reasons. Dutch Company officials in the seventeenth century relied on the Chinese to help establish themselves in the region but were not inclined to put much effort in administering them. It was easier to appoint top merchants from the Chinese community to serve as intermediaries between them and the larger Chinese community. And for almost three centuries this system worked well for all parties: the Chinese officers were useful to the Dutch because through prestige, patronage, and wealth they were able to govern their compatriots and keep peace and order in the Chinese districts; thanks to the authoritative status conferred on them, the Chinese officers stood to be key figures in their community; and the Chinese community needed cultural brokers to facilitate the communications with the Dutch and to deal with these foreign power holders effectively. So long as the Dutch were only interested in the resources of the overseas colonies to fill the state's treasury, the system of Chinese officers needed no revision. With the emergence of the modern colonial state, however,

³⁶² Diehl, "Revenue Farming and Colonial Finances in the Netherlands East Indies", 201; M. T. N. Govaars-Tjia, *Dutch Colonial Education: The Chinese Experience in Indonesia 1900–1942* (Singapore: Chinese Heritage Centre, 2005), 28; The Siauw Giap, "The Socioeconomic Role of the Chinese in Indonesia", 3.

³⁶³ Williams, *Overseas Chinese Nationalism*, 124.

whether the Chinese officers had a future in a reformed government was questionable. As we have seen, the Cultivation System (gradually) had to make way for private enterprise, while a system of direct taxation was supposed to replace the revenue farms. The end of the tax farms was the beginning of many problems that the colonial government had to face regarding the future of the Chinese officers.

Because the colonial government had taken away the main source of income from the Chinese officers, vacancies for Council member were no longer easy to fill. In 1913 the Semarang-based newspaper *Warna Warta* pointed out that the post of Chinese officer was no longer in demand in Soerabaja; ten out of fourteen positions were vacant and it seemed impossible to find qualified candidates.³⁶⁴ A year later, the newspaper *Djawa Tengah* noted that of all positions in Semarang only that of major was filled; two captains' and eight lieutenants' posts remained vacant.³⁶⁵ This was in sharp contrast with the situation a century before. The *cabang atas* was a clearly recognisable class in the central and eastern part of Java; sons of revenue farmers and Chinese officers married the daughters of other farmers and officers, and often became farmers and officers themselves.³⁶⁶ Their wealth was conspicuous:

the great opium farmer-Chinese officers of Semarang built luxurious family compounds nested in gardens laid out in the Chinese style, with fish ponds and ornamental mountains and caves made of coral. The Be family compound was known as Kebon Wetan, or the Eastern Garden; across the river was Kebon Barat, the Western Garden, home of the Tans. Within them the good life of the *peranakan* elite was lived —great feasts and parties. . . . Gentlemen Chinese drank rice wine together and

³⁶⁴ “Persoverzicht: De Chineesche Pers, Juli-Augustus 1913”, *Koloniaal Tijdschrift* 2:2 (1913): 1482.

³⁶⁵ “Persoverzicht: De Chineesche Pers, Februari-Maart 1914”, *Koloniaal Tijdschrift* 3:1 (1914): 821.

³⁶⁶ Rush, *Opium to Java*, 89.

entertained themselves writing poetry and listening to Chinese drummers and to the Javanese gamelan.³⁶⁷

The fragment taken from Rush's monograph on the opium farms on Java shows how wealthy the top members of the constellation of opium farm-Chinese officer were in Central Java. With the governmental phasing out of the farms, these constellations collapsed, along with their immense fortune. Without the financial backing of the farms, the position of the Chinese officer was virtually meaningless. It must be noted that the economic link between the Chinese officers and the revenue farms (especially the opium farms) was much stronger in East and Central Java than in the western part of the island. This had to do with the stronger economic situation of the Chinese in West Java. While the Chinese economy in East and Central Java declined in power after the abolition of the tax farms, the Chinese in the western part of the island managed to retain a great part of their capital through private landownership. Thus, the position of Chinese officers in Batavia was less dependent on revenue farming than it was in the rest of Java.³⁶⁸ According to Chen Menghong's research relatively few *effectieve Kong Koan officieren* (official members of the Chinese Council) in Batavia served as revenue farmers during their term of office. During the period 1845–62 only ten revenue farmers applied for an officer position or a titular rank, and only five of the sitting official Council members were revenue farmers. Before 1865, not one opium farmer held the title of officer. Relatively more landowners applied for an officer position in Batavia

³⁶⁷ Ibid., 95.

³⁶⁸ Djie Ting Ham, "Enkele Opmerkingen over den Economischen Toestand van de Chineezzen op Java", 48–49; Lohanda, *The Kapitan Cina of Batavia*, 216, 247. The yields of the Batavian opium farm were relatively small. The farm was leased out with the farms of other districts. Together these opium farms were not able to gain as much profit (a mere 12 to 17 percent a year) as the farms in the rest of Java. The opium farms in East and Central Java were the most profitable. See Chen, *De Chinese Gemeenschap van Batavia*, 73.

due to the importance of landownership in West Java's economy. Most landowners who applied for the post of Chinese officer saw their application approved.³⁶⁹

However, the semi-official position in Batavia had also ceased to be popular. At the Chinese New Year's meeting of February 1912, when the office was re-opened after a ten-day recess, Major Khouw Kim An sighed sadly because the resignation of a few officers had led to a reduced attendance at the Council's regular board meetings.³⁷⁰ In the meeting of April 1912, the major called on the secretaries of the Chinese Council to take up some of the tasks of the officers because there were still not enough members.³⁷¹ Six months later, Major Khouw Kim An explained that due to a shortage of officers, articles four and eleven of the Council's statutes (concerning the management of revenues and burial plots) could not be carried out properly.³⁷² At that time the formation of the Chinese Council should have consisted of one major, two captains and six lieutenants. Minutes of the 1912 meetings, however, show that only one major, one captain, three lieutenants and one acting lieutenant (one of the neighbourhood chiefs) were in office.³⁷³ Apparently it was difficult to recruit new officers, and it took more than a year before new members were added to the Council: during the meeting of 30 January 1913, when the office was officially closed to take a ten-days' recess for the celebration of Chinese New Year, a happy and relieved Major Khouw Kim An finally announced the appointment of four new colleagues: "This is joyful news. Even though our new

³⁶⁹ Chen, *De Chinese Gemeenschap van Batavia*, chaps. 3 and 4.

³⁷⁰ Chinese minutes, no. 21024, 22 February 1912: pp. 10–11.

³⁷¹ Chinese minutes, no. 21024, 3 April 1912: pp. 24–25

³⁷² Chinese minutes, no. 21024, 4 October 1912: p. 88.

³⁷³ It was determined in *Indisch Staatsblad* 1868-24 and *Indisch Staatsblad* 1871-70 that the official formation of the Chinese Council in Batavia should consist of one president (the major) and ten members (four captains and six lieutenants). In 1912, following the reorganisation of the Batavian local administration, the formation was reduced to one president (the major) and eight members (two captains and six lieutenants). See letter of the Resident of Batavia to the Governor-General, 18 October 1912, no. 319/C, in *Gouvernementsbesluit*, 4 January 1913, no. 27, ANRI, Jakarta.

colleagues are not yet entirely familiar with our activities and responsibilities, the fact remains that a fortress occupied by an army is always better than an empty one!”³⁷⁴

The colonial authorities were in a dilemma. The unpopularity of the honorary position was due mainly to the government’s terminating the tax farms, but this did not automatically mean that from now on the officers would be on the government’s payroll. The modern colonial state required a new (Western) style of administration characterised by clearly defined formal institutions and (Western) educated government officials and in which there was no place for the traditional feudal system of Chinese officers.³⁷⁵ The institution of Chinese officers was based on wealth, bribes, and family relations, and none of these characteristics was suited to a modern bureaucracy. The modern government official was supposed to be educated and did not have to buy his way into officialdom. He was also conscious of his duties and did not have to be financially encouraged to fulfil his obligations to the state. This however, did not entirely apply to the indigenous government officials, who were still entitled to percentages of government crops (*cultuurprocenten*). According to the Dutch, indigenous officials were still far behind the European officials as far as their intellectual development was concerned. The cultivated European official was conscious of his duties, but this could not yet be expected from his indigenous colleague, who still needed financial encouragement. The *cultuurprocenten* were not abolished until 1907. The practice of hereditary appointment to office was still deeply ingrained in Java. Sons usually succeeded fathers, or at least a man could expect to be followed in his position by a nephew, a son-in-law or some other reasonably close relative. The question now was how the colonial government would face the problem of the Chinese officers.³⁷⁶

In the late nineteenth century the close connection between certain elite families and the position of Chinese officer encountered increasing resistance from within colonial government

³⁷⁴ Chinese minutes, no. 21024, 30 January 1913: p. 132.

³⁷⁵ Lohanda, *Growing Pains*, 9.

³⁷⁶ Van den Doel, *De Stille Macht*, 84; H. Sutherland, “The Priyayi”, *Indonesia* 19 (April 1975): 74.

circles. Although there was still a preference for candidates from respectable and well-off families, the appointment of candidates who were closely related to officers still in office was regarded as questionable. In 1872 the governor-general raised his objection to the resident's nomination of Oeij Tiang Lam to the post of lieutenant, as he was the son-in-law of Major Tan Tjoen Tiat. The governor-general argued that "*eene familie regering onder alle hemelstreken de slechtste is*" (in every country, a family government is the worst possible scenario") and he accused the resident of giving in to the major's persistent pleas to appoint his son-in-law. It appears that the Chinese major had repeatedly pleaded with the resident that if none of his family members were appointed he would be laughed at and unable to exercise influence in his community. This kind of nepotism was a common feature in the appointment of Chinese officers and it was a way to consolidate and maintain power within family circles and it was exactly this practice that the colonial government now strongly disapproved.³⁷⁷ The nomination was cancelled. In 1878 Oeij Tiang Lam was nominated for the post of lieutenant once again, only to be met with objections from the advisor for Chinese affairs, who claimed that the Chinese Council in its present composition already seemed to be an association of family and friends. At his urging, Oeij Tiang Lam was rejected again.³⁷⁸

In 1878 the colonial authorities also decided to break the hegemony of Chinese officers of Hokkien *peranakan* descent in Batavia by introducing important reforms that altered the composition of the Chinese Council. Hitherto, membership in the Council was mainly reserved for the Indies-born Hokkien Chinese. For the most part these Hokkien Chinese originated from the southern Chinese province Fujian. With the influx of Hakka immigrants from other parts of South China, the Chinese population in Batavia became more heterogeneous. According to calculations of the assistant-resident, the ratio of Hakka to Hokkien Chinese in Batavia was about 2-to-3. The

³⁷⁷ Letter of the Resident of Batavia to the Governor-General, 13 August 1872, no. 5650, Gouvernementsbesluit, 31 October 1872, no. 11, ANRI, Jakarta.

³⁷⁸ Confidential letter of the Advisor for Chinese Affairs to the Governor-General, 16 November 1878, Gouvernementsbesluit, 22 December 1878, no. 19, ANRI, Jakarta.

arrival of increasingly large numbers of China-born Hokkien Chinese also contributed to the variety of Chinese sub-ethnic groups. The number of Chinese from Hong Kong and Macao was still insignificant.³⁷⁹ The onset of Chinese mass emigration in the mid-nineteenth century was caused by the Opium War, which ended in 1842. The war had two important effects on Chinese emigration: first, the system of treaties that opened China to the West gave Western powers extraterritorial privileges and dominance in China's seaports, which made it easier to recruit labourers for their overseas colonies. Second, the war and opium trade had disrupted Chinese society in the coastal provinces socially and economically, and many Chinese who had lost their livelihood were driven to desperate measures, including emigration, to survive. Mass emigration grew further still because of the Taiping rebellion (1850–64), which left the southern Chinese provinces in poverty and ruin, and also because of technological advances that made seafaring safer and swift.³⁸⁰ The increasing demand for cheap labour on tropical plantations and in mining operations in the Nanyang functioned as a strong pull factor for Chinese immigrants. In addition, the Qing court revoked the ban on emigration, which was imposed on its citizens by the first Manchu Emperor. Ending the prohibition on emigration not only caused a massive influx of cheap labourers to the archipelago, Chinese women also began arriving in the region, creating a “new” totok Chinese population group next to the well embedded peranakan communities.³⁸¹ Noteworthy differences in dialect, customs, and traditions were discernible between the Hokkien and Hakka Chinese. In addition, the peranakans had adapted themselves to the local circumstances in their country of residence and most of them had lost the ability to speak Chinese. The totok newcomers mostly maintained the

³⁷⁹ Confidential letter of the Resident of Batavia to the Governor-General, 4 September 1878, no. 5448 and confidential letter of the Advisor for Chinese Affairs to the Governor-General, 16 November 1878. Both letters can be found *Gouvernementsbesluit*, 22 December 1878, no. 19, ANRI, Jakarta.

³⁸⁰ Kuhn, *Chinese Among Others*, 107–12.

³⁸¹ C. Coppel, *Indonesian Chinese in Crisis* (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1983), 1; Kuhn, *Chinese Among Others*, chap. 3.

cultural traditions and language of their motherland, though the peranakans regarded themselves as their superiors.³⁸²

With the increasing diversity in the Chinese community, the authorities deemed it essential that the Chinese Council be representative of the whole Chinese population and not just the Hokkiens. Only then would the Council gain the trust and respect of the Chinese and be able to exercise influence over them. It was thus decided that it was most desirable (but not binding) to divide membership to the Chinese Council as follows: seven out of ten members should be Hokkien Chinese, because the majority of the Chinese people originated from this dialect group, but the remaining three seats in the Council were to be assigned to the Hakka Chinese, regardless of where they were born. The Indies-born Hokkien were the wealthiest among their countrymen, and included a great number of landowners. For these reasons, five of the seven seats assigned to the Hokkien group should be given to people born in the Indies, and two seats to the Hokkiens born in China. The Dutch officials realised it would be difficult to find suitable candidates among the Hakka Chinese, because they themselves regarded the Hakka Chinese as generally uncivilised, coarse and ill-bred. Aside from this prejudice, few Hakka spoke Malay well enough, and most Hakka Chinese were convinced that they were not even welcome in the Chinese Council. As a result, most of them were not keen on accepting membership to the Council.³⁸³ Nevertheless, a beginning was made with the appointment of Hakka trader Tan A Kauw on 26 September 1879.³⁸⁴ In the early twentieth century the proportion of peranakans and totoks in the Chinese Council was

³⁸² Confidential letter of the Resident of Batavia to the Governor-General, 4 September 1878, no. 5448 and confidential letter of the Advisor for Chinese Affairs to the Governor-General, 16 November 1878. Both letters can be found *Gouvernementsbesluit*, 22 December 1878, no. 19, ANRI, Jakarta.

³⁸³ *Ibid.*

³⁸⁴ *Regerings-almanak voor Nederlandsch-Indië* (1880): 180. He was directly appointed as captain.

fairly balanced: five members were Hokkien peranakan, one was a Hokkien totok, two were Hakka totoks, and a fourth totok represented the Macau Chinese in Batavia.³⁸⁵

But the incorporation of non-Hokkien and non-peranakan Chinese officers in the Chinese Council of Batavia did not prevent the institution from being ignored or rebuffed by the growing totok community in the early twentieth century. Especially these newcomers rejected the leadership of the Chinese officers because they took the institution merely as serving the colonial administration while the Chinese community did not benefit from it at all. This will be discussed more elaborately in the next chapter.

The Chinese officers themselves also began to complain about their declining position. Not only were they deprived of their unofficial source of income, they also lost authority in the Chinese community. The Chinese officers had always been the leaders of their countrymen, formally or informally involved in all aspects of life in the Chinese community, small or big, financial or cultural, criminal or marital. Now the Chinese people were subjected to more government interference and increasingly came in contact with legal counsellors and notaries to solve their problems.³⁸⁶ The following fragment shows how the authority of the Chinese Council in marital problems was undermined through the involvement of a lawyer in a Chinese divorce request:

Major Khouw Kim An spoke: “Souw Keng Siong from Pekajon (Tangerang) has submitted a request to divorce his wife Tjiong Liong Nio from Pasar Pisang. When I summoned him to appear before the Council to discuss his case, he arrogantly answered that he had hired a lawyer and did not wish to appear before the Council.

³⁸⁵ Confidential letter of the Assistant-Resident of Batavia to the Resident of Batavia, 11 October 1912, no. 199 and confidential letter of the Resident of Batavia to the Governor-General, 18 October 1912, no. 319/C. Both letters can be found *Gouvernementsbesluit*, 4 January 1913, no. 27, ANRI, Jakarta.

³⁸⁶ *Verbaal*, 17 April 1896, no. 27, National Archive (NA), The Hague.

Therefore, I propose to seek the assistance of the assistant-resident in order to force him to appear before us”.

The other Council members agreed with the major.³⁸⁷

Even though the Chinese Council had lost influence in the Chinese community, the government and police increasingly called on the officers for the less pleasurable tasks such as collecting taxes. For small offences the officers, just like any other ordinary Chinese, had to appear before the police court and were subjected to preliminary investigations from the *djaksa*, the indigenous prosecutor. In addition, the officers also had to carry travel passes on their journeys throughout the region. Thus, the honorary character of the post was in practice merely the unpaid element.³⁸⁸ In earlier times, the official appointment of a Chinese officer had been an impressive event with lots of ceremony and protocol (see chapter 2), but little of that dignity remained when the last *majoor der Chineezen* of Batavia was appointed on 29 August 1910:

After arriving at the office of the resident, the major took the oath, burnt some incense and subsequently received his rank and post from the resident. After these formalities were concluded, the resident congratulated him, and the other European, Arab, and indigenous officials who were present followed suit. Then, the major went back to the Chinese Council, accompanied by the Chinese officers, neighbourhood chiefs, and representatives of several Chinese organisations of Batavia. There everybody raised a glass of champagne and congratulated the new Chinese major.³⁸⁹

³⁸⁷ Malay minutes, no. NM2, 4 October 1912: p. 115. See also Chinese minutes, no. 21024, 4 October 1912: pp. 89–90.

³⁸⁸ Verbaal, 17 April 1896, no. 2, NA, The Hague.

³⁸⁹ Malay minutes, no. NM1, 29 August 1910: pp. 61–62.

In order to attract more candidates, the colonial government considered paying the officers, though no final decision was made. Opponents of this plan pointed out that while salaries would indeed attract more candidates, it was uncertain that the most qualified persons would respond. Moreover, the officers were not part of colonial officialdom; they merely supported it. To make the officers proper government officials would require formal training, which was a costly affair. In his 1894 report, Fokkens argued against making the Chinese officers paid government officials. Instead he proposed to grant the officers a number of privileges to improve the administration over the Foreign Orientals, including: the right to be tried by the residency council of justice (*Residentiegerecht*) instead of the *politierechter*; exemption from traveling with special passes on Java and Madoera (they would be given identity cards instead, to be produced when asked for); uniforms for the Chinese officers, secretaries and neighbourhood chiefs, and for the Chinese officers ceremonial uniforms for special occasions; the right for Chinese officers (but not the secretaries) to carry a parasol; and exemption from paying taxes on horses for effective Chinese officers who used horse-drawn vehicles on official business.³⁹⁰

In 1908 the Chinese officers were given special rights of travel and residence. That same year, the government granted the Chinese officers a *forum privilegiatum* (*Indisch Staatsblad* 1908-347)—that is, they were to be tried “by courts and judges for Europeans and those assimilated to them”. In addition, the government permitted the children of Chinese officers to attend the European primary schools.³⁹¹ Mr Fromberg questioned the motives of the colonial government to grant the Chinese officers the *forum privilegiatum*:

We have already drawn attention to the *forum privilegiatum* which was granted to the headmen of Foreign Orientals in 1908. These headmen, at least those of the Chinese,

³⁹⁰ The Fokkens Report, part 2, 1894, NA, The Hague: pp. 862–81.

³⁹¹ P. H. Fromberg, “De Chineesche Beweging en het ‘*Koloniaal Tijdschrift*’”, in *Verspreide Geschriften* (Leiden: Leidsche Uitgeversmaatschappij, 1926), 480; Williams, *Overseas Chinese Nationalism*, 127.

are not of any political significance, they merely matter administratively; thus for reasons of prestige there was no reason for granting them a *forum privilegiatum*. And it is difficult to assume that favoured treatment when violating penal law is a means to make this unpopular office attractive. It is merely intended to shield off prominent Chinese from native jurisprudence and criminal law.³⁹²

Another attempt to raise the prestige of the officers was the introduction of an official uniform. The officers themselves requested these uniforms, so as to be more recognisable as an authority in the *kampongs*. In the past, the officers usually wore the robes of officialdom of the imperial Qing regime on official occasions, but they now requested an official costume in which they could perform their daily activities.³⁹³ The issue was raised in the Council meeting of 22 March 1901 in Batavia, in which a proposal was discussed to request that the governor-general issue proper garment rules for the Chinese officers:

We Chinese officers have never dressed ourselves in a way that our compatriots could recognise us as their leaders. Therefore, I propose to seek the assistance of the honourable resident to present our request to introduce an official dress code for the Chinese officers. The following style could be submitted:

- an ordinary uniform but with golden buttons, engraved with Chinese characters;
- a soft hat with golden stripes, so as to make the ranks of the major, captains, lieutenants, and secretaries more recognisable.’

³⁹² P. H. Fromberg, “De Chineesche Beweging op Java”, 429.

³⁹³ Verbaal, 17 April 1896, no. 27, NA, The Hague; Williams, *Overseas Chinese Nationalism*, 128.

Major Tio Tek Ho agreed and promised to immediately contact the assistant-resident.³⁹⁴

Apparently the official dress code was not an inconsequential matter to the officers, as the Chinese Council of Semarang also submitted a detailed proposal for an official clothing style, which was discussed at the meeting of 12 May 1905 in Batavia:

Major Tio Tek Ho spoke: “The following styles of uniforms for Chinese officers have been submitted by the Kong Koan of Semarang and are waiting for our approval:

- the major will wear a dark flannel blouse with golden buttons, engraved with Chinese characters and trousers with three braided golden stripes on the side;
- the captains will wear a dark flannel blouse with golden and silver buttons, engraved with Chinese characters and trousers with three braided silver stripes on the side;
- the lieutenants will wear a dark flannel blouse with silver buttons, engraved with Chinese characters and trousers with two braided silver stripes on the side.”

After discussion, the Council approved the dress code and presented the proposal to the resident of Batavia for official approval.³⁹⁵

In 1908 the official uniforms of the officers had been determined by the colonial authorities and were laid down in *Indisch Staatsblad* 1908-505. The officers were given two uniforms, a *groot kostuum* (ceremonial costume) and a *klein kostuum* (official costume for daily use):

³⁹⁴ Chinese minutes, no. 21023, 22 March 1901: pp. 61–62.

³⁹⁵ Chinese minutes, no. 21023, 12 May 1905: p. 82.

1. The ceremonial costume:

- the major will wear a black jacket with a high collar, to be worn with white linen collar and cuffs, embellished with gold embroidery of orange³⁹⁶ and oak leaves, and with six large gold buttons with crowned *Ws*;³⁹⁷ black linen trousers with gold piping; and a cap of black linen with gold piping, bearing an emblem of a crowned *W*;
- the captain will wear the same costume as the major, except for the gold *and* silver embroidery and piping, and silver buttons with crowned *Ws*;
- the lieutenant will wear the same costume as the major, except for the silver embroidery, piping and buttons.

2. The official costume for daily use:

- the major will wear a white jacket (*attila*) with a high collar, to be worn with white linen collar and cuffs, and with seven large gold buttons with crowned *Ws*; white trousers; and a black cap with gold piping, bearing an emblem of a crowned *W*;
- the captain will wear the same costume as the major, except for the gold *and* silver piping on the cap;
- the lieutenant will wear the same costume as the major, except for the silver piping on the cap.³⁹⁸

³⁹⁶ The colour orange referred to the Dutch Royal House of Orange-Nassau.

³⁹⁷ The *W* stood for Wilhelmina and referred to Queen Wilhelmina of the Netherlands.

³⁹⁸ For more detailed garment rules, see *Indisch Staatsblad* 1908-505; Fromberg, “De Chineesche Beweging op Java”, 480; Williams, *Overseas Chinese Nationalism*, 128.



Chinese officers in official costume

The great importance suddenly attached to wearing an official uniform is indicative of the officers' apprehension that power was slowly slipping out of their hands. With the growing emphasis on modern state bureaucracy, the Chinese officers may have realised that status based solely on wealth had become inferior and they came to envy the educational background and everything else associated with the dominant ruling class. The heightened respect for Dutch culture became a prevalent among the majority of the Indies Chinese—and indigenous people—in the twentieth century; their wish to identify themselves with the ruling class enhanced the tendency of value and accept elements of Dutch culture. The wish for European status and Dutch education (to be discussed in the next chapter), and the right to wear Western attire (in 1889 Semarang's Major Oei Tiong Ham already fought—successfully—for the right of Chinese officers to wear Western clothes) are all examples of this desire to be associated with the Dutch.³⁹⁹ Thus in the minds of the Chinese officers, an official uniform must have been one step closer to the group of power holders.

But above all was the need to be recognised as figures of authority. Official uniforms for members of the Binnenlandsch Bestuur were already introduced in 1827.⁴⁰⁰ In order to be recognised as authoritative figures, the Chinese officers needed to be dressed like officials of the Binnenlandsch Bestuur. Therefore the official uniforms of the Chinese officers as determined by *Indisch Staatsblad* 1908-505 showed features⁴⁰¹ similar to those found in the uniforms of the Dutch

³⁹⁹ Skinner, "Overseas Chinese Leadership", 198; D. E. Willmott, *The Chinese of Semarang: A Changing Minority Community in Indonesia* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1960), 21–22. In the early twentieth century it became a widespread trend among Chinese and native Indonesians to dress "Western" despite the official rule that prohibited non-European inhabitants (except for the Japanese from 1899 onwards) to adopt Western dress. For more on changes in dress style in the Netherlands Indies, see K. van Dijk, "The Indonesian Archipelago from 1913–2013: Celebrations and Dress Codes between International, Local, and Islamic Culture", in *Islam in the Era of Globalisation: Muslim Attitudes towards Modernity and Identity*, edited by J. Meuleman, (Jakarta: INIS, 2001), 51–69.

⁴⁰⁰ Van den Doel, *De Stille Macht*, 54–55.

⁴⁰¹ For example the embroidery of orange and oak leaves on the collar of the jacket, and buttons with crowned *W*'s. For detailed descriptions of the uniforms of officials of the Binnenlandsch Bestuur, see Collectie Lohnstein, Dutch Military, Civil Official's and Colonial Police Dress on <http://www.ambtskostuums.nl/frameset.htm>

and indigenous officials of the Binnenlandsch Bestuur. Of course, ensuring uniformity in dress with the Dutch and indigenous officials did not solve the problems. In theory, one did not need official apparel if one was powerful already and the sudden urge for costumes seemed merely a cry of distress. The rest of the measures taken by the colonial government did not do much good either. The freedom of travel and residence and the privileges in the justice system and education that the officers were willing to accept were not extended to the Chinese community at large, and the more the Chinese officers tried to identify themselves with the Dutch as a ruling group, the more they became regarded as “tools of the Dutch” by their countrymen. As Skinner has pointed out: the most desirable leader for the Chinese was someone who served as a rallying point for ethnic-group aspirations, exemplified ethnic values, and symbolised ethnic identity, yet in the twentieth century the Chinese officers were propelled toward the non-Chinese values of the dominant society, which caused them to lose their effectiveness as community leaders.⁴⁰²

Along with the loss of authority in the Chinese community, the institution of Chinese officers represented an outdated administrative element of colonial bureaucracy and the colonial authorities were forced to think over the question whether it should be allowed to continue. This was not easy as the institution of Chinese officers as part of the Foreign Orientals administration ran parallel to the indigenous administration. Both administrative systems were subordinate to the European administration headed by the resident. Due to the ethnic segregation policy of the Dutch, colonial society was ethnically divided, with the Chinese taking up the place of the middle class, between the European upper class and the indigenous population, who were at the bottom of the social hierarchy. It was difficult to decide where to place the Chinese in the new administrative framework. Placing the Chinese directly under European administration would offend the indigenous administration corps, whereas placing them under the indigenous administration would be unacceptable to the Chinese. In 1907 the Chinese officers were alarmed by the assistant-

⁴⁰² Skinner, “Overseas Chinese Leadership”, 198–99.

resident's plan to place all police affairs involving Chinese or indigenous people under the command of the *inlandsche kommandant* (to be replaced by the *wedana* in 1908). In the meeting held on 31st December 1907, the Chinese Council of Batavia discussed the assistant-resident's plan with the neighbourhood chiefs. Captain Tjung Boen Tek worried about the unfair treatment the Chinese people might suffer if the assistant-resident carried it out and he strongly urged everyone to think of a scheme to stop this "horrible scenario":

This is a very serious matter to the Chinese because every Chinese man has a father and mother, a wife and children, who will not be able to live their lives peacefully under indigenous command. The indigenous officials will only cheat and take advantage of them. I suggest you all think about this and come up with a plan to stop this. That would be very welcome.⁴⁰³

Lieutenant Oeij Boen Soeij also worried about the Chinese officer's reputation because "when all Chinese police cases will be supervised by indigenous officials, everyone will laugh at us, which is unbearable." Lieutenant Khouw Kim An agreed:

The Chinese officers are capable and incorruptible, even though they do not receive a salary. They fulfil their duties well and I have never heard about one officer accepting money or gifts, which proves that the officers are honest and sincere. The Chinese people are satisfied with their leaders. Assigning Chinese affairs to indigenous officials without any good reason would mean that the Chinese officers merely have a ceremonial function, which is humiliating.⁴⁰⁴

⁴⁰³ Chinese minutes, no. 21023, 31 December 1907: p. 91.

⁴⁰⁴ Chinese minutes, no. 21023, 31 December 1907: pp. 91–92.

Neighbourhood chief Tan Tjin Bok proposed to offer a rather compelling petition to the government, to be signed by the Chinese community:

We must present our grievances and complain about unjust treatment, while simultaneously persisting in our opinion about the indigenous officials being cruel.

The Chinese officers are honest and fair. That is why it is better if police affairs remain under our own control. Otherwise the resident or assistant-resident will experience that the majority of our people will not obey the indigenous officials. Fear of losing control over the Chinese might change the government's mind about this plan.⁴⁰⁵

It was decided that Captains Tjung Boen Tek and The Tjoen Sek, and Lieutenant Khouw Kim An would request an audience with the resident to discuss the matter.⁴⁰⁶ A similar situation occurred six years later in Bondowoso, a small provincial town and regency in East Java. Chinese community affairs were under threat of being placed under the *wedana* and *patih* as no proper replacement could be found for Lieutenant Tjoa Liang Gie, who had resigned from office because of a severe illness. Because it was unbearable to let indigenous officials decide over Chinese matters, Tjoa's brother accepted the position of acting lieutenant until a suitable person could be found to replace his brother.⁴⁰⁷

In the course of the twentieth century, the crisis in the institution of Chinese officers deepened with the introduction of the *gemeente* (municipality) in the main cities of the Dutch East Indies in 1905. The *gemeente* was a newly developed administrative unit that consisted of a town council and its chairman, the appointed head of town or *burgemeester* (mayor). The responsibilities of the municipality were formally confined to maintenance, repair work, and the renovation of

⁴⁰⁵ Chinese minutes, no. 21023, 31 December 1907: p. 91.

⁴⁰⁶ Chinese minutes, no. 21023, 31 December 1907: p. 92.

⁴⁰⁷ Chinese minutes, no. 21025, 11 June 1913: p. 12.

infrastructural facilities, urban hygiene, drinking water supply, market places, cemeteries, waste disposal, street lighting, and fire regulations, including in the Chinese neighbourhoods. The introduction of the *gemeente* meant that two systems of city administration coexisted, headed by the mayor and assistant-resident.⁴⁰⁸ More tasks of the Chinese Council were taken away with the end of the pass- and residence systems in 1914 and 1919. The disappearance of the passes and quarter regulations diminished the importance of Chinese officers in East and Central Java especially. It was during the Cultivation System that these regulations were strictly enforced by the colonial government with the important assistance of the Chinese officers, and the institution of Chinese officers had expanded throughout eastern and central Java during the early Cultivation years.⁴⁰⁹ In 1919, the Dutch Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages (*Burgerlijke Stand*) was applied to the Chinese, thus stripping the Chinese officers of a role in marriage and divorce cases. The siphoning off of core tasks to government departments not only indicates that the Chinese officers were becoming superfluous, but also demonstrates the process of state formation and the homogenisation of state structures. The colonial government increasingly took control over its subjects and therefore wished to be more involved in the administration over the Chinese. In view of this, the fact that the Chinese Council's secretary began writing the minutes of the monthly board meetings in Malay may also be attributed to increased government interference. Malay was more known among government officials than Chinese and the colonial government may have required the Chinese Council to record its meetings in Malay so that Dutch and indigenous government officials would be able to read the minutes and keep themselves informed of Chinese affairs. The introduction of official uniforms can also be seen as part of the homogenisation process. Be that as it may, an official medium of communication and a uniform hinting at professionalising the bureaucracy and making all officials "equal" did not change the fact that the Chinese officers were not part of

⁴⁰⁸ N. Niessen, *Municipal Government in Indonesia: Policy, Law, and Practice of Decentralisation and Urban Spatial Planning* (Leiden: Research School CNWS, 1999), 50–53.

⁴⁰⁹ Rush, *Opium to Java*, 87–88.

colonial officialdom. And even as instruments of the colonial government, the officers were losing their value.

3.4 Conclusion

The early twentieth century marked the beginning of a new order on Java. In this new order, the Chinese found themselves in a position vastly different from the one they occupied in the centuries before. Prior to the twentieth century the Chinese were essential as intermediaries in the domestic exchange of goods that helped sustain Dutch wholesale trade and as financiers of the Dutch treasury. At the turn of the twentieth century the usefulness of the Chinese to the Dutch slowly faded. After 1870 private investors—sometimes with large consortia behind them—arrived in the Indies to invest in plantation agriculture and infrastructure. More actors became involved in the Indies economy; private entrepreneurs, mostly from the West, with more capital to invest than (most of) the Chinese. The nature of the relationship of the Chinese with the colonial government depended very much on the economic role the Dutch bestowed on them. The colonial government increasingly contracted out infrastructural projects to non-Chinese private investors. When profit-making activities had to give way to welfare policies for the benefit of the natives, Dutch-Chinese relations altered further still. The Chinese were no longer treated as partners, but rather as obstacles standing in the way of native welfare and emancipation. Dutch concern for the welfare of the natives had its roots in their anxiety over increased Chinese dominance of the colonial economy, a mix of humanitarian concepts and feelings of guilt, and economic gain. Along with the imaginary responsibility to the indigenous population that should justify their lasting occupation of the Indies, the Dutch presence in the East changed.

The liberal era heralded the transformation of Dutch presence in the colony when state monopolies were terminated and a free-market economy was introduced. The arrival of private planters with their families called for more state involvement in the lives of its subjects. State

concern was raised again with the introduction of the Ethical Policy and, unlike in previous times, a strong eagerness for political commitment emerged among the Dutch. This eagerness was revealed in the sophistication of administration and increased government interference over its subjects. The formation of a modern colonial state depended much on the formatting of a modern professional bureaucracy. Officialdom was no longer to be an elite affair; modern government officials should be appointed on equal terms and they should be conscientious in their duties. A process of homogenisation of state structures took place in a sphere of liberalism and free enterprise that presumed the principals of equality and freedom of individuals.

The notion of modern government official was not applicable to the Chinese officers, and their role in modern colonial society became open to question. The institution of Chinese officers, based on feudal concepts and wealth, was a feature of the old order. With the formation of the modern colonial state the Chinese officers also saw an increasing number of their tasks assumed by professionals and the colonial government, which seriously affected their authority. While the feeling of being redundant steadily crept in, the post of Chinese officer already ceased to be popular after the termination of the tax farms. Yet the question of how to reorganise Chinese administrative affairs was not easily answered. To pay the Chinese officers was not an option. To abolish the system of Chinese community leadership would lead to the next question of whether to place the Chinese under European or indigenous administration. Either choice exacerbated racial and ethnic tensions. In the case of Batavia there was yet another concern. In Batavia the office of community leader and the revenue farm system did not form an integrated whole as they did in the rest of Java. Most Chinese officers there were able to sustain their riches through private landownership. Furthermore, the Chinese Council of Batavia was in possession of several plots of land and still played an important role in managing these lands on behalf of the Chinese community. As the colonial government did not have a clue how to handle the problems in Chinese administration, the wavering situation lingered on. The government's indecision only managed to produce a number of

experiments in an attempt to make the institution of Chinese officers more attractive. The results were meagre. The rise of the Chinese movement would push the government to make a decision.

CHAPTER 4

SOCIAL CHANGE ON JAVA 1870–1920s: ETHNIC GROUP ORGANISATION, RACIAL CONFLICTS, AND OPPOSITION TO TRADITIONAL STRUCTURES OF LEADERSHIP

In March 1912, a poster appeared on a number of walls in the Chinese quarters of Batavia with the following text: “Of what nationality is the major? Answer: Chinese and still not Chinese; native and still not native; in reality [he is] of mixed race! This bastard cannot return to China and cannot be named a European. He has no land to turn to—only the Land of the Hereafter.”⁴¹⁰ Apparently the Chinese major was attacked for being too explicitly *peranakan*. It was an action by *totok* Chinese who refused to recognise the authority of the Chinese Council. Demonstrations like this were not unusual in the early twentieth century and attempts by the colonial government to improve the institution of Chinese officers had been quite unsuccessful, and it had no answer to the mounting problems in Chinese administration. It was no longer possible for the government to be indecisive. Criticism of the Chinese officers was intensifying and becoming increasingly strident, and new leaders were ready to replace the traditional community leaders.

This chapter will analyse the criticism of the Chinese officer system. To put the mounting aversion to the Chinese officers in broad perspective, it is necessary to look at the patterns of change in civil society of the late colonial state. The first two sections will show the connection between the social stratification system introduced by the Dutch and the formation of ethnic group organisation as modern concepts and ideas began to awaken the various populations in the colony. The third section will take a close look at the deterioration of racial relationships in the early

⁴¹⁰ Williams, *Overseas Chinese Nationalism*, 129.

twentieth century. Finally, an analysis will be given of how the “awakening” inspired the various ethnic groups to reject the authority of their traditional community leaders.

4.1 From exploitation to settlement: Europeanisation on Java and the strengthening of racial class structures

As mentioned in the previous chapter, until the late nineteenth century, the Netherlands Indies could be described as an exploitation colony. With only limited resources available, the Dutch East India Company had never been inclined to plunge into a political adventure in the indigenous territories unless it was necessary to secure and maintain its trading privileges. After the Company was dissolved in 1799 and its territorial possessions in the archipelago were placed under the direct authority of the Batavian Republic, this policy was for the most part continued. The Batavian Republic took over the Company’s monopolies in the most profitable crops, and nearly all the old institutions, such as feudalism, forced labour and deliveries were retained.⁴¹¹

When Herman Willem Daendels was appointed governor-general by King Louis Bonaparte in 1808, he attempted to implement reforms and replace old institutions that were considered detrimental. Arising from his anti-feudal instincts, Daendels considerably reduced the power and income of the Javanese aristocracy in the Dutch-controlled regions and treated its members merely as officials of the colonial administration rather than as lords of Javanese society. He also initiated reforms to eradicate inefficiency, power abuse, and corruption from the colonial administration. Nonetheless his reforms had little effect. Daendels also tried to impose restraints on the system of *contingenten* and forced deliveries of agricultural products. Under his rule, the sugar monopoly was given up and the forced deliveries of cotton and indigo were abolished. Yet coffee cultivation was encouraged and expanded. As a result, the tax system basically remained the same as it had been

⁴¹¹ G. M. Kahin, *Nationalism and Revolution in Indonesia* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell Southeast Asia Program Publications, 2003), 3, 10.

under VOC rule.⁴¹² During the British interregnum (1811–16), Thomas Stamford Raffles served as lieutenant governor of the colony. As much a reformer as Daendels, Raffles introduced an impressive program of reforms aimed at professionalising the colonial administration and destroying feudal indigenous institutions. But above all he is remembered for his tax reforms. In 1813 Raffles introduced the “land rent” system with which he meant to replace the VOC system of *corvée* labour and forced deliveries of agricultural products. From then on every cultivator was to be taxed according to the quantity and quality of his landed possessions. However, as in Daendels’ case, most of Raffles’ reforms were only partially realised because there was as yet no comprehensive land registry, so some elements of the old VOC system endured.⁴¹³

When authority was returned to the Netherlands in 1816, the Dutch largely abandoned the administrative reforms of Daendels and Raffles. Facing a huge financial debt, Dutch policy became indecisive, wavering between opening up Java and other colonial possessions to private enterprise and reverting to the state monopoly system of the Dutch East India Company.⁴¹⁴ Aside from the colonial administrators who guarded the Dutch government’s monopoly of cash crops, there were Dutch and Chinese landowners who profited directly from the colony. These landowners were allowed to set up private enterprises and demand compulsory labour from the (indigenous) people living on their private estates. Like the indigenous aristocracy, the landowners had absolute power over these people, who had to pay taxes, mostly in the form of precisely measured quantities of coffee and rice, and produce crops solely for the landowners.⁴¹⁵

Ultimately in 1830 financial considerations forced the Dutch government to resort to an exploitation policy that would not only cover the costs of the colonial administration, but would

⁴¹² P. Boomgaard, “Children of the Colonial State: Population Growth and Economic Development in Java, 1795–1880”, (PhD diss., University of Amsterdam, 1987), 46–48; Ricklefs, *A History of Modern Indonesia*, 145–46.

⁴¹³ Boomgaard, “Children of the Colonial State”, 46–48; Ricklefs, *A History of Modern Indonesia*, 148–50.

⁴¹⁴ Kahin, *Nationalism and Revolution in Indonesia*, 10–11.

⁴¹⁵ J. A. A. van Doorn, *De Laatste Eeuw van Indië: Ontwikkeling en Ondergang van een Koloniaal Project* (Amsterdam: Bert Bakker, 1995), 30–31.

also bolster the deteriorating financial position of the Netherlands in the aftermath of the costly Java War (1825–30) and Belgian revolt (1830). At the suggestion of the newly appointed Governor-General Johannes van den Bosch, the Cultivation System was introduced in 1830, which aimed at a system of state exploitation that in many respects resembled the practices of the defunct VOC, although this time the system was more refined.⁴¹⁶ This also meant that the government began to ward off private entrepreneurs; no longer was it easy to set up private enterprises on Java.⁴¹⁷ Van den Bosch did not consider Java suitable for the large-scale production of cash crops for the European market under private European direction.⁴¹⁸ To safeguard the exploitation activities of the Dutch government and to prevent the development of the Indies as a settler colony with an economically independent and politically active European population group, several important Dutch statesmen even advised against the migration of Dutch private immigrants to the Indies. According to these politicians, the Netherlands Indies should be maintained as an exploitation colony, an area of gain (*wingewest*) efficiently managed by a corps of administrators. An influx of Dutch immigrants seeking their fortunes in the colony would only cause problems, cost money, and eventually jeopardise “the retention of the colony for the Netherlands”.⁴¹⁹

In 1848 a wave of revolutions across Europe aimed to remove conservative governments and in various ways sought to introduce constitutional, liberal, nationalist, or socialist changes in society. Fearing unrest might be brewing in the Netherlands as well, King Willem II ordered statesman Johan Rudolf Thorbecke to draft a new, liberal constitution. This constitutional reform gave the parliament in the Netherlands for the first time a voice in colonial affairs and allowed for increasing liberal influence of the bourgeoisie. Meanwhile opposition to the Cultivation System

⁴¹⁶ Kahin *Nationalism and Revolution in Indonesia*, 11; Ricklefs, *A History of Modern Indonesia*, 155–56.

⁴¹⁷ Van Doorn, *De Laatste Eeuw van Indië*, 31–32.

⁴¹⁸ F. van Baardewijk, *Changing Economy in Indonesia: A Selection of Statistical Source Material from the Early 19th Century up to 1940*, vol. 14, *The Cultivation System, Java 1834–1880* (Amsterdam: Royal Tropical Institute, 1993), 12.

⁴¹⁹ Van Doorn, *De Laatste Eeuw van Indië*, 26–27.

began to grow among parliament members and the Dutch middle-class. They pushed for modernisation in the Indies, which involved a drastic reduction of the state's role in the colonial economy, the lifting of restrictions on private enterprise in Java, and an end to forced labour and oppression of the indigenous people.⁴²⁰ Eventually yielding to these liberal demands, the Dutch government revamped its taxation system and gradually abolished compulsory state crops throughout its territories in the Indies. This process lasted until 1919 when the last compulsory production of coffee stopped for good.⁴²¹

The Agrarian Law of 1870 opened the Indies for private enterprise. The law granted private entrepreneurs freedom and security, and even though only the indigenous people were allowed to own land, foreigners were allowed to lease land for up to seventy-five years. The law stimulated private European enterprises to open up and clear new land for modern agrarian exploitation. With the development of steam navigation in the 1860s, improvements in communications (the use of telegraphy became publicly available in 1856, and in 1862 a modern postal service was introduced), and the opening up of the Suez Canal in 1869, private enterprise was further encouraged as communication with the home base became faster and more frequent.⁴²² Liberal reforms changed entrepreneurship in the Indies; instead of only one shareholder in the exploitation business, there were now many. The Industrial Revolution turned the Indies into a different kind of exporting area in the world economy. The Indies, especially Java, had hitherto mainly produced coffee, sugar, and spices for the world market, but with the industrial expansion in the West, new products from the

⁴²⁰ C. Fasseur, *The Politics of Colonial Exploitation*, 102–84; F. van Baardewijk, *Geschiedenis van Indonesië* (Zuthpen: Walburg Press, 1998), 65.

⁴²¹ Ricklefs, *A History of Modern Indonesia*, 161.

⁴²² Furnivall, *Netherlands India*, 174; Ricklefs, *A History of Modern Indonesia*, 161.

islands of Sumatra and Borneo like tobacco, rubber, and quinine, and raw materials such as copra, oil, and tin were very much in demand.⁴²³

Another result of the liberal reforms was the impressive growth of European settlement in the Indies. Whilst in 1870 not more than 40,000 European sojourners were counted, this number had risen to about 250,000 by 1940. As transformational, entrepreneurs soon outnumbered colonial officials who had been the main group of Europeans in the colony before 1870.⁴²⁴ With the arrival of entrepreneurs, a European community was formed consisting of two opposing professional groups. Private immigrants came to the Indies as innovators with the wish of modernising the colony whilst seeking personal fortune. To achieve their aspirations, they closely worked together with indigenous chieftains to ensure the (frequently forced) labour of the people for low wages. The colonial officials had a different role to fulfil. During the years of state exploitation they had been responsible for handling the administrative affairs and the management of the colony's economy. The liberal system however called for a separation of political and economic control. Moreover, officials inspired by Eduard Douwes Dekker's famous exposé, *Max Havelaar*, increasingly took an interest in the welfare of the indigenous people. The officials now felt obligated to protect the natives against the exploitation by private planters and their indigenous agents. They were also the conservative guards of the government's policy to preserve traditional indigenous leadership structures and economic ways of production, while allowing the expansion of modern European

⁴²³ Van Doorn, *De Laatste Eeuw van Indië*, 30; I. Schöffner, "Dutch 'Expansion' and Indonesian Reactions: Some Dilemmas of Modern Colonial Rule (1900–1942)", in *Expansion and Reaction: Essays on European Expansion and Reaction in Asia and Africa*, edited by H. L. Wesseling and F. P. Braudel (Leiden: Leiden University Press, 1978), 78.

See also J. S. Furnivall, "Colonial Policy and Practice: Netherlands India", in *South East Asia: Colonial History*, edited by Paul H. Kratoska (London: Routledge, 2001), 173–76.

⁴²⁴ Schöffner, "Dutch 'Expansion' and Indonesian Reactions", 82.

enterprise. As a result of such differences in attitude and views, friction often arose between the officials and entrepreneurs.⁴²⁵

From 1870 onwards, the Indies proved to be a true gold mine for European (and Chinese) private entrepreneurs. The same could not be said of the native entrepreneurs, artisans, peasants, and wage labourers, who did not profit much from the liberal economic system. As the government maintained the traditional structures of indigenous society, conditions did not change much for the indigenous people. Even though the Liberal Period marked the end of the Cultivation System, the forced cultivation of crops on behalf of the government was only gradually abolished. Only the least profitable crops were abolished first, while forced cultivation of crops such as coffee continued until the early decades of the twentieth century. Moreover, as a result of the modernisation process in the Indies, the government still demanded *corvée* labour to build the colony's growing infrastructure such as roads and bridges and other public works. Indigenous *corvée* labour was also supplied for the private capital concerns.⁴²⁶

In addition, the last three decades of the nineteenth century witnessed a series of serious crises. Harvests of the colony's most profitable crops dropped when in 1870 the coffee leaf disease began to spread and in 1882 *sereh* disease (a blight of sugar cane) was detected in sugar plantations across much of Java. The sugar production of the Indies also faced tough competition from beet sugar that flooded the European market. Because sugar dominated Java's economy, the impact of the crisis was widespread and a general rural depression ensued. Trade stagnated and bankruptcy among traders and planters was rampant. Peasants whose livelihood still depended on the cultivation of coffee and sugar were thrown out of work. The need for money brought the peasants to moneylenders, who led them into even greater debts with the objectionably high interest rates

⁴²⁵ Bloembergen and Raben, *Het Koloniale Beschavingsoffensief*, 9; Van Doorn, *De Laatste Eeuw van Indië*, 37; Furnivall, "Colonial Policy and Practice", 173–74; Schöffner, "Dutch 'Expansion' and Indonesian Reactions", 91–92.

⁴²⁶ Kahin, *Nationalism and Revolution in Indonesia*, 15; Ricklefs, *A History of Modern Indonesia*, 161.

they demanded. Not infrequently land was leased to European entrepreneurs in return for advances.⁴²⁷

Apart from their weak position in the economic sphere, an increasing sense of inferiority in relation to the Europeans was tangible among the natives. In the course of the nineteenth century a class structure had developed in Java, termed the “colour caste system” by W. F. Wertheim and The Siauwi Giap.⁴²⁸ With the arrival of substantial numbers of European private individuals in the Indies, the “whites” were even more firmly entrenched in the position of complete supremacy. All key positions in the government, including the civil service, the army, the police force and the judiciary, were held by Europeans. In private enterprise, education, health care, and missionary work, most chief positions were also in the hands of the Europeans. Indo-Europeans—still included to the European group, although socially inferior to the pure-blood or totok Europeans—occupied most intermediate and clerical functions in government offices, while the intermediate trade remained in the hands of the Foreign Orientals. The great majority of the indigenous people lived in rural areas where they were employed in small farming or as cheap labourers in Western plantations. In the urban centres, most indigenous people relied on menial work in European or Chinese households or in public works and industry.⁴²⁹

Most indigenous people who lived in the urban centres remained close to the markets and worksites. In the main cities of Batavia, Semarang, and Soerabaja, such neighbourhoods (*kampongs*) were also situated in the coastal districts, close to the harbour. Their dwellings were usually shabby and poor, lacking any access to basic amenities such as fresh air, drinking water, or a working sewer system. Most *kampongs* were also difficult to reach, lacked street lighting, and were in danger of flooding and serious fires. These unhygienic conditions in combination with

⁴²⁷ Kahin *Nationalism and Revolution in Indonesia*, 16–17; Ricklefs, *A History of Modern Indonesia*, 162–63.

⁴²⁸ W. F. Wertheim and The Siauwi Giap, “Social Change in Java, 1900–1930”, *Pacific Affairs* 35:3 (Fall 1962): 229.

⁴²⁹ Van Doorn, *De Laatste Eeuw van Indië*, 23; Wertheim and The Siauwi Giap, “Social Change in Java”, 229.

overcrowding and poverty kept mortality rates high. But most indigenous people could not afford to move to healthier districts.⁴³⁰

Whereas the dwellings of the indigenous people in the inner urban commercial districts showed no sign of increased prosperity, the residential area of the Europeans reflected their great wealth. Most European migrants settled in the southern parts of the cities, where luxurious housing and gardens were typical. With the growing number of European immigrants in the colony, a kind of “Europeanisation” was discernible. The rapidly improving communication systems, passenger and freight transport helped to link the European community closer to Europe than before. The arrival of European women helped to maintain a European family life. A European style of living was also reinforced by exclusive European schools, sport accommodations, and recreational sites to which only a small group of wealthy and intellectual Chinese and indigenous elite were admitted.⁴³¹ Racial segregation had been formally laid down in the Constitutional Regulation of 1854⁴³², but when a European way of life permeated colonial society in the Indies, an informal kind of social “apartheid” was reinforced. European women who presented themselves as visible symbols of Western civilisation played a special role in this process. By displaying European culture in typical feminine domains such as fashion and cuisine, the women helped define racial demarcations in colonial society.⁴³³

⁴³⁰ Wertheim and The Siauw Giap, “Social Change in Java”, 232–34.

⁴³¹ Schöffner, “Dutch ‘Expansion’ and Indonesian Reactions”, 82–83.

⁴³² Article 109 of this regulation made a distinction between Europeans and those who were granted equal status (Indonesian Christians amongst others) on the one hand, and the indigenous and those of equal status (Chinese, Arabs, Moors, and other “Foreign Orientals”) on the other.

⁴³³ Bloembergen and Raben, *Het Koloniale Beschavingsoffensief*, 19; Schöffner, “Dutch ‘Expansion’ and Indonesian Reactions”, 83. See also E. Locher-Scholten, “Summer Dresses and Canned Food: European Women and Western Lifestyles in the Indies, 1900–1942”, in *Outward Appearances; Dressing State and Society in Indonesia*, edited by H. Schulte Nordholt (Leiden: KITLV Press, 1997).

Rapid Europeanisation was very perceptible among the indigenous people as until 1870 little in Java was European except for the government. The introduction of a European way of life and the growth of the state bureaucracy were clear indications of Europeans' expectations for a lasting presence and superior position in the colony. Indeed, around the turn of the century, the Dutch East Indies seemed to "belong" to the Netherlands more than ever before in popular imagination; the periphery in the East and the metropolitan state in the West were no longer regarded as separate entities, but as a possible *trait d'union*. The exploitation colony had turned into a place for settlement, with strong links to the metropolis.⁴³⁴

The Dutch wish to stay in the Indies became more evident when in 1901 the Ethical Policy was introduced to share Western welfare with its indigenous subjects. In this new "civilising mission", the Dutch saw themselves destined for the role of permanent overseer of indigenous development. The permanent element in this role became especially apparent when the Ethical Policy led to unexpected and unintentional political consequences that the Dutch would not accept. The Ethical Policy was introduced as a welfare program for the natives centred on three lines of policy: education, irrigation, and migration. The Liberal Period had not achieved the desired outcome of increased prosperity for the indigenous people as Western capitalism had largely overrun indigenous production, while the Javanese commercial class was too weak to reap the fruits of the new *laissez-faire* economy. In order to promote general welfare in the colony, the indigenous economy had to be fostered.⁴³⁵ The achievements in education, combating poverty, and building infrastructure were in general positively evaluated. Village education—neglected for a long time—started to receive more attention, while governmental oversight of public health and living conditions in the *kampongs* was gradually put into motion. But above all, infrastructure received the most attention: public works such as bridges, railways, and dams were built at fast pace, but also

⁴³⁴ Schöffner, "Dutch 'Expansion' and Indonesian Reactions", 85; Bloembergen and Raben, *Het Koloniale Beschavingsoffensief*, 13.

⁴³⁵ D. Buskirk, "Strangers in a Strange land: The Chinese of Java", *Asian Profile* 7:6 (1979): 548–49.

factories and offices.⁴³⁶ Nevertheless, the Ethical Policy did not fulfil its early promise. The welfare of the indigenous people was not noticeably raised as population growth tended to counterbalance higher production.⁴³⁷ Educational opportunities remained unattainable to the masses as shown by a literacy rate of merely 7.4 percent of the indigenous population in 1930. The migration policy also failed to achieve its targets with only 250,000 Javanese living in settlements outside Java in 1941.⁴³⁸ In addition, their altruistic motives notwithstanding, the Dutch focussed too much on rapidly Westernising the Indies without taking notice of the actual needs of the people. Innovations were introduced for the most part in the same aloof and authoritarian way as before, sometimes resulting in economic sanctions or actual force when certain reforms met with indigenous resistance. This paternalistic method was known as the *perintah halus* (gentle command). According to the Dutch, people did not have to understand the significance of the modernisation process, they simply were expected to comply with Dutch innovations.⁴³⁹ After all, in the somewhat condescending perception of the colonial ruler, modernisation, progress, and civilisation reflected Western superiority. More than a decade later, however, intellectuals from other population groups began to challenge this view and disseminate their own interpretation of modernisation, progress, and civilisation.⁴⁴⁰

4.2 Nationalist consciousness, emancipation, and ethnic group solidarity

The intensity of the Dutch presence on Java around the turn of the twentieth century had different repercussions for each ethnic group, but whatever changes occurred for each group, a common phenomenon was prevalent: the development of group solidarity along ethnic lines. Influenced by

⁴³⁶ Bloembergen and Raben, *Het Koloniale Beschavingsoffensief*, 10.

⁴³⁷ Furnivall, "Colonial Policy and Practice", 178.

⁴³⁸ Claver, "Commerce and Capital in Colonial Java", 254.

⁴³⁹ Wertheim and The Siau Giap, "Social Change in Java", 225–26.

⁴⁴⁰ Bloembergen and Raben, *Het Koloniale Beschavingsoffensief*, 10–14.

the impact of Dutch direct rule and inspired by developments elsewhere in the world,⁴⁴¹ communal solidarity evolved on a common aspiration to improve the position of each ethnic group in the colony.

A closer look at the emancipation of three population groups: the Chinese, the Arabs and the

Indonesians

The Chinese

The Chinese were the first to organise themselves. The Chinese population group had been a relatively quiescent element in the Indies society. Lacking political and cultural aspirations, they were primarily preoccupied with commerce to improve their economic position. However, around the turn of the twentieth century Chinese society in the Indies went through significant changes. The introduction of the Ethical Policy was at the expense of the Chinese minority. Dutch colonial administration translated its lofty ideals towards the indigenous population into hostility towards the Chinese.⁴⁴² The media branded the Chinese as ruthless extortionists of the Javanese; the Chinese were excluded from educational reforms that opened Western education to indigenous people; the restrictions on freedom of movement and domicile (*passen- en wijkenstelsel*), and the prosecution of the Chinese by the police courts and the indigenous courts of justice were retained; and when the Japanese were granted equal status with the Europeans in 1899, the Chinese felt even more

⁴⁴¹ For instance the Japanese victory over China in 1895 that established Japan as a new regional power; the American victory in the Spanish-American War (1898) that opened the door to independence for the Philippines; Russian defeat in the Russian-Japanese War (1904–1905) that inspired Asian nationalists; and the Chinese revolution (1911) that led to a renewed appreciation among the overseas Chinese for their motherland.

⁴⁴² Williams, “The Ethical Program and the Chinese of Indonesia”, 41.

humiliated.⁴⁴³ The feeling of being more and more left behind by the colonial government encouraged the Chinese to re-evaluate their relationship with the Dutch.⁴⁴⁴

Meanwhile developments in China itself had led to a renaissance of Chinese culture and traditions among the overseas Chinese. The rediscovery of the teachings of Confucius among the overseas Chinese at the end of the nineteenth century can be traced back to the Confucian revival movement in China led by Kang Youwei and Liang Qichao. The Opium Wars (1839–42 and 1856–60), the Taiping rebellion (1851–64), the cession of foreign spheres of influence, and an incompetent and corrupt bureaucracy were precursors of the Manchu dynasty's demise.⁴⁴⁵ Kang Youwei attributed China's state of turmoil to disloyalty to the traditions of ancient Chinese civilisation and the failure to adapt to modern circumstances.⁴⁴⁶ He believed that to restore China's grandeur it was necessary to implement economic and political modernisation within a moral Confucian framework. Sympathetic to the appeals of Kang, the ardent young Emperor Guangxu helped launch the "Hundred Days Reform" of 1898. This was however stopped by a military *coup d'état* staged by the Empress Dowager who felt her position as *de facto* ruler of the Qing dynasty threatened. During the coup, the Emperor was placed under house arrest and six reformers were

⁴⁴³ Another chagrin of the Chinese was the heavy tax burden placed on them. Under the new fiscal system, introduced after the abolition of the revenue farms, the Dutch levied *bedrijfsbelasting* (corporate tax) and *personeele belasting* (property tax) on the Chinese. The *bedrijfsbelasting* was only levied on the indigenous people, while the Europeans were taxed on a different basis. Due to their civil status as *gelijkgesteld met de inlanders*, the Chinese were liable to pay this tax. But the Chinese were equally taxed with the Dutch for the *personeele belasting* (tax levied on material possessions such as houses, vehicles, furniture, etc.) as well. Thus the tax burden of the Chinese was double compared to what the indigenous had to pay. See Wahid, "Turning Java into a Modern Fiscal State", 117.

⁴⁴⁴ C. Fasseur, "Cornerstone and Stumbling Block: Racial Classification and the Late Colonial State in Indonesia", in *The Late Colonial State in Indonesia: Political and Economic Foundations of the Netherlands Indies, 1880–1942*, edited by R. B. Cribb (Leiden: KITLV Press, 1994), 37–38.

⁴⁴⁵ W. T. Rowe, *China's Last Empire: The Great Qing* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2009), 149–252.

⁴⁴⁶ Kwee Kek Beng, *Beknopt Overzicht der Chineesche Geschiedenis* (Batavia: Sin Po, 1925), 165.

executed. Kang Youwei and Liang Qichao managed to escape execution and fled into exile to Japan.⁴⁴⁷

Once in exile, Kang and Liang tried to gain followers for their Confucian reform movement among the overseas Chinese. In 1899 Kang established the Imperial Reform Party in Canada and branch societies were established subsequently in the United States.⁴⁴⁸ But the Confucian reform movement of Kang received its most enthusiastic response among Western-educated Chinese in Southeast Asia. In 1898, a Confucian religious society called the Khong Kauw Hwe was established in Singapore by Dr Liem Boen Keng, a British-trained physician, and Song Ong Siang, an attorney who had obtained his law degree in Cambridge. From then on, prominent Indies peranakans frequently visited Liem Boen Keng in Singapore to discuss the promotion of Confucianism in Java. These visits ultimately resulted in the publication of the first Malay translation of Confucian classics in Java, and the foundation of several newspapers and other periodicals based on Confucianism.⁴⁴⁹ The most prominent feature of the Confucian revival on Java was the establishment of the first modern Chinese organisation, the Tiong Hoa Hwee Koan (THHK) in 1900. The principal initiators of the THHK were also Western-educated men who were broad in perspective and liberal in thought: Lie Kim Hok, the Nestor of Chinese Malay writers and Phoa Keng Hek, the first president of the organisation and father-in-law of Major Khouw Kim An. Both had received their education at Dutch missionary schools in Buitenzorg (presently Bogor). The main objectives of the THHK were to promote Chinese customs and traditions in line with the teachings of Confucius, and to provide educational opportunities for Chinese children in the Netherlands Indies.⁴⁵⁰

⁴⁴⁷ Rowe, *China's Last Empire*, 242–43. See also J. D. Spence, *The Search for Modern China* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1999), 223–29; Fairbank and Reischauer, *China*, 370–76.

⁴⁴⁸ Shih-shan Ho Tsai, “The Revolution of 1911 and the Role of the Overseas Chinese”, in *The 1911 Revolution—The Chinese in British and Dutch Southeast Asia*, edited by Lee Lai To (Singapore: Heineman Asia, 1987), 10.

⁴⁴⁹ Williams, *Overseas Chinese Nationalism*, 54–57.

⁴⁵⁰ Nio, “Bij het 40-jarig Jubileum van de Tiong Hoa Hwe Koan-Batavia”, 288–90.

In 1901, the first THHK school was established in Batavia. The school's curriculum was modelled after the new Japanese education system that was already introduced in China, and included the teaching of Mandarin Chinese, the study of Confucian classics, and practical subjects such as arithmetic and geography.⁴⁵¹ As no one on Java was qualified to teach Mandarin, Dr Liem Boen Keng provided the THHK school with its first head teacher. In the years that followed, more THHK schools were established throughout Java and more schoolteachers were recruited through Dr Liem. Associates of Kang Youwei were also sent to the THHK schools in the Indies. The successor of the first head teacher of the Batavia THHK school was even recommended by Kang himself, then residing in the Straits Settlements. In 1903, he visited Java and was hospitably received by the board members of the Batavia THHK. Kang Youwei gave a lecture to an enthusiastic crowd in the THHK building of Batavia and then resumed his tour through Java during which he visited a number of THHK schools.⁴⁵² According to Lea Williams, Kang achieved little in the Indies beside the fact that a number of teachers in the modern schools were his disciples and at least one head teacher was hired on his recommendation. Leo Suryadinata attributes more influence to Kang, showing that he was able to get in touch with the Chinese communities on Java, which resulted in a further spread of Confucianism and Chinese language schools. M. T. N. Govaars-Tjia claims in her dissertation on Chinese education in the Dutch East Indies, that it was Kang Youwei who was most responsible for the rapid growth of Chinese education in the Indies.⁴⁵³

The choice of Mandarin as the language of instruction reflected another important aim of the THHK, namely to unify the various Chinese population groups on Java, regardless of whether they

⁴⁵¹ Nio, "De eigen Onderwijsvoorziening der Chineezzen", 72.

⁴⁵² Govaars-Tjia, *Dutch Colonial Education*, 55; Kwee Tek Hoay, *The Origins of the Modern Chinese Movement in Indonesia*, 25.

⁴⁵³ L. Suryadinata, "The 1911 Revolution and the Chinese in Java: A Preliminary Study", in *The 1911 Revolution—The Chinese in British and Dutch Southeast Asia*, edited by Lee Lai To (Singapore: Heineman Asia, 1987), 112; Williams, *Overseas Chinese Nationalism*, 73, 168–69; Govaars-Tjia, *Dutch Colonial Education*, 55.

were peranakan or totok, Hokkien or Hakka, or from some other Chinese ethnic subgroup.⁴⁵⁴ The Chinese in the Indies were always quite distinct from other inhabitants of the colony, but they were far from united as a community. Friction between various economic classes often occurred, while group cohesion did not extend beyond familial borders. Membership in traditional Chinese organisations and underground secret societies were either exclusively peranakan or totok, or based on separate speech-groups. These bodies—established to serve the interests of its membership only—were for a long time sources of hostility between various segments of the Chinese community. The perceptive board members of the THHK understood that animosity and bloody feuds between people of common Chinese descent had to be combated in order to become a respected group in colonial society. The presence of a strong Chinese group might motivate the colonial administration to tone down its anti-Chinese bias. Group consciousness had to transcend parochial boundaries and extend to a feeling of membership in one great Chinese nation.⁴⁵⁵ Within this development of group solidarity, Confucianism should be applied as a moral system that would guide the Chinese in improving their social lives.⁴⁵⁶ Kwee Tek Hoay claims that Kang Youwei played a crucial role in ending the frequent clashes between the traditional associations. When speaking before leaders and members of various organisations in a packed THHK building in Batavia, Kang stressed the importance of harmony and unity of the Chinese people. From then on, according to Kwee, one did not often hear of friction among the associations that had led to frequent violence in the past.⁴⁵⁷ But how strong this united front was and how long it would last were open to question.

In the meantime, the overseas Chinese had caught the attention of the Chinese imperial government. Traditionally the policy of the Qing court toward the emigration of its subjects was explicit: emigration was prohibited and it was the duty of the local officials to enforce the

⁴⁵⁴ Nio, “Bij het 40-jarig Jubileum van de Tiong Hoa Hwe Koan-Batavia”, 297–98.

⁴⁵⁵ Williams, *Overseas Chinese Nationalism*, 22, 63–66.

⁴⁵⁶ Kwee Tek Hoay, *The Origins of the Modern Chinese Movement in Indonesia*, 11.

⁴⁵⁷ Kwee Tek Hoay, *The Origins of the Modern Chinese Movement in Indonesia*, 25–26.

prohibitions. Nevertheless, the emigration of Chinese from China's southeastern provinces occurred throughout most of the Qing dynasty and reached flood stage in the late 1840s. The gold rushes in California and Australia attracted large numbers of Chinese emigrants, while at the same time the notorious wholesale human trafficking in contract labour, known as the coolie trade, had begun. During the first two decades of the coolie trade, the Qing central government stuck to the traditional prohibitions against emigration and refused to acknowledge the atrocities of the system. The disinterest and non-action displayed by the imperial court stemmed from the view that regulation of the coolie trade would constitute acknowledgement of an evil. However in 1860 the Peking government was forced by the British and French to modify its prohibitions on emigration and from then on the government officially recognised the right of its subjects to emigrate, although prohibitive laws remained on the books until 1893. With the recognition of Chinese emigration and increasing popular hostility to the traffic in humans, the Qing government started to show more interest in the problems of the coolie trade. It began to distinguish between voluntary emigration and the coolie trade and attempted to prohibit the latter. From the 1870s Peking attempted to protect Chinese emigrants through the despatch of diplomatic and consular officials.⁴⁵⁸

Amidst these developments, the relatively successful overseas Chinese communities, especially in Southeast Asia caught the eye of the Chinese imperial court. Having been thrown in a state of political turmoil, and on top of that suffering from the humiliation of foreign interference in its internal affairs, the Manchu court realised that the capable, energetic, and financially strong overseas Chinese could be instruments of great usefulness. In 1893, the ban on emigration was repealed and a pardon was issued for emigrants who had left their country and the graves of their ancestors. This was soon followed by other measures to tie the Chinese abroad more closely to their ancestral country. Numerous governmental missions were sent to the Indies, often transported on a warship or a squadron of warships, with the aim of inspiring renewed loyalty towards China. Being

⁴⁵⁸ Irick, *Ch'ing Policy toward the Coolie Trade*, 11–15, 389–414.

confronted with hostile public opinion in the colony, the Indies Chinese experienced the rapprochement with the government of China as moral support.⁴⁵⁹

The rapidly expanding Chinese school system in the Netherlands Indies was soon taken under the wing of the Chinese Ministry of Education in Peking. Chinese teachers were sent to the Indies to teach in the THHK schools and special schoolbooks were printed in Shanghai. Starting in 1906, a Chinese school inspector visited the schools in the Indies on a yearly basis. The Chinese Ministry of Education also provided scholarships for outstanding students to further their education in Chinese secondary schools and universities.⁴⁶⁰ More official visits from China took place with the foundation of the Chinese Chambers of Commerce (Siang Hwee) in the Indies. The first Siang Hwee was established in 1901 in Batavia. Operating under the jurisdiction of the Department of Agriculture, Industry and Trade in Peking, The Siang Hwee primarily served as an agency of the Chinese government. Officials of the Chinese government were despatched to the Dutch East Indies to report on the state of Chinese affairs and the circumstances under which business was done. Until Chinese consuls were admitted to the Dutch East Indies in 1912, diplomatic affairs and Chinese grievances were handled by the Siang Hwee. This economic association was also active in social matters. Funds were raised to help victims when China was hit by natural disasters like famine or floods, and donations were given to Chinese social organisations such as orphanages. The Siang Hwee was also active in sending out ballots for elections held in China.⁴⁶¹

With the government of China playing such an active role in the life of its citizens, the colonial government was obliged to reconsider its restrictive policy towards the Indies Chinese. In 1904, the pass system was relaxed; travel passes were no longer issued for a specific trip but were made valid for a year. In 1910, Foreign Orientals were allowed to travel without passes in Java and Madoera, as long as they travelled between main business centres and markets situated along main

⁴⁵⁹ A. Vandenbosch, "A Problem in Java: The Chinese in the Dutch East Indies", *Pacific Affairs* 3:11 (1930): 1003.

⁴⁶⁰ Govaars-Tjia, *Dutch Colonial Education*, 55–56.

⁴⁶¹ Govaars-Tjia, *Dutch Colonial Education*, 58–59; Vandenbosch, "A Problem in Java", 1008–1009.

highways or railways, and greater freedom of residence was granted. The pass- and residence systems were abolished in Java and Madoera in 1914 and 1919. It must be remarked that another reason for easing the enforcement of the pass system was economic. As government control on the movement of Chinese into rural Java was tightened after the abolition of several revenue farms, Chinese retail trade was hampered, resulting in sharply declined sales and the inability to collect short-term loans or outstanding debts. Ultimately this also affected European wholesale trade and government revenue.⁴⁶²

Yet the colonial government's primary reason for strengthening ties with the Chinese community seems to have been political. Although the emancipation of Chinese society and its aspirations were welcomed by the colonial authorities, they were wary of the close links that existed between the Chinese organisations and the Straits Settlements and China. Many deemed it outrageous that Chinese government officials were allowed to enter the Indies with the purpose of "inspecting the well-being of Chinese colonial subjects".⁴⁶³ In 1907 a legislative act was adopted that paved the way for individuals to obtain European status (*gelijkstelling*) by means of voluntary assimilation to Europeans. A year later, the Hollandsch-Chineesche School (Dutch-Chinese School, HCS) was opened, while Chinese children were allowed to enter indigenous government schools as well. When in 1909 the imperial government of China proclaimed all children born of a Chinese mother or father, regardless of their place of birth or country of residence, to be Chinese nationals, the colonial government was quick to respond.⁴⁶⁴ A year later, the Dutch colonial government passed the Dutch Subject Law, which declared all Indies-born Chinese to be Dutch subjects. On 8

⁴⁶² Fromberg, "De Chineesche Beweging op Java", 427–28; Lohanda, "The 'Passen- en Wijkenstelsel'", 19–21. For more details on the passport- and residence systems, see Tjiok-Liem, *De Rechtspositie der Chinezen in Nederlands-Indië*.

⁴⁶³ "Het Chineezenvraagstuk", *De Indische Gids* 27:2 (1905): 1890–91; "Het Chineesche vraagstuk in Indië", *De Indische Gids* 28:2 (1906): 1745–46.

⁴⁶⁴ Ong Eng Die, *Chineezenvraagstuk in Nederlandsch-Indië: Sociografie van een Indonesische Bevolkingsgroep* (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1943), 255.

May 1911, the issue was more or less settled in Peking in a consular agreement between China and the Netherlands Indies by which the imperial government acknowledged that in cases where the *peranakan* Chinese were in Dutch territories, the question of whether a person was Dutch or Chinese was to be determined according to Indies law. It was also agreed that Indies Chinese who wished to return to China could reclaim their Chinese nationality. China by no means abandoned its claim over the Indies Chinese and the end result of the consular meeting was that the *peranakan* Chinese held dual nationality. It should be mentioned that the Dutch Nationality Law of 1892, which defined Indies-born Asians as inhabitants (*ingezetenen*) of Dutch territories but non-Dutch (*niet-Nederlander*) was still in effect. The law drew a distinction between *Nederlanders* and *niet-Nederlanders* (the indigenes and other Asians). Therefore two kinds of subjects existed: *Nederlanders* who were Dutch subjects and *niet-Nederlanders* who were Dutch subjects. Thus, the Dutch Subject Law of 1910 did not elevate the status of the Chinese; they remained Foreign Orientals with a status inferior to that of Europeans. Furthermore, the Dutch agreed to the establishment of a Chinese consulate in the Indies. However, from the Dutch point of view, the consuls were not to be considered diplomats but merely trade agents responsible for the commercial interests of their compatriots.⁴⁶⁵ The Dutch Office for Chinese Affairs kept a watchful eye on the consuls and alerted the director of internal affairs when they went beyond their remits, as they often did in Chinese education.⁴⁶⁶

In 1914, the hated police courts were abolished and the *Landgerecht*—a court with jurisdiction over all population groups—was established in the same year. A process of legal unification followed. Most steps taken by the colonial government to bind the Indies-Chinese closer to their country of residence were welcomed, but the Chinese remained unhappy with the

⁴⁶⁵ Ong Eng Die, *Chineezzen in Nederlandsch-Indië*, 244–45. See also Fromberg, “De Chineesche Beweging op Java”, 431–46.

⁴⁶⁶ Confidential letter of the Advisor for Chinese Affairs to the Director of Internal Affairs on 9 November 1917, no. 409/17, Binnenlandsch Bestuur, no. 2192, Bemoeiingen van de Chinese Consuls htl, 1916–1918, ANRI, Jakarta.

nationality situation and few Chinese took the opportunity of obtaining European status as the conditions attached to this sort of naturalisation process were either unfeasible or repugnant. Individuals who wished to obtain European status were required to have a thorough (speaking) knowledge of Dutch, possess a certain amount of property, perform military service, and agree to the equal division of property among children (according to Chinese law Chinese daughters were excluded from family inheritance). The Chinese did not want assimilation but an improved status as foreigners, such as that enjoyed by the Japanese since 1899.⁴⁶⁷ This fervent wish was underlined by Major Khouw Kim An in his tribute to Queen Wilhelmina when she celebrated her jubilee. He praised all the efforts of the government under the Queen's leadership to improve the lives of the Indies Chinese in the previous twenty-five years, but regretted that the government had not taken the last, most important step of conferring equal status upon the Chinese.⁴⁶⁸

The colonial government's attempt to improve the lives of the Indies-born Chinese did weaken the fragile unity of the peranakan and totok Chinese. Now that most of the major grievances were removed,⁴⁶⁹ peranakans tended to align themselves more with the colonial government. At the same time, the Chinese revolutionaries under the leadership of Dr Sun Yat-sen increasingly gained support among the overseas Chinese. Kang Youwei's reform movement and Sun Yat-sen's revolutionary party had been battling about which form of government would be in China's best interests and competed with each other to win the support of the overseas Chinese. Kang's

⁴⁶⁷ Ong Eng Die, *Chineez in Nederlandsch-Indië*, 241–42; F. Tichelman, "Early Emancipation and Inter-ethnic Relations on Java", *Kabar Seberang* 24–25 (1995): 221; Vandenbosch, "A Problem in Java", 1009–10. For more details on the Dutch Subject Law and the naturalisation process, see Tjiok-Liem, *De Rechtspositie der Chinezen in Nederlands-Indië*.

⁴⁶⁸ L. F. van Gent, W. A. Penard and E. Moresco, *Gedenkboek voor Nederlandsch-Indië: Ter Gelegenheid van het Regeeringsjubileum van H. M. de Koningin, 1898–1923* (Batavia: Kolff, 1923), 47–48.

⁴⁶⁹ Even though the police courts were replaced by the uniform *Landgerecht* (local tribunal), criminal cases involving the Chinese were still handled by the *Landraad*, the court for the indigenous people. The Chinese were also not granted equal status with the Europeans, with the exception of those undergoing a naturalisation process.

reformists were in favour of reinstating the young Emperor Guangxu as a constitutional monarch while implementing reforms that would combine modern technology with the teachings of Confucius. The revolutionaries had set their minds on overthrowing the Manchu regime and founding a Chinese Republic.⁴⁷⁰ Gradually most overseas Chinese, including followers of Kang Youwei, regarded the Manchu rulers as too corrupt, and with the death of Emperor Guangxu in 1908, the reformists lost their *raison d'être*.⁴⁷¹ The throne was left in the hands of ignorant and vainglorious Manchu princes and the Empress Dowager named her three-year-old grand-nephew Puyi as Guangxu's successor. Puyi's father, the second Prince Chun, acted as regent but proved unfit for the troubled period the Qing dynasty found itself in.⁴⁷² As a result, an increasing number of overseas Chinese in North America and parts of Southeast Asia shifted allegiance to the revolutionary ideas of Sun Yat-sen. The efforts made on behalf of the revolutionary cause varied from moral support to financial contributions and from the spread of revolutionary propaganda to tracking down and killing Manchu officials in the overseas settlements, even at the risk of one's own life.⁴⁷³

The identification of the overseas Chinese with the revolutionary cause was a result of the Manchu ruling house's inability to protect its overseas subjects. The overseas Chinese strongly felt that their inferior status in colonial society and China's deterioration were related, and they blamed the ills inflicted on them by their imperial hosts to the weakening of the government in their ancestral land. They looked at the strong, modernised Japanese state that was able to protect and improve the position of the Japanese in the Indies. The overseas Chinese were also in need of a strong Chinese nation with a ruling house capable of handling diplomatic affairs. The Manchu's way of handling diplomacy had only resulted in concessions to the imperialists. Therefore, they

⁴⁷⁰ Spence, *The Search for Modern China*, 234.

⁴⁷¹ Shih-shan Ho Tsai, "The Revolution of 1911 and the Role of the Overseas Chinese", 11.

⁴⁷² Fairbank and Reischauer, *China*, 401.

⁴⁷³ Shih-shan Ho Tsai, "The Revolution of 1911 and the Role of the Overseas Chinese", 11–14.

supported the revolutionaries who were hinting at the expulsion of the ruling Manchus. The dynasty's "Mandate of Heaven" had quite evidently expired.⁴⁷⁴

The revolutionaries did not gain much ground in the Indies, as the Dutch colonial government kept a suspicious eye on their revolutionary activities. In 1907, Sun Yat-sen was refused entry to the Dutch East Indies, and he never had direct contact with the Indies Chinese on their home ground.⁴⁷⁵ Most support for the revolutionaries came from the totok Chinese whose revolutionary activities were carried out in secret in the Soe Po Sia book clubs, which were affiliated with the Tung Meng Hui (Revolutionary Alliance), which Dr Sun founded in 1905 while he was still in political exile in Japan and which is considered the forerunner of the Kuo Min Tang party.⁴⁷⁶

In 1909, the first Soe Po Sia of the Dutch East Indies was established and introduced its members to revolutionary political ideas through the distribution of books, newspapers, and periodicals. The clubs were also frequently venues for public or secret lectures and meetings.⁴⁷⁷ The colonial authorities kept a close eye on the Soe Po Sia and deported any radical they deemed a threat. Most peranakans were in favour of the Confucian reform movement of Kang Youwei and redirected their attention to the *status quo* in the Indies, keeping their distance from revolutionary activities.⁴⁷⁸ This explains why the peranakans did not join the totoks with the same degree of enthusiasm when the last Manchu emperor abdicated in January 1912. Any involvement in Chinese political affairs was also strictly forbidden by the colonial authorities. In its board meeting of 20 November 1915, the Batavian Chinese Council discussed a confidential letter from the assistant-

⁴⁷⁴ Shih-shan Ho Tsai, "The Revolution of 1911 and the Role of the Overseas Chinese", 8; Yen Ching-hwang, "Nanyang Chinese and the 1911 Revolution", in *The 1911 Revolution—The Chinese in British and Dutch Southeast Asia*, edited by Lee Lai To (Singapore: Heineman Asia, 1987), 20–34.

⁴⁷⁵ Suryadinata, "The 1911 Revolution and the Chinese in Java", 112

⁴⁷⁶ Suryadinata, "The 1911 Revolution and the Chinese in Java", 109–110.

⁴⁷⁷ Govaars-Tjia, *Dutch Colonial Education*, 60–61.

⁴⁷⁸ Suryadinata, "The 1911 Revolution and the Chinese in Java", 112.

resident⁴⁷⁹ which instructed the officers that no one in the Chinese community was to show any emotion with regard to the political developments in China. Demonstrations were strictly forbidden, as well as hoisting any Chinese flag. Neighbourhood chiefs were then instructed by the officers to announce these rules in the Chinese neighbourhoods. Any violator would be punished severely, as well as the neighbourhood chief who was in charge of the quarter in which the violator lived. This warning by the colonial government was probably a result of the political turmoil in China following the establishment of the Chinese Republic and the riots that took place in a number of Javanese cities in 1912, which will be discussed later on. The passive and obedient attitude by the peranakans was not appreciated by the totok Chinese, who viewed the peranakans as cowards, disloyal to the Chinese nation, and slaves of the Dutch.⁴⁸⁰ Thus Kwee Tek Hoay's conclusion that Kang Youwei's influence helped end rifts between peranakans and totoks should be taken with caution. If a feeling of unity ever existed, it was very short-lived or merely superficial.

The split between the peranakans and totoks was manifested in various newspapers and political organisations. The China-orientated Sin Po Group was a political organisation that sprang from the *Sin Po* newspaper, established in Batavia in 1910, and represented the totok Chinese. The group embraced Chinese nationalism, rejected the HCS and Dutch Subject Law of 1910, and refused to participate in local politics, which was made possible for the Indies Chinese with the establishment of the People's Council (*Volksraad*) in 1918. According to the Sin Po Group, in the end all Indies Chinese would return to their ancestral country; their stay in the colony was only temporary. Pieter Fromberg warned that aversion to participation in colonial affairs and contempt for Dutch education—that is, the refusal to learn from others—indicated an extreme form of nationalism. Extremist nationalism as such would stand in the way of progress and development.⁴⁸¹

⁴⁷⁹ Dated 28 October 1915, no. 339/G.

⁴⁸⁰ Chinese minutes, no. 21026, 20 November 1915: pp. 60–61; Malay minutes, no. NM3, 20 November 1915: pp. 98–99. See also “Een Chinees over de Chineesche Beweging”, *Koloniaal Tijdschrift* 1:2 (1912): 667–72.

⁴⁸¹ Fromberg, “De Chineesche Beweging op Java”, 656–57.

The Sin Po Group advocated the unity of peranakans and totoks but the gap between them seemed unbridgeable.

The more moderate, Indies-orientated *Perniagaan* newspaper represented the peranakan Chinese. In 1928 the Chung Hwa Hui (Chinese Organisation, CHH) was founded, the first political party representing the peranakan Chinese. Unlike the Sin Po Group, the CHH wished to participate in local politics. The organisation regarded the Indies as the home of the peranakan Chinese and that Western education was therefore needed; Chinese education alone was insufficient for a successful life in the Indies.⁴⁸² The Chinese community saw the emergence of a third faction with the foundation of the Partai Tionghoa Indonesia (Chinese Indonesian Party, or PTI) in 1932. This political organisation sought allegiance with the Indonesian nationalist movement.⁴⁸³ Leo Suryadinata has studied the struggle within these political groups and their ideological differences. He traces the strongholds of the political streams back to the three main cities on Java: the Sin Po Group was all-powerful in Batavia, the CHH was based in Semarang, and the PTI was most prominent in Soerabaja.⁴⁸⁴

The Arabs and Indonesians

Signs of broad group consciousness were also prevalent among the Arabs and Indonesians. In keeping with the temper of the twentieth century, the Arabs in the Indies also tried to “forge a collective Arab identity”. Elite Arab businessmen took the lead in this search for identity by building up educational institutions and engaging themselves in the world of print. They were inspired by the schools of the Ottoman Empire, to which, from the late nineteenth century onwards,

⁴⁸² Ong Hok Ham, *Riwayat Tionghoa Peranakan di Jawa* (Depok: Komunitas Bambu, 2005), 135–36.

⁴⁸³ M. Osman, *Perkembangan Nasionalisme Masyarakat Cina di Jawa dan Partai-partai Politiknya: 1900–1945* (Jakarta: Studi Klub Sejarah Fakultas Sastra, Universitas Indonesia, 1986), 6–8.

⁴⁸⁴ See Suryadinata, *Peranakan Chinese Politics in Java 1917–1942*.

numerous sons of elite Arab families in Java had been sent to obtain modern education.⁴⁸⁵ The Arab community became politicised in a manner comparable to the way the Chinese had become when the Manchu dynasty was overthrown by the Chinese nationalists in 1911. Political consciousness among the Indies Arabs emerged when the Ottoman Empire was weakened as a world power in the years leading up to World War I and dissolved in 1922, after which one year later Atatürk established the Republic of Turkey.⁴⁸⁶

The new Indonesian elite was the result of the Ethical Policy and the association principle, which sought to combine “Eastern experience” with “Western wisdom”. Progressive politicians, confirmed believers of the association principle, had called for the establishment of more European-style education in the Dutch language for a rising Westernised Indonesian elite that could take over much of the work of Dutch civil servants. But handing over more responsibilities to this elite group turned out to be complicated. The dualist structure of the Binnenlandsch Bestuur, in which the Dutch officials were considered superior to their native counterparts, was retained. The governmental posts of governor-general, resident, assistant-resident, and controleur remained inaccessible to indigenous officials. Native people were only allowed to hold subordinate offices.⁴⁸⁷

Indonesian dissatisfaction over their inferior position in colonial society, coupled with the drive for progress led to the establishment of emancipative organisations, their charters suffused with the words of progress, uplift, prosperity, and social welfare. The Ethical Policy was thus not only reserved for the Dutch; competition came from indigenous innovators who had developed their own ideas of modernisation, progress, and civilisation. Unlike the Chinese ones, the Indonesian

⁴⁸⁵ S. K. Mandal, “Forging a Modern Arab Identity in Java in the Early Twentieth Century”, in *Transcending Borders: Arabs, Politics, Trade and Islam in Southeast Asia*, edited by H. de Jonge and N. Kaptein (Leiden: KITLV Press, 2002), 163–65.

⁴⁸⁶ C. Finkel, *De Droom van Osman: Geschiedenis van het Ottomaanse Rijk 1300–1923* (Amsterdam: Mets and Schilt, 2008), chaps. 15 and 16; Mandal, “Forging a Modern Arab Identity in Java”, 168.

⁴⁸⁷ W.H. van den Doel, *Afscheid van Indië: De Val van het Nederlandse Imperium in Azië* (Amsterdam: Prometheus, 2001), 23–25.

organisations were orientated towards ethnicity, ideology, or religion. Group cohesion seldom extended beyond speech-groups or regional ties. Nationwide organisations did not gain ground until the late 1920s, when the nationalist concept of *bangsa Indonesia* (Indonesian people) was created.⁴⁸⁸ The only bond linking the Indonesians from the different parts of the archipelago together was the Islamic faith. The rapid expansion of Islamic-based associations like the Sarekat Islam and Muhammadiyah showed a revived interest in the Islamic faith. Islam increasingly took a central position in the nationalist awakening of the Indonesians. It was not Western ideas but Islam that provided the model of raised consciousness among the Indonesians.⁴⁸⁹ Robert van Niel summarised the importance of Islam in indigenous life as follows:

To the Indonesians Islam was much more than a religion—it was a way of life. As such, it came more and more to stand for everything that was indigenous as opposed to foreign. Islam came to be a factor of unity within the growing self-consciousness of Indonesians, and at the same time came to be a criterion of national solidarity, of brown man against white.⁴⁹⁰

Indonesian emancipation was not only a result of Dutch “lofty” ideals. Developments elsewhere in Asia contributed significantly to the awakening of the indigenous people. The victory of Japan in the Russo-Japanese War (1904–1905) made a deep impression. For the first time, an Asian country had defeated a European power on its own terms. The Japanese victory was a signal that through hard work and sacrifice Asians could work their way up to becoming first-rate citizens

⁴⁸⁸ Wertheim and The Siauwi Giap, “Social Change in Java”, 245–47.

⁴⁸⁹ J. van Doorn, *A Divided Society: Segmentation and Mediation in Late-Colonial Indonesia* (Rotterdam: Erasmus University, Faculty of Social Science, CASP, 1983), 9–13.

⁴⁹⁰ R. van Niel, *The Emergence of the Modern Indonesian Elite* (Leiden: Foris, 1984), 82.

on the world stage.⁴⁹¹ The indigenous people also followed the progressive reforms in the Philippines and British India with great interest. In 1907 the Philippine Assembly was inaugurated, the first native-controlled legislative body in the colonial world. Nine years later, United States Congress passed the so-called Jones Act by which the United States officially pledged to grant independence to the Philippines as soon as a stable Filipino government could be established. Meanwhile, the British government opened more vacancies in the Indian Civil Service to Indians and the Government of India Act of 1919 contained far-reaching administrative reforms. Certain departments such as public security and finances remained under the control of the British governor, but equally important departments such as local administration, education, public works, healthcare, agriculture and irrigation were handed over to Indian ministers accountable to democratically-chosen provincial councils.⁴⁹²

Inspiration also came from closer to home. Indonesian intellectuals admired the awakening of the Chinese that had led to the establishment of a successful school system. Realising that education was the main feature of progress, the intellectuals called for a similar movement to be launched by the Indonesians.⁴⁹³ The Chinese press was also a source of inspiration. In 1886 a certain Tjoa Tjoan Lok successfully made a bid for the ownership of the Dutch printing firm Gebroeders Gimberg and Co. and the right to publish its newspaper, *Bintang Timoer*, in a public auction that took place in Soerabaja. The sale of the printing firm to Tjoa Tjoan Lok marked the beginning of Chinese participation in newspaper publication, and other Chinese decided to try their luck in the printing press business. Within a short span of time numerous Chinese-Malay printing presses were set up and Chinese-Malay newspapers mushroomed across Java.⁴⁹⁴

⁴⁹¹ Van Dijk, “Een Kolonie in Beweging”, 61.

⁴⁹² Van den Doel, *Afscheid van Indië*, 19–20, 50–54.

⁴⁹³ A. B. Adam, *The Vernacular Press and the Emergence of Modern Indonesian Consciousness, 1855–1913* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Southeast Asia Program, Cornell University, 1995), 104–105.

⁴⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 63–71.

The Malay press was an important medium to reach and educate the masses by spreading new ideas, thoughts, and opinions that could contribute to a collective awakening and, in a later stage, nationalist consciousness. Newspapers were able to open people's eyes to the reality of their status in colonial society, to reassess their identity and to bolster a feeling of group consciousness. The Chinese-Malay press came to function as an important medium for the intellectual development of the indigenous masses and played an important role in improving the quality of the indigenous press. Indigenous journalists were invited to work at Chinese-Malay newspapers to gain more publishing experience. There they were taught the techniques of the printing business, newspaper management, and of course journalism.⁴⁹⁵

The pergerakan

At the turn of the twentieth century, a new era began in which colonial civil society underwent significant changes. It was an era in which the Indonesians, Chinese, Arabs, and Indo-Europeans became conscious of their status in colonial society and began to demand equal rights with the Dutch. It was an era in which followers of new ideologies (socialism, communism) emerged as political power groups and old cultural (Confucianism) and religious concepts (Islam) were revived. People began to see the world in new ways and felt they could change it. Even though Takashi Shiraishi pointed in particular to the indigenous when summarising this awakening, his summary is also applicable to the Chinese, Arabs and Indo-Europeans:

It [this awakening] was and still is called the *pergerakan* [movement], in which 'natives' moved [*bergerak*] in their search for forms to express their new political

⁴⁹⁵ A. Wahid, "Modal Cina dan Nasionalisme Indonesia: Industri Pers Cina pada Masa Pergerakan Nasional, 1910–1942", *Lembaran Sejarah* 2:1 (1999): 107–11.

consciousness, put in motion [*menggerakkan*] their thoughts and ideas, and confronted the realities of the Indies in the world and in an age they felt to be in motion.⁴⁹⁶

This awakening was expressed in newspapers and journals, in rallies and meetings, in labour organisations and strikes, in associations and political parties, but also in such forms as novels, songs and theatres, and revolts.⁴⁹⁷ A new trend in outward appearances was also visible: indigenous, Arabs, and Chinese all started to dress in a Western manner.⁴⁹⁸ To the Dutch, the *pergerakan* was simply modern or a natural phenomenon as all the major forms in which the *pergerakan* found its expression were familiar. But to the indigenous, Arabs and Chinese, the *pergerakan* was revolutionary because now they were able to say what they had always been unable to say.⁴⁹⁹

4.3 A divided society: racial segregation and ethnic conflict in early twentieth century Java

During the Chinese New Year celebration in February 1912, Dutch bans on fireworks and flag hoisting led to disturbances between the Chinese and the police in Soerabaja.⁵⁰⁰ When the Chinese of Soerabaja closed their shops during the riots, the city suffered a shortage of staple foods, but Arab retail traders continued selling rice to the native people at normal prices.⁵⁰¹ They refused

⁴⁹⁶ T. Shiraishi, *An Age in Motion: Popular Radicalism in Java, 1912–1926* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1990), p. xi.

⁴⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. xi.

⁴⁹⁸ Cornelis (K.) van Dijk, “Sarong, Jubbah, and Trousers: Appearance as a Means of Distinction and Discrimination”, in *Outward Appearances: Dressing State and Society in Indonesia*, edited by H. Schulte Nordholt (Leiden: KITLV Press, 1997), 58.

⁴⁹⁹ Shiraishi, *An Age in Motion*, 339–40.

⁵⁰⁰ As the Dutch government had not yet recognised the Chinese Republic, the colonial government issued a ban on hoisting the new Chinese republican flag.

⁵⁰¹ Nevertheless, the inconvenience caused by the market strike did anger the natives who could not always buy the rice they needed. Natives—especially the Madoerese—attacked the Chinese and beat them up. See Shiraishi, “Anti-Sinicism in Java’s New Order”, 202.

offers from the Chinese to take over their supplies. In fact, the Arabs refused to sell rice to the Chinese at all, even when gold was offered, thereby sabotaging the plans of the instigators who hoped that people would revolt because of the food shortage. The result was severe strain between the Chinese and Arab communities.⁵⁰² Simultaneously, bitterness over the economic freedom hitherto enjoyed by the Chinese had aroused Arab animosity towards the Chinese.⁵⁰³ In the following months, tension between the two ethnic communities rose to higher levels, eventually resulting in riots from 27 October to 2 November 1912, when there was heavy fighting between Chinese and Arabs and Chinese shops were ransacked by Arabs. Among the eight dead were five Chinese, two Arabs, and one European.⁵⁰⁴ Similar conflicts between Chinese and Arabs occurred in Bangil, Tuban, and Cheribon.⁵⁰⁵ In Batavia, Chinese children spread rumours about the storage of litres of pork fat by the Chinese to pour over the Arabs.⁵⁰⁶

In October 1918, an influenza epidemic killed many people in the city of Kudus. Out of concern that the epidemic might cause more deadly victims, a group of Chinese youngsters staged a ceremonial procession in front of the Chinese temple in the hope that it might stop the outbreak. The procession caught the eye of a group of *hajis*⁵⁰⁷ who owned tobacco factories in the city but operated at a competitive disadvantage to the Chinese. Upon seeing the procession, they tried to stir up unrest by turning their employees and members of the local Sarekat Islam branch against the Chinese. The workers and members of Sarekat Islam began mocking the Chinese and the incident quickly escalated into skirmishes between the indigenous and Chinese. On the following night, 31 October 1918, Chinese neighbourhoods and shops were ransacked and set on fire by thousands of Sarekat Islam members, many of whom came from outside the city. There were hundreds of

⁵⁰² “Persoverzicht: De Chineesche Pers, oktober-november 1912”, *Koloniaal Tijdschrift* 2:1 (1913): 333.

⁵⁰³ “Chineezen en Arabieren”, *De Indische Gids* 35:1 (1913): 107.

⁵⁰⁴ “Chineezen in botsing op Java”, *De Indische Gids* 34:2 (1912): 1656–57.

⁵⁰⁵ Lohanda, *Growing Pains*, 131–35.

⁵⁰⁶ Malay minutes, no. NM2, 4 November 1912: p. 124.

⁵⁰⁷ The term “haji” refers to a devoted Muslim who has made the pilgrimage to Mecca.

casualties and sixteen people were killed. Forty houses were burnt down, a Chinese temple was destroyed and several Chinese shops and factories were damaged. Some people were burnt or buried alive when their houses were destroyed.⁵⁰⁸

These two examples of virulent anti-Chinese violence are highlighted here for the purpose of illustrating that racial relations in the Dutch East Indies had changed dramatically in the second decade of the twentieth century. The reason for this deterioration in racial relations was twofold. First, rivalry in business created sharp boundaries between the ethnic groups. After the revenue farms had been dismantled in the 1890s, the Chinese sought new investment opportunities in the *kretek* (clove) cigarette and batik industries, entrepreneurial domains hitherto dominated by the indigenous bourgeoisie and the Arabs.⁵⁰⁹ The competition was aggravated with the arrival of Chinese newcomers, mostly of Hakka and Cantonese origin. Traditionally these *singkehs* had found patrons in the existing peranakan business networks. But when the tax farms were placed under direct government management and rural credit banks replaced the Chinese moneylenders, the *singkehs* had no reason anymore to assimilate in the peranakan community and shifted their attention to other businesses. The aggressiveness of the need-driven newcomers from China set off fear among the indigenous merchants. In 1909 the Sarekat Dagang Islam was formed to ward off Chinese competition from the established indigenous industries.⁵¹⁰ Second, the colonial government shared some of the blame. Chinese vulnerability to native antagonism was fostered by the government's strategy of slandering the Chinese for standing in the way of native progress.⁵¹¹ The

⁵⁰⁸ Setiono, *Tionghoa dalam Pusaran Politik*, 375–79. For more details on the anti-Chinese riots in Kudus, see The Siauw Giap, “Group Conflict in a Plural Society”, *Revue du Sud-Est Asiatique et de l'Extrême-Orient* 1 (1966): 1–31.

⁵⁰⁹ A. Azra, “The Indies Chinese and the Sarekat Islam: An Account of the Anti-Chinese Riots in Colonial Indonesia”, *Studia Islamika: Indonesian Journal for Islamic Studies* 1:1 (1994): 36–37; Mandal, “Forging a Modern Arab Identity in Java”, 165; D. Noer, *The Modernist Muslim Movement in Indonesia, 1900–1942* (Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1973), 102–103.

⁵¹⁰ Rush, *Opium to Java*, 243–44.

⁵¹¹ Shiraishi, “Anti-Sinicism in Java's New Order”, 190.



Tram carriage displaying Batavia's ethnic diversity, c.1881-1889

lack of an “Indies identity” also contributed to popular hatred towards the Chinese. For centuries the Dutch had enforced a policy of racial segregation because they discouraged intense interaction between the ethnic groups in the colony, especially between the Chinese and the native people.⁵¹² In keeping every group in ethnocultural confinement, the Dutch prevented the various population groups in the archipelago from developing a shared “Indies identity”. This lack of a common identity in turn contributed to the modern development in which each ethnic group started to emphasise its own distinct racial identity, manifested in educational institutions, socio-political societies, cultural associations, and economic organisations. Apart from institutionalising their own

⁵¹² Tichelman, “Early Emancipation and Inter-ethnic Relations on Java”, 214–15.

activities, the ethnic groups sealed themselves off from one another and began to display an increasing intolerance toward one another.⁵¹³

As I have shown in previous chapters, the Dutch segregation policy was first introduced by the Dutch East India Company to secure its lasting rule and it was maintained in part to limit the spread of Islam among the Chinese. Prior to the arrival of the Company on Java, many Chinese immigrants embraced Islam and created a (Muslim) *peranakan* culture with many affinities with the Javanese Islamic world in which they lived.⁵¹⁴ Despite the restrictions on ethnic amalgamation enforced by the Company, Islam continued to attract Chinese converts. Financial considerations appear to have been a catalyst for conversion because middlemen and tax farmers of Chinese descent were more acceptable to the local population if they were Muslims. Converting to Islam was also a way for the Chinese to escape the head tax levied upon them by the Company. Finally, due to the scarcity of Chinese women in Java, Chinese immigrants married indigenous women who sometimes made religious demands.⁵¹⁵ Because most of these Javanese women came from families whose religious orientation was native Javanese with a nominal adherence to Islam, their version of Islam was considerably less orthodox than that found in Madoera or Sumatra.⁵¹⁶ By 1770, the Dutch East India Company acknowledged the category of Chinese Muslims by appointing a chieftain to

⁵¹³ Van Doorn, *A Divided Society*, 12, 24–25.

⁵¹⁴ Rush, *Opium to Java*, 89–90.

⁵¹⁵ P. Carey, “Changing Javanese Perceptions of the Chinese Communities in Central Java, 1755–1825”, *Indonesia* 37 (April 1984): 12; The Siau Giap, “Religion and Overseas Chinese Assimilation in Southeast Asian Countries”, *Revue du Sud-Est Asiatique et de l’Extrême-Orient* 2 (1965): 69–71; Van Mastenbroek, *De Historische Ontwikkeling van de Staatsrechtelijke Indeeling der Bevolking van Nederlandsch-Indië*, 25.

⁵¹⁶ G. W. Skinner, “Change and Persistence in Chinese Culture Overseas: A Comparison of Thailand and Java”, *Journal of the South Seas Society* 16 (1960): 96–97.

oversee the Chinese (Muslim) *peranakans* of Batavia (*kapitan peranakan*).⁵¹⁷ During the time of the Company, *peranakans* were those Chinese who had converted to Islam.⁵¹⁸

Before the outbreak of the Java War (1825–30), Chinese assimilation into Javanese society in the central Java principalities of Surakarta and Yogyakarta even went so far that some “Javanised” Chinese entered Javanese court circles. Peter Carey observes that “the Javanese elite enjoyed many contacts with the Chinese communities and made full use of the skills the latter had to offer. This was especially noticeable in the fields of tax-farm administration, commercial enterprise, and military expertise.”⁵¹⁹ But contacts with the Chinese in court circles were by no means limited to purely business and financial matters. A particular interest in Chinese-derived gambling and entertainments, such as fireworks displays, resulted in close social contacts between the Chinese elite and members of the *kraton* (palace), while casual liaisons between local rulers and attractive (Muslim) *peranakan* women sometimes led to Javanese rulers taking Chinese women as secondary wives.⁵²⁰ From the Chinese point of view, close ties with the Javanese courts were often a “*sine qua non* for their commercial success in the hinterland, and they actively sought to strengthen these ties through marriage and personal relationships.”⁵²¹ Carey summarises the relationship between the Javanese courts and Chinese communities in central Java before the Java

⁵¹⁷ C. Salmon, “Ancestral Halls, Funeral Associations, and Attempts at Resinicization in Nineteenth-Century Netherlands India”, *Sojourners and Settlers: Histories of Southeast Asia and the Chinese: In Honour of Jennifer Cushman* (St. Leonards, NSW: Allen and Unwin, 1996), 194. The office of *kapitan peranakan* was terminated in Batavia in 1827. In the years thereafter, the Dutch gradually abolished the office in the rest of Java, Madoera, and also Makassar as most of the *peranakans* had completely assimilated into native society.

⁵¹⁸ Van Mastenbroek, *De Historische Ontwikkeling van de Staatsrechtelijke Indeeeling der Bevolking van Nederlandsch-Indië*, 26.

⁵¹⁹ Carey, “Changing Javanese Perceptions of the Chinese Communities in Central Java”, 16.

⁵²⁰ *Ibid.*, 20.

⁵²¹ *Ibid.*, 3–4.

War as being based on a marked degree of reciprocity, common interest, and inter-communal cooperation.⁵²²

This more or less harmonious relationship began to change as Dutch rule on Java intensified. In the years leading up to the Java War, Dutch rule on Java became firmly established. By then, the Chinese were widely employed as tax farmers by both the Javanese aristocracy and increasingly by the colonial government, especially for tolls and opium farms. This made the Chinese targets of popular resentment. Hatred toward the Chinese intensified when economic conditions in central Java started to decline sharply and large-scale abuses by the Chinese tax farmers became more frequent. Prince Diponegoro, who in 1825 rebelled against the Dutch during the Java War, branded the Chinese as traitors and issued an order to kill those who did not want to adopt the Islamic faith. Feeling exposed and threatened, the Chinese now felt that assimilation into Javanese society was much less appealing,⁵²³ and conversion to Islam was more and more perceived as a serious threat to the survival of Chinese identity. Another important consideration was that class and ethnicity tended to coincide in Java and that upward mobility carried the Chinese in the direction of the elite stratum. So long as the Javanese courts still displayed ethnic confidence and cultural vigour, the honourable titles bestowed on the most prominent and talented Chinese were very much coveted. But as the socio-political structure in Java changed with increasing Dutch domination, honours from the shadow courts of Djokjakarta and Surakarta meant less and less and it was liaisons with representatives of the Dutch crown that were coveted. By the nineteenth century the elite in Java was unmistakably Dutch, rather than indigenous Javanese.⁵²⁴

In the second section of this chapter, it was pointed out that a renaissance movement of Chinese culture took place at the end of the nineteenth century. Yet, Claudine Salmon has shown

⁵²² *Ibid.*, 3.

⁵²³ *Ibid.*, 32–41; The Siau Giap, “Religion and Overseas Chinese Assimilation in Southeast Asian Countries”, 73; Tichelman, “Early Emancipation and Inter-ethnic Relations on Java”, 219.

⁵²⁴ Skinner, “Change and Persistence”, 90–91.

that already in the mid-nineteenth century the (Muslim) peranakan society in the Indies was undergoing cultural changes. Attempts were made to “resinicise” the (Muslim) peranakan Chinese and to revive Confucian social order through the establishment of Chinese socioreligious associations throughout the Indies. These temples and funeral associations gave financial assistance to the poor and needy Chinese in the areas where the associations were based. But the particular aim of the associations was to preserve Chinese identity. The founders of the associations observed the merging of the (Muslim) peranakans with the local population and the adoption of Muslim culture and superstitious beliefs with dismay, and they feared that (Chinese) civilisation would fall into oblivion. By reviving traditional Chinese customs with respect to funerals and marriages and encouraging (Muslim) peranakan women to wear traditional Chinese dress, serious attempts were made to curb the Islamisation and assimilation of peranakan Chinese into indigenous society. The establishment of ancestral temples and funeral associations in significant numbers and the promotion of Chinese *esprit de corps* showed that certain segments of the Chinese community in the Indies were determined to halt the Islamisation process and to redirect their countrymen towards the customs of their ancestral land.⁵²⁵ In the nineteenth century it was also common among rich families to send their sons to China to be acculturated.⁵²⁶ However, in the long run such efforts to sustain a Chinese identity were largely overwhelmed by the local environment. Adoption of the European and Indonesian ways of life was widespread among the Indies Chinese, resulting in a typical peranakan culture as seen in the nineteenth and twentieth century, but nevertheless with important features of Chinese culture.⁵²⁷

In the twentieth century, it was no longer necessary for the Dutch to keep the system of ethnic stratification in force. The rise of modern politics went hand in hand with the awakening of

⁵²⁵ Salmon, “Ancestral Halls, Funeral Associations, and Attempts at Resinicization in Nineteenth-Century Netherlands India”, 183–214.

⁵²⁶ Rush, *Opium to Java*, 90.

⁵²⁷ *Ibid.*, 90–92.

the Chinese as Chinese, the Arabs as Arabs, and the natives as natives. Shiraishi argues that segregation was maintained by the spirit of the era: “It was no longer necessary to require Chinese and natives to wear their own distinctive dress. It became perfectly permissible for Chinese and natives to appear in public in European dress, for the new politics quickly implanted racial distinctions in everyone’s mind.”⁵²⁸

4.4 Changes in ethnic community leadership

The *pergerakan* not only embodied the process by which non-Western groups in the Dutch East Indies were moving towards nationalist consciousness. It also comprised the emergence of a new Western-trained elite in the Chinese, indigenous, and Arab communities. The new elite represented Western modernity; they went to Dutch schools and some even had the opportunity to further their education in the Netherlands. Some increasingly took interest in practical professions such as medicine, journalism, engineering, and law, while others were exposed to modern political ideas that stimulated them to become active in political organisations after returning to the Indies. Through these organisations, they sought to improve the lot of their people and demand equal rights with the Dutch. Other politically active people ran as candidates for municipal, regency, and provincial councils for the same reason. The new elite represented progress and development and they increasingly usurped the roles of traditional community leaders, who were more and more considered as remnants of the past. The latter’s authority was rooted in the era of the Cultivation System, when their predecessors were appointed not for their competence or outstanding education, but on the basis of hereditary rights, wealth, and their loyalty to the Dutch. These principles were not consistent with modern ideas of good government and people began to abandon the traditional community leaders to follow the new elite.

⁵²⁸ Shiraishi, “Anti-Sinicism in Java’s New Order”, 205.

The institution of Chinese officers

According to Donald Willmott's carefully observed study of the Chinese of Semarang, in the twentieth century leadership of the Chinese community fell into four distinct categories:

1. Administrative leadership: participation in the actual day-to-day governing of the Chinese community;
2. Political leadership: leadership in organisations that attempted to influence the Dutch or Indonesian governments, to support the government or people of China, or to give political orientation to the local Chinese;
3. Commercial leadership: leadership in business or commercial organisations or affairs;
4. Organisational leadership: leadership in community organisations, such as schools, charitable institutions, religious societies and mutual-aid clubs.⁵²⁹

Although Willmott's theories on Chinese community leadership are mainly based on the Chinese population of Semarang, his conclusions are still useful to sketch a general outline of Chinese leadership in the rest of Java. According to Willmott, during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries the Chinese officers had a virtual monopoly of all four types of leadership. Administrative rule was carried out by the Chinese Council when the colonial government applied a system of indirect rule on the Chinese through the Chinese officers. As revenue farmers and landowners the officers had a dominant position in commerce, and they usually took the lead in religious festivities and charitable events in the Chinese community. Political aspirations among the Chinese only started to blossom in the twentieth century and it is safe to say that "political" leadership, as Willmott uses it, was of minor importance before the twentieth century.⁵³⁰

⁵²⁹ Willmott, *The Chinese of Semarang*, 159.

⁵³⁰ *Ibid.*

In the first two decades of the twentieth century, the Chinese officers retained some administrative leadership, although the colonial government increasingly took over important administrative tasks. Commercial and political leadership passed almost completely into the hands of the Siang Hwee and Chinese political societies. The development of political awareness by groups like the Siang Hwee and Soe Po Sia was initially China-orientated and helped focus the Indies Chinese on Chinese nationalism. However, it was not always possible to identify the welfare of the overseas Chinese with that of the Chinese state. Most Indies Chinese became emotionally rather than politically attached to China, and were more concerned with improving the lot of the local Chinese. It became increasingly important to have Chinese representatives in the provincial, regency, and municipal councils, and of course in the People's Council (*Volksraad*). Even though the authority of these political boards was limited, holding seats in these councils gave the Chinese the chance to actively participate in the Indies politics and improve the welfare of their community as a whole, something the Chinese Council had failed to do. Organisational leadership was divided between the Chinese Council and the Siang Hwee.⁵³¹ Thus, the dispersion of Chinese community leadership in the early twentieth century can be viewed as a power struggle between the newcomers (the leaders of the Chinese movement) and the old established order (the Chinese officers).

The growth in attacks against the institution of Chinese officers

The struggle for leadership over the Chinese community was accompanied by fierce criticism directed at the Chinese officers. The Chinese-Malay press in particular had no scruples about venting its spleen on the Chinese officer system. On 16 June 1914 the editor in chief of the Semarang-based newspaper *Warna Warta* showed his contempt for the Chinese officers whose appointments were in most cases based on their ability to collect money:

⁵³¹ Ibid., 160; Williams, "The Ethical Program and the Chinese of Indonesia", 112–13.

They [the Chinese officers] are not asked to take an examination or do some other test, neither are they asked to have sufficient knowledge or to be educated. It does not matter whether a Chinese community leader is able to speak his [the Chinese] language, as long as he has plenty of money. A majority of these officers do not have any knowledge of the law, so it is safe to say that they also do not know anything about the *Chinese* laws, customs and traditions. They even do not have a command of the Chinese language. And yet, these incompetent people serve as advisors in the indigenous courts of justice (*Landraad*) and the Council of Justice (*Raad van Justitie*). One might ask how this could happen. The answer would be that anything is possible in the Dutch East Indies.⁵³²

Two days later, the editor in chief continued his condemnation of the Chinese officer system by comparing the situation of the Dutch East Indies with that of the Netherlands. He wondered how the Dutch would react if a farmer were to be appointed a mayor, just because he had plenty of livestock and sufficient other financial resources. He was convinced that the Dutch people would certainly not accept that. Then why, he wondered, would the colonial government invest in the education of the Chinese people, invest in their intellectual development and progress, but at the same time still expect them to accept a leadership system that is based on old-fashioned and feudal principles? He advised the government to allow free election. Then the Chinese people would be able to choose their own representatives and base their choice on a person's ability and competence. He argued that it might be an even better idea to follow the Straits Settlements and abolish the Chinese officers with their ridiculous military titles at once.⁵³³

⁵³² *Warna Warta*, 16 June 1913.

⁵³³ *Warna Warta*, 18 June 1914. The chieftain system in the Straits Settlements was officially abolished in 1826.

The editors of *Pewarta Soerabaja* expressed great indignation about the usage of the honourable title *padoeka* (your excellency) in certain periodicals when referring to the Chinese officers: “So there are still backward people who honour these officers, while in these times they are nothing but bastards, the second plague of Java!”⁵³⁴ According to the newspaper, educated Chinese no longer held their officers in high esteem and were themselves reluctant to apply for an officer post, the introduction of official uniforms notwithstanding.⁵³⁵ The fact that the prestige of the officers had dropped significantly was also shown by the Soerabaja-based newspaper *Tjhoen Tjhioe*, which reported an incident in December 1915 involving a Chinese lieutenant who allegedly used counterfeit money at a local market. Upon hearing the alleged crime, the village head ordered his *kamitoewa* (head of hamlet) to bring the Chinese before him. Even though the lieutenant identified himself as a Chinese officer, he was forced to come along by the *kamitoewa*, who in the meantime had pulled his dagger (*keris*). “A Chinese lieutenant brought in to a village head! Where has the prestige of the Chinese race gone?” According to the newspaper it was no wonder that the Chinese people no longer looked up to their community leaders.⁵³⁶ *Pewarta Soerabaja* suggested that the colonial government link the post of Chinese major to the presidency of Chinese trade organisations. The vice-presidents of those organisations could be appointed to captain, while the commissioners could take up the post of lieutenant.⁵³⁷ Another solution would be allowing the Chinese to select their own community leaders.⁵³⁸

Voting rights would not make any difference in the recruitment of capable men for the function of Chinese officer according to *Sin Po*, which argued that during election time wealthy

⁵³⁴ “Persoverzicht: De Chineesche Pers, mei-juni 1912”, *Koloniaal Tijdschrift* 1:2 (1912): 847; “Persoverzicht: De Chineesche Pers, maart-april 1914”, *Koloniaal Tijdschrift* 3:2 (1914): 957.

⁵³⁵ “Persoverzicht: De Chineesche Pers, juli-augustus 1912”, *Koloniaal Tijdschrift* 1:2 (1912): 1134; *Pewarta Soerabaja*, 12 September 1914.

⁵³⁶ “Persoverzicht: De Chineesche Pers, december 1915”, *Koloniaal Tijdschrift* 5:1 (1916): 383–84.

⁵³⁷ “Persoverzicht: De Chineesche Pers, juli-augustus 1912”, *Koloniaal Tijdschrift* 2 (1912): 1134.

⁵³⁸ “Persoverzicht: De Chineesche Pers, september 1914”, *Koloniaal Tijdschrift* 3:2 (1914): 1686.

candidates seeking the post would be able to bribe the less fortunate Chinese into voting for them and thus rich incapable men would still be elected. According to *Sin Po*, this was also the case in the Dutch Parliament in The Hague. The newspaper claimed that nearly half of the members of the Dutch Parliament had paid big money to be seated in the meetings: “Not to discuss important matters or to submit a useful proposal that could help their people, no, only for the reason to receive honour and to be addressed as *Hoog Edel Gestrenge Heer!*”⁵³⁹ Apparently *Sin Po* did not think much of the Dutch political system. It would be best, according to the newspaper, to abolish the whole captain system. The officers were of no use for the Chinese community anyway, as their authority was limited. For instance, they were not allowed to make actual decisions in conflicts between community members; they merely had the authority to give advice in trials.⁵⁴⁰ The indigenous leaders had far more authority. The regent was also the judge and chairman in the Regency Council of Justice (*Regentschapsgerecht*) and thus allowed to decide over small conflicts and violations of the law.⁵⁴¹ On the other hand, *Sin Po* argued, a Chinese officer would use all his powers to make someone’s life miserable if he chose to.⁵⁴² But even if the officers were given more authority, the Chinese community would not benefit from that since most officers regarded their posts as a sideline to which they would devote themselves only if they had time. Their principal occupation—mostly trade or something else that would bring financial benefit—always came first.⁵⁴³ Many officers also left their responsibilities to their secretaries and worried little if at all about their community.⁵⁴⁴

Personal actions against the Chinese officers also occurred. In 1904, Chinese protested against the appointment of a captain in Buitenzorg who was said to be “uncultivated”. A year later a

⁵³⁹ *Sin Po*, 1 December 1916.

⁵⁴⁰ *Sin Po*, 6 December 1916.

⁵⁴¹ *Sin Po*, 7 December 1916.

⁵⁴² *Sin Po*, 25 October 1916; *Sin Po*, 17 November 1916.

⁵⁴³ *Sin Po*, 29 July 1915.

⁵⁴⁴ *Sin Po*, 1 December 1916.

boycott was organised against the appointment of a lieutenant whom the Chinese considered unsuitable.⁵⁴⁵ In March 1912 the Batavian major was denied a role in the planning of festivities to celebrate the foundation of the Chinese Republic. He was considered too close to the colonial regime and it was felt that he had no business participating in Chinese nationalist activities.⁵⁴⁶ In June 1912, a group of Cantonese tore the Dutch flag from the house of a lieutenant in Semarang and trampled on it, a clear message that the Chinese officers were considered to be merely puppets of the colonial government.⁵⁴⁷ In the same year a newly appointed captain in Makassar was thrown onto a table and threatened by a furious Chinese crowd.⁵⁴⁸ In 1916 plans were made by a group of Chinese in East Java to mobilise the Chinese community against the Chinese officer system and plead for its termination with the local government.⁵⁴⁹

The most serious and violent outbreaks against the Chinese officers occurred during the festivities organised to celebrate Chinese New Year and the downfall of the Manchu imperial regime. In February 1912, local authorities in Batavia decided not to grant permits to hoist the Chinese republican flag during the Chinese New Year festivities because the Netherlands had not yet officially recognised the Chinese Republic. Despite the official ban, a number of Chinese hoisted the republican flag anyway. The first Chinese to (perhaps unknowingly) violate the restriction was interestingly enough a Chinese officer and shop owner of Hakka origin. When selling the republican flags to a group of Hakka and Macao Chinese, he assured them that it was allowed to hoist the flags and when the police arrived and ordered the flags taken down, the crowd refused and turned hostile to the police. It also vented its anger on the Chinese major of Batavia. The Hakka and Macao Chinese accused him of deliberately misleading them by giving out permits

⁵⁴⁵ Williams, *Overseas Chinese Nationalism*, 128.

⁵⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 129.

⁵⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴⁸ "Persoverzicht: De Chineesche Pers, mei-juni 1912", *Koloniaal Tijdschrift* 1:2 (1912): 847.

⁵⁴⁹ *Sin Po*, 17 November 1916.

to hoist the republican flag, while at the same time pleading with the resident to prohibit the flag hoisting.⁵⁵⁰ The grudge against the major was severe; threats accumulated and there was even a bounty of 12,000 guilders on his head.⁵⁵¹

Even the building that housed the THHK was at risk. Upon discovering that the republican flag had not yet been hoisted, a number of Hakka Chinese demanded that a caretaker hoist the flag immediately, but the THHK did not yet have a republican flag. In their rage, the Hakka Chinese destroyed the windows and lanterns of the building. Finally, with the assistance of the military, the situation in Batavia returned to normal. The crowd dispersed and every republican flag was hauled down. Twenty persons were arrested. The following day, everyone who had been arrested was released, except for four ringleaders, who were detained a few days more. Through mediation by a delegation of representatives of all Chinese groups in Batavia they were eventually released. The delegation had vouched for the four ringleaders that they would not disobey the authorities again.⁵⁵²

The situation in Soerabaja was far more serious. Whereas unrest in Batavia lasted a day, it took the authorities of Soerabaja ten days to restore order. On 17 February 1912—it was Chinese New Year's eve—a police commissioner, assisted by a few supervisors, patrolled through the Chinese neighbourhoods. Upon seeing a group of Chinese endangering ongoing traffic by setting off fireworks in the middle of the street, the police commissioner asked the group to suspend its fireworks activities. The local authorities had granted permission to set off fireworks during Chinese New Year provided that it would not endanger the safety in the neighbourhoods. The revellers ignored the order and when the police commissioner attempted to arrest one of the violators, the Chinese immediately called out for help. In an instant, members of a Cantonese gang

⁵⁵⁰ “Een Chinees over de Chineesche Beweging”, *Koloniaal Tijdschrift* 1:2 (1912): 668–69.

⁵⁵¹ “Persoverzicht: De Inlandsche Pers, februari 1912”, *Koloniaal Tijdschrift* 1:1 (1912): 353–54.

⁵⁵² Lohanda, *The Kapitan Cina of Batavia*, 196–98; Oei Kiauw Pik, “Officieel Relas van de Chineesche Opstootjes te Batavia en Soerabaja”, *Koloniaal Tijdschrift* 1:1 (1912): 601–602; “Een Chinees over de Chineesche Beweging”, *Koloniaal Tijdschrift* 1:2 (1912): 668–69.

appeared from every corner of the street and started to attack the police men while shouting “Kill them!” When assistance arrived, a part of the gang fled to a nearby shop where the Chinese shop owner was counting his day’s earnings. When the police arrived, the gang had already left through the back door, taking with them the four hundred guilders worth of silver the shop owner had taken in that day. Shortly after this, another group went to the major’s house to complain about police brutality and the ban on fireworks. At that moment the major was hosting a New Year’s Eve party and he ordered the Chinese to submit their complaints to the Chinese captain. But the captain was not in because he was on his way to the same party. The group then moved back to the major’s house and when the situation got tense, the major and captain called in the assistant-resident, who ordered an investigation into the alleged police brutality earlier that day, but concluded that the police had followed protocol.⁵⁵³

Two days later, an agitated crowd assembled in front of the Soe Po Sia building where a proclamation had been posted summoning people to go to the major’s residence to compel him to hoist the Chinese republican flag and cut off his queue. A Chinese neighbourhood chief wearing a queue happened to pass by and sought to read the proclamation, only to be attacked by the mob and forced to cut off his queue. The assistant-resident arrived at the scene with the Chinese captain and the presidents of the Siang Hwee and Soe Po Sia and tried to calm the crowd and ordered police protection for the major. Later that day, the captain stopped by the office of the assistant-resident to report that the situation had returned to normal, but not long after that, a gang of two to three hundred Cantonese ransacked the same captain’s house and broke almost everything in it with the exception of the family altar. The gang then went on to the house of the major where, ignoring the police they stormed into the yard. The police fired on the crowd, killing one and wounding several others. Part of the gang then fled to the Soe Po Sia building, where they were arrested.⁵⁵⁴ The next

⁵⁵³ Oei Kiauw Pik, “Officieel Relas van de Chineesche Opstootjes te Batavia en Soerabaja”, 602–603.

⁵⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 603–604.

day the Chinese neighbourhoods appeared peaceful, but it was reported that a group of Cantonese had compelled Chinese shop owners to close their business, threatening them with violence if they ignored the order. Chinese wholesale traders also received threatening letters in which they were warned not to conduct business, and even European traders received death threats. As a result, owners of stores and pawnshops kept their doors closed in the days that followed. After four days, on 24 February 1912, the authorities decided to take radical action. The police arrested more than 500 people, followed by another 250 over the next two days. Police officers patrolled the commercial district to boost confidence in Chinese trade activities. During the ten-day disturbance 850 Chinese were detained. Of those arrested, 173 were quickly released because police investigation revealed that they were Hokkien Chinese who had been arrested by mistake. A majority of the detainees turned out to be illegal immigrants without a valid residence permit and they were expelled by the authorities.⁵⁵⁵

The situation in Semarang seemed to have been more peaceful. Johannes Widodo mentions that the proclaiming of the Republic of China was celebrated with great enthusiasm. The five-coloured Chinese flag was hoisted side by side with the Dutch tricolour flag and gates with Chinese characters were erected in every street in the Chinese quarter in Semarang.⁵⁵⁶ Also Liem Thian Joe mentions the hoisting of the two flags in Semarang.⁵⁵⁷ Apparently it was permissible to hoist the Chinese flag or the government did not get word of it because the situation in Semarang remained

⁵⁵⁵ Ibid., 604–606.

⁵⁵⁶ J. Widodo, *Chinese Settlement in a Changing City: An Architectural Study on the Urban Chinese Settlement in Semarang, Indonesia* (Leuven: Department of Architecture, Urban & Regional Planning, University of Leuven, 1988), 23 (part 1).

⁵⁵⁷ Liem, *Riwayat Semarang*, 237–38.

calm. The resident of Semarang was very pleased with the placid situation and thanked the Chinese major, captain and neighbourhood chiefs for their efforts in warding off serious incidents.⁵⁵⁸

When summarising the incidents during the Chinese New Year festival, one cannot help noticing that there was a significant difference between Batavia and Soerabaja with regard to the cause and nature of the disturbances. The incident in Batavia was merely caused by a festive mood that got out of hand and after the authorities intervened, the situation quickly improved. The disturbances in Soerabaja were caused by a simple restriction on setting off fireworks on public roads. It seemed a small, routine matter, especially when considering that Peking applied even stricter rules on setting off fireworks during the Spring Festival. However, the consequences of this restriction turned out to be disastrous for the rest of the Chinese New Year festivities. For ten days people were brutally assaulted, robbed, houses of Chinese public figures were plundered and traders received death threats to prevent them from conducting business. It was not until the police used overwhelming force that order in the Chinese neighbourhoods was restored.⁵⁵⁹

That the situation in Batavia did not escalate can be explained in part by the fact that the majority of Batavia's Chinese community consisted of peranakans.⁵⁶⁰ Even though the influx of Chinese male and female immigrants had created a stable totok community that was sensitive to nationalist influences, most peranakans were not susceptible to such sentiments. Provocation by the totoks did not result in peranakan "brotherhood" participation in their nationalist activities. In fact, a group of peranakans planned the establishment of an Indo-Chinese Association to counter the totok

⁵⁵⁸ Letter of the Resident of Semarang to the Chinese Major of Semarang, 22 February 1912, no. 4284/43, in Certificates of the appointments of Khouw Kim An (Batavia) and Tan Siau Lip (Semarang), private collection Friends of the Kong Koan Archive Foundation, Leiden.

⁵⁵⁹ "De Minister over de Chineezten-woelingen in Nederl.-Indië", *De Indische Gids* 34:2 (1912): 926–28.

⁵⁶⁰ In 1912, there were approximately 16,000 peranakans, 7000 Hakka Chinese, 4000 Hokkien totok Chinese, and 1,200 Macao Chinese in Batavia. See confidential letter of the Assistant-Resident of Batavia to the Resident of Batavia, 11 October 1912, no. 199, in *Gouvernementsbesluit*, 4 January 1913, no. 27, ANRI, Jakarta.

Chinese who branded them as “slaves of the Dutch”.⁵⁶¹ The totoks were much more influential in Soerabaja, where Chinese nationalists had direct links to counterparts in China under the guidance of the Soe Po Sia and THHK, the latter increasingly having been taken over by the totoks.

Soerabajan sports clubs also showed their solidarity with China by organising special matches to raise money for Northern China, which had suffered from economic hardship during the period of warlordism.⁵⁶²

A significant difference can also be observed between the conduct of the Batavian Chinese officers and their colleagues in Soerabaja. When Hakka and Macao Chinese accused Major Khouw Kim An of deliberately tricking them into hoisting the Chinese republican flag, while in actual fact it was prohibited by the colonial government, he immediately sent a telegram to the governor-general in Buitenzorg in which he asked official confirmation of the ban. An official confirmation was then given out, translated into Chinese and Malay and subsequently distributed in the Chinese neighbourhoods.⁵⁶³ He also instructed his neighbourhood chiefs to be alert for these false accusations in the Chinese neighbourhoods and to inform community members that the ban was issued by the colonial government and not by the Chinese major.⁵⁶⁴ These arrangements taken by the major and the composure he displayed during the disturbance helped to ease the violent situation in Batavia.⁵⁶⁵ The Chinese major of Soerabaja simply sent the Cantonese complainants to the Chinese captain because he preferred hosting his party to responding to matters of urgent concern to his community. Only after the situation escalated did the major and captain leave together to look for the assistant-resident. It was the rumour that the major had advised the government not to grant permission to the Chinese to erect the Chinese republican flag that fuelled

⁵⁶¹ “Een Chinees over de Chineesche Beweging”, *Koloniaal Tijdschrift* 1:2 (1912): 671–72.

⁵⁶² R. N. Bayu Aji, *Tionghoa Surabaya dalam Sepak Bola 1915–1942* (Yogyakarta: Ombak, 2010), 125.

⁵⁶³ Lohanda, *The Kapitan Cina of Batavia*, 197.

⁵⁶⁴ Chinese minutes, no. 21024, 5 March 1912: p. 17. See also Malay minutes, no. NM2, 5 March 1912: pp. 60–61.

⁵⁶⁵ “Persoverzicht: De Chineesche Pers, februari 1912”, *Koloniaal Tijdschrift* 1:1 (1912): 356.

the anger of the totoks. The Chinese captain also made the grave mistake of calling the Cantonese “stinking immigrants”, which added more fuel to the flames.⁵⁶⁶ During the disturbances between the Chinese and Arabs in October and November 1912, the Chinese officers in Soerabaja also remained aloof. In fact, the *majoor der Chineezen* was on leave and even applied for an extension. The fact that a peace agreement was signed on 2 November 1912 between representatives of the Chinese and Arabs (the Chinese and Arab officers and the board members of the Siang Hwee, Soe Po Sia, THHK and the Arabic Society), could certainly not be attributed to the diligence and commitment of the Chinese officers.⁵⁶⁷

The weakness of the Chinese Council in Soerabaja lay in the fact that all the officers were peranakans. In Batavia, non-Hokkien and non-peranakan Chinese had been accommodated in the Chinese Council since 1878. The Batavia authorities were well aware of the growing non-peranakan element in the Chinese community and knew they could not disregard the wide diversities in language, dialect, customs, and origin. The advisor for Japanese and Chinese affairs, B. A. J. van Wettum, attributed the relative quiet ending of the disturbances in Batavia to the fact that no less than three Chinese officers were totoks of Hakka descent. In late 1912, there were plans to appoint three new lieutenants to the Batavia Council, all of whom were Hokkien peranakans. Fearing that the balance of peranakan-totok and Cantonese-Hakka-Macao-Hokkien Chinese representation in the Council would align to the Hokkien peranakan element, the advisor for Japanese and Chinese affairs urged the resident to replace one of the nominees for the post of lieutenant with a totok of Hokkien descent; the resident agreed with the advisor.⁵⁶⁸

⁵⁶⁶ “De Chineezen-opstootjes te Soerabaja”, *De Indische Gids* 34:1 (1912): 658–59; Liem, *Riwayat Semarang*, 238.

⁵⁶⁷ “Persoverzicht: De Chineesche Pers, oktober 1912”, *Koloniaal Tijdschrift* 2:1 (1913): 203–206.

⁵⁶⁸ Confidential letter of the Advisor of Japanese and Chinese Affairs to the Resident of Batavia, 1 August 1912, no. 248, in *Gouvernementsbesluit*, 4 January 1913, no. 27, ANRI, Jakarta. See also the confidential letter of the Resident of Batavia to the Governor-General and the Director of Internal Affairs, 18 October 1912, no. 319/C, in *Gouvernementsbesluit*, 4 January 1913, no. 27, ANRI, Jakarta.

The fact that Chinese officers of mixed descent represented the Chinese Council of Batavia ensured that matters concerning the totok element in the Chinese community were not neglected. The Chinese Council of Batavia frequently reserved money to aid needy totoks. In the meeting of 21 April 1909 it was decided to set aside an amount of 2,000 guilders to help newly arrived totok immigrants, Java-born totok Chinese and peranakans who were jobless.⁵⁶⁹ In the meeting of 6 September 1916, the major expressed his concerns about the totok Chinese who were denied residence in the Netherlands Indies. Awaiting their deportation, the totok Chinese were usually detained in a prison in Berok Pasar Ikan. Disapproving of this situation, the major proposed to rent a house in either Pendjaringan or Tanah Abang, where detainees could wait for their journey back to China. A doctor would first make sure that the house would meet the necessary health requirements. “After all”, the major said, “these people have not committed any crime and do not deserve to be kept in such dreadful circumstances”.⁵⁷⁰ A year later the Chinese Council received a letter from Major Tjiong A Fie of Medan, who proposed setting up a fund for totok Chinese without work or residence. The fund would cover their travel expenses back to China. The members of the Chinese Council approved the proposal and agreed to contribute to the fund once it had been set up.⁵⁷¹

A number of newspapers frequently accused the Chinese officers of being too much concerned with the prestige of their post. These accusations were quite unfounded if we look at the Chinese Council of Batavia. In the Council meeting of 10 January 1913, neighbourhood chief and interim-Lieutenant Tan Tjin Bok proposed renovating the building of the Chinese Council. He argued that the shabby and old-fashioned state of the building was unworthy of the Chinese Council’s status. The building of the Chinese Council should be as modern and classy as the

⁵⁶⁹ Chinese minutes, no. 21023, 21 April 1909: p. 142.

⁵⁷⁰ Chinese minutes, no. 21026, 6 September 1916: p. 113. See also Malay minutes, no. NM3, 6 September 1916: pp. 181–82.

⁵⁷¹ Chinese minutes, no. 21026, 3 March 1917: pp. 151–152. See also Malay minutes, no. NM3, 3 March 1917: pp. 248–49.

assistant-resident's office, so visitors would know they had set foot in a building of important officials. Most officers present at the meeting acknowledged the building needed to be repainted but rejected the neighbourhood chief's proposal. They deemed it more important to reserve the Council's finances to help the poor and needy. Major Khouw Kim An also brushed aside the comparison with the assistant-resident: "I am a person without any talent and knowledge, and I believe you can not compare the office of the Chinese Council with the office of the assistant-resident. Spending too much money on renovating our building does not correspond with our kind of people."⁵⁷²

The reaction of the Chinese officers

During a conference held on 28 July 1915 in the building of the Batavia Chinese Council, the advisor for Chinese affairs, J. L. J. F. Ezerman expressed his astonishment over the difficulty the Councils in Semarang and Soerabaja had attracting candidates for the post of officer, while Batavia seemingly had no trouble filling the vacancies.⁵⁷³ It was true that the Chinese Council of Batavia managed to fill the empty seats, although it was more difficult finding suitable candidates than it had been. Also present at the conference was Tan Kim San, one of the founding fathers of the THHK. He disapproved the common practice that officers were still appointed based on their wealth or family relations. "As a result", he argued, "young, inexperienced men are appointed, who on top of that also have no thorough knowledge of Chinese customs and traditions. Most of these men have been living a comfortable life in the confines of their rich family. How could these men identify themselves with the majority of the Chinese who are poor?" Major Khouw Kim An, also present at the conference, agreed that more experienced men should be recruited for the post, but these men could simply not be found. "Nonetheless", the major spoke proudly, "the Batavia Council

⁵⁷² Chinese minutes, no. 21024, 10 January 1913: pp. 128–30.

⁵⁷³ *Sin Po*, 29 July 1915.

is still running albeit most of its officers are young and inexperienced".⁵⁷⁴ Indeed, marching with the times the Chinese Council in Batavia had incorporated non-peranakan Chinese on its board, and took its tasks in the Chinese community very seriously. Board meetings continued and the Council still had an important role in the management of burial grounds. Major Khouw Kim An played a key role in running the Council and made sure his officers were not lax in carrying out their responsibilities.⁵⁷⁵

An important question is how the Chinese officers responded to the criticism levelled against them. Unfortunately the board meetings of the Batavian Chinese Council do not reveal enough information to answer this question. On 3 July 1914, the Council discussed a series of articles by Henri Borel that appeared in the *Bataviasch Nieuwsblad* of 13–15 June in which he severely criticised the institution of the Chinese officers. In his conclusion, Borel advised the government to either make the post of Chinese officer a paid position or to abolish the whole system. Major Khouw Kim An asked his officers whether they should make a statement after this public denouncement. One lieutenant advised waiting to see if the government would respond to Borel's articles. Everyone agreed. This shows a rather passive reaction. More action was shown when Mr Fromberg attended a meeting of the Chinese Council on 3 January 1914. Fromberg pointed out his deep appreciation for the Council's efforts in the Chinese community and proposed publishing a brochure to introduce the Chinese Council and its activities to the people of the Indies and the Netherlands. The officers agreed that a brochure might make the public more sympathetic, to their activities. A committee of officers, secretaries, and neighbourhood chiefs was then formed to work on the brochure.⁵⁷⁶ Whether it was actually published is unknown. All that can be found in further proceedings is that Major Khouw Kim An urged the committee to speed up publication of

⁵⁷⁴ *Sin Po*, 29 July 1915.

⁵⁷⁵ Malay minutes, no. NM1, 3 August 1911: pp. 170–71.

⁵⁷⁶ Chinese minutes, no. 21025, 3 January 1914: pp. 76–77. See also Malay minutes, no. NM2, 3 January 1914: pp. 228–29.

the brochure in the board meeting of July 1914.⁵⁷⁷ In 1913 the Chinese officers decided to join hands and establish the *Nederlandsche Indische Chineesche Officieren Bond* (Association of Dutch Indies Chinese officers). Among its objectives were enhancing the institution of Chinese officers, encouraging cooperation between officers, and guarding the reputation of the office. The establishment of the *Officieren Bond* was the most apparent offensive of the Chinese officers against their imminent loss of prestige.⁵⁷⁸

The Chinese officers and the Pan-Chinese Movement

The Chinese Council of Batavia played an important role in the Pan-Chinese Movement as a number of its members were involved in Chinese organisations. Among the founders of the THHK were men who later held important positions in the Chinese Council of Batavia: Khouw Kim An (appointed major in 1908), Nio Hoey Oen (appointed captain in 1913), Khoe A Fan (appointed lieutenant in 1905), and Khoe Siauw Eng, the secretary of the Chinese Council. It was Khoe Siauw Eng who proposed to call the first modern Chinese organisation the *Tiong Hoa Hwee Koan*.⁵⁷⁹ The founders of the THHK were considered educated men: broad in perspective and liberal in thought, progressive, and bold enough to fight against anything false.⁵⁸⁰ Chinese officers and their family members held important positions in the executive board of the THHK. The first president of the organisation, Phoa Keng Hek (1900–23), was the son of a Chinese lieutenant in Meester-Cornelis and the major, Tio Tek Ho, became patron of the organisation. However, it seems his role in the organisation was negligible as no records can be found of his participation in committee meetings.⁵⁸¹ When Khouw Kim An, as the Chinese major of Batavia, became patron of the THHK,

⁵⁷⁷ Chinese minutes, no. 21025, 3 July 1914: pp. 116–117. See also Malay minutes, no. NM3, 3 July 1917: pp. 280–81.

⁵⁷⁸ *Pewarta Soerabaja*, 13 February 1915.

⁵⁷⁹ Nio, “Bij het 40-jarig Jubileum van de *Tiong Hoa Hwe Koan-Batavia*”, 288–89.

⁵⁸⁰ Kwee Tek Hoay, *The Origins of the Modern Chinese Movement in Indonesia*, 11.

⁵⁸¹ Lohanda, *The Kapitan Cina of Batavia*, 139–45.

he showed more interest in the organisation. Khouw, son-in-law of Phoa Keng Hek, understood the necessity of modern education, and in a tribute that was compiled by Nio Joe Lan to commemorate the fortieth anniversary of the THHK, he quoted Confucius: “The next generation should be respected, for who could say they will not be better than the current generation.”⁵⁸² Keeping in mind that Khouw was one of the founding fathers of the THHK and son-in-law of its first president, Lea Williams’s claim that Khouw was not only inactive as the patron of the THHK, but also hostile to the organisation is quite odd and unjustified.⁵⁸³ The Chinese Council gave the THHK a monthly subsidy of 275 guilders per month.⁵⁸⁴ Nevertheless, the close involvement of the Chinese officers in the THHK and its schools did not stop critics from questioning the officers’ sincerity regarding the Chinese movement: “There were those who gave a lot of money to the THHK schools, but their own children were sent to the secondary school (*hoogere burgerschool*, HBS), yes, even to European boarding schools. So for years and years their young offspring were denied training to become good patriots.”⁵⁸⁵

Chinese nationalists did not appreciate the fact that the Chinese Council and even the president of the THHK assisted the colonial government in recruiting Chinese pupils for the Hollandsch-Chineesche School.⁵⁸⁶ The nationalists feared that a Western education might cause Chinese children to lose their heritage, and they keenly promoted Chinese education in the Chinese community. Indeed, enrolling their children in European schools might have sent the message that the Chinese officers considered a European education more valuable than the Chinese education provided by the THHK schools, but there is no denying a certain narrow-mindedness on the part of Chinese nationalists in this matter. Helping Chinese children attend the Hollandsch-Chineesche

⁵⁸² Nio Joe Lan, *Riwajat 40 Taon dari Tiong Hoa Hwe Koan-Batavia (1900–1939)* (Batavia: Tiong Hoa Hwe Koan, 1940).

⁵⁸³ Williams, *Overseas Chinese Nationalism*, 133.

⁵⁸⁴ Kwee Tek Hoay, *The Origins of the Modern Chinese Movement in Indonesia*, 23.

⁵⁸⁵ “Persoverzicht: De Chineesche Pers, maart 1917”, *Koloniaal Tijdschrift* 6:1 (1917): 548. (Text modified).

⁵⁸⁶ Chinese minutes, no. 21025, 3 July 1914: pp. 111–112. See also Malay minutes, no. NM2, 3 July 1914: pp. 272–73.

School did not mean that the Chinese officers were aloof from the nationalist movement. It merely showed concern for the future of the Chinese community in the Netherlands Indies, for they were well aware that Chinese education alone was not sufficient in a country of such diversity in race and language.

Lieutenant Khoe A Fan was involved in the Soe Po Sia. He was the only officer who was accepted by the organisation to participate in the festivities accompanying the foundation of the Chinese Republic. He was also the lieutenant in question who had stirred up disorder by hoisting the Chinese republican flag on top of his shop.⁵⁸⁷ But the Batavian officers were not the only ones active in the movement. Throughout the Indies Chinese officers were involved in modern associations. For instance, Major Oei Tiong Ham of Semarang (also the owner of the largest Chinese conglomerate of the Dutch East Indies at the time), was a leading member of the Siang Hwee.⁵⁸⁸ Despite what their critics then and now have said, the Chinese officers were not only part of the modern movement, they helped start it with the establishment of the THHK.

The institution of Arab officers and *priyayi*

There were parallel developments in the Arab community, in which the leadership passed almost completely into the hands of the leaders of sociopolitical and economic organisations and businessmen who set up modern education and sponsored the Arab press. Like the Chinese officers, Arab headmen lost their authority among the Arabs. This was confirmed by *Volksraad* member Sajid Ismail bin Abdoellah Al Atas, who visited the most important Arab settlements on Java. According to the people's complaints, the Arab officers and their followers showed improper behaviour by manipulating government rules and retaliating against people who disagreed with

⁵⁸⁷ Williams, *Overseas Chinese Nationalism*, 142.

⁵⁸⁸ Ong Hok Ham, "Chinese Capitalism in Dutch Java", 66.

their decisions and work performance. Therefore, Al Atas concluded that the institute of Arab officers was outdated and in conflict with the interests of the Arab community.⁵⁸⁹

A power struggle also evidently developed between the traditional indigenous rulers and the modern indigenous elite, who had taken advantage of the educational opportunities provided by the colonial government from the late nineteenth century onwards. The upper social stratum in the indigenous world was referred to as the *priyayi*, a term that in general defines an aristocrat or official, a member of the governing elite of Java.⁵⁹⁰ Within the *priyayi* group there were various divisions that differed in administrative power, economic position, social status, and origin. The term upper *priyayi* specified the traditional indigenous administrators and nobility. The lower *priyayi* consisted for the most part of younger sons and close relatives of the upper *priyayi*,⁵⁹¹ and it was this group that came into prominence around the turn of the twentieth century.⁵⁹²

The upper *priyayi* were able to maintain their authority and hierarchical position thanks to their feudal heritage and their role as political middlemen in the colonial bureaucratic structure.⁵⁹³ To uphold their status as members of a bureaucratic elite, the *priyayi* preserved a life-style that set them apart from the common people: marriages were kept within their status circles and they displayed status symbols to show their privileged position and dignity, such as certain patterns of *esprit de corps*, luxurious households, and a large number of domestic servants. But the practice of upholding their status frequently came at a heavy price. Regents for example, were expected to

⁵⁸⁹ Letter of the Resident of Batavia to the Director of Internal Affairs, 25 September 1918, no. 18327/1, in Agenda, 1918, no. 31028, ANRI, Jakarta.

⁵⁹⁰ H. Sutherland, *The Making of a Bureaucratic Elite: The Colonial Transforming of the Javanese Priyayi* (Singapore: Heinemann, 1979), p. xix.

⁵⁹¹ Van Niel, *The Emergence of the Modern Indonesian Elite*, 28.

⁵⁹² Sutherland, "The Priyayi", 76.

⁵⁹³ S. Kartodirdjo, "The Regents in Java as Middlemen: A Symbolic Action Approach", in *Papers of the Dutch-Indonesian Historical Conference held at Lage Vuursche, the Netherlands, 23–27 June 1980*, edited by G. J. Schutte and H. A. Sutherland (Leiden: Bureau of Indonesian Studies, 1982), 173.

organise and host festivities during indigenous and Dutch holidays. They also had a moral obligation towards kinsmen who often were in need of financial assistance. Many regents tended to overspend to preserve their status and lived far beyond their means. To cover their debts, regents frequently resorted to corrupt practices like excessive taxation and extortion. Accordingly, the common people were forced to sustain the extravagant life-style of the *priyayi*, and paid for their lavish feasts and conspicuous consumption. As a result, resentment against the *priyayi* intensified from the late nineteenth century onwards.⁵⁹⁴

The introduction of free capitalist enterprise in the Indies was accompanied by the expansion of Dutch control and the rationalisation of colonial administration. At the same time, the colonial government began to develop an interest in indigenous education. As officialdom expanded and new government agencies were created, there was a growing need for a Western-educated indigenous bureaucracy to which end schools for the natives were established. The upper *priyayi* were quite apathetic to modern education and most considered Western schooling unnecessary and feared it might lead to cultural alienation.⁵⁹⁵ The lower *priyayi* had fewer reservations, and emergence of indigenous civil servants, government technicians and intellectuals brought more diversity in the *priyayi* class, which around the turn of the century comprised mainly aristocrats and administrators.⁵⁹⁶ The new Western-educated elite organised itself in modern associations and was able to reach the masses. Modern concepts that evolved within indigenous society came into conflict with the old, feudal values of the *priyayi*. Hereditary principles ran against the demand for education, special treatment for kinsmen conflicted with impartiality and disinterested treatment, and status symbols were inconsistent with modern bureaucratic rules.⁵⁹⁷ The new elite felt that the old-guard upper *priyayi* were not changing with the times, and their criticism of the traditional

⁵⁹⁴ Kartodirdjo, "The Regents in Java as Middlemen", 175–82.

⁵⁹⁵ Adam, *The Vernacular Press*, 83; Sutherland, *The Making of a Bureaucratic Elite*, 46.

⁵⁹⁶ Van Niel, *The Emergence of the Modern Indonesian Elite*, 50–51.

⁵⁹⁷ Kartodirdjo, "The Regents in Java as Middlemen", 189.

feudal structure grew. Social inequality in particular met with increasing resentment, as did the humiliating *hormat* practices.⁵⁹⁸ The loss of prestige of the upper *priyayi* also motivated their children to decline traditional *priyayi* employment and to develop a growing interest in specialised professions like medicine and the law.⁵⁹⁹ In response to their declining position in colonial society, voices emerged from among the upper *priyayi* urging the government to provide education for their children.⁶⁰⁰ This outcry found response among the progressive Dutch politicians.

4.5 Conclusion

The late colonial state was highly stratified. The Dutch policy of discouraging assimilation between ethnic groups had resulted in a racially segmented society and left a big mark on social relations. When the Javanese aristocracy still occupied the upper stratum in society, some Chinese were willing to convert to Islam; being Muslim meant easier access to court circles and prominent positions among the Javanese elite. But when Dutch rule over Java expanded and a system of social stratification was enforced, the Dutch became the ruling class, the Chinese occupied the middle class, and the Javanese fell to the lowest level of society. Assimilation into the Javanese world now meant moving into the lower stratum of colonial society, an option that was far less attractive to the Chinese.⁶⁰¹ The boundaries between the rulers and the ruled were reinforced by the wave of Europeanisation that took place in the late nineteenth century. The development of a European

⁵⁹⁸ D. H. Burger, “Structuurveranderingen in de Javaanse Samenleving”, *Indonesië* 2 (1948–1949): 1. The *hormat* referred to forms of respect or honour, usually pejorative in character, which were used in the civil service by subordinates to superiors. For more details on *hormat* practices see Sutherland, *The Making of a Bureaucratic Elite*.

⁵⁹⁹ Sutherland, *The Making of a Bureaucratic Elite*, 54.

⁶⁰⁰ Adam, *The Vernacular Press*, 86; Burger, “Structuurveranderingen in de Javaanse Samenleving”, *Indonesië* 3 (1949-1950): 102.

⁶⁰¹ The Siauw Giap, “Religion and Overseas Chinese Assimilation in Southeast Asian Countries”, 82.

culture confined to the ruling class widened the social and cultural distance between the Dutch “rulers” and their Asian “subjects”.⁶⁰²

Thus, when these ruled groups began to manifest their “awakening” in nationalistic organisations, in the press, and even in literature, folk music and theatres, the colonial administration had difficulty justifying its alleged civilising mission on them. At the same time, each ethnic group became more self-reliant and confined, resulting in a certain attitude of aloofness vis-à-vis other population groups. Identity or the search for identity played an important role in the awakening. Feeling abandoned by the colonial government, the Chinese sought to renew cultural and political ties with their ancestral country. The natives became even more aware of their status as *Inlander* in colonial society, although sub-ethnic disparities still prevented group cohesion from extending beyond local or familial boundaries. The Arabs sought connection to the Ottoman Empire and the Middle East. These changes in attitude toward one another erupted into racially based violence from the 1910s onwards. As Van Doorn has remarked, “late-colonial Indonesia became a collection of self-aware population groups, guided by group nationalism.”⁶⁰³ The Chinese especially suffered from the profound structural changes taking place in Java as a surge of anti-Chinese feelings were directed at them.⁶⁰⁴

Within this process of self-awareness and ethnic confinement, another development took place that shook power relations between traditional leadership institutions and their dependents. Although they kept themselves in ethnic confinement and displayed an increased antagonism toward one another, it was a development the Chinese, natives, and Arabs shared. Modern concepts such as democracy that found a warm response among the “awakened” population groups ran counter to the older feudal leadership systems. For a long time the Javanese *priyayi* and the Chinese and Arab officers were able to sustain their elite status as community leaders because they had a

⁶⁰² Tichelman, “Early Emancipation and Inter-ethnic Relations on Java”, 216.

⁶⁰³ Van Doorn, *A Divided Society*, 15–16.

⁶⁰⁴ Shiraishi, “Anti-Sinicism in Java’s New Order”, 189.

mediating role to play. But now that the people they represented began to turn away from the colonial government, and started to regard them as collaborators of the colonial regime, their position became untenable.⁶⁰⁵ Moreover, gifted speakers of the indigenous emancipation movement who sent out the message that the time had come for the *wong cilik* (common man) to take over, were able to stir up people at public mass meetings. The legitimacy of the Chinese officers was directly challenged by the Chinese-Malay press in particular. It appears that the newspapers were deliberately starting a witch hunt against the officers, as *Pewarta Soerabaja* was proud to announce that the attacks on the officers by the press was the main reason why the post of Chinese officer was no longer in demand.⁶⁰⁶ There were however differences to be considered between the Batavian Council and the Councils in Semarang and especially Soerabaja. While protests against the officers escalated, especially in Soerabaja, Batavia managed to limit the damage. But it was obvious that it was now time for the colonial government to intervene and reconsider the whole system of leadership in ethnic communities.

⁶⁰⁵ Van Doorn, *A Divided Society*, 26.

⁶⁰⁶ “Persoverzicht: De Chineesche Pers, maart-april 1914”, *Koloniaal Tijdschrift* 3:2 (1914): 957–58.

CHAPTER 5

THE CHINESE COUNCIL IN CRISIS: THE DEBATE ON CHINESE ADMINISTRATION AND THE FUTURE OF THE CHINESE OFFICER SYSTEM

The social and political developments in colonial society analysed in the previous chapters called for intervention by the colonial government. The published attacks on Chinese officers, which incited physical violence in some cases, and the increasing unpopularity of the officer post, were clear signs for the colonial government that the traditional approach to dealing with the Chinese community on Java needed to be critically re-evaluated. The government's rather simplistic attempts to revamp the system discussed in chapter 3 did not have the desired results, as shown in chapter 4. More far-reaching steps were in order and this triggered a lively debate among government officials that went beyond the inner workings of Chinese administration. The problems of leadership in the Chinese community did not exist in isolation and had to be viewed in a larger context. Political factors played a crucial role.

This chapter presents the debate among colonial government officials in which the institution of Chinese officers was re-evaluated, and analyses the solutions brought forward to improve the administration over the Chinese. The debate culminated in a meeting held in the Department of Internal Affairs in September 1917. The meeting was called to draw conclusions from the debate and to draft reorganisation plans for the Chinese administration, which was becoming a priority of the colonial government—specifically, to create more equality among the different non-white races in the Indies. This led to the consensus to incorporate the reorganisation of Chinese administration into a master plan that aimed to reform the whole system of local

administration in the *hoofdplaatsen* of Batavia, Semarang, and Soerabaja, and introduce a new system that would apply to every population group. Before turning to this debate and the decisions taken in the September 1917 meeting, we must look at developments preceding the debate. After briefly reviewing the problems in Chinese administration and how the colonial government had approached them, I will use the analysis of an ex-government official to show how the government previously misjudged the situation and why it seemed lost in approaching the problems. Eventually the assistance of an “outsider” was called in to examine and handle the defects of the system.

5.1 The problems in Chinese administration

The colonial government initially viewed the problems in Chinese administration as rather isolated questions. In chapter 3 we saw that the abolition of the revenue farms had deprived Chinese officers of the unofficial, but substantial financial compensation for their unpaid activities. With the increasing interference of the colonial government over the lives of its subjects in the twentieth century and the emergence of professionals to handle legal matters and business affairs, the Chinese officers were forced to share their authority with other professionals in the Chinese community. This loss of influence, prestige, and potential for material gain discouraged Chinese men from applying for the position of community leader. As a result, more and more officer posts were left vacant in the early twentieth century. The government took steps to raise the prestige of the Chinese officers and attract candidates to fill the vacant positions by granting privileges in the freedom of movement and domicile, the judicial system, and education. These proved a short-term solution—if they constituted a solution at all—because they were overshadowed by vigorous protest campaigns against the institution of Chinese officers initiated by the Sino-Malay press. Recent developments in the Chinese community such as the provision of modern education, exposure to new concepts and ideologies, the emergence of platforms to express new thoughts and ideas made the Chinese people question the legitimacy of the existing Chinese officers. One pillar of modern society was the

professionalisation of the bureaucracy. The image of the modern government official who is educated and conscious of his duties was laid down as a standard in the modern bureaucracy by the colonial government, but was not applied to the Chinese officers. The Chinese officers continued to be selected from prominent families and wealth rather than competence and capability was a prerequisite. Resistance to this selection procedure and the institution of Chinese officers as a whole began to grow. It no longer sufficed to simply make the job more attractive; the colonial government had to think about how the traditional institution of Chinese community leadership would fit in a modernising society that was beginning to demand more from its leaders. But the colonial government was reluctant to deal with this matter.

Henri Borel put his finger on the problem by demonstrating how little the colonial government knew of recent developments in the Chinese community. In a number of articles published in various newspapers and journals, Borel criticised the colonial government for the way it dealt with the problems in Chinese administration. Borel had acquired a thorough command of Chinese in Leiden and Amoy and had worked five years (1894–99) as an interpreter in imperial China. In 1909, Borel was appointed as the official for Chinese affairs in Soerabaja, and three years later he was transferred to Makassar to oversee Chinese affairs. After repatriating to the Netherlands in 1913 he became a journalist and literary critic for the newspapers *De Telegraaf* and *Het Vaderland*. In the years he spent in China and the Netherlands Indies, Borel became very well acquainted with the language, culture, and customs of mainland and Indies Chinese as well as with the recent social and political developments in both countries.

According to Borel, the colonial government's inability to grapple with the problems in the Chinese administration could be attributed to the fact that local officials knew too little about the Chinese community. Borel saw that the only Chinese people the residents, assistant-residents, and the controleurs knew were conservatives with a boundless, even servile respect for European

officials and who viewed material wealth as the principal criterion for government office.⁶⁰⁷ The local governments knew little of the political agitation among the Chinese, which was one reason why officials and the Chinese of this era had become estranged. To Borel's dismay, they also had a poor understanding of developments in China, much less their implications for the situation in the Indies.⁶⁰⁸ Had the local governments put more effort into understanding the nature of the emancipated Chinese, they would have realised that the institution of Chinese officers had no place in a modernising society such as that in the Indies. The traditional institution of Chinese community leadership was a remnant of the Company's regime, which was oppressive and out of fashion. The local governments should also have realised that to expect the community to acknowledge the Chinese officers simply because they were appointed by the colonial government—even against the wishes of the Chinese community—was in conflict with the ethical program. Borel pointed out that a large percentage of the *hoofden hunner natie* (headmen of their nation) neither knew China, nor could speak, read, or write Chinese. They were also almost completely unfamiliar with the Chinese laws and institutions. And yet, these officers were still seated in the *Landraad* and the *Raad van Justitie* to give “expert” advice on Chinese law, customs, and traditions. Borel admits that before the emergence of the Chinese movement this oligarchic system of rule worked. But now that the colonial government had provided modern education for the Chinese people and emancipation had found its way into the Chinese community, the colonial government should not be surprised to see that they were no longer willing to obey the instruments of colonial capitalism. More important, the colonial government should not blame this emancipated people for turning to the chairmen and board members of modern organisations—representatives of knowledge and competence—because they had outgrown the traditional system of community leadership. Now it was the task of the

⁶⁰⁷ H. J. F. Borel, “De Chineesche Kwestie en de Ambtenaren van ’t Binnenlandsch Bestuur”, *Koloniaal Tijdschrift* 2:1 (1913): 53–54.

⁶⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 41–42.

colonial government to acknowledge the changes in the Chinese community and to find a satisfactory solution for the problems in Chinese administration.⁶⁰⁹

According to Borel, the local government's ignorance of recent developments in the Chinese community could to a certain extent be blamed on the ambiguous position of the officials for Chinese affairs, which originated in the post of "interpreter for the Chinese language" in 1860. This was the first time that European officials had been appointed as official Chinese-language interpreters. At the time, the colonial government felt the need to appoint European interpreters because its leaders believed they could no longer rely on translators from the Chinese community, especially for a correct assessment of Chinese publications, and in legal proceedings involving Chinese speakers. European interpreters-to-be were educated in the Netherlands and the Dutch East Indies and also spent a few years of their training in China for practical experience. After completing this special training, they were employed as official interpreters and were expected to provide oral and written translations to the judicial and administrative authorities. They were also occasionally employed by local governments as advisors with regard to Chinese affairs.⁶¹⁰

In 1895 it was decided to move the interpreter's function as advisor to the forefront. The *Indisch Staatsblad* 1895–135 set forth official instructions regarding the post, formation, titles, education, and salary of the officials for Chinese affairs, as the interpreters for Chinese languages were now called. In *Indisch Staatsblad* 1896–96 the advisory duties of the officials for Chinese affairs were emphasised: they were foremost expected to supply information and provide expert advice on Chinese affairs to the judicial and administrative authorities and its institutions; to submit proposals in connection with the administrative, judicial, social, and political affairs within the Chinese community; and if necessary, to provide oral and written translation services to the authorities and private persons. Five offices were set up, in Batavia, Soerabaja, Tandjong Pinang,

⁶⁰⁹ "Chineesche Officieren", *De Indische Gids* 36:1 (1914): 885–87.

⁶¹⁰ "Chineesche Zaken (Ambtenaar voor-)", in: *Encyclopaedie van Nederlandsch-Indië* (1917), vol. 1: 477–78.

Medan, and Makassar. Later on, new offices were opened in Semarang and Pontianak, while the office in Medan was replaced by a new one in Padang.⁶¹¹ It is striking that the officials for Chinese affairs reported directly to the director of justice without sending copies of their reports to the local government heads, who remained unaware of what went on among the Chinese in their localities, especially with regard to the Chinese associations.⁶¹² The lack of awareness was illustrated by the Chinese riots of 1912, which took the local authorities by surprise.⁶¹³ Borel explained that the problem also lay in the fact that the chiefs of local governments relied on the Chinese officers for information on local affairs, while keeping the officials for Chinese affairs at arm's length.⁶¹⁴ This was not the best choice as the rise of Chinese nationalism had placed the Chinese officers in a difficult position between the interests of Dutch colonial rule and the promoters of a "Greater China".⁶¹⁵ One of the officers' most important duties was to inform the colonial government about what went on in the Chinese neighbourhoods, but they were reluctant to inform on nationalists seeking support for a revolution in China from the overseas Chinese. This lack of information was dangerous enough, but the officers also gave false information to avoid any *soesah* (difficulties) with the modern Chinese organisations. Borel referred to a report from an official for Chinese affairs warning that the Soe Po Sia book clubs frequently opened their doors to revolutionary refugees from China who fiercely condemned imperial authority and called for the establishment of a Chinese republic, and who strongly denounced the colonisation of Eastern colonies by Western powers. When the local authorities demanded an explanation for these inflammatory public meetings, the Chinese officers denied the accusations and stated that the meetings were merely organised to hold lectures about Chinese ethics. Satisfied with this explanation, the authorities let

⁶¹¹ Ibid.

⁶¹² "Bestuursambtenaar en Adviseur voor Chineesche Zaken", *De Indische Gids* 35:1 (1913): 382.

⁶¹³ "Bestuursambtenaar en Adviseur voor Chineesche Zaken", *De Indische Gids* 35:2 (1913): 949.

⁶¹⁴ Borel, "De Chineesche Kwestie en de Ambtenaren van 't Binnenlandsch Bestuur", 45–46.

⁶¹⁵ Confidential letter of the Director of Internal Affairs to the Governor-General, 10 December 1915, no. 685 G/B, Binnenlandsch Bestuur, no. 1935, ANRI, Jakarta.

the meetings continue. But regret followed instantly when Macao Chinese, frequent visitors of the meetings, committed violent crimes to show their support for the Chinese revolution.⁶¹⁶

The influence of Chinese nationalism on the officers was also demonstrated by Captain Nio Hoey Oen, who replaced Major Khouw Kim An on the immigration committee in December 1914. The committee had convened to discuss the requests of nine Chinese immigrants, members of the Kuo Min Tang, to be allowed admittance to the Netherlands Indies. The discussion of this case was in fact just a formality since the colonial authorities considered such immigrants undesirables and their presence in the Indies was not appreciated. But as soon as Captain Nio Hoey Oen learned he was expected to give advice in this matter, he excused himself from the meeting, claiming ill health, but clearly he wanted to avoid passing judgement on these revolutionaries. Possible sympathy for the revolutionary cause or fear of animosity and possible retaliation made it difficult for the Chinese officers to function. Therefore it was no longer possible to exclusively rely on the Chinese officers for information.⁶¹⁷ Yet, Borel said with regret, most local government heads still viewed the officials of Chinese affairs as a *quantité négligeable*.⁶¹⁸ It was of course easier for the residents and assistant-residents to deal with the Chinese officers who were subordinate to them, as an independent European official would not bow to everything they said. Nevertheless, had the local administrators been willing to confer with the officials for Chinese affairs on a regular basis, they would have been aware of the developments in the Chinese neighbourhoods. They would also have anticipated that the current system of Chinese administration did not meet the standards of a modernising and emancipating society, like that of the Indies Chinese society. Thus, Borel urged for a change in the bureaucratic arrangements for the official for Chinese affairs.⁶¹⁹

⁶¹⁶ Borel, “De Chineesche Kwestie en de Ambtenaren van ‘t Binnenlandsch Bestuur”, 45–47.

⁶¹⁷ Memorandum of the Assistant-Resident of Batavia, 25 December 1914, in: Mailrapport, no. 34/16, NA, The Hague.

⁶¹⁸ Borel, “De Chineesche Kwestie en de Ambtenaren van ‘t Binnenlandsch Bestuur”, 45.

⁶¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 45–46.

Changes occurred in 1913 when a *Kantoor voor Chineesche Zaken* (Office for Chinese Affairs) was set up in Batavia as the main centre of information for Chinese affairs within the Department of Internal Affairs. This office consisted of the advisor for Chinese affairs (who headed the office), and the officials for Chinese affairs. The colonial government realised that the situation in the Chinese community had become complex and the nationalist movement drew Indies Chinese into the political arena. Now that the government could no longer rely on the Chinese officers, it needed a centralised intelligence service to keep tabs on the Chinese community. Putting the office in the Department of Internal Affairs⁶²⁰ meant that the local branches of the Office for Chinese Affairs would be placed under local administrations, a prospect that was hard for the officials to swallow. Claiming that the Department of Internal Affairs had so far not concerned itself with Chinese politics and the fact that the local administrations had always ignored them, they insisted on remaining part of the Department of Justice and thus independent from local government heads. The director of justice also failed to see why the Office for Chinese Affairs should move to another department, given that—according to his judgment—the office ran well under its supervision. He also scoffed at the Department of Internal Affairs' view of the Indies Chinese as well-behaved subjects with only a few grievances. In the eyes of Internal Affairs the Indies Chinese were the *peranakan* on Java and therefore it was sufficient to turn to the Chinese officers when information was needed. It completely disregarded the *totok* element that was in close contact with Chinese revolutionaries in China and other parts of Southeast Asia. Nevertheless, the dispute was decided in favour of the Department of Internal Affairs. The colonial authorities stressed that close cooperation between the Office for Chinese Affairs and local administrations was critical for monitoring new developments in the Chinese community. They had no stomach for a reprise of the 1912 riots. By

⁶²⁰ “Chineesche Zaken (Ambtenaar voor-)”, in: *Encyclopaedie van Nederlandsch-Indië* (1917) vol. 1: 477–78.

Koninklijk Besluit (royal decree) of 10 March 1913, no. 84, the Office for Chinese Affairs was placed under the Department of Internal Affairs.⁶²¹

Another issue with implications for the administration not only of Indies Chinese but of all Foreign Orientals was the growing tension between the ethnic communities. In the previous chapter it was shown that the early twentieth century marked the beginning of a crucial period for non-Western groups in the colony. Influenced by developments in the wider world and also by each other, the Chinese, the natives, and also the Arabs in the Netherlands Indies were moving towards nationalist consciousness and awaking to the realisation that they could attain social and economic parity with the West. This resulted in the establishment of political movements and societies that used the streets and press as platforms to voice their collective demands for equality with Western groups in the colony. Due to the policy of segregation that had lasted centuries, ethnic communities manifested their “awakening” by emphasising their own identities. As a result, social pluralism became even more visible. Feelings of frustration over government rules that favoured one ethnicity above the other led to increasing mutual intolerance. For this reason, the colonial government was forced to consider creating more equality among the ethnic groups in the spheres of administration, education, justice, taxation, freedom of movement and domicile, and so on. More uniformity would not only answer the demands to receive the same treatment as the Western groups; it would also create more equality among the non-Western communities, which might reduce the tension and feelings of communal jealousy and resentment. As the system of Chinese community leadership in its current structure was no longer workable, and the Arabs had also expressed their dissatisfaction with the Arab officers, it might be the right time for the colonial government to create a form of administration that could be applied to all the (non-Western) communities.

⁶²¹ Lohanda, *Growing Pains*, 213–17. See also *Indisch Staatsblad* 1913-350.

5.2 The advice of temporary government advisor W. J. Oudendijk

It was now apparent to the colonial government that the institution of Chinese officers could no longer deal with the changes in the Chinese community and that it was impossible to leave Chinese administration in the hands of the Chinese officers. Government intervention was required and the colonial authorities were forced to find a way to incorporate the administration over the Chinese into their new vision of colonial rule. Before the colonial government could come up with a solution, it was first necessary to be fully informed about Chinese public opinion, the inner-workings of the Chinese community, China and the Chinese movement, and the image of the Chinese officers among their countrymen. For this, the colonial government sought the advice of W. J. Oudendijk, an experienced Dutch diplomat who had held office in China, Russia, and at the time his services were requested by the colonial government, Persia.

Born in 1874 in Kampen, a river town in the Dutch province of Overijssel, Oudendijk was sent to Amsterdam as a teenager by his parents to attend secondary school. After completing his secondary education, Oudendijk went to Leiden University to study law. After his graduation he successfully passed the entrance examination for the Foreign Office and was told he would be sent to the legation of Peking. With this destination ahead, Oudendijk followed a preliminary course in the Chinese written language given by the famous Leiden Sinologist J. J. M. de Groot. The Foreign Office officially appointed him to the Dutch legation in Peking in February 1894. Starting out as an apprentice interpreter, he rapidly climbed the bureaucratic ladder to the post of envoy extraordinary.⁶²² After four years in Peking, Oudendijk spent a leave of absence in Russia. He returned to China in 1900, right in the midst of the Boxer uprisings. Oudendijk headed the St. Petersburg legation in 1907 before returning to Peking a year later. Oudendijk was appointed consul-general in Teheran in 1910, with the personal title of minister plenipotentiary. According to

⁶²² W. J. Oudendijk, *Ways and By-ways in Diplomacy* (London: Peter Davies, 1939), 1–78.

his memoirs, his years in Teheran were the happiest of his life.⁶²³ In 1913, the minister of foreign affairs dispatched him to Java to advise the colonial government on the reorganisation of the outdated administrative system for the Chinese population. Given his long experience as a diplomat in China and his profound knowledge of international affairs, and in particular the recent developments in China, Oudendijk was judged as the most suitable person to shed light on the problems in Java.

To be able to assist the colonial government in laying the foundation for extensive reforms in the antiquated administrative system that was the Chinese Council and its officers, Oudendijk carried out a meticulous investigation into the condition of life of the Chinese settlers:

I travelled all over Java, Sumatra, Borneo, and other islands. I had conferences with all the residents and all the officials who had any dealings with the Chinese section of the population; and wherever there was a Chinese community of any importance, I convened a meeting of its principal members and of the committees of their societies, and inquired about their wishes, their grievances and their opinions in general. . . .

. . . I also travelled to the Straits Settlements and the Federated Malay States, and consulted with the British officials in Ipoh, Kuala Lumpur, and Singapore; and had a general look round at the ways and methods of the British in their colonial administration. With the knowledge thus gathered I drafted my proposals to the Governor-General.⁶²⁴

In February 1914 he presented his report to the governor-general in which he underlined the fact that the colonial government had insufficient knowledge of the developments in the Chinese community. For a long time, this had not mattered, but since a new intellectual trend in East Asia

⁶²³ Ibid., 78–191.

⁶²⁴ Ibid., 197, 198.

had led to the formation of Chinese political associations in the Indies, demanding equal status with the Europeans and propagating against colonial authority, it became necessary for the colonial government to forge closer relationships with the Chinese community.⁶²⁵ Oudendijk pointed out that the institution of Chinese officers had been established in an era when the main objective of Dutch colonists in the archipelago was commerce and the Chinese were considered essential for the development of the region's economy. Previously the system of indirect rule had been a practical and lucrative way to govern these people with their strange languages and customs, but with the intensification of Dutch direct rule over the archipelago and the increasing interference from the Chinese government, it was time for the colonial government to show more concern for the affairs of the Indies Chinese, who had become Dutch subjects by the Dutch Subject Law of 1910. No longer could they be considered as foreigners and the colonial government now had the obligation to look after their best interests and re-evaluate their position in colonial society. According to Oudendijk, the institution of Chinese officers was one of the matters that needed re-evaluation. He observed that the Chinese people in the Netherlands Indies were no longer willing to accept the Chinese officers' patriarchal way of governance, and they could no longer identify themselves with the officers who were members of the established elite and had little understanding of the new challenges their countrymen were facing. The Chinese officers no longer served their community; neighbourhood chiefs sometimes committed extortion by demanding excessive taxes from the people and the officers did not do anything to prevent this. Some officers even allied with the neighbourhood chiefs in their extortion activities and split the profits. Oudendijk anticipated that the Chinese people would expect better treatment under direct European administration.⁶²⁶

Another issue that Oudendijk raised was the Dutch practice of encouraging the different races and ethnic groups to live in accordance with their own customs and traditions, and under laws

⁶²⁵ Report of the Government Advisor on Chinese Affairs W. J. Oudendijk to the Governor-General, 4 February 1914, no. 28, Binnenlandsch Bestuur, no. 1935, ANRI, Jakarta.

⁶²⁶ Ibid.

that took those customs and traditions into consideration.⁶²⁷ In this new era in which the non-Western communities started to demand equal rights, it should become the government's ambition to administer all ethnic groups as equitably as possible. The system of segregation was no longer workable. Therefore it was imperative, according to Oudendijk, to place the Chinese under direct European administration and to abolish the officer system that only emphasised the *status aparte* of the Chinese. However, he argued, in a plural society a Chinese representative was always necessary to assist the Department of Internal Affairs in dealing with the Chinese, just as the regents did for the indigenous people. The Chinese needed a confidant who would observe their interests and defend them in disputes or clashes with the natives. As the unpaid Chinese officers no longer functioned satisfactorily, the colonial government should create a new salaried position for someone who could take an independent position between the Chinese people and the colonial government; on the one hand he should serve the interests of the Chinese community, but on the other hand he should be the eyes and ears of the colonial authorities in the Chinese neighbourhoods.⁶²⁸ Oudendijk imagined this official to be a police official, still designated as captain, as the Chinese were familiar with this title. The captain should be directly accountable to the local authorities and therefore be equal and not subordinate to the local Dutch police official. He should receive a salary of 200 guilders per month and have a police office at his disposal, to be named the "Chineesch Kantoor".⁶²⁹ He should be assisted by police officers—partly Chinese, partly indigenous—who will take care of the civil registration and the collection of tax money. In the principal cities such as Batavia and Soerabaja, two or three of these offices should be established. Oudendijk estimated the total costs for sixty-one offices in Java and Madoera at 180,000 guilders per year, including the

⁶²⁷ Oudendijk, *Ways and By-ways in Diplomacy*, 195.

⁶²⁸ Report of the Government Advisor on Chinese Affairs W. J. Oudendijk to the Governor-General, 4 February 1914, no. 28, Binnenlandsch Bestuur, no. 1935, ANRI, Jakarta.

⁶²⁹ The name of the police office in Chinese characters should be added for those *singkeh* Chinese who are not able to read Dutch: 華民事務衙門.

salaries of the officials and clerks, but not including the rental of office space. The reason why Oudendijk intended the new captains to function as police officials was twofold: first, with a Chinese police official in charge of police officers and detectives, the colonial authorities would be directly informed about developments in the Chinese community. Second, with the handing over of certain police affairs to the Chinese captain it would not be necessary to charge subordinates of the native administration to deal with Chinese police matters. Well-to-do and educated members of the Chinese community found it trying to have native officials handling Chinese police affairs.⁶³⁰

Although the tools of administration might vary from one ethnic group to another, Oudendijk advocated a uniform colonial administration in which the Chinese were governed the same way and subject to the same laws and regulations (and tax system!) as the other inhabitants. Therefore the colonial government should avoid granting the Chinese people privileges, like the right to choose their own neighbourhood chiefs and police officials, which would imply that the Chinese community formed an autonomous group in the Indies society. It would also be dangerous to grant the Chinese voting rights for their own representatives, for this could invite China's interference, leading to a *staat in een staat* (a state within a state). The Chinese were still not fully aware of the meaning behind Dutch citizenship and still focussed their attention on China. Therefore the Chinese police official, or captain, should be a Dutch citizen chosen and appointed by the Dutch.⁶³¹ In consideration of a uniform and unmediated colonial administration, Oudendijk urged for the striking out of the words *onder leiding van hunne eigene hoofden* (under the supervision of their own headmen) in article 73 of the Constitutional Regulation of 1854, pending the withdrawal of the whole article.⁶³²

⁶³⁰ Report of the Government Advisor on Chinese Affairs W. J. Oudendijk to the Governor-General, 4 February 1914, no. 28, Binnenlandsch Bestuur, no. 1935, ANRI, Jakarta.

⁶³¹ Ibid.

⁶³² Ibid.

As a transitional measure, Oudendijk recommended the appointment of “aspirant captains” in the main cities such as Batavia, Soerabaja, Semarang, Bandoeng, Solo, Djokja, Medan, Padang and Makassar. Candidates should be young educated Chinese, Dutch citizens who had successfully passed the *klein-ambtenaars-examen* (civil service examinations) required for entry into the lower echelons of the bureaucracy. Thorough knowledge of the Hokkien dialect should also be a prerequisite. Aspirant captains, who in time could be promoted to captain, would receive a monthly salary of fifty guilders and a pension.⁶³³ Oudendijk only recommended the new system in places that required a change in administration. As far as the outer regions were concerned, in cases where the existing situation was satisfactory, no alterations should be implemented.⁶³⁴

Oudendijk also addressed the well-known Chinese grievances such as the police courts, the travel-pass system, and the requirement to live in designated quarters of the towns. He proposed abolishing the police courts, lifting the travel and residence restrictions, and expanding the facilities for Dutch education for the Chinese.⁶³⁵

Even though Oudendijk was not thrilled to leave his post in Teheran to study the problems in Chinese administration in the Dutch East Indies, he derived much satisfaction from his work. His efforts were very much appreciated not only by the governor-general and other high officials of the colonial administration, but also by the Chinese community, which spontaneously expressed its sincere appreciation for his work, as he described in his autobiography, though his description of their gratitude may sound a bit too rosy:

How sincere the feelings of the Chinese towards me were, was proved by the many enormous baskets of flowers that decorated the great drawing-room and dining-hall of the Rotterdam Lloyd liner in which my wife and I were to travel back to Europe. They

⁶³³ Ibid.

⁶³⁴ Ibid.

⁶³⁵ Oudendijk, *Ways and By-ways in Diplomacy*, 198.

were addressed by the leading Chinese personalities and Chinese societies in Batavia to my wife. We could not but be exceedingly touched by these delicate tokens of appreciation. I was leaving the country, so they had nothing more to expect from me; this wealth of flowers was therefore a real and genuine mark of affection and gratitude. Equally touched were we by a beautiful basket sent by the Governor-General and his wife. I travelled home with the pleasant feeling that I had done well and had achieved something for the good of my country.⁶³⁶

5.3 The debate on reforming Chinese administration

Although the highest authorities of the colonial government showed their gratitude for Oudendijk's proposals, not everyone appreciated his appointment. In *Het Vaderland* on 14 July 1913, Henri Borel disapproved the government's decision to place the Office for Chinese Affairs under the supervision of the Department of Internal Affairs. The reason why the officials of this office had been able to inform the government about the affairs of the Chinese, he argued, was because they were subordinate to the director of justice and thus independent from the local administrations. Instead of appreciating their efforts, they were downgraded to being subordinated to the local governments. Such was their reward! Then, Borel added, there was the temporary appointment of a young outsider from Teheran as head of the Office for Chinese Affairs, which was especially annoying to the officials for Chinese affairs. Oudendijk also failed to make direct contact with the Chinese community in the Indies. Borel referred to Oudendijk's trip to Tangerang to inspect the situation there. He admitted that Oudendijk was an outstanding Sinologue, but he only spoke the Mandarin Chinese language and not the Hokkien dialect, the language spoken by the Chinese he encountered in Tangerang. Therefore he lacked the practical experience needed to give expert advice to the government. According to Borel, the trip in vain to Tangerang was definitely no

⁶³⁶ Ibid., 200.

exception. Why, Borel wondered with annoyance, did the government fail to see the importance of the officials for Chinese affairs?⁶³⁷

B. A. J. van Wettum, the advisor for Japanese and Chinese affairs, disagreed with Oudendijk's suggestion to abolish the institution of Chinese officers. He expressed his full support for the preservation of the traditional system of community leadership, although he admitted that a few changes should be made. He deemed it now an indispensable condition to grant the Chinese officers compensation for their services in order to improve the quality of the institution. This compensation should be given in the form of an official salary.⁶³⁸ Making the Chinese officers paid government officials had already been suggested after the release of the Fokkens report in 1894, which noted that the Chinese officers had suffered immensely from *Indisch Staatsblad* 1887–12, which exempted the headmen of Foreign Orientals from paying the business tax on their unpaid leadership activities, but not on their private businesses. Hitherto the Chinese officers had been exempt from paying the business tax on their own trading businesses.⁶³⁹ The Chinese officers objected to the changes, but the first government secretary who drafted the ordinance on the business tax brushed aside their objections, although he did propose to make the Chinese officers paid government officials, just like the indigenous officials. The director of finances backed the first government secretary,⁶⁴⁰ as did the director of internal affairs who added that a fixed government salary was more appropriate than tax privileges because a salaried position would also give less well-to-do but nonetheless qualified people the opportunity to apply.⁶⁴¹ Proposals for introducing

⁶³⁷ “Een Inspecteur voor Chineesche Zaken in Ned.-Indië”, *De Indische Gids* 35:2 (1913): 1240–41.

⁶³⁸ “Kort overzicht van de in den laatsten tijd uitgebrachte adviezen over een reorganisatie van het Chineesch Bestuur”, *Binnenlandsch Bestuur*, no. 1935, ANRI, Jakarta.

⁶³⁹ *Indisch Staatsblad* 1857–99. See the Fokkens Report, part 1, 1894, NA, The Hague: pp. 291–92.

⁶⁴⁰ Letter of the Director of Finances to the Governor-General, 29 March 1895, no. 5177, in: *Mailrapport*, no. 13–1896, NA, The Hague.

⁶⁴¹ Letter of the Director of Internal Affairs to the Governor-General, 29 June 1894, no. 3722, in: *Mailrapport*, no. 13–1896, NA, The Hague.

fixed salaries in the Chinese officer system were volleyed back and forth, but in vain: the system of privileges was continued in a desperate attempt to make the unpaid post more attractive. Now, twenty years later, the colonial government had to admit that granting privileges was not a solution to improve the system of Chinese community leadership, and the idea of paying the Chinese officers was suggested once again.

However, most government officials judged that a salary alone was not sufficient to overcome the problems in Chinese administration. Therefore, Oudendijk's proposals became the basis for the plans drafted to reorganise the Chinese administration. There was a consensus of opinion among government officials that the outdated institution of Chinese officers should be abolished and that the Chinese population should be subjected to more direct government control. Reorganisation should first take place in the *hoofdplaatsen* of Batavia, Semarang, and Soerabaja, but opinions differed on how this should be accomplished. The first disagreement was over whether to place the Chinese people under direct European administration or to appoint salaried Chinese intermediaries to replace the Chinese officers. The former plan included the installation of a controleur for handling the administrative affairs of the Chinese community in the *hoofdplaatsen* of the residencies, specifically assisting local governments in dealing with the Chinese inhabitants; maintaining the registers of birth, marriage, divorce, and death; and participating in the taxation- and immigration committees. Self-evidently he should be informed on every movement in the Chinese neighbourhoods. The controleur would be assisted by a Chinese advisor, interpreters and other office staff. The Chinese advisor should be reliable, well-educated, and familiar with the local circumstances and affairs, and he should have a command of the most important Chinese dialects.⁶⁴² But under no circumstances should he act as a mediator between the colonial

⁶⁴² For his services he should receive a salary of 300–400 guilders per month. See the memorandum of the Assistant-Resident of Batavia, 25 December 1914, in: Mailrapport, no. 34/16, NA, The Hague.

administration and the Chinese people.⁶⁴³ This ran counter to Oudendijk's suggestion to appoint a Chinese representative who would function in a similar way as the indigenous regent. Advocates of direct European administration argued that such a representative would only preserve the current situation in which the Chinese people were governed by their own people, while the aim should be to subject the Chinese to direct European administration, which they were confident the Chinese people would accept as a step towards obtaining the same rights as Europeans. Apparently these government officials no longer feared that subjecting the Chinese people to direct European administration might offend the indigenous administration corps. Increased Chinese nationalist radicalism was a more imminent threat. They also argued that a salaried Chinese representative would be less inclined to report nationalist radicals or support the colonial government's efforts to bind the Chinese people to the Dutch crown.⁶⁴⁴ According to reports of the residents of Batavia, Semarang, and Soerabaja, it was also virtually impossible to find any suitable, educated and trustworthy Chinese to qualify for the position of official Chinese representative.⁶⁴⁵ Even if the government was able to find a suitable person, this person could not be properly prepared for his duties as training simply did not exist for such a position. The Chinese officers were never professionally trained because they were appointed for their wealth.⁶⁴⁶ A different but interesting outlook came from the acting advisor for Chinese affairs, H. Mouw, who argued that it was now more necessary than ever to place the Chinese people under direct European leadership because Japan was seeking closer relationships with China. Japan was already involved in aiding China with its educational system, which was modelled on that of Japan, while a significant number of Chinese

⁶⁴³ Confidential letter of the Director of Internal Affairs to the Governor-General, 10 December 1915, no. 685 G/B, Binnenlandsch Bestuur, no. 1935, ANRI, Jakarta.

⁶⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁴⁵ Confidential letter of the Director of Internal Affairs to the Governor-General, 31 January 1917, no. 111/B, Binnenlandsch Bestuur, no. 1935, ANRI, Jakarta.

⁶⁴⁶ Confidential letter of the Director of Internal Affairs to the Governor-General, 10 December 1915, no. 685 G/B, Binnenlandsch Bestuur, no. 1935, ANRI, Jakarta.

students were being educated in Japan. Mouw observed that the unstable political situation in the young Chinese republic had invited Japanese interference in spheres other than education. The Indies Chinese, who had been disillusioned with the political developments in China, might find new hope in a Chinese republic led by Japan, the first Asian country that had proved itself the equal of its Western counterparts. The appointment of a Dutch official to administer the Chinese community was the most efficient way to counterbalance Japanese influence on the Indies Chinese, as a Chinese representative might not be dependable enough to resist possible Japanese overtures.⁶⁴⁷

The Raad van Nederlandsch-Indië (Indies Council) opposed direct European administration on the grounds that the controleur, as a Dutchman, would fail to win the trust of the Chinese people and that no one in the Chinese community would turn to him when needed. The Indies Council agreed with Oudendijk that it would be best to place an educated and salaried Chinese representative in charge of the Chinese community. Only someone familiar with Chinese customs and traditions, and circumstances in the Chinese neighbourhoods qualified to look after the best interests of the Chinese community. Moreover, placing the Chinese directly under the controleur would lead to a striking and unsuitable difference between the administrative systems over the Chinese in the *hoofdplaatsen* of the residencies Batavia, Semarang, and Soerabaja and those in the rest of Java and Madoera. The Chinese subjects in the *hoofdplaatsen* would be placed under direct European administration, while the Chinese residing outside the *hoofdplaatsen*, would remain subject to indigenous administration. Appointing a local Chinese representative for the Chinese community would also fit the administrative system of a plural colonial society.⁶⁴⁸ The Indies Council acknowledged the fact that there was no one trained for the post of Chinese representative, but the Council argued that it would only be difficult to find qualified persons in the beginning and that it certainly was not impossible to find suitable candidates among those who had received a

⁶⁴⁷ “Beschouwingen van het Kantoor voor Chineesche Zaken”, in Mailrapport, no. 352/17, NA, The Hague.

⁶⁴⁸ “Advies van den Raad van Nederlandsch-Indië, uitgebracht in de vergadering van 5 mei 1916”, no. XVIII, Binnenlandsch Bestuur, no. 1935, ANRI, Jakarta.

proper education at, for instance, the secondary school (HBS). Gradually, the Chinese representatives would be able to train their successors.⁶⁴⁹ The resident of Soerabaja, Van Aalst, who initially was in favour of appointing a controleur to administer the Chinese community, reconsidered his views and reasoned that only a Chinese would be able to gain the trust of the Chinese community. Moreover, he argued that the Chinese people often complained that they were only awarded a salaried government position in exceptional cases. The appointment of a controleur for Chinese affairs would definitely give rise to bitter sentiments that Chinese money was only good for paying the salaries of European officials.⁶⁵⁰

Another point of disagreement concerned the question of establishing advisory boards to compensate for the dismissal of the Chinese officers as official spokesmen of the Chinese community. Supporters of the idea argued that these would give the Chinese a way to voice their needs and complaints in an unconstrained way. The current Chinese officers, the chairmen of the main Chinese incorporated associations, and other respected members of the Chinese community could be given a seat in the boards and thereby function as the new spokespersons of the Chinese people. The board members would be appointed by the colonial government, possibly on the basis of recommendations from the Chinese community. Direct elections were out of the question. Neither should the colonial government follow the advice of the advisory boards at all times. The establishment of advisory boards was mostly intended to reassure the Chinese that the colonial government was not out to govern the Chinese *sur eux sans eux*. In the Straits Settlements such advisory boards were quite successful in improving the communication between the government and the various groups in the Chinese community.⁶⁵¹ The chieftain system had been officially

⁶⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁵⁰ Letter of the Resident of Soerabaja to the Director of Internal Affairs, 23 March 1915, no. 3/23g, in: Mailrapport, no. 34/16, NA, The Hague.

⁶⁵¹ Letter of the Official for Chinese Affairs to the Director of Internal Affairs, 14 October 1915, no. 352, in: Mailrapport no. 34/16, NA, The Hague.

abolished in 1826 when Singapore was grouped together with Penang and Malacca into a single administrative unit (the Straits Settlements) and brought under the jurisdiction of the court of judicature at Penang.⁶⁵² Chinese secret societies had plagued the Straits Settlements until 1889 when the British government passed the Societies Ordinance Bill, which outlawed them. With the suppression of the secret societies, the British had to find new means to seek communication with the Chinese community leaders and a Chinese Advisory Board (CAB) established the same year proved a success. With the establishment of the CAB, the British not only recognised the status of Chinese community leaders, but they were also able to address the grievances of the Chinese community.⁶⁵³ Proponents of such an advisory system in the Dutch East Indies argued that it would have the same satisfying results there as in the Straits Settlements. Opponents argued that as members of these boards would have no authority to make decisions, advisory boards would be powerless, and that it would be more advisable to allocate a fixed number of seats to the Chinese in local government bodies such as the municipal council, and allow them to choose their own representatives. Moreover, a separate board for the Chinese community would only underscore their position as a separate entity in colonial society.⁶⁵⁴

5.4 The meeting of September 1917

On 1–2 September 1917, Director of Internal Affairs H. Carpentier Alting called a meeting to discuss reforming the Chinese administration in the *hoofdplaatsen* of the residencies Batavia, Semarang, and Soerabaja. In attendance were the residents and assistant-residents, some officials

⁶⁵² Yen, *A Social History of the Chinese in Singapore and Malaya*, 111.

⁶⁵³ Yong, *Chinese Leadership and Power in Colonial Singapore*, 292–95.

⁶⁵⁴ “Advies van den Raad van Nederlandsch-Indië, uitgebracht in de vergadering van 5 mei 1916”, no. XVIII, Binnenlandsch Bestuur, no. 1935, ANRI, Jakarta; “De regeling van het bestuur over Chineezzen en andere Vreemde Oosterlingen na het verdwijnen van wijken voor ingezetenen van die landaarden”, in: Mailrapport, no. 3426/22 of Verbaal 10 March 1923, no. 5, NA, The Hague.

from the Office for Chinese Affairs, the controleur of Batavia, and other government officials involved in dealing with the Chinese administration.⁶⁵⁵ It was agreed that the inefficiency of the traditional Chinese community leadership system and its declining influence over the Chinese population proved that it was unsuitable for current conditions. The unpaid Chinese officers viewed the administrative tasks assigned to them as a matter of secondary importance and most lacked the diligence and dedication needed to fulfil their administrative duties.⁶⁵⁶ Moreover, the government officials were not convinced of the Chinese officers' ability to resist nationalist pressure and remain loyal to the colonial government now that China was seeking to extend its influence over the Chinese overseas. In addition, more uniformity in administration was desirable. The people in the surrounding areas or countryside were all subject to indigenous administration, which worked properly, but city administration was based on ethnicity and mediation; the Chinese were governed by the Chinese officers, the Arabs were governed by the Arab officers, while there were separate administrative systems for the indigenous and European people.

It was agreed to carry out an experiment that would eliminate the Chinese Councils and place the Chinese community under direct colonial government control as of 1 January 1918. The Dutch present at the meeting assumed that as most Chinese no longer depended on the Chinese officers and sought equal status with Europeans, they would welcome the idea of being placed directly under European administration. At the same time, most government officials favoured placing Arabs, Indians, and Moors under the indigenous administration, which would be dealt with separately in the future.⁶⁵⁷

⁶⁵⁵ Minutes of the meeting held on 1–2 September 1917 at the Department of Internal Affairs, enclosed with the confidential letter from the Director of Internal Affairs to the Residents of Batavia, Semarang and Soerabaja, 14 September 1917, no. 792/B, Binnenlandsch Bestuur, no. 1935, ANRI, Jakarta.

⁶⁵⁶ Memorandum of the Assistant-Resident of Batavia, 25 December 1914, in: Mailrapport, no. 34/16, NA, The Hague.

⁶⁵⁷ Minutes of the meeting held on 1–2 September 1917 at the Department of Internal Affairs, Binnenlandsch Bestuur, no. 1935, ANRI, Jakarta.

It was decided to appoint a controleur to oversee the reorganisation. Except for some translators and other office staff, the controleur would need the help of Chinese assistants to transmit and explain government rules to the Chinese community. These assistants would not replace the Chinese officers as community heads but merely serve the controleur in dealing with the daily administrative affairs. For these activities they would receive an official salary of approximately 200–400 guilders per month. The current Chinese neighbourhood chiefs were regarded as the right persons to fulfil the role of these assistants, although not all of them would be needed. Five neighbourhood chiefs would be appointed for Batavia, six for Semarang, and four for Soerabaja. Each would be given an office, two assistant-neighbourhood chiefs, a Chinese writer, and a messenger.⁶⁵⁸ As the neighbourhood chiefs were not replacing the Chinese Council, it was suggested the defunct institution's responsibilities would be divided among several government bodies and Chinese associations: Chinese notables could be appointed to give advice in various government committees, such as those concerned with immigration, taxation, or the local councils of justice. Special cashiers could take care of tax collection with the assistance of the neighbourhood chiefs.⁶⁵⁹ The local police could now supervise security in the Chinese

⁶⁵⁸ The salaries of the assistant-neighbourhood chiefs and the Chinese writer would be 80–100 guilders and 50–80 guilders per month respectively. No information was given about the messenger's payment. The total costs for hiring these personnel were estimated at 92,000 guilders per year. See minutes of the meeting held on 1–2 September 1917 at the Department of Internal Affairs, Binnenlandsch Bestuur, no. 1935, ANRI, Jakarta.

⁶⁵⁹ Given the complaints about neighbourhood chiefs using their power to extract more tax money from the people, the government decided to appoint special cashiers for the collection of taxes. Those cashiers would collect the taxes on certain days in the neighbourhood chief's offices. The neighbourhood chiefs should only be responsible for summoning or reminding the people to pay their taxes. The resident of Soerabaja feared that taking away the tax collection duties from the neighbourhood chiefs would make them reluctant to assist the cashiers, for it would mean that they no longer were entitled to receive eight percent of the tax collection as a reward for their collecting services. This was called the *collecteloon*. The resident of Batavia argued that close supervision by the controleur would guarantee the constant revenue of tax money. Moreover, the neighbourhood chiefs would be given reasonable fixed salaries of 200–400 guilders per month.

neighbourhoods and inform the government on sanitation matters such as the possible spread of contagious diseases like cholera and smallpox, and last but not least, suspicious Chinese nationalist societies.⁶⁶⁰ Until the introduction of the Dutch Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages, the neighbourhood chiefs should temporarily take care of the Chinese civil registry, while public and religious ceremonies were to be organised by the Chinese associations (already common practice in Semarang). Finally, the municipal government should be given the task of maintaining the roads in the Chinese quarters.⁶⁶¹

The last important task of the Chinese Council that needed assignment was the management of the Chinese burial grounds and funeral fund in Batavia. The Chinese Councils of Semarang, and Soerabaja could be closed without any objection, as the Chinese burial grounds there were managed by the town council and were under the supervision of a committee in which the *majoor der Chineezen* and a few retired officers were seated. The Chinese Council of Batavia was a different story. Throughout the centuries, the Chinese Council of Batavia had acquired considerable extensive properties and financial resources. In 1917 the properties managed by the Council were in three mortgages, fifteen plots of land, five houses, bank deposits, and shares. Its income was derived from interest, rent, public land sales, and biannual land leases.⁶⁶² Anticipating that the Chinese community would fear Dutch confiscation of the Council's properties, it was proposed that the Council's properties be transferred to a committee of Chinese notables. This proposal was elaborated in more detail in a concept-ordinance drafted by the Office for Chinese Affairs, which recommended that management of these properties be handed over to a "Committee for the management of the properties owned by the former Chinese Council". This so-called Chinese

⁶⁶⁰ Minutes of the meeting held on 1–2 September 1917 at the Department of Internal Affairs, Binnenlandsch Bestuur, no. 1935, ANRI, Jakarta.

⁶⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶⁶² "Opgaaf van de bezittingen van den Chineeschen Raad te Batavia 1917", Binnenlandsch Bestuur, no. 1935, ANRI, Jakarta.

Committee should consist of nine members, to be selected from the Chinese community. Every two years one-third of the nine members would have to stand for re-appointment, subject to input from the Chinese community and approval by the resident. This would assure the Chinese community that the management of the Council's properties remained exclusively in Chinese hands. Like the Chinese Council, the committee should present a yearly report of its activities and financial status to the resident. Other management details were not stipulated in the draft ordinance, which meant that the committee would have a free hand in managing the properties and appointing its own secretaries and other office personnel.⁶⁶³

With the management of the properties of the Chinese Council of Batavia settled, nothing seemed to be standing in the way of carrying out the reform on the agreed date. The Dutch officials present at the meeting were confident that the test case on Chinese administration would have a successful outcome, and therefore it was agreed to release the Chinese officers from their posts, while retaining their titles on an honorary basis, and express official appreciation for their services.⁶⁶⁴

The experiment on Chinese administration was meant to be a transitional measure while awaiting the realisation of an unmediated city administration in the *hoofdplaatsen* of the residencies of Batavia, Semarang, and Soerabaja that would put all Asian races under a uniform system of local government. The assistant-resident of Soerabaja, L. J. Schippers, had drafted the reorganisation plan for a unified city administration, which he presented to the participants of the meeting. He believed that this reorganisation should be implemented at once, without a transitional phase, as did the resident of Soerabaja, Van Aalst. The plan involved abolishing of the current specially-designated quarters for Europeans, Chinese, Arabs, and indigenous people, reorganisation of these into new

⁶⁶³ "Concept-Ordonnantie", in a letter of the Official for Chinese Affairs to the Director of Internal Affairs, 12 April 1919, no. 158/19, Binnenlandsch Bestuur, no. 1935, ANRI, Jakarta.

⁶⁶⁴ Minutes of the meeting held on 1–2 September 1917 at the Department of Internal Affairs, Binnenlandsch Bestuur, no. 1935, ANRI, Jakarta.

neighbourhoods (*wijken*) irrespective of ethnicity, and appointing government officials responsible for supervising these neighbourhoods, again irrespective of ethnicity. These neighbourhood officials (*wijkambtenaren*) would replace the Chinese and Arab officers and indigenous village heads. The neighbourhood chiefs, As Schippers suggested they be called, would be tasked with assisting the European and indigenous administration in supervising each neighbourhood (of approximately 3000–4000 citizens). Considering that colonial society was plural, he also proposed appointing European chiefs for the neighbourhoods with a majority of European inhabitants, and Chinese, Arab, and indigenous chiefs for the neighbourhoods where the Chinese, Arab and indigenous people were in the majority. If not enough Europeans, Chinese, or Arabs were willing to take on the job of chief, indigenous neighbourhood chiefs would be appointed in their stead. The European, Chinese and Arab neighbourhood chiefs would be directly supervised by the *controleur* and assistant-resident, while the indigenous neighbourhood chiefs would be directly accountable to the *assistent-wedana*, the *wedana* and *patih*. To give their post an official character, the neighbourhood chiefs should be appointed as temporary or permanent government officials and given an official uniform.⁶⁶⁵

With the increasing demands for equal treatment and growing tension between the ethnic communities in mind, the assistant-resident of Soerabaja argued that it was time to relieve the Foreign Orientals from their separate administrative systems and bring them under the same governmental structure as the European and indigenous classes. Now that it was agreed to abolish the Chinese Council and its officers, and plans could also be drawn up to terminate the Arab officer system, the way was opened for an unmediated and uniform city administration in the *hoofdplaatsen* of the residencies Batavia, Semarang, and Soerabaja.⁶⁶⁶

⁶⁶⁵ “Voorlopig schema (van de) bestuurs-reorganisatie in de gemeente Soerabaja”, enclosed with the confidential letter from the Department of Internal Affairs to the Residents of Batavia, Semarang and Soerabaja, 14 September 1917, no. 792/B, Binnenlandsch Bestuur, no. 1935, ANRI, Jakarta.

⁶⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

The reorganisation plan of the assistant-resident of Soerabaja was also linked to the transfer of authority and responsibilities (especially the authority over the local police, as administration and police were closely linked) of the assistant-resident to the mayor, head of the municipality. The new neighbourhood chiefs would accordingly be municipal officials. Appointing the mayor as the head of local administration would end the undesirable dualistic situation in which the authority and responsibilities of the assistant-resident and mayor often overlapped. In this sense the reorganisation of Chinese administration became part and parcel of the discussion on further decentralisation and modern state formation. The director of internal affairs welcomed the idea of a unified city administration that would diminish race distinctions, but he argued that for financial reasons it would be better to reform Chinese administration first—to facilitate a state of transition—and that the plans of the assistant-resident of Soerabaja be reconsidered at a future date. The other officials shared the director's opinion. Decentralisation, they argued, was not something that should be hastily implemented; decentralisation required efficiency, sufficient funds and qualified personnel. All these requirements called for a step-by-step approach. Thus it was decided to implement these reforms gradually.⁶⁶⁷

In the end, none of these reforms or transitional measures was ever put into effect, leaving the local administrations of Batavia, Semarang, and Soerabaja in limbo. According to the law of 25 July 1918 no. 76, article 73 of the Constitutional Regulation of 1854 was withdrawn, although the Chinese community was still administered by the Chinese officers and neighbourhood chiefs.⁶⁶⁸ In Batavia the Chinese major had already asked permission to resign from office. Even though his request was granted, as a titular major he continued to chair the Chinese Council as a friendly gesture to the colonial authorities. Similarly, in Semarang, and Soerabaja officers had resigned, and the Chinese officers who remained in office did so only for the sake of helping out the local

⁶⁶⁷ Minutes of the meeting held on 1–2 September 1917 at the Department of Internal Affairs, Binnenlandsch Bestuur, no. 1935, ANRI, Jakarta.

⁶⁶⁸ *Indisch Staatsblad* 1918-794.

government officials.⁶⁶⁹ The end result of the September 1917 meeting was that the status quo of half-hearted measures taken by the colonial government was maintained.

5.5 The end results of the debate: confusion, opposing forces and ultimately the maintenance of the status quo

The striking fact about the debate on Chinese administration was that political factors rather than administrative considerations were predominant. The debate became inextricably bound up with the discussion of implementing reforms to carefully discard racial classification—the cornerstone of colonial society.⁶⁷⁰ In the years of enlightened and benign colonial rule an increasing number of “ethical” politicians had called for the revision of colonial legislation that found its basic principles in racial differentiation. Some conciliatory measures had already been implemented to appease the non-Western groups that were starting to show signs of emancipation, but increasing Chinese agitation and native restlessness called for more far-reaching reforms to achieve racial equality. Colonial officials realised that with a rapidly modernising colonial society, it would be appropriate to introduce a system of governance that would subject all ethnic categories to the same kind of administration. In the meeting of September 1917, it was decided that in the future the racially-bound administrative structures in the *hoofdplaatsen* of Batavia, Semarang, and Soerabaja should be replaced with a unified and unmediated administrative system. This meant that the reorganisation of Chinese administration became attached to the unification of city administration in the main residencies of the Dutch East Indies. Reform was not limited to the government, and Fasseur has shown that hopeful changes also occurred in the bureaucratic, educative, and legal spheres. For instance, after 1913 non-Europeans became eligible for nearly all offices in the administration and the army (with the symbolic exception that only a Dutchman could be appointed governor-general).

⁶⁶⁹ “De regeling van het bestuur over Chineezzen en andere Vreemde Oosterlingen na het verdwijnen van wijken voor ingezetenen van die landaarden”, in: Mailrapport, no. 3426/22 of Verbaal 10 March 1923, no. 5, NA, The Hague.

⁶⁷⁰ Fasseur, “Cornerstone and Stumbling Block”, 31.

Secondary and higher education became accessible to all pupils without any racial proviso or reservation—although the enrolment of non-European children was not to be at the expense of European children. Noteworthy progress was made with the introduction of a uniform *Landgerecht* (local tribunal) for minor offences in 1914 which replaced the hated police courts (*Politierol*). In 1918 a unified penal code was promulgated. Tax legislation also displayed a trend for unification: in 1920 an income tax was introduced on a uniform basis for all ethnic groups of the population. Finally, most constraints on the freedom of movement and domicile for non-Europeans were lifted after 1916.⁶⁷¹

It appears that the colonial government was following a new political line that aimed for more equality in legislation, judicial practice, and executive policy. It was a radical change of course from the strict adherence to the multi- racially based caste society that had dominated colonial policy for centuries. However not all change was welcomed. Applying a unified administrative system on the various population groups in the three principal cities of Java proved too complicated. Because the Arabs of Batavia mostly lived in Pekodjan and Kroekoet, which were situated in the predominantly Chinese neighbourhood Pendjaringan, it was highly likely that a Chinese neighbourhood chief would be appointed to take charge of this section of the city. The Arabs objected to this as they refused to accept any form of Chinese administrative leadership over them, including a Chinese neighbourhood chief.⁶⁷² It was also unlikely that the Chinese would agree to be supervised by an Arab chief, or that the Chinese neighbourhood chief would be able to exercise his influence in an indigenous neighbourhood or vice versa.

The deeply embedded racial segregation in colonial society had led to the general acceptance of racial discrimination in the Indies. For centuries the colonial powers had successfully applied a system of “apartheid” to control the various population groups by means of continuous

⁶⁷¹ Ibid., 41–43.

⁶⁷² Letter of the Resident of Batavia to the Director of Internal Affairs, 25 September 1918, no. 18327/1, in: Agenda, 1918, no. 31028, ANRI, Jakarta.

adjustments in administrative policy and the implementation of distinctive legislature.⁶⁷³ This originated from the Company's policy to separate the ethnic groups and the enforcement of this system by the Constitutional Regulation of 1854 that stimulated the implementation of even more regulations designed to reinforce distinction among Europeans, natives, and Foreign Orientals. Now that concrete plans were drawn up to bring the ethnic groups in the principal residencies of Java under the same administrative system, the government had to face the consequences of its tradition of strict adherence to racial separateness, as not everyone embraced the government's plans. The practice of racial segregation had not only led to the acceptance of the status quo, but it had also prevented the different population groups in the archipelago from developing an "Indies identity", for (according to Dutch colonial legislation):

legally one was either European, native or Chinese. One's legally defined racial status determined where one could live, what taxes one paid, to which laws one was subject, before which courts one was tried, and, if found guilty of a crime, how and with what degree of harshness one was punished. In everyday life, it also determined what a person could wear. A native could not dress as a European, nor could a Chinese male cut off his Manchu braid. Just as the neatness of a village had been equated with its security in nineteenth-century Java, neat racial distinctions had to be displayed openly, precisely because real racial distinctions were not even skin deep.⁶⁷⁴

The Dutch reluctance to allow intense interaction between the ethnic groups, especially between the Chinese and the indigenous people had marked racial relations in colonial society. When important restrictions on the interaction between the ethnic groups of the population were

⁶⁷³ Chen, *De Chinese Gemeenschap van Batavia*, 155.

⁶⁷⁴ Shiraishi, "Anti-Sinicism in Java's New Order", 205.

lifted in the twentieth century, social pluralism tended to intensify rather than weaken: each ethnic group began to unveil its own individual racial identity to the world by returning to their cultural roots and traditions and by setting up their own modern institutions. With these proud displays of group identity, it was evident that the image of the alleged superiority of the white race was under attack, but an increasing animosity among its subject population groups was also discernible. The lack of an “Indies identity” or the feeling of “oneness” among the different races in the Dutch East Indies certainly contributed to this last development. Segregation continued, but this time it was maintained by the ethnic groups.⁶⁷⁵ In 1917, the Indonesian nationalist leader Dr Tjipto Mangoenkoesoemo tried to stimulate a sense of common identity when he presented his ideas of an Indies nation. In his view, the Indies nation should be composed of all who considered the Indies their motherland and had its best interests in mind. Thus, his concept of an Indies nation ignored race or ethnic origin and intended to join Dutch Eurasians, peranakan Arabs, and peranakan Chinese together with native Indonesians to build a free Indies nation. Mangoenkoesoemo’s concept was not shared by most Indonesian nationalists, who continued to incorporate the racial concept in their vision of an Indonesian nation. An example was article four in the constitution of the Indonesian Nationalist Party (Partai Nasional Indonesia, PNI), which stated that only native Indonesians were eligible for membership in the party. Other Asians could only be associate members. As a result, when the peranakan Chinese Kwee Tjing Hong from Palembang took the initiative to set up a local branch of the PNI, since he was regarded as a Chinese—and hence an alien—by the PNI members, he was never able to hold an executive position in the branch he himself had established. On the other hand, the majority of the Chinese also persisted in retaining the ethnic boundaries. Most were

⁶⁷⁵ Van Doorn, *A Divided Society*, 12, 24–25.

indifferent to the Indonesian nationalist movement and focussed on Chinese nationalist concerns or their own group interests.⁶⁷⁶

In effect, the plans to unify city administration appeared not to be as unified as one imagined. In the proposed scenario, the neighbourhood chief would have to report to the controleur in case he was a Chinese. The indigenous neighbourhood chief however would be directly accountable to the *wedana* and *patih*. This meant that neighbourhoods would still be administered differently and according to race.⁶⁷⁷ Nevertheless, racial antagonism was not the only obstacle to implementing a unified city administration in the near future. In the meeting of September 1917, it was decided to attach the administrative reforms to the transfer of more authority from the assistant-resident to the mayor within the framework of decentralisation, and to make the neighbourhood chiefs paid servants of the municipal government. Since it was decided that the municipality and the position of mayor needed more time to develop, a transition measure would first be implemented. This transition involved the placing of the Chinese community under direct colonial government control on 1 January 1918 while relieving the Chinese officers from their posts. Yet it was all in vain: the status quo was maintained and not the slightest progress was made in reforming Chinese administration.

5.6 Conclusion

There were many reasons why Chinese administration in the Indies had to undergo reform. The winds of change and enlightenment also blew in the direction of the Chinese community and it invited the Chinese people to participate in the process of emancipation. Traditional concepts of leadership were abandoned, while new ideas emerged. Wealth and extended family relations were

⁶⁷⁶ L. Suryadinata, "Pre-war Indonesian Nationalism and the Peranakan Chinese", *Indonesia* 11 (April 1971): 86–88.

More on the political ideas of Dr. Tjipto Mangoenkoesoemo can be found in M. Balfas, *Dr. Tjipto Mangoenkoesoemo: Demokrat Sedjati* (Amsterdam: Djambatan, 1952).

⁶⁷⁷ "Hervorming van het Chineesch en Inlandsch Bestuur", *De Indische Gids* 41:1 (1919): 495–97.

no longer prerequisites for becoming a Chinese community leader. A potential leader was now subject to new criteria such as competence and a good education. The feudal structure of the officer system did not allow for the adoption of modern concepts and voices against the obsolete system of Chinese community leadership became louder, resulting in an increasing number of openings in the leadership of the Chinese community. The colonial government had no other choice than to admit that the system had become outdated and needed reform. As former official for Chinese affairs Henri Borel pointed out, it was unfair to make modern education available for the Chinese while at the same time expecting them to accept an old-fashioned leadership system such as the institution of Chinese officers.⁶⁷⁸

It was not just the Chinese people who felt they could no longer depend on the Chinese officers. Colonial government authorities also realised they could no longer rely on the loyalty of the Chinese officers. The officers used to inform the colonial government on every issue in the Chinese community, but concealed sympathy for the nationalist cause, or fear of reprisals for being counterrevolutionaries kept the Chinese officers quiet. It sometimes even occurred that false information was given. The colonial government realised it knew too little of what went on in the Chinese community. Ironically this was exactly the reason why the institution of Chinese officers had been set up in the first place. Chinese headmen were appointed simply because the Company officials did not wish to meddle in Chinese affairs, but only in serious disputes.⁶⁷⁹ The current situation did not allow for the colonial government to remain aloof from the developments in the Chinese community. Thus, in order to safeguard national interests it was necessary to subject the Indies Chinese to firm leadership.

Temporary government advisor Oudendijk pointed the way to reforming the Chinese administration. In his vision modernisation necessitated doing away with the institution of Chinese

⁶⁷⁸ "Chineesche Officiëren", *De Indische Gids* 36:1 (1914): 885–87.

⁶⁷⁹ J. Moerman Jz., *In en om de Chineesche Kamp* (Batavia: Kolff, 1929), 54.

officers and placing the Chinese people under direct government control. His advice fitted well in the new era, and governments in other countries were similarly intent on replacing the privileged (feudal) groups and semi-autonomous institutions in society with a more hands-on government that dealt directly with its subjects and brought more equality to society. But reforming the Chinese administration proved to be a complicated matter, especially when it became attached to the reorganisation of the whole system of local administration in the *hoofdplaatsen* of Batavia, Semarang, and Soerabaja. Disagreement arose over whether to appoint Chinese intermediaries between the European administration and the neighbourhood chiefs or to place the Chinese under direct European administration; whether to form advisory boards as centres of communication for the Chinese community; whether to reform Chinese administration first and leave plans for the unification of city administration for the future; and whether to appoint the mayor as head of a local administration in the near future or to maintain the dualistic system of city administration for the time being. The main outcome of the September 1917 meeting was the conclusion that the reform of the Chinese administration could not be dissociated from the proposed plan to introduce an equal system of administration for the different races of the population. It was planned to place this equal administrative system under the leadership of the mayor, but the appointment of the mayor as head of local administration would not be realised for several years. Then there was also the resistance of certain groups that refused to be subject to the supervision of neighbourhood officials of a different ethnic background. In the end, nothing happened; none of the detailed plans formulated in the meeting were effectuated. Instead, a state of equivocation and uncertainty had taken over.

CHAPTER 6

LIFE AFTER “DEATH’: THE CHINESE RESPONSE TO THE PROPOSED REFORMS AND RESTORATION OF THE CHINESE COUNCIL OF BATAVIA

While ethnic divisions were an obstacle to implementation of the government’s plan to introduce an equal and unmediated administrative system for all the different races of the population, an even bigger one was the Chinese community’s scepticism. As a consequence, the proposed reforms were not carried through and in Batavia the same old system was revived. On 10 December 1927 a conference was held in the building of the Chinese Council of Batavia to discuss the reorganisation of the Chinese officers and neighbourhood chiefs in the residency. The conference was attended by the Chinese officers, the secretary of the Chinese Council, the assistant-resident of Batavia, the inspector of finances and the regent of Batavia. During the conference chairman Khouw Kim An announced to which districts the Chinese officers would be reassigned and the neighbourhood chiefs they would supervise.⁶⁸⁰

This chapter will analyse the Chinese response to the proposed reforms in Chinese administration. Chinese public opinion was for an important part manifested through the Chinese-Malay press as we have seen in chapter 4. But Chinese public opinion was also formed in gatherings that were set up by Chinese cultural associations and political societies. The pertinent rejection of the reform plan by the Chinese raises the question how the colonial government could have misjudged Chinese public opinion. Furthermore, attention will be given to the question how

⁶⁸⁰ Malay minutes, no. NM5, 10 December 1927: pp. 300–301.

the colonial government coped with this unexpected rejection and how the authorities were ultimately forced to restore the institution of Chinese officers in Batavia.

6.1 The “battle of words” between *Sin Po* and *Perniagaan*

The reactions in the Chinese-Malay press on the proposed reforms in Chinese administration were dominated by a war of words between the China-orientated *Sin Po* and the Indies-orientated *Perniagaan*. Under the editorial leadership of Kwee Hing Tjiat and Tjou Boe San, *Sin Po* was among the absolute supporters of the government’s plans and argued roughly as follows: the officer system was created in the era of “Asiatic despotism”, when the Chinese people were still uncivilised and obediently followed orders from the colonial government. In this era, the officers enjoyed elite status in the Chinese community; they were rich and influential and were seen as the natural leaders of the Chinese people. According to *Sin Po*, Chinese parents looked up to the officers and hoped that some day their sons would attain their status. They did not realise that the officers were merely slaves of the colonial government and had never used their influence for the benefit of the Chinese people. But the twentieth century had brought change; education and political development had directed the Chinese people towards modern principles and new ideas about leadership. It was in this era of modern principles that the Chinese people became aware that the Chinese officers were in fact unprofessional officials who served the colonial government’s interests. Frustration grew while one incompetent officer was replaced by another. Animosity against the officers increased and was answered with reprisals by the latter. The institution of Chinese officers had sown discord in the Chinese community and harmony would only be restored if the government decided to carry out its reforms.⁶⁸¹

Sin Po also considered being directly subjected to European administration an important step towards obtaining equal status with the Europeans, and it urged its readers to embrace the

⁶⁸¹ *Sin Po*, 22 November 1916; *Sin Po*, 2 November 1918.

government's plans with enthusiasm. *Sin Po* acknowledged that the new administrative system might be flawed, but the newspaper was confident that the government would continue to improve the system until it ran smoothly and favourably to the Chinese. For now it was more important to call for the dismissal of the Chinese officers, as they were part of an outdated institution that had only served Dutch interests. The officers were throwbacks who represented Chinese silence and obedience; instruments of the colonial government that had become rusty.⁶⁸²

Sin Po followed every established newspaper that reported on the Chinese officers and did not hesitate to give its unvarnished opinion. It noted that of the other main Malay newspapers, only *Perniagaan* fought for the continuation of the Chinese officer system, while the Soerabaja-based newspapers *Pewartas Soerabaja* and *Tjhoen Tjhioe*, and the Semarang newspapers *Warna Warta* and *Djawa Tengah* more or less supported the proposed reforms.⁶⁸³ That *Perniagaan* showed strong opposition to the proposed reforms in Chinese administration was not surprising considering that the newspaper was financed by several Chinese officers and peranakan businessmen.⁶⁸⁴ At the time the editorial staff of the newspaper consisted of F. D. J. Pangemannan, Lie Kim Hok, and Gouw Peng Liang.⁶⁸⁵ The latter, especially, broke a lance for the Chinese officers, as will be shown later. As the most outspoken supporter of the Chinese officers, *Perniagaan* took great efforts to point out the value of the officers in handling Chinese affairs. And, according to *Sin Po*, *Perniagaan* did not hesitate to use unjustified measures to mislead the Chinese people. Its rival maintained that the newspaper constantly spread false statements on delicate issues in hopes that the Chinese people would plead for the continuation of the officer system before the colonial government. The editors of *Sin Po* felt it was their duty to warn its readers about these assertions, and in late October 1918,

⁶⁸² *Sin Po*, 7 November 1916; *Sin Po*, 11 December 1916.

⁶⁸³ *Sin Po*, 5 December 1916.

⁶⁸⁴ *Sin Po*, 30 October 1918.

⁶⁸⁵ L. Suryadinata, *Etnis Tionghoa dan Nasionalisme Indonesia: Sebuah Bunga Rampai 1965–2008* (Jakarta: Kompas, 2010), 26.

the newspaper devoted its front page for one week to expose all the “lies” of *Perniagaan*.⁶⁸⁶

Although some arguments appeared to be plausible, *Sin Po*'s critique of *Perniagaan* was mostly anti-Chinese Council propaganda.

The first supposed falsehood that *Perniagaan* aired was that the colonial government would confiscate all possessions of the Chinese Council in Batavia after its abolition. The newspaper reported that the resident of Batavia had already been meddling in the financial management of the Chinese Council by demanding that all expenditures of 1000 guilders or more should first be reported to him. “What a nerve to demand such a thing, considering that the Chinese officers are still in office and the fact that the Council’s money actually belongs to the Chinese community!” *Perniagaan* warned that confiscation would be the next step, and that the Chinese people should join hands in support of the Chinese officers and the Chinese Council to keep its resources in the Chinese community.⁶⁸⁷

Sin Po challenged this assertion by placing parts of a written interview with the advisor for Chinese affairs, J. L. J. F. Ezerman. To a question concerning the Council’s finances, Ezerman answered that even after the termination of the Chinese officer system the financial possessions of the Council would be used solely for the benefit of the Chinese community.⁶⁸⁸ This answer showed that the information spread by *Perniagaan* was incorrect and that, as *Sin Po* argued, *Perniagaan* had deliberately tried to mislead the Chinese people with false information in an attempt to mobilise them to support the Chinese officer system. It was obvious that the Chinese officers were behind this. According to *Sin Po*, *Perniagaan* used to be in favour of frequent inspections of the Council’s finances by the resident, but now that *Perniagaan* was owned by several Batavia officers, it

⁶⁸⁶ *Sin Po*, 29 October 1918-2 November 1918.

⁶⁸⁷ *Sin Po*, 30 October 1918. See also Malay minutes, no. NM4, 3 October 1918: pp. 63–64 for the resident’s order that the Chinese Council should first report to him when it anticipated expenditures of 1000 guilders or more, and *Perniagaan*, 22 October 1918.

⁶⁸⁸ *Sin Po*, 29 October 1918.

opposed any government interference. Moreover, *Sin Po* argued that it would make no difference if the Council's possessions were under the resident's surveillance because as collaborators of the Dutch, the Chinese officers were already managing the Council's finances in a way that primarily served the interests of the colonial government, without taking account of the Chinese community. Therefore, the Chinese people should urge for an even quicker end of the Chinese officer system, rather than protesting against it.⁶⁸⁹

The second shrewd "lie" spread by *Perniagaan*, according to *Sin Po*, was its presumption that after doing away with the Chinese officers, every Chinese in the colony would automatically turn into a Dutch subject (*Nederlandsch onderdaan*), which undoubtedly would also involve compulsory military service. *Perniagaan* reasoned that as long as the institution of Chinese officers existed, the Chinese people were still considered Foreign Orientals who were governed by their own community leaders, despite the Dutch Subject Law of 1910. With the Chinese people still being Foreign Orientals, the Dutch would not be able to impose military duty on them. However if the colonial government carried through its plan to abolish the Chinese officers, the Chinese people would no longer be Foreign Orientals and military duty would lie in wait. Again, the newspaper urged for a protest campaign against the government's plans.⁶⁹⁰

Sin Po pointed out that military service had nothing to do with the dismissal of the Chinese officers and would only become an issue if the Chinese people accepted the Dutch Subject Law and chose to participate in the People's Council. In fact, *Sin Po* argued, the Chinese officers had always been in favour of becoming Dutch subjects, participation in the People's Council *and* military service. The officers, as servants of the colonial government, had used their influence to pressure the THHK and Siang Hwee into sending delegations to a meeting in Deca Park in Batavia on 31 August 1916 that was organised by the Comité Indië Weerbaar (Committee for the defence of the

⁶⁸⁹ *Sin Po*, 30 October 1918.

⁶⁹⁰ *Sin Po*, 31 October 1918; *Perniagaan*, 30 September 1918.

Indies) to campaign for the establishment of an Indies militia. Major Khouw Kim An even was a member of the militia committee.⁶⁹¹ On the same day the Deca Park meeting took place, Major Khouw offered a motion to the governor-general in favour of an Indies defence force.⁶⁹² So why would *Perniagaan* now claim that if the Chinese officers were abolished, the Chinese people would be subject to military duty? This was yet another false comedy play performed by *Perniagaan* to deceive the Chinese people. *Sin Po* warned the Chinese people not to fall for this lie. If they really wanted to make sure they would not be subject to military duty, they had better urge for the immediate dismissal of the Chinese officers.⁶⁹³

It indeed appears as though *Perniagaan* did try to take advantage of Chinese aversion to compulsory military service. The Indies Chinese had managed to remain free from this obligation since October 1620, when the VOC relieved all Batavia Chinese from civic guard duty to allow them to focus on their trading activities.⁶⁹⁴ Fear of military duty was probably deliberately spread because the Indië Weerbaar movement had raised the question of forming an Indies militia on the eve of the First World War.⁶⁹⁵ One proposal called for enlisting all Dutch subjects in the Indies for military service, including the Indies-born Chinese who had been declared Dutch subjects by the Dutch Subject Law of 1910.⁶⁹⁶ As this law was a diplomatic instrument to keep China at a safe distance from the Indies Chinese, it had nothing to do with the Chinese Council. The Chinese remained Foreign Orientals because of the Constitutional Regulation of 1854 and the Dutch

⁶⁹¹ *Sin Po*, 23 August 1916; *Sin Po*, 28 August 1916.

⁶⁹² *Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant*, 10 October 1916.

⁶⁹³ *Ibid.*

⁶⁹⁴ *Nederlandsch-Indisch Plakaatboek*, vol. I, 1602–1642: pp. 76–77 and 547.

⁶⁹⁵ K. van Dijk, *The Netherlands Indies and the Great War 1914–1918* (Leiden: KITLV Press, 2007), 255.

⁶⁹⁶ Setiono, *Tionghoa dalam Pusaran Politik*, 443. However, according to Van Dijk the initial idea was for a militia of Europeans and Javanese. The Chinese were excluded because the immediate pre-war years had shown that the Chinese as a group were too restless. The Arabs were left out because they were distrusted for religious reasons, Van Dijk, *The Netherlands Indies and the Great War*, 256.

Nationality Law of 1892. In addition, and *Sin Po* was right about this, the Chinese officers supported the Indië Weerbaar movement, which weakened *Perniagaan*'s argument. In a Council meeting of 6 September 1916, Major Khouw Kim An ordered the neighbourhood chiefs to remind people of the purpose of the Indië Weerbaar, especially those who complained that participating in a militia would be disadvantageous to the Chinese people. Criticising the militia was of no benefit to the Chinese people, and what's more, it would only put *him* in a delicate position (given his role in the Comité Indië Weerbaar).⁶⁹⁷ Benny Setiono mentions that in 1917 *Perniagaan* also supported the Indië Weerbaar movement and Chinese participation in the People's Council.⁶⁹⁸ However, *Perniagaan*'s strategy to play on people's aversion to military service was a clever one. In its issue of 17 October 1918, the paper reported that its tactic had worked: after its warning that military service awaited the Chinese, letters had poured in to support *Perniagaan*'s stance.⁶⁹⁹

The third unjust assertion of *Perniagaan*, according to *Sin Po*, was its claim that after the termination of the Chinese officer system, the Chinese people would be placed under indigenous government officials and would again suffer from the cruelty of the *priyayi*.⁷⁰⁰ In August 1917, *Perniagaan* had presented the case of Lioe Min Nji, who became a victim of unjust treatment by indigenous officials. The newspaper reported that in June 1917, Lioe paid a visit to his friend who lived in Dawoean Poerwakarta (Krawang). Lioe was a *singkeh* who, like so many Chinese, had come to the Indies to try his fortune. Besides visiting his friend, he also wanted to see for himself the living conditions in Dawoean. According to *Perniagaan*, Lioe was a kind-hearted man who had never shown any misconduct and had never violated any law. Yet he was suddenly arrested by the *wedana* of Dawoean on the suspicion that he did not possess a valid residence permit. He was then brought in to the regent of Dawoean and subsequently transferred to Batavia under police escort.

⁶⁹⁷ Malay minutes, no. NM3, 6 September 1916: pp. 182–83.

⁶⁹⁸ Setiono, *Tionghoa dalam Pusaran Politik*, 445.

⁶⁹⁹ *Perniagaan*, 17 October 1918.

⁷⁰⁰ *Sin Po*, 1 November 1918.

There he was imprisoned for three or four days before he was finally released. Unfortunately, *Perniagaan* argued, such incidents were not exceptional in places without Chinese officers. Had there been a Chinese captain or lieutenant stationed in Krawang, Lioe would have never suffered such torment and humiliation. A Chinese officer would first investigate a matter like this before sending a person to jail and the indigenous officials should have handled the case of Lioe the same way. However, indigenous officials were not concerned with the welfare of the Chinese. Therefore, the Chinese people should come to the defence of the Chinese officers in order to prevent subjection to the *priyayi*.⁷⁰¹

Perniagaan was not the first newspaper to express its concerns about the possibility of indigenous leadership over the Chinese. *Warna Warta* had begun to come around in support of the Chinese officers in 1915, and two years later it rejected the abandonment of the traditional system, fearing that the European government officials would employ indigenous subordinates to handle Chinese affairs. It would be wrong to expect that the Chinese would accept being administered by people whom they considered their inferiors. Moreover, the Chinese people had not forgotten about the extortion practices of indigenous officials when the police courts still existed. It was not only the lower officials who committed extortion; even the prosecutors (*djaksa*) frequently abused their power.⁷⁰² *Tjahaja Timoer* also began to reject the abolition plans because it questioned the integrity of the interpreters who would be used by the European administrators once the Chinese officers were discharged. It also feared that without the Chinese Council religious affairs would not be looked after properly.⁷⁰³ *Pewarta Soerabaia* asked its readers whether they, after having scoffed at the Chinese officers and neighbourhood chiefs and calling them slaves of the whites and traitors of

⁷⁰¹ *Perniagaan*, 7 August 1917.

⁷⁰² “Persoverzicht: De Chineesche Pers, Augustus 1915”, *Koloniaal Tijdschrift* 4:2 (1915): 1541–42.

⁷⁰³ “Persoverzicht: De Chineesche Pers, September 1915”, *Koloniaal Tijdschrift*, 4:2 (1915): 1690.

their own race, would be more pleased being governed by Javanese administrative and police officials, with whom Chinese girls would also have to deal.⁷⁰⁴

In reaction to these concerns, *Sin Po* again referred to the interview with Ezerman. The advisor for Chinese affairs stressed that the Chinese people would be placed under European administration and not under indigenous leadership. The government intended to create an equal system of administration in the cities, in which every race would be treated the same under a uniform and unmediated leadership. In practice this would mean that neighbourhoods with a majority of European people would be under the supervision of a European neighbourhood chief. Neighbourhoods in which the indigenous or Chinese were in the majority would be supervised by indigenous or Chinese chiefs, respectively. The advisor assured *Sin Po*'s readers that the European and indigenous neighbourhood chiefs would be assisted by Chinese clerks if a large concentration of Chinese people resided in their wards. Furthermore, he emphasised that the neighbourhood chiefs would under no circumstances be regarded as administrative officials; they merely served to transmit government regulations to the people living in their neighbourhoods. This way, every Chinese in the main cities of Java would be under direct European administration.⁷⁰⁵

Regardless of the merits of these journalistic arguments, most Chinese considered the unification plans ill-timed. Animosity between the Chinese and Indonesians was not a memory of a distant past; segregation was deeply embedded in colonial society. As we have seen, for centuries the Dutch had prevented ethnic groups from developing an "Indies identity" by limiting their interaction. Lifting these restrictions tended to strengthen rather than weaken social pluralism. The emancipation process suddenly made the various population groups aware of their own identity, and they began to isolate themselves from each other and became increasingly intolerant towards one another. This growing tension became apparent in the anti-Chinese outbreaks of 1912–13. Thus, it

⁷⁰⁴ "Persoverzicht: De Chineesche Pers, December 1914", *Koloniaal Tijdschrift* 4:1 (1915): 395–96.

⁷⁰⁵ *Sin Po*, 29 October 1918; *Sin Po*, 1 November 1918.

would certainly not be groundless to assume that the Chinese would refuse indigenous neighbourhood chiefs in their neighbourhoods and vice versa. (The Arabs had already indicated that they would not accept the presence of Chinese chiefs in their neighbourhoods.⁷⁰⁶) In a meeting of the People's Council, Kan Hok Hoei (also known as H. H. Kan), a *peranakan* landowner and leading businessman, confirmed that it would be premature to appoint "foreign" neighbourhood chiefs in Chinese quarters, especially considering that the government still found it necessary to appoint Chinese representatives in certain government committees to serve the interests of the Chinese community. Placing "foreign" chiefs in Chinese neighbourhoods would definitely lead to conflicts.⁷⁰⁷ *Perniagaan* also pointed out that the Europeans living in "native" neighbourhoods would be much better off than the Chinese as the indigenous chiefs were accountable to a European official who could easily overrule the native neighbourhood chief to protect "his" people. He would be less inclined to do this for the Chinese.⁷⁰⁸

The fourth "lie" of *Perniagaan*, *Sin Po* revealed, was the assumption that the Chinese people still needed Chinese representation. The newspaper persisted in its opinion that the officers still formed an important bridge between the Chinese community and the colonial government. Moreover, European administrators would not put much effort into taking Chinese customs and traditions into account. For instance, a European official would not be willing to thoroughly investigate marital conflicts. According to *Perniagaan*, if a couple filed for divorce and gave a plausible reason, the *controleur* would be inclined to grant the couple's request instantly. A Chinese officer would first examine the couple's complaint and then try to find a proper solution. In most cases, the officer urged reconciliation. Only when there was no hope for the couple to reconcile did

⁷⁰⁶ Letter of the Resident of Batavia to the Director of Internal Affairs, 25 September 1918, no. 18327/1, Agenda, 1918, no. 31028, ANRI, Jakarta.

⁷⁰⁷ *Handelingen van den Volksraad*, 13th meeting (19 November 1918) (Batavia: Volksraad van Nederlandsch-Indië, 1918–1941/42): p. 276.

⁷⁰⁸ *Perniagaan*, 3 October 1918.

the officer grant a divorce. Chinese females would also not feel comfortable going to a controleur to report a complaint. A controleur would bluntly encourage a Chinese woman to share her problems by giving her a pat on the back and telling her she can trust him. The woman would be ashamed being improperly touched by another man and would not be encouraged to proceed with her complaint. A Chinese officer would know how to properly deal with such matters.⁷⁰⁹

Sin Po challenged this assumption by arguing that the officers had never looked after the Chinese people and had only been serving the colonial government, as was shown by their over-zealous effort to collect tax money from the Chinese people and the flag incident of February 1912.⁷¹⁰ *Sin Po* also questioned the actual influence of the Chinese officers. Now that the government was increasingly taking over core activities of the officers, they merely served as the authorities' errand boys and only had advisory roles in matters concerning the Chinese, roles that came with little power or influence.⁷¹¹ Two years before, in 1916, *Sin Po* had already compared the officers with employees of a *toko*: the shop owner (that is, the colonial government) hired the employees to sweep the floor and keep the shop tidy, but the account books were off limits!⁷¹² Yet *Perniagaan*'s claim that the Chinese community needed Chinese representation made it the definite winner in the war of words with *Sin Po*, as Chinese public opinion increasingly shifted in support of the Chinese officers. In fact, *Sin Po*'s insistence that the need for Chinese representation was a lie was itself a misrepresentation of the truth.

The other battles of *Sin Po*

The argument with *Perniagaan* was not the only one to engage *Sin Po*, which challenged other government measures aimed at weakening ties between the Indies Chinese and their ancestral

⁷⁰⁹ *Perniagaan*, 22 June 1918 and 3 October 1918.

⁷¹⁰ *Sin Po*, 1 November 1918.

⁷¹¹ *Ibid.*

⁷¹² *Sin Po*, 11 December 1916.

country or individuals and groups that *Sin Po* considered allies of the Dutch. *Perniagaan* was sympathetic to the Dutch, in the opinion of *Sin Po*, because it was owned by Chinese officers and *peranakan* businessmen whose roles and position in colonial society depended on the Dutch. In *Sin Po*'s eyes sympathy for the Dutch automatically meant hostility towards China and the Chinese.⁷¹³ The paper's most conspicuous campaigns took on the Dutch Subject Law and, in relation to this, compulsory military service in 1918, and Chinese participation in the People's Council in the years leading up to the foundation of the representative body.

The campaign against the Dutch Subject Law failed bitterly. The campaign took the form of a series of articles enumerating the dangers and disadvantages of the Dutch Subject Law, which obliged one to compulsory military service. With mounting international tension on the eve of the First World War, the Dutch authorities began seriously considering the formation of an Indies militia. Dutch experts realised that the colonial army of 10,000 European and 25,000 native professional soldiers and volunteers was neither equipped nor trained for warfare against a modern armed foreign enemy (such as Japan). In 1916 supporters of an Indies militia organised a campaign under the slogan *Indië Weerbaar*. The leadership of this semi-official movement rested with the Comité Indië Weerbaar. In 1917 the committee sent a deputation to the Netherlands to petition for the establishment of an Indies militia. The idea of a militia composed of all Dutch subjects soon became entangled with demands from the natives for the creation of a popular representative body. The natives argued that the Dutch could only expect Indonesians to defend the colony if they were represented in the colonial government. After the colonial government promised to establish the People's Council through which the Indonesians could participate in colonial politics, the indigenous people were prepared to support the *Indië Weerbaar* movement.⁷¹⁴

⁷¹³ Suryadinata, *Peranakan Chinese Politics in Java 1917–1942*, 14.

⁷¹⁴ H. Burgers, *De Garoeda en de Ooievaar: Indonesië van Kolonie tot Nationale Staat* (Leiden: KITLV, 2010), 168–69; Van Dijk, *The Netherlands Indies and the Great War*, chap. 10.

The matter was not so simple for the Chinese, for whom military service had always been a tricky issue. Defending a regime that refused to treat the Chinese as equals had never been negotiable to the Chinese. And even now after the colonial government had made a number of concessions to the Chinese, they still were unwilling to jeopardise their lives for Dutch interests.⁷¹⁵ This was shown by the Chinese reticence with regard to the Indië Weerbaar movement. According to *Sin Po*, compulsory military service was correlated with the Dutch Subject Law. Therefore *Sin Po* encouraged the Indies Chinese to reject the Dutch Subject Law and support the newspaper's petition for rights to repudiate Dutch nationality. The Chinese nationalists planned to petition the Chinese government in Peking to pressure the Dutch into granting the peranakan Chinese repudiation rights. The outcome of the actions was quite successful: *Sin Po* gathered nearly 30,000 signatures in favour of the petition and 200 Chinese organisations also pledged their support.⁷¹⁶ The prospect of compulsory participation in the Indies militia most likely had triggered this support. Furthermore, the Dutch Subject Law was unpopular among the Indies Chinese because it suddenly made them second-class Dutch subjects (after Europeans), and stripped them of their Chinese nationality. The petition was offered to the Chinese government in Peking in early 1919 by Hauw Tek Kong, a former director of *Sin Po*. The reason for starting the campaign in 1918 had to do with the Paris Peace Conference in Versailles in 1919 and the hopeful expectations for a successful outcome for China. *Sin Po* (and the entire Chinese nation) hoped that China, as part of the allied victors after World War I, would be able to negotiate about regaining full sovereignty over those areas it had earlier leased to Germany. The claims of the Chinese diplomats were denied, leading to

⁷¹⁵ "Persoverzicht: De Chineesche Pers, December 1916", *Koloniaal Tijdschrift* 6:1 (1917): 685.

⁷¹⁶ The exact number of signatures was 28,789.

the May Fourth Movement in China.⁷¹⁷ When Hauw Tek Kong offered the petition of the *Sin Po* campaign, the Chinese government stuck to the consular agreement with the Netherlands of 8 May 1911 in which China promised to recognise Dutch jurisdiction over the Indies-born Chinese. The Chinese government probably felt it was in no position to meddle in this affair after the failure of the Chinese diplomats in Versailles. The question of the Indies militia was resolved by itself when the colonial government abandoned the idea of an Indies defence force.⁷¹⁸

The campaign against Chinese participation in the People's Council was not only a battle against the colonial government, but also against a group of *peranakan* Chinese whom *Sin Po* regarded as pro-Dutch and thus anti-Chinese. Led by the vocal H. H. Kan, the group consisted of Dutch-educated intellectuals and businessmen who foresaw a future in the Dutch East Indies for the Indies Chinese. These *peranakan* Chinese welcomed the foundation of the People's Council and embraced the government's proposal to open membership to the Chinese. They saw the council as an instrument to expand their roles in Indies politics and improve the position of the Indies Chinese in colonial society. They acknowledged they were emotionally tied to China, but they found it evident that the future of the *peranakan* Chinese was in the place where they lived. Acknowledging that the position of the Indies Chinese in colonial society was improvable in many ways, they grasped the opportunity to represent the Chinese people in an official body in which grievances could be expressed and proposals for improvement submitted and voted upon.⁷¹⁹ They argued that with China in a state of turmoil and unable to protect their interests, the Indies Chinese had to look after themselves and political participation was the only means to assure they would be heard. In

⁷¹⁷ The May Fourth Movement broke out of discontent at the failure of the Chinese delegation to negotiate favourable terms for China at the Paris Peace Conference. On 4 May 1919 Chinese students took to Tiananmen Square to demonstrate against the terms of the Treaty of Versailles. The demonstrations were also an expression of dissatisfaction with China's political state.

⁷¹⁸ Suryadinata, *Peranakan Chinese Politics in Java 1917–1942*, 21–22; L. Suryadinata, *Tokoh Tionghoa and Identitas Indonesia: Dari Tjoe Bou San sampai Yap Thiam Hien* (Depok: Komunitas Bambu, 2010), 5.

⁷¹⁹ L. Suryadinata, *Pemikiran Politik Etnis Tionghoa 1900–2002* (Jakarta: Pustaka LP3ES Indonesia, 2005), 65.

addition, they argued that there were considerable differences in lifestyle and culture between the peranakans and totoks and that it would be illusory to believe that the Indies Chinese would return to China. Without doubt the peranakans would be unable to cope with the way of life in China.⁷²⁰

Obviously, this line of thought ran counter to the ultra-nationalist message sent out by *Sin Po* and arguments between the two groups raged in the Chinese-Malay press. *Sin Po* contended that the clique of H. H. Kan consisted mainly of landlords, leading businessmen, and Dutch-appointed officials who were keen on maintaining the status quo as their alliance with the Dutch protected their interests. The majority of the Indies Chinese, however, were not in such a privileged position and the colonial government did not care about their well-being. Therefore it was of no use to accept membership of government councils. Participation in Dutch institutions would, like the Dutch Subject Law, only split the Chinese community.⁷²¹

The Indies-oriented peranakans accused *Sin Po* of pushing the Indies Chinese towards China against their will.⁷²² They argued that participation in government councils would not separate the peranakans from the totoks, but would actually bring the two groups together. Members of the municipal councils strove for the improvement of living circumstances in the Chinese neighbourhoods and made sure streets were maintained and repaired and that Chinese cemeteries were managed properly. They fought for tax reduction and an accommodating environment for Chinese traders, pedlars and businessmen. The Chinese representatives of the People's Council would strive for more Dutch-Chinese Schools (HCS), more medical doctors, and more supervision when Chinese houses were searched by the police. All these proposals benefitted not only the peranakan Chinese but also the totoks. So how, they wondered, would Chinese representation in government councils split the Indies Chinese community, and why should the peranakans and

⁷²⁰ Setiono, *Tionghoa dalam Pusaran Politik*, 478.

⁷²¹ Suryadinata, *Peranakan Chinese Politics in Java 1917–1942*, 13.

⁷²² Suryadinata, *Pemikiran Politik Etnis Tionghoa 1900–2002*, 65.

totoks turn on each other and become enemies? The H. H. Kan group considered the arguments of the Chinese nationalists not only nonsense, but corrupt and vicious lies.⁷²³

On 4 November 1917 a conference was held in Semarang in which representatives of Chinese organisations, Chinese members of local councils in Java, and any other interested Chinese discussed whether Chinese representatives should be sent to the People's Council. It was the largest gathering ever held by the Chinese since the rise of the Pan-Chinese Movement. A majority of the conference participants moved against Chinese representation in the People's Council.

Nevertheless, in 1918 H. H. Kan and Liem A Pat, a Chinese officer from Muntok, accepted appointments from the colonial government as members of the People's Council.⁷²⁴

6.2 The public outcry of the Chinese people against the reform plans

Although the Chinese-Malay press dominated the debate on the Chinese officers, it was not the only forum for public discussion. Throughout Java, members of various Chinese organisations held gatherings to discuss the reforms in Chinese administration. Interestingly enough, despite the severe criticism of the Chinese officers over the previous decade, most meetings ended in support of the Chinese officer system. What follows are four examples of protest movements against the government's plans to terminate the officer system and subject the Chinese people to unmediated colonial administration.

As early as May 1915 a petition on behalf of the Chinese people of Semarang was sent to the governor-general to plead for the preservation of the Chinese officers and the Chinese Councils. The petition was signed by Kwik Djoen Eng, The Pik Hong, and Kwee Yan Tjo, all representatives of various Chinese organisations in Semarang. The petition argued that the Chinese people of Semarang were familiar with the Chinese officers, to whom they could turn for help, and that it

⁷²³ Ibid., 75–79.

⁷²⁴ Suryadinata, *Peranakan Chinese Politics in Java 1917–1942*, 7–14.

would be difficult for the Chinese people, especially the poor, to express their needs and problems to European officials. Therefore, the three gentlemen pleaded for the right to select the officers themselves and asked the government to reconsider its plans. The petition was never answered by the colonial government.⁷²⁵

A year later, on 6 October 1916, a conference held in the building of the Siang Boe (Siang Hwee) of Semarang was attended by representatives of various Chinese organisations, Advisor for Chinese Affairs H. Mouw and two lawyers. The conference was organised to present a motion to Mouw acknowledging the need to improve the current system of Chinese administration, but urging for the preservation of the Chinese officers who were deemed indispensable for taking care of the religious affairs of the Chinese people, providing financial help to the poor, catering assistance in marital affairs and divorce cases, arranging funerals, and mediating in minor civil disputes among the Chinese. The motion was supported by the 7000 members of the Chinese organisations represented at the conference.⁷²⁶ The advisor for Chinese affairs challenged the motion by arguing that the Chinese did not need mediation anymore; the last decennium had shown that the Chinese were capable of expressing their needs and grievances in the interest of improving their position in colonial society. No longer *onmondig* (voiceless) they had no reason anymore to be hesitant in turning to the European officials for assistance. Mouw also pointed out that the Malay language had increasingly replaced the various Chinese dialects in the daily speech of the Indies Chinese and that the Chinese officers were no longer needed as translators. In addition, the Chinese could still voice their opinion through their representatives in the municipal and regency councils, and, as of 1918, in the People's Council.⁷²⁷

⁷²⁵ *Sin Po*, 14 October 1916; "Persoverzicht: De Chineesche Pers, November 1916", *Koloniaal Tijdschrift* 6:1 (1917): 248.

⁷²⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷²⁷ *Ibid.*

The Chinese delegates persisted in their opinion that mediation was still necessary, although certain reforms in the recruitment of officers were needed. One delegate observed that while the government's advisor claimed that mediation was superfluous, the government had made no arrangements to abolish the indigenous leaders like the regents, *wedanas*, *assistent-wedanas*, *loerahs*, and so on. If those leaders were allowed to stay on, why not the Chinese officers? More important, subjection to European administration did not automatically mean equal status with the Europeans, as assumed by *Sin Po*. When Mouw was asked whether the Chinese would be granted equal status with the Europeans if placed under unmediated colonial administration, he answered that equal status for the Chinese would not happen in the near future because the Chinese in general were still unequal to the European people in terms of intellectual development. In reaction to this statement, one of the Chinese delegates argued that the government was to blame for this. The Chinese had always been eager to receive good education but it was not until 1908 that the first Hollandsch-Chinesche School was opened to provide Western education to the Chinese: "And even now there are not enough of these schools. In Semarang there are still nearly 400 children who could not be enrolled in the HCS." Subsequently the motion was adopted and signed by the various Chinese organisations present. The Chinese did not wish to be placed under European administration without equal status.⁷²⁸

On 23 July 1918, 221 Chinese inhabitants of Batavia and Weltevreden filed a petition against the government's plan to abolish the Chinese officers and the Chinese Councils in Batavia and the rest of Java. They pleaded for retaining the Chinese officer system on the grounds that most Chinese people in the Indies were "poor and uneducated" (*miskin dan bodo*) who considered the "educated and experienced" Chinese officers as leaders to whom they could express their wishes and interests. If the Chinese officers were abolished, these "poor and uneducated" Chinese would lose the courage to register their complaints with the authorities. Moreover, most totok Chinese

⁷²⁸ Ibid.

were unable to address themselves to the colonial authorities as they were not yet articulate in the Malay language.⁷²⁹

According to the petition, the position of Chinese officer and the institution of the Chinese Council had never harmed the Chinese people or violated their rights. For hundreds of years, the officers had functioned as intermediaries between the Chinese community and the colonial government, which they provided with information on the Chinese community including the sentiments and wishes of the Chinese people. In addition, the officers had a thorough understanding of Chinese customs and morals, rituals, and religious affairs. Placing the Chinese people under direct European administration would only lead to misunderstandings that could harm not only the Chinese community but also the government.⁷³⁰ The petitioners did acknowledge that the officer system failed to work properly owing to the unwritten rule that only wealthy Chinese were eligible to serve as Chinese officers. It frequently happened that wealthy appointees had absolutely no affinity for the job and hardly knew what was going on in their resort. Therefore the petitioners pleaded for the right to select the Chinese officers themselves, by passing a list of their own recommendations to the resident so that his appointment would reflect the will of the Chinese community.⁷³¹

In reaction to this petition, Advisor for Chinese Affairs Ezerman held a meeting in Batavia on 18 September 1918 to discuss the Chinese objections to the proposed reforms. Twenty-five Chinese from all walks of life were invited to the meeting, but only twelve attended.⁷³² Nevertheless, Ezerman tried to open a dialogue to come to a mutual agreement on reforming the Chinese administration. He explained that the Chinese people would be placed directly under

⁷²⁹ Petition of 221 Chinese inhabitants of Batavia and Weltevreden to the Governor-General, 23 July 1918, no. 23316, in: *Agenda* 1919, no. 1635, ANRI, Jakarta. See also *Perniagaan*, 18 September 1918.

⁷³⁰ *Ibid.*

⁷³¹ *Ibid.*

⁷³² Second secretary Khoe Siau Eng represented the Chinese Council at this meeting.

European administration and that the European government officials would be assisted by salaried neighbourhood chiefs recruited from all races. Chinese aversion to the possibility of being placed under the supervision of indigenous neighbourhood chiefs was uncalled for, as Ezerman pointed out that Chinese chiefs would also supervise indigenous neighbourhoods and that Europeans would be in the same position as the Chinese and indigenous people. The activities of the neighbourhood chiefs would include receiving complaints and objections from the Chinese people and providing them with advice and information regarding government regulations and rules. Indigenous and European neighbourhood chiefs would be assisted by Chinese clerks and interpreters so that the “poor and uneducated” Chinese, as well as newcomers not yet fluent in Malay, could still turn to Chinese “intermediaries” for assistance. The religion of the Chinese needed no further discussion as Ezerman considered this a private matter. With regard to Chinese customs and traditions, the Chinese could turn to the Chinese neighbourhood chiefs and Chinese “intermediaries” as well as to the Office for Chinese Affairs and the Chinese-Malay press. The forthcoming introduction of the *Chineesche Burgerlijke Stand* (Chinese Civil Registry) in 1919 should remove concerns about Chinese civil affairs such as marriage licences and divorce requests.⁷³³ Ezerman deemed it unnecessary to discuss the Chinese plea for voting rights with the forthcoming implementation of a unified city administration. Granting the Chinese the right to select their own headmen would only emphasise their special position in colonial society, while the government intended to create an equal administrative system for all ethnic groups. Moreover, the Chinese were asking for something that was not even granted to the Europeans and indigenous, although Ezerman omitted that the village heads (*desahoofden*) were in fact elected by the indigenous people. Ezerman pointed out that like the indigenous, the Chinese already had voting rights for the municipal council.⁷³⁴ Although Ezerman intended for this to foster a dialogue with the Chinese community, he left little room for

⁷³³ Letter from the Advisor of Chinese Affairs to the Director of Internal Affairs, 20 September 1918, no. 379/18, Binnenlandsch Bestuur, no. 1935, ANRI, Jakarta. See also *Perniagaan*, 18 September 1918.

⁷³⁴ *Ibid.*

discussion and seems to have used the meeting more to defend the proposed reforms. Most of the Chinese people present answered Ezerman's "propaganda action" with silence, while those who did speak declared that they could not make a proper judgement of the plans yet.⁷³⁵

The failed meeting of September 1918 was followed in October by a campaign against abolishing the Chinese officer system led by Gouw Peng Liang, director of the newspaper *Perniagaan*.⁷³⁶ Gouw was known as a good Malay stylist. He had also been the secretary of the Chinese Trade School, the Kong Boe Siang Hoei, but he was accused of devoting himself more to gambling than to this position. He was also a personal friend of the Chinese lieutenant in Meester-Cornelis.⁷³⁷ For the campaign of October 1918, Gouw wrote a number of blunt, sometimes fierce articles in *Perniagaan* to mobilise the Chinese people against ending the Chinese officer system. He called on the various Chinese associations on Java to support his proposal to send telegrams to the Dutch parliament in The Hague and to Her Majesty the Queen, in which the Chinese associations, as representatives of the Chinese community on Java, should plead for the preservation of the Chinese officers and the Chinese Councils.⁷³⁸

On 12 October 1918 *Perniagaan* stated that it had received numerous telegrams from around the Netherlands Indies expressing Chinese opposition to abolishing the Chinese officers. "The government must realise some day that the Chinese people wish to retain the Chinese officers and its Councils", it reported. On the same day, a meeting was held at the THHK in Meester-Cornelis to collect signatures in support of Gouw's proposal.⁷³⁹ Three days later, the newspaper reported receiving three gentlemen who handed over a sealed document with more than 150 signatures of prominent Chinese from Meester-Cornelis. The document was also signed by various

⁷³⁵ Ibid.

⁷³⁶ Suryadinata, *Prominent Indonesian Chinese*, 27.

⁷³⁷ Confidential letter from the Advisor for Chinese Affairs to the Director of Internal Affairs, 8 November 1918, no. 457/18, Binnenlandsch Bestuur, no. 1935, ANRI, Jakarta.

⁷³⁸ Ibid.

⁷³⁹ *Perniagaan*, 12 October 1918.

Chinese organisations from Meester-Cornelis, Ambarawa, and Bandoeng to emphasise that there was common support for maintaining the Chinese officer system.⁷⁴⁰ In the editions of 16, 19, 21, and 22 October 1918 Gouw reported that more meetings had been set up in Java to discuss the proposal, and *Perniagaan* had also received dozens of telegrams and letters from Chinese associations and inhabitants in support of the proposal. The most remarkable among the supporters were the Tjong Hoa Ing Giap Hwee from Semarang, which claimed to represent *all* Chinese associations in Semarang⁷⁴¹ and the petitioners from Bandoeng, who, like the Batavian Chinese, pleaded for the right to select the Chinese officers themselves: “*soepaja orang Tionghoa bisa kasi hak memili aken goena itoe djabatan*” (“so that the Chinese people are given voting rights for that post”). At last, the telegram to the governor-general was sent on 23 October 1918 and on 24 October to the Minister of Colonies.⁷⁴²

Advisor for Chinese Affairs Ezerman was far from impressed and characterised the campaign as a bold attempt to challenge the government. In a confidential letter to the director of internal affairs, he pointed out that the supporters of Gouw’s motion included “the Tjong Hoa Hwee Koans in the Netherlands Indies”, but that in fact, only fourteen of the over two hundred THHK schools on Java and the outer regions supported the telegram.⁷⁴³ It was misleading of Gouw “to claim the support of [all] the Tjong Hoa Hwee Koans in the Netherlands Indies”. Ezerman reported that a meeting in Soekaboemi only attracted twenty-four people, eight of whom opposed the motion. The meeting in Bandoeng was also attended by just a few people. Another official for

⁷⁴⁰ *Perniagaan*, 15 October 1918.

⁷⁴¹ The decision to support the proposal was taken in a meeting that was attended by six hundred representatives of Chinese organisations in Semarang and private persons.

⁷⁴² Confidential letter from the Advisor for Chinese Affairs to the Director of Internal Affairs, 8 November 1918, no. 457/18, Binnenlandsch Bestuur, no. 1935, ANRI, Jakarta.

⁷⁴³ The branches of the THHK in the following cities supported the motion: Tjiandjoer, Krawang, Ambarawa, Djoeana, Batang (residency Pekalongan), Meester-Cornelis, Soemedang, Laboean, Tangerang, Garoet, Serang, Soekaboemi, Solo, and Batavia (with two subdivisions in Tanah Abang and Pasar Senen).

Chinese affairs, A. D. A. de Kat Angelino, reported that the *Tiong Hoa Ing Giap Hwee*, which supposedly represented all the Chinese associations of Semarang, was merely an employment agency and could not be said to represent all the Chinese associations in Semarang. According to De Kat Angelino, the Semarang action could be attributed to the advisor of the *Tiong Hoa Ing Giap Hwee*, Lim Kim Siang, who was an influential person and member of various associations that supported the Chinese officers. De Kat Angelino also reported that a protest campaign in Koedoes was instigated by Major Khouw Kim An, who had written a letter to the Chinese lieutenant of Koedoes urging him to support the motion.⁷⁴⁴

Ezerman concluded that apart from the fourteen *Tiong Hoa Hwee Koans*, only twenty-seven Chinese associations in a number of cities sided with Gouw Peng Liang.⁷⁴⁵ Batavia was best represented on the list with ten associations, followed by Ambarawa with six. Considering that most actions took place in Batavia and the substantial properties the Chinese Council of Batavia owned and managed, this was not surprising. In addition, most of the supporting associations shared the same board members, and Ezerman suspected that the associations of Ambarawa had at least some overlapping board members. Moreover, he thought that as a Chinese settlement Ambarawa was too insignificant to carry a lot of weight in the campaign. The same was true of other places (except for Batavia and Bandoeng) in which the Chinese inhabitants signed telegrams to protest against the government's plans, such as Djoeana, Dawoean, Laboean, Meester-Cornelis, Serang, Soemedang, Tasikmalaja, Temanggoeng, and Tjitjalengka. Remarkably, Soerabaja apparently did not participate

⁷⁴⁴ Confidential letter from the Advisor for Chinese Affairs to the Director of Internal Affairs, 8 November 1918, no. 457/18, *Binnenlandsch Bestuur*, no. 1935, ANRI, Jakarta.

⁷⁴⁵ Chinese associations in the following cities supported the motion: Koedoes (3), Semarang (1), Krawang (2), Ambarawa (6), Meester-Cornelis (1), Batavia (10), Buitenzorg (2), Gombong (1), and Soekaboemi (1).

in the campaign. *Perniagaan* did call for support from East Java in its edition of 12 October 1918, but by then the Chinese Council of Soerabaja probably had lost too much influence.⁷⁴⁶

Ezerman suspected that the Chinese major of Batavia Khouw Kim An and his father-in-law Phoa Keng Hek, president of the THHK in Batavia were the brains behind Gouw's campaign. Khouw and Phoa were known to be very wealthy, but rumours had begun spreading that both men were suffering financial difficulties. Phoa was said to have been in debt to Reynst en Vinju, or at least to have owed a lot of money to the firm's representative in Soekaboemi. Ezerman also revealed that the chairman of the Chinese Council received more than 300 guilders per month and estimated that Khouw Kim An earned nearly 3,000 guilders for his activities as major although he admitted that he was unable to prove this.⁷⁴⁷ Nevertheless, Ezerman argued, it would explain why Khouw Kim An strongly objected to the government's plans: the end of the Chinese officer system would mean a great financial loss for him.⁷⁴⁸

It is interesting that Ezerman suspected that the *majoor der Chineezzen* of Batavia was the mastermind behind Gouw's campaign, for the minutes of the Council's board meetings give no indication of resistance to terminating the Chinese officer system. But in November 1918, *Sin Po* reported that the Batavian Chinese officers and their loyal followers frequently came together in "secret" meetings to discuss the government's intention to do away with the institution of Chinese officers. The gatherings were never held in the building of the Chinese Council, but in buildings of Chinese organisations such as the Siang Hwee and the THHK and those present agreed to fight for the continuation of the Chinese officer system. To the great indignation of *Sin Po*, the officers

⁷⁴⁶ Confidential letter from the Advisor for Chinese Affairs to the Director of Internal Affairs, 8 November 1918, no. 457/18, Binnenlandsch Bestuur, no. 1935, ANRI, Jakarta.

⁷⁴⁷ The major received a monthly compensation (*toelage*) of three hundred guilders from the state for his administrative activities and all the expenses involved. The rest of his "income" came from so-called "voluntary contributions" from (Chinese) associations and benevolence or *douceurs*.

⁷⁴⁸ Confidential letter from the Advisor for Chinese Affairs to the Director of Internal Affairs, 8 November 1918, no. 457/18, Binnenlandsch Bestuur, no. 1935, ANRI, Jakarta.

afterwards claimed that the Siang Hwee and THHK actually agreed with their decision. Whether the report in *Sin Po* was based on facts or not, it helps explain why the Council's minutes yield no clues about how the officers regarded their pending dismissal.⁷⁴⁹

Thus, Chinese public opinion on the Chinese officer system and its future fell into two camps. Most peranakan Chinese compared the officer system with a house that, though old, had a solid foundation. The new system in which the Chinese would be subjected to direct European administration was like a new house built on sand and with no solid foundation. The peranakans challenged the reform plans of the government: "Which house would be better to live in? An old house, that is still strong or a new house that could easily break down? An old house with a solid foundation only needed to be renovated by replacing a few windows or doors. It should not be necessary to demolish the whole building and replace it with a new one. Indeed, reforms are necessary as there are a number of officers who are not functioning well. These incompetent persons should of course be replaced." The peranakan Chinese suggested that the government should consider paying the officers fixed salaries and granting the Chinese people the right to select their own headmen. "But why should the entire institution of Chinese officers be replaced by a brand new system that is shaky?" For its part, *Sin Po* mockingly compared the Chinese officer system with a rotten mango: "A mango is indeed a delicious fruit if it is still fresh; however, once the mango is rotten, it should be thrown away."⁷⁵⁰

Now that we have seen that the Chinese were split into two camps as far as the Chinese officers were concerned, we also can see that Lea Williams' conclusion about the Chinese officers—that the Chinese officers were installed by the Dutch authorities rather than their countrymen, that they only served Dutch interests, and that they were never really in a leadership position in the Chinese community—does not really correspond to this development.⁷⁵¹ It seems that Williams was

⁷⁴⁹ *Sin Po*, 1 November 1918.

⁷⁵⁰ *Sin Po*, 6 December 1916.

⁷⁵¹ Williams, *Overseas Chinese Nationalism*, 171–72.

fixated on the totok's protests, while overlooking the needs *and* the nature of the peranakan Chinese community of Batavia. The institution of Chinese officers may have been a casualty of nationalism, but in the long run, especially, the situation in Batavia developed differently than in other Javanese cities. The colonial government made the same mistake.

6.3 The ill-fated plans of the colonial government to reforming Chinese administration

Ever since the emergence of nationalism among the Indies Chinese had invited China's interference in their affairs, the Dutch colonial government had adopted a policy that favoured the Indies-born peranakan. Considering the peranakans' significance to the colony, it was important to keep China at arm's length. Among the reasons why the colonial government intended to place the Indies Chinese under direct European administration, was that the Chinese officers were no longer able to deal with the incoming nationalist streams from China. Given the volume of criticism levelled at the Chinese officers and the peranakans' wish to equal treatment, the government assumed that its reform plans would be welcomed with enthusiasm. However, the policy of favouring the peranakan Chinese did not reveal a deep understanding of the inner-workings of the Chinese community, which is why the colonial government was taken by surprise when the Chinese vehemently rejected the proposed reforms.⁷⁵²

One important mistake of the government was that it relied too much on the fierce anti-officer criticism of the China-orientated press. According to the Indies Chinese, the Office for Chinese Affairs was partly to blame for this, as it took a rather unbalanced interest in the developments in China and the China-orientated movement in the Netherlands Indies. According to the Office for Chinese Affairs, the political activities of the *singkeh* Chinese and the China-orientated peranakans in the colony reflected the policy of the Chinese government regarding its overseas subjects. The activities of the Chinese nationalists could stir up anti-Dutch sentiment

⁷⁵² Lohanda, *Growing Pains*, 228–29.

among the *peranakan* community, which would ultimately threaten Dutch authority. Therefore, the Kuo Min Tang movement should be put under strict surveillance. Because of this focus on the China-orientated movement, the advice given by the Office for Chinese Affairs did not reflect the actual circumstances in the Chinese community. The office was established to stay attuned to the political situation, social condition, customs and traditions, and mentality of the Chinese community and its employees were appointed to be the advisors, confidants, and if necessary, the defenders of the Indies Chinese. But with a few exceptions, the officials for Chinese affairs were completely unknown in the Chinese community, and the newspaper *Djawa Tengah* even wondered if they had ever set foot in the Chinese neighbourhoods.⁷⁵³ To the Indies Chinese, the office was more a government spy instead of their friend.⁷⁵⁴ Chinese animosity towards the office intensified after its advisors brushed aside the various petitions and other protest campaigns that were organised by the *peranakan* Chinese and defended the government's plans.

Questions began circulating in the Chinese community as soon as word came out about the proposed reforms. The primary concerns were why the government had never consulted the Chinese on the proposed reforms, and why it was in such a hurry to reform Chinese administration. For centuries the government had taken the Chinese officers for granted and never properly compensated them for all their work. The least the government could do was to allow the officers to resign of their own volition, so they could be spared the humiliation of dismissal.⁷⁵⁵ Although the minutes of the Chinese Council's board meetings do not mention how the officers viewed their upcoming dismissal, other sources reveal that the Chinese officers had indeed been feeling unappreciated by the colonial government for quite some time now. More and more officers felt that the government had freely bestowed rich Chinese with titles so to push off the administration over the Chinese and it had never rightfully rewarded them for all their work. In Semarang the Chinese

⁷⁵³ "Persoverzicht: De Chineesche Pers, January-February 1914", *Koloniaal Tijdschrift* 3:1 (1914): 527.

⁷⁵⁴ *Handelingen van den Volksraad*, 5th meeting (16 June 1924): p. 54.

⁷⁵⁵ *De Locomotief*, 4 December 1918.

officers had already realised this in the early years of the twentieth century and as a result they almost all had resigned, one by one. Only the major was left. The Chinese mockingly proposed that the authorities place the following add to recruit candidates for the vacancies in the Semarang Council:

Wanted:

Seven rich Chinese merchants to function as Chinese officer

Uniform: to be paid by the candidate himself

Wages: none, as usual

The employment of an *oppasser* [servant] is allowed, but he is to be paid by the candidate himself

Candidates are expected to arrange their own office supply

Applicants should submit their sealed requests to the local authorities of Semarang⁷⁵⁶

On 4 December 1918, *De Locomotief* announced that rumours circulated in the Chinese communities that the Chinese officers on Java planned to turn in their resignations en masse out of dismay over the government's plan to abolish the officer system. The Chinese officers, who felt that their loyal services had never been fully appreciated by the colonial government, did not wish to be simply brushed aside as useless material.⁷⁵⁷ In the eighth meeting of the People's Council in 1925, Major Khouw Kim An acknowledged the fact that the institute of Chinese officers had become unpopular and outdated, but stressed that the Chinese officers were not the only ones to blame. "It often occurs", said the *majoor der Chineezen*, "that the post is forced upon potential candidates. Wealthy Chinese with influence in the community are often summoned by the assistant-resident or resident to take on the officer post once a vacancy opens. Fearing vexation and feelings of shame, these people reluctantly yield to the authorities' urgent request." According to Khouw Kim An, the

⁷⁵⁶ *Het Nieuws Van Den Dag*, 26 January 1911.

⁷⁵⁷ *De Locomotief*, 4 December 1918.

Chinese community also often submitted a request to the local government to appoint one of their rich members.⁷⁵⁸

More to the point, the new administrative system that supposedly would unify the population groups in the main cities appeared shaky, at best. There was no guarantee that the indigenous, Arabs and Europeans would accept Chinese neighbourhood chiefs in their quarters, but it was certain that the Chinese would refuse indigenous leadership over their community. In addition, as the Dutch Registry of Births, Deaths, and Marriages would not be applied to the Chinese until 1919, who would take care of the Chinese civil registry in the meantime? The Chinese also worried about the lack of Chinese representatives in government committees and councils of justice with the disappearance of the Chinese officers. Finally, the government had yet to propose a satisfactory solution for the management of the Batavian Chinese Council's possessions. In the thirteenth meeting of the People's Council in 1918, H. H. Kan also expressed his concern about the government's hasty decisions: "Would it not be advisable to look after a solid foundation first prior to building a temple in which association and assimilation should be housed?"⁷⁵⁹

The peranakans were well aware that the system needed reform and pleaded for voting rights to improve the recruitment of candidates. This way, the Chinese community would have more control over the Chinese Councils, which they helped establish with their own money.⁷⁶⁰ The peranakans rejected reforms that would place the Chinese under European administration. The heart of the matter lay in the fact that the Chinese, although Dutch subjects, were still classified as Foreign Orientals. To speak in terms of Rousseau's concept of a social contract between the state and the people, the Indies-born Chinese were *sujets* (subjects) and not *citoyens* (citizens) of the Dutch state. In the fifth meeting of the People's Council in 1924, Han Tiauw Tjong, one of the founders of the Chung Hwa Hui and member of the *Volksraad*, denounced the forced mass

⁷⁵⁸ Handelingen van den Volksraad, 8th meeting, (19 June 1925): p. 242.

⁷⁵⁹ Handelingen van den Volksraad, 13th meeting (19 November 1918): p. 276.

⁷⁶⁰ *De Locomotief*, 5 December 1918.

naturalisation of the Indies-born Chinese as Dutch subjects. The Chinese did not become Dutch citizens, but a second-rate group of Dutch subjects or *heimatlosen*.⁷⁶¹ Although he opined that the Chinese Council was a showy institute without substance, he and other prominent Chinese asked what the benefit would be for the Chinese, if they, as second-rate Dutch subjects, were placed under direct European administration.⁷⁶² Being subject to direct European administration without any Chinese representation would place the Chinese in a fragile position and would not contribute to an improvement in accommodating their interests. The government's argument that the Chinese could still voice their opinion in the municipal, regency, and provincial councils was received with howls of derision. The Chinese representatives in the local councils were unable to exercise influence because participation was determined by quotas, financial status, and Dutch literacy, the last requirement being considered particularly burdensome. Not only was it unfair to consider Dutch literacy as a criterion for intellectual development, the government itself was to blame for the fact that so little of the Chinese people were proficient in the Dutch language.⁷⁶³ The Chinese people had no objections to a unified city administration, but as long as the indigenous people were still represented by their own leaders, the Chinese wanted the same arrangement for themselves. Dismantling the Chinese officer system was premature as long as the Chinese were still *heimatlosen*. In other words, the Chinese people did not object to abolishing the officer system if it meant full equal status with the Europeans.⁷⁶⁴ This was confirmed by Major Khouw Kim An who argued that there would be no need for Chinese officers anymore when the Chinese people were subject to the same laws as the Europeans.⁷⁶⁵

⁷⁶¹ Handelingen van den Volksraad, 5th meeting (16 June 1924): pp. 55–56.

⁷⁶² Handelingen van den Volksraad, 5th meeting (16 June 1924): p. 54.

⁷⁶³ Handelingen van den Volksraad, 5th meeting (19 June 1918): p. 123.

⁷⁶⁴ “Persoverzicht 1918: De Chineesch-Maleische Pers, *Perniagaan* 15 June 1918”, Binnenlandsch Bestuur, no. 4390, ANRI, Jakarta; “Persoverzicht: De Chineesche Pers, September 1918”, *Koloniaal Tijdschrift* 8:1 (1919): 117.

⁷⁶⁵ Confidential letter of the Advisor for Chinese Affairs to the Director of Internal Affairs, 16 July 1926, no. 367/26, Binnenlandsch Bestuur, no. 1672, ANRI, Jakarta.

The government was reluctant to listen to the wishes of the peranakan Chinese. In the 1915 Semarang meeting, it had been pointed out to Advisor for Chinese Affairs Mouw that the Chinese-Malay press did not speak for the whole Chinese community. The newspapers were edited by Indies Chinese, but most Chinese disagreed with their editorial positions, those of the China-orientated press in particular.⁷⁶⁶ In the People's Council meeting of 25 November 1918, H. H. Kan presented thirty telegrams and twenty letters, representing seventy Chinese associations throughout Java, in support of the Chinese officers. He then asked why the government had never consulted these people about reforming the Chinese administration, for "these telegrams and letters are no mystifications!"⁷⁶⁷ Director of Internal Affairs Carpentier Alting replied it was not the government's concern whether the Chinese wished to retain the Chinese officer system or not; the point was to consider which administrative system would be best for the Chinese people, and only the government as legislator should answer this question.⁷⁶⁸

Nevertheless, the government could not carry out the formative plans drawn up in the September 1917 meeting, which left Chinese administration in Batavia more or less intact. The only substantive change involved the office of neighbourhood chief, although this in fact had been implemented two years before, when by *Indisch Staatsblad* 1915-88, the neighbourhood chiefs of Batavia became fully paid government officials.⁷⁶⁹

⁷⁶⁶ "Persoverzicht: De Chineesche Pers, November 1916", *Koloniaal Tijdschrift* 6:1 (1917): 249.

⁷⁶⁷ *Handelingen van den Volksraad*, 14th meeting (25 November 1918): p. 288.

⁷⁶⁸ *Handelingen van den Volksraad*, 14th meeting (25 November 1918): p. 293.

⁷⁶⁹ *Indisch Staatsblad* 1915-88 superseded section three of *Indisch Staatsblad* 1914-724, which determined that the neighbourhood chiefs would be paid government officials on a temporary basis. *Indisch Staatsblad* 1915-88 determined that a total of forty-eight neighbourhood chiefs will be employed in the districts Batavia and Weltevreden, as well as Meester-Cornelis in the Ommelanden of the residency Batavia, for a salary of fifty guilders per month. Those neighbourhood chiefs will be assisted by 52 writers (*twiedies*) who would receive twenty-five guilders per month and 153 messengers (*sareans*) against a monthly salary of fifteen guilders.

In a meeting of the Chinese Council on 3 December 1914, the major reminded the neighbourhood chiefs of the government's intention to reduce their number and appoint the remaining neighbourhood chiefs as paid government officials, and he advised them to show diligence and attention; lazy neighbourhood chiefs would certainly be dismissed.⁷⁷⁰ Almost a month later, on 30 December 1914, the Council convened a special meeting in which the neighbourhood chiefs were given guidelines the government followed in selecting nominees for the “new” post of paid neighbourhood chief.⁷⁷¹ To qualify, the neighbourhood chiefs had to

- show progress in collecting taxes;
- show sincere and correct behaviour;
- show diligence;
- show capability and knowledge;
- show loyal conduct.⁷⁷²

In the Council meeting of 4 January 1915, a list of the selected neighbourhood chiefs and their assistants—writers/*twidies* and messengers/*sareans*⁷⁷³—was presented. Twelve neighbourhood chiefs were appointed as of 1 January 1915,⁷⁷⁴ and they were expected to have moved to their

⁷⁷⁰ Chinese minutes, no. 21025, 3 December 1914: p. 142. See also Malay minutes, no. NM2, 3 December 1914: pp. 319–20.

⁷⁷¹ These nominees would be selected from the current neighbourhood chiefs.

⁷⁷² Chinese minutes, no. 21025, 30 December 1914: pp. 145–14. See also Malay minutes, no. NM2, 30 December 1914: p. 325.

⁷⁷³ In the Malay minutes of the Chinese Council's board meetings, the writers and messengers, known to the public as *twidies* and *sareans*, are defined as “second-neighbourhood chiefs” and “sergeants”. The Chinese minutes recorded the writers and messengers as 對理 and 是連, both corruptions of the Malay words *twidie* and *sarean*, which were loan-words of the Dutch words *tweede* (second) and sergeant.

⁷⁷⁴ See Chinese minutes, no. 21026, 4 January 1915: pp. 1–2, and Malay minutes, no. NM3, 4 January 1915: pp. 3–4 for a detailed list of the selected neighbourhood chiefs, their assistants and their assigned jurisdictions.

assigned neighbourhoods by 1 April.⁷⁷⁵ In 1916 the uniforms of the neighbourhood chiefs were determined by the assistant-resident:

- The official uniform for daily use consisted of a white jacket, white trousers and a white cap. The jacket had five buttons inscribed with the letter *W*.⁷⁷⁶ The cap was adorned with a crown or oak branch;
- The ceremonial uniform for special occasions consisted of a black jacket and black trousers. The jacket was adorned with two stripes. The trousers were also adorned with stripes.⁷⁷⁷

Although the neighbourhood chiefs were now officially employed by the government, they still received the *collecteloon*⁷⁷⁸ for taxes collected from people whose yearly income did not exceed six thousand guilders. People earning more than that had to pay their taxes at the tax office themselves without the intervention of the neighbourhood chiefs.⁷⁷⁹ Those chiefs who were not selected as of January 1 were honourably discharged, and the Chinese Council established a fund to offer financial help for those who were not able to find a new job.⁷⁸⁰ The major compliantly accepted these changes. In the New Year's meeting of 17 February 1915, when the Council's office was reopened, he regretted the cuts in his staff but also expressed his gratitude for the selection of

⁷⁷⁵ Chinese minutes, no. 21026, 3 April 1915: pp. 18–19. See also Malay minutes, no. NM3, 3 April 1915: p. 33.

⁷⁷⁶ The *W* stood for Wilhelmina and referred to Queen Wilhelmina of the Netherlands.

⁷⁷⁷ Malay minutes, no. NM3, 6 September 1916: pp. 179–80. See also Chinese minutes, no. 21026, 6 September 1916: p. 112.

⁷⁷⁸ The *collecteloon* was a percentage of the tax collection (8 percent), which the neighbourhood chiefs received for their tax collection services.

⁷⁷⁹ Malay minutes, no. NM4, 3 January 1922: pp. 280–81; Malay minutes, no. NM5, 16 October 1922: pp. 32–33.

⁷⁸⁰ Chinese minutes, no. 21026, 8 February 1915: pp. 7–8. See also Malay minutes, NM3, 8 February 1915: p. 15.

his most capable men: “A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush” (*Lebih baik satoe boeroeng di tangan dari 10 jang ada di atas awan*).⁷⁸¹

In the meantime, the Chinese Council of Batavia continued its activities. There were no captains officially in office anymore; acting Captain Khouw Keng Liong retired in 1917, while Captain Lie Tjian Tjoen stepped down in 1919. Major Khouw Kim An also officially retired in 1919, but on special request of the government, he remained active as a titular major.⁷⁸² Lieutenant Tan Tjin Bok died in 1919. Five lieutenants and one secretary were still officially in office.⁷⁸³ Although membership had been reduced, the Council still convened almost once a month. From 1918 to 1919, Captain Lie Tjian Tjoen, as *waarnemend* (acting) *majoer* took the chair from Major Khouw Kim An, who almost disappeared entirely from the Council meetings in those years. He only appeared in the meeting of 4 March 1918, still in the function of major and chairman of the Council. After Captain Lie retired, the meetings were chaired by Lieutenant Lay Soen Hie, but Lie Tjian Tjoen still attended the meetings as a titular major. In the meeting of 17 March 1920 titular Major Khouw Kim An resumed chairmanship, probably because the Dutch had asked him to.⁷⁸⁴

But with only five official members active, there was not always a quorum of at least five members in attendance. In light of this, Resident Hunger approved the following changes regarding the quorum: if the Council had six members, the attendance of at least four members was required (including the chairman); in case of four to five members the attendance of at least three members was required; if there were only two or three members, the attendance of at least two members was required (but a minimum of three persons had to attend the meeting: the chairman, one member, and

⁷⁸¹ Malay minutes, no. NM3, 17 February 1915: pp. 17–18. See also Chinese minutes, no. 21026, 17 February 1915: pp. 9–10.

⁷⁸² Khouw Kim An retired by Gouvernementsbesluit, 24 March 1919, no.15.

⁷⁸³ These lieutenants were Oh Sian Tjeng, Liong A Tjan, Oeij Kim Liong, Lie Sin Leng and Lay Soen Hie. Khoe Siau Eng was the remaining secretary.

⁷⁸⁴ Interestingly, from this meeting on the use of officer titles disappeared. From then on everyone who attended the meetings was addressed to as *Toean* (Sir), even the persons who were still official Council members.

the secretary). The changes were ratified by Residentsbesluit of 23 March 1920, no. 7174/6, and in the Council meeting of 14 April 1920 the remaining members of the Chinese Council officially agreed with this change of rule.⁷⁸⁵

Although the Chinese Council continued its activities, the plans to abolish it were still on the table. In the meeting of 8 September 1921, Assistant-Resident Gessler Verschuur informed the Chinese officers and neighbourhood chiefs that “proposals regarding the reorganisation of Chinese administration were in progress, but were unlikely to be implemented within a short period”.⁷⁸⁶

6.4 Looking for Plan B: a new discussion on reforming Chinese administration

After so many Chinese people had vehemently rejected the proposed reforms in Chinese administration, the government was forced to reconsider the plans formulated in the September 1917 meeting. The concept of a unified city administration was not completely abandoned, but it clearly could not be realised in the near future. This was also due to the disagreement that arose between the government officials on the specific details regarding the unification plans. From the Chinese Council meeting of 3 December 1917 it appears that the colonial government officials still disagreed about how to collect taxes once the Chinese officers were dismissed.⁷⁸⁷ Nor was there agreement about when to transfer more authority from the assistant-resident to the mayor, as it was intended to delegate the unified city administration to the municipal government. Governmental cutbacks delayed the reforms even more.⁷⁸⁸

⁷⁸⁵ Chinese minutes, no. 21028, 17 March 1920, pp. 3–5. See also Malay minutes, no. NM4, 17 March 1920, pp. 116–117; Residentsbesluit, 20 August 1907, no. 15548/36 regarding the official instruction for the Chinese Council, section 9, subsection 2, Binnenlandsch Bestuur, no. 1935, ANRI, Jakarta; Malay minutes, no. NM4, 14 April 1920, pp. 129–131; and Residentsbesluit, 23 March 1920, no. 7174/6. See also Hesseling-Tjan, “The Kong Koan in Crisis”, 121.

⁷⁸⁶ Malay minutes, no. NM4, 8 September 1921: pp. 258–59.

⁷⁸⁷ Malay minutes, no. NM4, 3 December 1917: p. 28.

⁷⁸⁸ Confidential letter from the Director of Internal Affairs to the Governor-General, 1 December 1923, no. 800, Binnenlandsch Bestuur, no. 2065, ANRI, Jakarta.

The Kuo Min Tang: an imminent threat

Yet political developments in China began to alarm the government officials. The Office for Chinese Affairs warned the government that the Chinese nationalist movement, inspired by the revolutionary ideology of the Kuo Min Tang (KMT), posed a potential threat in the Indies.⁷⁸⁹ The office contended that Chinese political activity in the Indies mirrored China's policy regarding its overseas subjects. Therefore the colonial government should follow events in China and all non-peranakan Chinese activities closely. In an overview on the Chinese movement in the Indies, the office reported that in the last years of the imperial regime the ideological principles of Dr Sun Yat-sen had begun to gain influence among the Indies Chinese, as well as among overseas Chinese in the United States and Canada. Overseas Chinese communities in Southeast Asia, especially the peranakan community on Java, were initially quite conservative and preferred Kang Youwei's reformist ideas. Nevertheless, towards the end of Manchu rule more and more peranakans turned their support to the revolution. The shift of the Nanyang Chinese allegiance from reform to revolution was due partly to internal strife among the reformists and partly to effective propaganda and persistence of Dr Sun.⁷⁹⁰ In 1905 Sun organised various anti-monarchist groups into the Tung Meng Hui (Revolutionary Alliance) in Tokyo, which planned and supported the overthrow of the Manchu regime up to the proclamation of the Chinese Republic on 1 January 1912. The Chinese historian Yen Ching-hwang considers the organisation to be the mainstream of the 1911 revolution.⁷⁹¹ The role of the overseas Chinese in the revolution was also important:

They became the main source of finance for funding various revolts in China and they contributed part of the manpower to the revolution. Overseas Chinese communities

⁷⁸⁹ Confidential letter from the Resident of Batavia to the Director of Internal Affairs, 10 August 1925, no. 1384/C, Binnenlandsch Bestuur, no. 1672, ANRI, Jakarta.

⁷⁹⁰ Shih-shan Ho Tsai, "The Revolution of 1911 and the Role of the Overseas Chinese", 16.

⁷⁹¹ Yen, "Nanyang Chinese and the 1911 Revolution", 23.

became the centres for publishing and spreading the revolutionary message; they also became the bases for planning and staging revolts, and the sanctuaries for revolutionary refugees.⁷⁹²

The Tung Meng Hui was reorganised as the KMT in Peking on 25 August 1912. The Batavia branch of the party opened the next January and more Indies Chinese became attracted to its revolutionary doctrine. Peranakans who felt left behind by the colonial government increasingly shifted their support to the revolutionaries. Together with the totok Chinese, they dreamt of a big and powerful Chinese state that would some day come to the rescue of its overseas sons.⁷⁹³

The KMT frequently sent revolutionary comrades to the Indies in an attempt to nurture the revolutionary spirit among the Indies Chinese. The KMT movement and its sympathisers were mostly active in the Soe Po Sia book clubs, but the press and educational institutions were also infiltrated. Nearly every Chinese newspaper editor in the Indies and a large percentage of Chinese schoolteachers were born in China and members of the KMT, and they tried to get their fellow party members from China to fill vacancies in the world of print and education. The Chinese government also sent some propagandists disguised as journalists or teachers to the Netherlands Indies in order to spread the anti-imperialistic message.⁷⁹⁴

After the foundation of the Chinese Republic, Sun Yat-sen was proclaimed president of the republic for a few weeks in 1912 until he resigned in favour of Yuan Shikai, a powerful military leader of the Qing who had shifted his support to the new republic. To give way to Yuan Shikai was a strategic move of Sun as Yuan possessed military strength to keep the young republic together.

⁷⁹² Ibid., 26.

⁷⁹³ “Overzicht over de Chineesche beweging in Nederlandsch-Indië”, ANRI, Jakarta; Suryadinata, *Prominent Indonesian Chinese*, 124.

⁷⁹⁴ “Overzicht over de Chineesche beweging in Nederlandsch-Indië”, ANRI, Jakarta; Shiraishi, “Anti-Sinicism in Java’s New Order”, 200.

However, after Yuan was appointed president he quickly showed signs of dictatorial behaviour. In 1913, he ordered the KMT disbanded and two years later he proclaimed himself emperor, though he was forced to abdicate as there was no common support for this move.⁷⁹⁵

Between 1916 and 1928 China was divided among competing warlords. The May Fourth Movement of 1919 inspired Sun Yat-sen to revive the KMT. But he needed help to eliminate the warlords and reunify the politically fragmented country. He found help in the Soviet Union and in 1923 he forged an alliance with the Comintern. The KMT-Comintern alliance meant cooperation with the nascent Chinese Communist Party (CCP). It was a marriage of convenience for both parties but quite fragile because of ideological differences. Both parties agreed on the evils of imperialism, but Sun Yat-sen did not link imperialism with class struggle. He favoured the struggle of oppressed nations against oppressing nations. Thus, his interests were pure nationalist rather than communist.⁷⁹⁶

Sun died of cancer in March 1925, by which time the Communist-KMT alliance had become a mass movement. The growth of the CCP and its influence on the nationalist government in Canton put the KMT on the defensive and ideological differences began to strain the fragile alliance. In 1926 Chiang Kai-shek staged a *coup d'état* at Canton and ousted part of the CCP leadership and some Soviet advisors. Like Sun, he emphasised anti-imperialism on a united, national basis rather than through class warfare. Yet he reaffirmed his loyalty to the alliance with the Comintern as he needed CCP and Soviet support to undertake the great Northern Expedition to crush the warlords and reunify the country under one government. Yet a split was unavoidable and during the expedition Chiang Kai-shek openly turned against the communists. In 1928 China was under nominal control of Chiang who established his capital in Nanking.⁷⁹⁷

⁷⁹⁵ J. K. Fairbank and M. Goldman, *China: A New History* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1998), 250–53; Fairbank and Reischauer, *China*, 413–19.

⁷⁹⁶ Fairbank and Goldman, *China*, 279–83.

⁷⁹⁷ Fairbank and Reischauer, *China*, 446–51; Spence, *The Search for Modern China*, 314–52.

Although peranakan Chinese came to support the revolutionaries, after the foundation of the Chinese Republic, the political chaos made them realise that waiting for China's aid was hopeless. They increasingly focussed on the Netherlands Indies as their home country and it is questionable whether the KMT really posed a serious threat to the Netherlands Indies. The rekindled interest in local affairs of the peranakans led to renewed discord with the totoks. In an open letter that was published in the *Koloniaal Tijdschrift* in 1912, a peranakan Chinese defined the members of the Soe Po Sia as a reckless and arrogant group that tried to stir up the Chinese people against the colonial government. When the Soe Po Sia was founded in Batavia, the organisation asked to use some rooms of the THHK building for its activities. The THHK refused because the organisation was well aware of the revolutionary ideas the Soe Po Sia was advertising.⁷⁹⁸ The same peranakan Chinese pointed out that the members of the Soe Po Sia could not get along with the local peranakans in Batavia because the peranakan Chinese did not wish to cooperate with them: "They [the Soe Po Sia members] accuse us of having sold ourselves to the Dutch, but we understand the laws of the colonial state; we know what we are allowed to do and what not."⁷⁹⁹ Thus, even though the popularity of the KMT movement peaked in the 1910s, it was unlikely that most peranakan Chinese in Batavia would join the *singkeh* organisations. That the revolutionary ideas of the KMT increasingly lost influence among the Indies Chinese was also shown in July 1925, when the Chinese consul-general in Batavia organised a memorial ceremony to pay respect to the deceased Dr Sun Yat-sen. The attendance was poor, owing to the reluctance of the Chinese officers to summon their people to attend the ceremony. The failure of this memorial service demonstrated the Indies Chinese' indifference to political developments in China, but it also implied that the Chinese officers still had influence in Batavia.⁸⁰⁰

⁷⁹⁸ "Een Chinees over de Chineesche Beweging", *Koloniaal Tijdschrift* 1:2 (1912): 667–72.

⁷⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 669–70.

⁸⁰⁰ Lohanda, *The Kapitan Cina of Batavia*, 170–71.

According to the Office for Chinese Affairs, enthusiasm for the nationalist movement was due not to home-grown changes in attitudes among the peranakan Chinese, but to government policies that prevented further influence from China infiltrating the peranakan Chinese, including frequent inspections in the press and schools and the expulsion of every journalist and teacher who expressed anti-imperialistic ideas. After these intellectuals had been expelled, leadership fell into the hands of incompetent persons who degraded the movement into a tame, slow-moving organisation. As a result, more and more Indies Chinese became attracted to local politics, leading to the emergence of the Chung Hwa Hui as the dominant party among the peranakan Chinese.⁸⁰¹

In spite of reduced KMT influence over the Indies Chinese, the Office for Chinese Affairs still found it necessary to issue warnings about recent developments in China. The Chinese government was too weak to assert itself in foreign politics, but this did not mean that it did not try to do so. Although the warlords competed against each other, they recognised the existence of the Chinese state, and the Peking government continued to have a diplomatic role.⁸⁰² Chinese consuls were instructed to protect Chinese inhabitants overseas against the “cruel regulations and foreign suppression” and to strengthen the ties between Chinese emigrants and their motherland as much as possible.⁸⁰³ The KMT-Comintern alliance and the Northern Expedition indicated the advent of a strong and powerful Chinese nation and rang alarm bells in the Dutch East Indies. In the eyes of the Office for Chinese Affairs, this imminent nationalist threat from China was all the encouragement the colonial government needed to establish firm leadership over the Indies Chinese soon. The ill-fated reform plans had put Chinese administration in limbo, which made the Indies Chinese susceptible to KMT manipulation. Therefore, the establishment of a solid administration “that

⁸⁰¹ “Overzicht over de Chineesche beweging in Nederlandsch-Indië”, ANRI, Jakarta.

⁸⁰² Fairbank and Reischauer, *China*, 424.

⁸⁰³ “Overzicht over de Chineesche beweging in Nederlandsch-Indië”, ANRI, Jakarta.

understands, supports, and improves the interests of this group” was crucial for the development and continued peaceful existence of the colonial state.⁸⁰⁴

The decision to restore the institution of Chinese officers in Batavia

In the period 1920–26 three consecutive *residenten* of the Batavia residency submitted proposals for reforming the Chinese administration. Although details varied, the proposals had a common purpose: to reinstate the role of Chinese middlemen. Resident J. D. Hunger, who submitted the first proposal, seemed susceptible to the objection raised by the Chinese that as long as the government retained indigenous leadership, the government had no right to abolish the Chinese community leaders. Hunger argued that it was still necessary to appoint Chinese intermediaries between the European administration and the neighbourhood chiefs. But he recommended dismissing the remaining Chinese officers, including the titular officers still functioning in Batavia and Meester-Cornelis⁸⁰⁵ and appointing two *Chineesche bestuursambtenaren* (Chinese administrative officials) as intermediaries, one for Batavia and one for Weltevreden.⁸⁰⁶ These would be added to the staff of the assistant-resident to carry out the tasks being (sporadically) fulfilled by the Chinese officers and Council secretaries, such as advising the government committees of taxation and immigration. The *bestuursambtenaren* would also have a seat in the Chinese Committee that would manage the properties of the Chinese Council, which would be abolished, as discussed in the meeting of September 1917. The neighbourhood chiefs would, according to current practice, have an advisory

⁸⁰⁴ Confidential letter from the Resident of Batavia to the Director of Internal Affairs, 10 August 1925, no. 1384/C, Binnenlandsch Bestuur, no. 1672, ANRI, Jakarta.

⁸⁰⁵ The positions of captain and lieutenant of the Chinese in Meester-Cornelis had been vacant for quite some time and no suitable candidates could be found to fill the vacancies.

⁸⁰⁶ Meester-Cornelis only had one Chinese quarter and therefore it was not necessary to appoint a *Chineesche bestuursambtenaar* there. The Chinese neighbourhood chief would be directly accountable to the controleur. See letter of the Resident of Batavia to the Director of Internal Affairs, 18 May 1920, no. 363/C, Binnenlandsch Bestuur, no. 1935, ANRI, Jakarta.

role in proceedings of the *Landraad* that involved Chinese citizens. The *bestuursambtenaren* would be part of colonial officialdom and would, to a greater extent than the Chinese officers, actually assist the controleur in his daily activities concerning city administration.⁸⁰⁷ The proposals of Hunger's successors Schenk de Jong and J. C. de Bergh apparently sought the restoration of the Chinese officer system. The two residents kept in mind that someday all ethnic groups in the three *hoofdplaatsen* of Java would be placed under a unified city administration. However, they did not expect that the unification plans could be carried out in the near future and both agreed that the Chinese people in Batavia were now vulnerable to KMT manipulation. Therefore, it was imperative to have strong Chinese leadership in the interim. For practical reasons, the restoration of the Chinese officers was preferable to the creation of a new system of young and ambitious, but inexperienced Chinese administrators.⁸⁰⁸

Advisor for Chinese Affairs H. Mouw strongly opposed the reintroduction of the Chinese officer system, which would perpetuate the special position of the Chinese in the colonial state—*die van staatje in den staat*—and obstruct a possible forthcoming equal position of the Chinese in colonial society.⁸⁰⁹ Instead, he favoured appointing one Chinese official and two assistants to help the local government in administering the 50,000 Chinese residing in Batavia and Weltevreden (including Meester-Cornelis). These officials would be directly accountable to the European administration. For the sake of tradition, Mouw did not object to giving the official and his two assistants the titles of “major” and “captain”, but under no circumstances were they to be

⁸⁰⁷ Letter of the Resident of Batavia to the Director of Internal Affairs, 18 May 1920, no. 363/C, Binnenlandsch Bestuur, no. 1935, ANRI, Jakarta.

⁸⁰⁸ Confidential letter of the Resident of Batavia to the Director of Internal Affairs, 10 August 1925, no. 1384/C, Binnenlandsch Bestuur, no. 1672, ANRI, Jakarta; Confidential letter of the Resident of Batavia to the Governor of West Java, 7 June 1926, no. 583/C, Binnenlandsch Bestuur, no. 1672, ANRI, Jakarta; Confidential letter of the Resident of Batavia to the Governor of West Java, 25 October 1926, no. 924/E, Binnenlandsch Bestuur, no. 1672, ANRI, Jakarta.

⁸⁰⁹ Confidential letter of the Advisor for Chinese Affairs to the Director of Internal Affairs, 16 July 1926, no. 367/26, Binnenlandsch Bestuur, no. 1672, ANRI, Jakarta.

considered permanent Chinese community leaders. Rather, they were to facilitate the transition to a unified city administration in which all ethnic groups would be administered by the same neighbourhood officials.

The advisor for Chinese affairs argued that reverting to the officer system was also unnecessary, because nowadays the Chinese people could easily find their way to the authorities to express their grievances, and this seldom required engagement with the Chinese officer. Moreover, the Chinese Council was no longer involved in marriage and divorce affairs and it no longer gave advice on inheritance cases. The police had their own Chinese detective force, and the taxation office also had its own Chinese officials and interpreters. Hence, it should be sufficient to appoint one Chinese administrative official and two assistants for Batavia and Weltevreden. This advice from the Office for Chinese Affairs suggests again that it had a poor understanding of the *peranakan* community of Batavia, whose protest campaigns in favour of retaining the officers were clear and persistent. The office chose to ignore them and saw the issue through the prism of criticism from previous decades,⁸¹⁰ although Mouw's considerations could also be seen in view of Oudendijk's report of 1914, which aimed at initiating further homogenisation of administrative structures while discarding privileged feudal institutions.

In the end, Schenk de Jong and De Bergh's plans calling for the restoration of the Chinese officer system were approved, although some details would be changed in the final draft. The government had observed that the Chinese people, especially in Batavia, had moderated their hostility towards the officers. The Batavian Chinese even campaigned to keep the officers as community leaders, whereas the majority of the Chinese-Malay newspapers had suspended their fierce campaign against them.⁸¹¹ In 1925 W. V. Smeets, acting director of internal affairs, confirmed this change of attitude towards the Chinese officer system:

⁸¹⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹¹ See the confidential letter of the Advisor of Chinese Affairs to the Director of Internal Affairs, 16 July 1926, no. 367/26, Binnenlandsch Bestuur, no. 1672, ANRI, Jakarta.

In recent years it appears that the aversion against the institute of Chinese officers is by far not as great as expected. The majority of the regional government officials also opine that the Chinese officers cannot be missed for the time being. The government cannot assent to the assertion that the majority of these civil servants are not able to cope with their tasks, although it willingly acknowledges that Chinese affairs in these regions have changed so much that different requirements should be met for the officers.⁸¹²

The governor of West Java also agreed that the Chinese officers were still needed in Batavia and he recommended the Chinese officer system as the best option for the city's administration over the Chinese—at least for the time being. He also anticipated that it would no longer be difficult to find candidates for the officer posts because the Chinese Council was no longer held in low esteem by a large part of the Chinese community. Ironically, the lack of candidates was one of the key reasons why the government started the reform plans in the first place.⁸¹³ The Chinese officers also regained their confidence, and perhaps even got a little bit overconfident. In the Council meeting of 27 January 1927, Captain Lie Tjian Tjoen congratulated Major Khouw Kim An and Lieutenant Yo Heng Kam with their (re)appointment in the People's Council and said:

Nowadays Chinese people acquire fancy titles after having completed their high education. But the fact that two of our members have been chosen (again) as council members shows that we, Chinese officers are still appreciated by the Chinese people.

The responsibilities of a People's Council member are not to be taken lightly and this

⁸¹² *Handelingen van den Volksraad*, 14th meeting (26 June 1925): p. 474.

⁸¹³ Confidential letter of the Governor of West Java to the Director of Internal Affairs, 23 June 1926, no. G 18/2/12, *Binnenlandsch Bestuur*, no.1672, ANRI, Jakarta.

confirms that the Chinese people have faith in us as representatives of the Chinese community.⁸¹⁴

6.5 The final draft for restoring the Chinese officer system

Let us now examine the final draft of plans to restore the Chinese officer system. According to a report of the controleur of Batavia, in 1925 the Chinese community in Batavia consisted of ± 50.000 people supervised by twelve Chinese neighbourhood chiefs in the following areas:

1. District Batavia with $\pm 22,500$ people, supervised by nine neighbourhood chiefs;
2. District Weltevreden with $\pm 17,000$ people, scattered through the neighbourhoods of Pasar Senen (nearly 10,000), Pasar Baroe (over 4,000), and Tanah Abang ($\pm 3,000$), and supervised by three neighbourhood chiefs;
3. Division Meester-Cornelis with $\pm 8,000$ people.⁸¹⁵

It was decided to retain the neighbourhood chiefs with their titles, although it was deemed more practical and financially attractive (by making it easier to collect taxes, for instance) to combine certain Chinese neighbourhoods so that fewer neighbourhood chiefs would be needed. The government decided to reduce the number of neighbourhood chiefs in the district of Batavia from nine to five. In addition, it was decided to attach Meester-Cornelis to Weltevreden, giving the enlarged Weltevreden a total population of ± 25.000 Chinese, with one extra neighbourhood chief. In sum, the number of neighbourhood chiefs in Batavia and Weltevreden would be reduced from

⁸¹⁴ Malay minutes, no. NM5, 27 January 1927: pp. 262–63. Major Khouw Kim An was reappointed, while Lieutenant Yo Heng Kam was appointed for the first time in 1927 as member of the People's Council.

⁸¹⁵ Confidential letter of the Resident of Batavia to the Director of Internal Affairs, 10 August 1925, no. 1384/C, Binnenlandsch Bestuur, no. 1672, ANRI, Jakarta.

twelve to nine, five in Batavia and four in Weltevreden.⁸¹⁶ The neighbourhood chiefs would receive a monthly salary of 50–100 guilders (an average of 75 guilders). The 8 percent *collecteloon* (almost 200 guilders per month) that the neighbourhood chiefs previously received would be reduced to 5 percent (125 guilders), but they would be provided with an office phone and clerks, assistant-clerks, and messengers.⁸¹⁷

Two captains would be appointed in Batavia and Weltevreden to supervise the neighbourhood chiefs with a monthly allowance (*toelage*) of 300 guilders, and an additional 75–150 guilders for office rent and travel expenses. A clerk and two messengers would be added to their staff and they, too, would be provided with an office phone.⁸¹⁸ The captains would each be assisted by two lieutenants, who were required to have completed a training as interpreters and to speak fluent Mandarin Chinese and the usual spoken dialect of Batavia. These requirements were an obvious attempt at soothing the totok community. The lieutenants should receive an average allowance of f 200,- per month and an additional f 25,- for travel expenses. They should be provided with an office phone and two messengers.⁸¹⁹

The *majoor der Chineezen* was to assume leadership over the captains, lieutenants, and neighbourhood chiefs, and the government favoured reappointing Khouw Kim An for this post,

⁸¹⁶ Confidential letter of the Resident of Batavia to the Director of Internal Affairs, 10 August 1925, no. 1384/C, Binnenlandsch Bestuur, no. 1672, ANRI, Jakarta; Confidential letter of the Resident of Batavia to the Governor of West Java, 7 June 1926, no. 583/C, Binnenlandsch Bestuur, no. 1672, ANRI, Jakarta.

⁸¹⁷ The clerks should receive an average salary of f 40,- per month. The assistant-clerks and messengers should be paid around f 25,- per month. See confidential letter from the Resident of Batavia to the Director of Internal Affairs, 10 August 1925, no. 1384/C, Binnenlandsch Bestuur, no. 1672, ANRI, Jakarta.

⁸¹⁸ The captain's clerk would receive an average salary of f 75,- per month and the messengers f 25,- per month. See confidential letter from the Resident of Batavia to the Director of Internal Affairs, 10 August 1925, no. 1384/C, Binnenlandsch Bestuur, no. 1672, ANRI, Jakarta.

⁸¹⁹ The lieutenant's messengers should, just like the neighbourhood chief's messengers, receive a monthly salary of 25 guilders. See confidential letter from the Resident of Batavia to the Director of Internal Affairs, 10 August 1925, no. 1384/C, Binnenlandsch Bestuur, no. 1672, ANRI, Jakarta.

even though the advisor for Chinese affairs warned against his reappointment because of Khouw's "fickle" opinion of the Chinese officer system. The advisor pointed out that in 1919 Khouw had been dismissed from the major's post at his own request, and after the government convinced him to stay on as acting titular major, he repeatedly asked to be relieved of his duties. At a meeting of the People's Council in 1925, Khouw declared that "the so-called institute of Chinese officers was outdated and untenable",⁸²⁰ but by the time that word came out that he would be renominated for the post he seemed to have changed his mind about the officer system and even recommended the appointment of three captains and six lieutenants for Batavia and Weltevreden. Despite the advisor's misgivings about appointing a person with such inconsistent views about the Chinese Council,⁸²¹ Khouw became the first choice for the post because the government considered him diligent and reliable, and he and his family were well respected in the Chinese community. He would receive a fixed allowance of f 400,- per month and an additional f 26.100,- for the period April 1919–June 1926 in which he, at the government's request, actively served as (titular) major, despite his official retirement on 24 March 1919.⁸²²

The officers and neighbourhood chiefs would assist the local government with the civil registry of people in the Chinese community, and they would be responsible for the tax collection, providing information on tax assessments, taking care of emigration and immigration affairs, and providing information on Chinese political movements and public opinion of the European administration. Since the officers were to receive a fixed allowance rather than an official salary, the government realised that it could not prohibit the officers from taking other jobs on the side, for to

⁸²⁰ Handelingen van den Volksraad, 8th meeting (19 June 1925): p. 242.

⁸²¹ Confidential letter of the Advisor for Chinese Affairs to the Director of Internal Affairs, 16 July 1926, no. 367/26, Binnenlandsch Bestuur, no. 1672, ANRI, Jakarta.

⁸²² Gouvernementsbesluit, 24 March 1919, no. 15, ANRI, Jakarta. See also confidential letter from the Resident of Batavia to the Governor of West Java, 7 June 1926, no. 583/C, Binnenlandsch Bestuur, no. 1672, ANRI, Jakarta.

The amount of f 26.100,- was based on 87 months (300 guilders per month) of unpaid services and expenses between April 1919 and June 1926.

do so would make qualified people reluctant to take the post. The *majoor der Chineezen* would still be accountable to the assistant-resident and not to the municipal government. With regard to smaller cities with sizeable Chinese communities, it was decided to retain the existing system of neighbourhood chiefs and unpaid captains and lieutenants, at least for the moment.⁸²³

The government acknowledged that the persons nominated for the officer posts had never received formal administrative instruction—due to the government’s own negligence to train the Chinese officers. However, the government still valued the experienced officers and agreed with Resident De Bergh who warned against appointing young educated and ambitious Chinese with “fancy diplomas” who lacked appropriate experience. In cooperation with the neighbourhood chiefs, the new officers—who had both experience and influence in the Chinese community—would be able to counter nationalist influences among the Indies Chinese. The irony is that one of the main reasons the government sought to dismantle the Chinese officer system was its conviction that the Chinese officers were unable to cope with the nationalist influences from China. The colonial government seems to have changed its mind about this or simply felt it had no better alternative to counteract KMT activities about which the Office for Chinese Affairs had warned.⁸²⁴ Another perhaps more plausible consideration is that the colonial government had no choice but to surrender to the Batavian Chinese protests against doing away with the Chinese Council. In the end, though, it had little to fear from either the Beiyang government (the warlords) or the KMT, as neither was able to gain a firm foothold in the Netherlands Indies. In Batavia, especially, the majority of the Chinese were indifferent to these Chinese influences. The Northern Expedition led by Chiang Kai-shek also made no difference. It is more likely that the colonial government had

⁸²³ Confidential letter from the Resident of Batavia to the Director of Internal Affairs, 10 August 1925, no. 1384/C, Binnenlandsch Bestuur, no. 1672, ANRI, Jakarta; Confidential letter of the Resident of Batavia to the Governor of West Java, 7 June 1926, no. 583/C, Binnenlandsch Bestuur, no. 1672, ANRI, Jakarta.

⁸²⁴ Confidential letter of the Resident of Batavia to the Governor of West Java, 7 June 1926, no. 583/C, Binnenlandsch Bestuur, no. 1672, ANRI, Jakarta.

given in to the Chinese claims in favour of keeping the Chinese Council in function. But it should be noted that Dutch officials continued to view the restoration of the Chinese officer system as a temporary measure pending the establishment of a unified administration.

6.6 Restoration of the Chinese officer system in Batavia

By September 1927, the reorganisation of Chinese administration in Batavia was complete. Chinese administration was composed of one major, two captains, and four lieutenants, who were assigned to the districts Batavia and Weltevreden.⁸²⁵ All officers were subjected to the supervision of the head of local administration (the assistant-resident) and their allowances were determined at 400, 300 and 200 guilders respectively.⁸²⁶ It was decided that nine neighbourhood chiefs would be appointed for the supervision of the Chinese neighbourhoods in Batavia and Weltevreden (including Meester-Cornelis). The remaining three neighbourhood chiefs were to be dismissed before December 1927. The discharged neighbourhood chiefs would be entitled to receive reduced pay (*wachtgeld*), which would comprise 80 percent of their last received salaries.⁸²⁷

There were no plans to resurrect the Chinese Councils of Semarang and Soerabaja. As mentioned in chapter 3, there had been a strong link between the officer post and the revenue farms⁸²⁸ in these cities, and after the farms had been abolished from the late nineteenth century

⁸²⁵ The officers who were (re)appointed were Major Khouw Kim An, Captain Yo Kim Thay, Captain Yo Heng Kam, Lieutenant Tan Yam Hok, Lieutenant Lie Boen Sin, Lieutenant Tan In Hok, and Lieutenant Na Tjioe Kim. The Gouvernementsbesluit of 3 February 1927, no. 26 reappointed Khouw Kim An as major and chairman of the Chinese Council, and Yo Kim Thay and Yo Heng Kam as captains. Lieutenants Lie Boen Sin, Tan In Hok, and Na Tjioe Kim were officially appointed as *luitenant der Chineezzen* by Gouvernementsbesluit no. 12 of 27 September 1927. Tan Yam Hok had officially been a lieutenant since 1925 and was allowed to stay on.

⁸²⁶ Just as before, these allowances (*toelagen*) were to be considered as a compensation for expenses made during the performance of their duties, not as official salaries.

⁸²⁷ Malay minutes, no. NM5, 10 December 1927: pp. 300–301.

⁸²⁸ Rush, *Opium to Java*, chap. 5.

onwards, the post ceased to be popular in the eastern and central part of Java. In 1914, only the position of major was filled in Semarang, while public and religious ceremonies were increasingly taken over by the Chinese associations.⁸²⁹ The situation in Soerabaja was not much different. In 1919 Han Tjong Khing, the major of Soerabaja, wrote a letter to the assistant-resident in which he pleaded for the quick implementation of the announced reforms. He wrote that for years he had been carrying out the duties of the Chinese Council with the assistance of only two neighbourhood chiefs, who had been assigned to take up the duties of a Chinese lieutenant. For years, the six lieutenant posts had been vacant, since no suitable candidates could be found willing to fill the vacancies. For the same reason, the retired Captain The Ing Bie (1916) had not been replaced.⁸³⁰ The major pointed out that he also had been paying for the use of office space and office staff himself, while increasingly feeling reluctant to continue his duty as head of the Chinese community. Because of the ongoing criticism in the Chinese press, the office could not please him anymore. The Chinese community also no longer seemed to appreciate the officers. The only reason why he stayed on as *majoor der Chineezen* was because the resident had asked him not to resign.⁸³¹ In 1924 Major Han Tjong Khing resigned from office.⁸³²

That the Chinese Councils of Semarang and Soerabaja were almost completely defunct can be explained by the fact that the Councils had never been able to acquire the same important

⁸²⁹ “Persoverzicht: De Chineesche Pers, Februari-Maart 1914”, *Koloniaal Tijdschrift* 3:1 (1914): 821; minutes of the meeting held on 1–2 September 1917 at the Department of Internal Affairs, Binnenlandsch Bestuur, no. 1935, ANRI, Jakarta. According to the Regeerings-almanak, Captain Liem Hiok Liam was still officially in function until the early 1930s, but it is possible that from 1914 onwards the captain no longer actively carried out his duties as a Chinese officer.

⁸³⁰ Letter of the Resident of Soerabaja to the Director of Internal Affairs, 31 March 1919, no. 11/23h, Binnenlandsch Bestuur, no. 4406, ANRI, Jakarta.

⁸³¹ Confidential letter of the Resident of Soerabaja to the Director of Internal Affairs, 27 March 1920, no. 151, Binnenlandsch Bestuur, no. 1935, ANRI, Jakarta.

⁸³² Letter of the Governor of East Java to the Director of Internal Affairs, 13 December 1928, no. 21/25H, Binnenlandsch Bestuur, no. 1672, ANRI, Jakarta.

position in Chinese administration like the Batavian Council. In Batavia, the post of Chinese officer did not depend as much on the revenue farms as in the rest of Java. Since the Company commenced with public land sales, the Batavian Chinese had acquired a considerable amount of land in Batavia and the Ommelanden. While the Chinese grip on the local economy in East and Central Java slackened after the abolition of the revenue farms, the Chinese in the western part of the island managed to retain a great part of their capital through private landownership that was not allowed elsewhere on Java.⁸³³ And so did the Chinese Council of Batavia. Even though the Chinese people did not fully depend on the Council anymore after the government took over some core activities, the Chinese Council of Batavia remained an important administrative institution with the management of its own land and properties, its huge financial funds and the management and supervision of the cemeteries and local temples. Therefore, Chinese protest against the end of the Batavian Council was partly rooted in the fear of a governmental take-over of the Council's possessions and financial management, which would possibly lead to the suspension of financial support to the various charitable foundations and educational institutions, and a more Western arrangement of selling Chinese graves.⁸³⁴ Moreover, the Batavian Council was the only institution that represented Chinese self-sufficiency and independence. The Councils of Semarang and Soerabaja had never acquired that much wealth. This was especially demonstrated by Major Han Tjong Khing who had to pay for office facilities himself.

The Semarang Chinese officers were not consulted anymore on matters such as the Chinese movement and the conduct of political figures in the Chinese community. The detective force of the local police department had its own Chinese officials and interpreters. The officers were also never asked again for advice on the foundation of public limited companies and associations, the approval

⁸³³ Chen, *De Chinese Gemeenschap van Batavia*, 94–5; Djie Ting Ham, “Enkele Opmerkingen over den Economischen Toestand van de Chineezzen op Java”, 48–49.

⁸³⁴ Letter of the Advisor for Chinese Affairs to the Director of Internal Affairs, 28 September 1918, no. 379/18, Binnenlandsch Bestuur, no. 1935, ANRI, Jakarta.

and amendment of statutes, the establishment of factories and workplaces, and so on.⁸³⁵ Thus, even though Chinese public opinion in Semarang shifted in support of the Chinese officers, it was unlikely that the officer system could be restored there. The situation in Soerabaja was even worse. Not only were the Chinese of Soerabaja reluctant to participate in the protest campaigns that were organised in support of the officers, they even pleaded with the colonial government for the abolition of the Chinese officer system.⁸³⁶ The influential totok community of Soerabaja resented the Chinese officers, who were recruited from the wealthy peranakan community. Most of them were not proficient in any of the Chinese dialects and did not maintain close contact with the totok Chinese.⁸³⁷ They were absorbed in their private commercial activities and were hardly aware of the circumstances in the Chinese community. Former Major Han Tjiong Khing was a perfect example for this. He stood far from the Chinese people and had never shown interest in the community, which made him unpopular as a leader.⁸³⁸ The hatred of the totoks toward the Chinese officers could also have been a reaction of feeling discriminated by the colonial government and the established peranakan community, two elements that the Chinese officers represented. The newly arrived totoks were regarded by both the colonial authorities and the established peranakans as inferior. The Chinese officers, established peranakans themselves, stood close to the government and even determined whether they could stay in the Netherlands Indies or not, being members of the immigration committee. The officers were thus the “natural enemies” of the totoks. Just like other newly arrived immigrants elsewhere in the world, the totoks, feeling left out in society,

⁸³⁵ Confidential letter of the Resident of Soerabaja to the Director of Internal Affairs, 20 December 1921, no. 516, Binnenlandsch Bestuur, no. 4406, ANRI, Jakarta.

⁸³⁶ *Sin Po*, 17 November 1916.

⁸³⁷ Liem, “Het Instituut der Chineesche Officieren”, 74.

⁸³⁸ Confidential letter of the Resident of Soerabaja to the Director of Internal Affairs, 28 December 1921, no. 516, Binnenlandsch Bestuur, no. 4406, ANRI, Jakarta; Letter of the Governor of East Java to the Director of Internal Affairs, 13 December 1928, no. 21/25H, Binnenlandsch Bestuur, no. 1672, ANRI, Jakarta.

naturally sought ways to emancipate and pressure the established elite. A natural reaction of newly arrived (struggling) immigrants that is still seen today.

How different the situation was in Batavia. There, the *totok* Chinese had no reason to feel resentful as the non-peranakan Chinese had been represented in the Chinese Council since 1878.⁸³⁹ The peranakan community of Batavia was also not so much susceptible to nationalist influences. As a result, the Chinese turbulences of 1912–13 did not escalate in Batavia (see chapter 4). However, the role of the Chinese officers in these conflicts should not be forgotten. That the situation escalated in Soerabaja can be attributed to the fact that the Chinese officers had lost grip on the Chinese community. The Batavian officers still managed to exercise influence over the Chinese population, which also helped reduce tension between the *singkeh* and peranakan groups.⁸⁴⁰

In 1931 it was decided to allow the institution of Chinese officers to fade away, (with the exception of Batavia).⁸⁴¹ On 8 January 1931, the institution officially came to an end in Semarang, and from then on the Chinese were governed directly by the local government (assistant-resident) with the assistance of Chinese neighbourhood chiefs.⁸⁴² In Soerabaja, the Chinese officer system was officially terminated in 1934. Also here the administration over the Chinese was carried out by Chinese neighbourhood chiefs who were under direct government control.⁸⁴³ The Batavia Council

⁸³⁹ Gouvernementsbesluit, 22 December 1878, no. 19 ANRI, Jakarta.

⁸⁴⁰ See chapter 4.

⁸⁴¹ “Het Bestuur over Vreemde Oosterlingen”, *Indisch Verslag* 1 (1931): 447.

⁸⁴² Willmott, *The Chinese of Semarang*, 19; Liem, *Riwayat Semarang*, 315–16.

⁸⁴³ A. Noordjanah, *Komunitas Tionghoa di Surabaya (1910–1946)* (Semarang: Masyarakat Indonesia Sadar Sejarah (Mesiass), 2004), 61.

was able to survive the storm of criticism that lasted nearly three decades and continued its activities until the Japanese invasion in 1942.⁸⁴⁴

6.7 Conclusion

The Chinese Council of Batavia was in many respects an exceptional case. While the Chinese Councils in Semarang and Soerabaja were unable to survive the sustained criticism of the institution, the Batavia Council and its officers managed to resist the forces working against them. The colonial government was convinced that the totok and peranakan Chinese were no longer willing to be administered by the Chinese officers, but this proved true only outside of Batavia. The government's misconception of the situation in Batavia can be attributed in part to the fact that totoks' dislike of the Chinese officers was discussed in the Chinese-Malay press at great length, which in turn influenced how the Office of Chinese Affairs interpreted the situation. While focussing their attention on the Chinese nationalist movement in China and the Netherlands Indies, the advisors for Chinese affairs ignored the peranakan community. H. H. Kan pointed out how the Dutch authorities were misled in the thirteenth meeting of the People's Council in 1918:

Owing to the inability to separate chaff from wheat, to gauge the actual streams and sentiments among the Chinese population groups, a minority of the Chinese people was able to give the government the impression that the institute of Chinese officers

⁸⁴⁴ It must be noted that the function of major in Medan also ended with the Japanese invasion in 1942. The last major of Medan was Khoe Tjin Tek, who succeeded Tjong A Fie, the high profile entrepreneur in real estate in Medan. See D. A. Buiskool, *Medan: A Plantation City on the East Coast of Sumatera 1870–1942: Planters, the Sultans, Chinese and the Indian* (Surabaya: Airlangga University, in cooperation with the Netherlands Institute of War Documentation, 2004), 8.

was an anachronism, and that therefore the sooner the better one should throw this age-old institution overboard.⁸⁴⁵

As a result, the government was taken by surprise when the Batavian Chinese vehemently rejected the proposed reforms. The prospect of being placed under direct supervision of the colonial authorities without equal status in colonial society caused even the Semarang Chinese to reconsider their views of the Chinese officer system. However, it was too late to resurrect the institution of Chinese officers in Semarang as the Chinese Council had virtually no involvement anymore in Chinese affairs. Nor did the Chinese community of Soerabaja come to the defence of the Chinese officers, which had lost too much influence there because of the influential totok community.

Eventually, the government was forced to recognise that the situation in Batavia was different. Although the peranakans were influenced by developments in China, they were well integrated into the local society of Batavia and environs, which made them resistant to nationalist Chinese influences and reluctant to associate with the *singkeh* Chinese. Instead, they focussed on improving their lot in the colonial state. When they saw that the government was being misled by the pro-China orientated movement and the Office for Chinese Affairs, the peranakans went to great lengths to convince the government that they still valued the Chinese officers. The Chinese Council of Batavia had the longest history in Chinese administration and was the symbol of Chinese self-sufficiency. It conducted the day-to-day work of Chinese administration and managed the Chinese-owned landed properties that for the large part comprised burial grounds, and even when the very existence of the Chinese officer system was under discussion, it continued its activities. Fearing a loss of self-sufficiency and self-reliance was the essence of Chinese protest. If the Chinese were at the mercy of the Dutch without the same status, Chinese self-determination as symbolised by the institution of Chinese officers would be at stake. Thus, when the government intended to place the

⁸⁴⁵ Handelingen van den Volksraad, 13th meeting (19 November 1918): p. 275.

Indies Chinese under direct government control, the Batavia-born Chinese began to fight for what they considered their last hope for self-determination in the colonial state and ultimately came out as winners.

CHAPTER 7

THE FINAL YEARS OF THE CHINESE COUNCIL OF BATAVIA

On 10 February 1930, *Majoor der Chineezen* Khouw Kim An was honoured for his twenty-five years as a Chinese officer in the festively decorated building of the Chinese Council. A large number of Dutch and indigenous officials were present to pay their respects to the major. Resident of Batavia P. H. Willemse had prepared a speech for the major, in which he thanked him for his many years of service. The resident in particular thanked Khouw for ending the disputes between the various Chinese ethnic groups in Batavia. H. Mouw, head of the Office for Chinese Affairs, expressed his admiration for Khouw and noted that he never shirked his responsibilities even in the face of the fierce criticism he had had to endure. The *patih* of Batavia read aloud the decision to grant Khouw the Golden Star for all his services, after which the medal was pinned on Khouw's chest.

A day later, Khouw and his wife held a reception in their mansion on the Molenvliet. Hundreds of guests came to congratulate the major and his wife. Among the guests were the vice-president of the Indies Council, high-profile members of the army and civil service, directors of banks and trading companies, members of the People's Council, indigenous and Chinese dignitaries, and ordinary members of the Chinese community. Such a high turnout underlined the fact that Khouw Kim An remained very popular and well-respected, not only in the Chinese community, but also in the rest of the city.⁸⁴⁶

⁸⁴⁶ *Het Nieuws Van Den Dag*, 11 and 12 February 1930.

The colonial government's decision to officially resurrect the Chinese Council of Batavia even as it allowed the Councils of Soerabaja and Semarang to fade away made the Chinese Council of Batavia the only surviving body of the Chinese officers in Southeast Asia. The fragments above show that the chairman of the Batavian Council was still very popular and that the colonial government had made the right choice in reappointing him. It seemed very promising for the future of the Chinese Council of Batavia, but in this period, situations changed quickly.

The late 1920s and 1930s were marked by the effects of the global economic depression and an important change in colonial policy—namely, the shift from a progressive ethical government to a more conservative and even repressive colonial leadership. Meanwhile the indigenous movement radicalised and turned into a nationalist movement that disregarded ideological, religious, regional, and dialectical differences among its followers. Indonesian nationalists channelled the native population to national unity and mobilised them to work together towards a common goal: independence from the Netherlands within the foreseeable future. The following questions can be asked with regard to these developments: what was the position of the Chinese community in the struggle for independence, and did the Chinese officers play any significant role in the Indonesian nationalist movement or did they have to make place for the Chinese politicians who made their appearance on the scene? And how did the Chinese Council position itself in the Chinese community after its resurrection, and did the Chinese officers regain their important role in the Chinese community?

This chapter will first analyse the social and political developments in the 1920s and 1930s in order to show in what environment the institution of Chinese officers operated after its resurrection. It will examine whether the resurrected Chinese Council still functioned as it had in the past, and whether it retained its vital position in the Chinese community or whether it was snowed under by the sociopolitical developments in this turbulent period.

7.1 The political climate in the 1920s and 1930s

In the early twentieth century the emancipation of non-Western groups in the Dutch East Indies was in full swing. Among the indigenous people, this development led to the foundation of emancipative organisations along ethnic, professional, and religious lines. The colonial government, still in its ethical phase, welcomed the establishment of indigenous cultural societies, labour unions, and youth organisations. It saw the “native awakening” as the successful culmination of its policy of introducing the native people to Western civilisation. Progressive colonial thinkers and liberal politicians were elated to see the successful results of the Ethical Policy and called for the implementation of more reforms so that the colonial state could develop in the direction of self-governance under Dutch guidance and according to Western ideas. The progressive diplomat J. P. Graaf Van Limburg Stirum, who assumed the post of governor-general in 1916, was enamoured of the thought that a new era had begun in the East. At the same time, he was under pressure from certain Dutch politicians and new indigenous community leaders who reminded him that Europe’s political problems might affect the Indies. The revolutions in Austria, Hungary, Germany, and other parts of Europe demonstrated that governments that relied on the military, censorship, restrictions on associations, and the imprisonment and banishment of political enemies could easily be overthrown by well-orchestrated revolutions. The vernacular press also pressed for more political reforms to prevent the European *toestanden* (conditions) from happening in the Indies. In addition, Van Limburg Stirum also was faced with a host of problems including severe food shortages, an outbreak of the Spanish influenza, an unruly labour force, mutinous soldiers and sailors, and growing discontent among the population. Times were stirring and the governor-general felt he had to show willingness to make far-reaching decisions towards reform.⁸⁴⁷

In two public statements by his spokesman in the newly installed *Volksraad* on 18 November and 2 December 1918, Van Limburg Stirum declared that the colonial government was

⁸⁴⁷ Van Dijk, *The Netherlands Indies and the Great War*, 591–98.

about to alter its course by vesting more power in the People's Council and establishing a review committee to advise the colonial government on how to reshape state-structures in the Dutch East Indies. The statements of the governor-general came to be known as the “November Promises”. Presided over by the president of the Supreme Court of the Netherlands Indies J. H. Carpentier Alting, the committee presented its proposals nearly two years later.⁸⁴⁸ Its sweeping reforms were intended to make the Dutch East Indies an independent entity of the Dutch monarchy through the transfer of administrative and legislative responsibilities from the motherland to the colony. This transfer of responsibilities called for the democratisation of central and local authority in the Indies that could be realised with the establishment of a national council and a number of local councils with co-legislative and administrative powers. Members of these councils were to be directly elected by the people. It was stated that only when the indigenous people were allowed more participation in the Indies government structure a far-reaching process of decentralisation was possible. The committee also considered that the natives should be eligible for positions in the Binnenlandsch Bestuur, even the post of governor-general. Any differentiation in race and descent had to be eliminated and competence was to be the only criterion for a government position.⁸⁴⁹ With these progressive proposals, the committee acknowledged the co-equal interests of every member of the Indies society. It seemed like the days of autocratic colonial rule in the hands of Dutch administrative officials and the native aristocratic elite were numbered and a modern and democratic colonial state was about to take over.

But appearances were deceptive, even in the Dutch East Indies. The “November Promises” of Van Limburg Stirum and the proposals of the Carpentier Alting Committee created a storm of outrage in the Netherlands. Even Dutch people in the Indies who viewed the nationalist movement with some degree of sympathy and who were not averse to greater political independence

⁸⁴⁸ Burgers, *De Garoeda en de Ooievaar*, 172–73.

⁸⁴⁹ Van den Doel, *Afscheid van Indië*, 29–31.

interpreted the proposals as far too revolutionary. Dutch politicians and the press accused Van Limburg Stirum of being spineless, of succumbing to pressure exerted by the indigenous nationalists, and even of losing his mind.⁸⁵⁰

When the extremely conservative Simon de Graaff became minister of colonies in 1919, he turned down the Carpentier Alting Committee proposals instantly and submitted his own proposals for administrative reforms. These included the establishment of provincial and regency councils, which in practice would be given hardly any say. Dutch administrative officials would still hold key positions at every local administrative level. Carpentier Alting and other sympathisers of a modern and democratic colonial state were disappointed with the conservative course in Dutch colonial policy and warned that De Graaff's proposals would cause unrest among the indigenous people, who had already begun to show signs of dissatisfaction about their inferior status in colonial society. Nonetheless, the proposals were approved by the majority of the parliament.⁸⁵¹ In 1921, D. Fock was appointed as the new governor-general. He was a former minister of colonies and a declared opponent of the "November Promises" and it was no surprise that he made no effort to win the trust of the indigenous nationalist leaders. He tried to restrain their political activities by tightening control over their organisations and meetings and by expanding police surveillance. He also increased taxes and implemented a rigorous austerity policy that especially affected education and health care. The new governor-general was popular among the Dutch in the Indies, who had begun to feel that their position and safety were under threat.⁸⁵²

At the same time, ties with the indigenous upper-class (*priyayi*) and feudal rulers were also strengthened. The strong belief that there was a fundamental difference between the East and West, which could not be bridged by the association principle, led to an idiosyncratic respect for native culture in Dutch circles. The colonial administrators became more and more convinced that the

⁸⁵⁰ Van Dijk, *The Netherlands Indies and the Great War*, 604.

⁸⁵¹ Van den Doel, *Afscheid van Indië*, 33–34.

⁸⁵² Burgers, *De Garoeda en de Ooievaar*, 177–79.

Indies was still an agrarian country that upheld traditional values and lived under the leadership of traditional institutions. They feared that if a small group of urban nationalists introduced Western values and democratic concepts too hastily, this would disrupt society and create complete chaos. Therefore, the Dutch colonial administrators chose to fall back on the traditional *volkschoufden* (native chiefs) as a countervailing power. The *priyayi* were reinstated as leaders of the indigenous people and guardians of traditional values and institutions. Hence, the Dutch East Indies remained a colonial state autocratically ruled by paternalistic Dutch colonial administrators and native feudal chiefs.⁸⁵³

The shift in colonial policy was not so much a direct result of native emancipation per se as by the speed with it had progressed. In a very short time, a pioneering nationalist movement had emerged from the new political ambitions of the native people. A growing number of indigenous people were pursuing Western education in the Indies and the Netherlands and discovering that the great archipelago that constituted their country was ruled by a very small country, and that this country—the Netherlands—owed its own independence to a revolt and a long war against foreign oppression. They also learned about the French Revolution and the American War of Independence and how before the arrival of the Dutch colonisers great indigenous cultures had created such magnificent structures as Borobudur. They learned of powerful and prosperous indigenous kingdoms of yore such as Srivijaya and Majapahit. At the same time they became aware that colonial society was highly stratified and that the indigenous people had been deliberately placed at the bottom of the social hierarchy. Differentiation in legal status, limited access to the better jobs and all but no access to higher administrative positions, and other forms of discrimination and humiliation conflicted with everything they had learned at school.⁸⁵⁴

⁸⁵³ Ibid., 178; Van den Doel, *Afscheid van Indië*, 35–38.

⁸⁵⁴ Burgers, *De Garoeda en de Ooievaar*, 154–55.

The desire for equal rights and status led to clear-cut nationalism. For the first time the message was sent out that all native inhabitants of the archipelago were part of one Indonesian nation (*bangsa Indonesia*). The two most prominent proponents of the concept of *bangsa Indonesia* were Mohamad Hatta, chairman of the Pendidikan Nasional Indonesia (PNI Baroe), one of the leading non-cooperative nationalist parties at the time, and K. S. Soekarno, the leader of the pro-independence party Partai Nasional Indonesia (PNI). Soekarno in particular was a captivating and moving speaker and as a gifted spokesperson for Indonesian independence, he managed to bring the masses under his spell. Crowds of people were drawn to the meetings at which he articulated their silent grievances. He intrigued his audiences with the idea of an independent state in which they would no longer be suppressed.⁸⁵⁵ In 1927 Soekarno managed to bring the divergent factions of the nationalist movement together into a single federation, the Permoefakatan Perhimpoeanan-Perhimpoeanan Politik Kebangsaan Indonesia (PPPKI, or Federation of Political Associations of the Indonesian Nation). Although it was a very loose organisation and a weak alliance of urban middle-class politicians, Islamic leaders, and leftist front men of the urban and rural proletariat, it was the first time that all participating modern organisations explicitly subscribed to the view that Indonesia should gain independence from the Dutch.⁸⁵⁶ With the *Soempah Pemoeda* (Youth Pledge) on 28 October 1928 the Indonesian youth followed suit.

In the meantime the Indonesian nationalist movement was out to openly confront the colonial government, which was demonstrated by the ill-fated communist uprisings of November 1926 in West Java and January 1927 in West Sumatra. Soekarno continued his anti-colonialist and pro-independence agitation in gatherings behind closed doors, but also in public meetings where he demanded independence for the Indonesian people and ridiculed the colonial authorities. When rumours of mutinous actions began to circulate at the end of 1929, Governor-General De Graeff

⁸⁵⁵ Niel, *The Emergence of the Modern Indonesian Elite*, 228–29, 236–37.

⁸⁵⁶ J. Pluvier, *Indonesië: Kolonialisme, Onafhankelijkheid, Neo-Kolonialisme: Een Politieke Geschiedenis van 1940 tot Heden* (Nijmegen: Socialistische Uitgeverij Nijmegen (SUN), 1978), 26.

took firm action. In a series of raids throughout Java Soekarno and other key PNI leaders were rounded up. Soekarno was convicted to four years of imprisonment.

Nevertheless, Soekarno remained very popular and after his release he became the political leader of Partindo (Partai Indonesia).⁸⁵⁷ But the political climate had turned very repressive after Governor-General B. C. de Jonge took office in September 1931. De Jonge showed no sympathy for the nationalist movement and reminded the nationalists time and again that the Dutch had been in the Indies for 300 years and that they would remain in the Indies for at least another 300 years. He made it clear that Indonesian independence was taboo for the colonial government and warned that any political activity raising this issue beyond the People's Council would meet with the available means of suppression.⁸⁵⁸ This warning was put in effect in 1932 when De Jonge ordered governors and residents to take strong action against political meetings in which people were encouraged to challenge colonial policy. The police was given more power to stop and prevent inflammatory meetings and agents of the political intelligence service (*Politieke Inlichtingendienst*) were called upon to infiltrate and disrupt meetings. Especially the meetings in which Soekarno delivered speeches to a mass audience were under close scrutiny. In 1933 the colonial government decided that Soekarno posed a serious threat to colonial rule and on the first day of August that year he was arrested for the second time and subsequently banished to the island Flores. A few months later the authorities prohibited all meetings organised by Partindo and PNI Baroe, and in 1934 Hatta and other prominent nationalist leaders were arrested too and exiled to Boven-Digoel in New Guinea.⁸⁵⁹

As the non-cooperative wing of the nationalist movement was under close government surveillance, the nationalists had no other choice than to adopt a different approach to attain independence for Indonesia. In this period the People's Council became increasingly important

⁸⁵⁷ The PNI dissolved itself in 1931.

⁸⁵⁸ Burgers, *De Garoeda en de Ooievaar*, 218.

⁸⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 224–28.

because only on this political platform it was more or less possible to declare oneself in favour of independence. Bereft of its leaders and subject to constant police harassment, Partindo dissolved itself in 1936. PNI Baroe continued to exist but withered as its leadership was sent into exile to Boven-Digoel twice. The remaining nationalists formed new parties, while other political parties merged to form new alliances. The aims were full political rights and the establishment of a democratic government system, although the ultimate goal remained independence. The parties sought to open the dialogue with the Dutch, but the colonial government continued its conservative course and even rejected moderate proposals for more autonomy, such as the Soetardjo petition.⁸⁶⁰ The calls and appeals for more autonomy, a parliamentary government, and the right of self-determination were all to no avail. With the Second World War in full swing, the Dutch announced that as long as they had ultimate responsibility for the Netherlands Indies, no political concessions would be made.⁸⁶¹ The colonial government had gone a long way since the announcement of the Ethical Policy by Queen Wilhelmina in 1901; a path that ended up in the opposite direction.

The political activities of the Indies Chinese and their role in the Indonesian nationalist movement

Even though Leo Suryadinata has analysed peranakan politics on Java very thoroughly, it remains necessary to give the political activities of the Indies Chinese another moment's thought. Since the turn of the twentieth-century Chinese emancipation in the Dutch East Indies manifested itself in the establishment of cultural societies, economic organisations and educational institutions. Political activities had not fully developed yet. The Indies Chinese were not much imbued with politics and were preoccupied with cultural revival and improving Chinese trade and education. Their limited involvement in the political sphere is revealed by very modest participation in the lower-level

⁸⁶⁰ J. Pluvier, *Zuidoost-Azië: Een Eeuw van Onvervulde Verwachtingen: Van Bonifacio tot Habibie* (Breda: De Geus, 1999), 113–18.

⁸⁶¹ Burgers, *De Garoeda en de Ooievaar*, 242.

colonial administration, but this had less to do with a lack of interest than with government restrictions imposed on non-European candidates. The number of Chinese running for municipal, regency, and provincial councils was limited by quotas, financial status, and Dutch literacy requirements. The city council was basically a European administration. Between the years 1905–29, there were 173 European members compared with 67 Indonesians, 19 Chinese, and 10 other Foreign Orientals. Indonesians held a majority in the regency councils, whereas in the provincial councils the Europeans and Indonesians shared the membership majority.⁸⁶² The restrictions imposed on Chinese candidates may have kept their interest in politics minimal.

But gradually the Indies Chinese awoke from their slumber. Cautious steps towards political awakening were first reflected in the Chinese press. In the first decade of the twentieth century Chinese-Malay newspapers were little more than advertising journals with a local character; advertisements and serial stories of translated novels predominantly filled the newspapers. Only limited space was devoted to news, which was mostly translated from Dutch newspapers. In the next decade newspapers began to cover both local and international affairs, including the Indonesian nationalist movement. In the 1920s and 1930s, the newspapers underwent further transformation and became more complete in terms of content.⁸⁶³ *Sin Po* is an example of a newspaper that developed from an idle journal to one of the most influential newsmagazines in the Dutch East Indies. Supporters of *Sin Po* were organised in the Sin Po Group and its anti-Dutch and pro-China stance has been analysed in previous chapters.

The pro-Indies group led by H. H. Kan that found a platform in the People's Council to protect Chinese group interests in the Indies established the Chung Hwa Hui (Chinese Association,

⁸⁶² Lohanda, *Growing Pains*, 123–24.

⁸⁶³ Kwee, *Beknopt Overzicht der Chineesche Geschiedenis*, 199–202, 215–19; Suryadinata, *Etnis Tionghoa dan Nasionalisme Indonesia*, 36–45.

CHH) in 1928.⁸⁶⁴ The decision to found this political party stemmed from a feeling of being powerless in the People's Council. As they formed a minority in the council, the Chinese members did not feel they could achieve much and that the government ignored them. To be able to push through their proposals, they needed the backing of a strong organisation or political party.⁸⁶⁵ Another reason connected with this was the feeling that their position in colonial society was at stake. According to leading figures in the peranakan community such as Kwee Tek Hoay⁸⁶⁶, peranakan Chinese were losing ground in areas they once dominated. Automobile and bus companies, printing offices, agricultural enterprises, drinking water companies, batik factories, and rice-mills were little by little taken over by totoks, while the peranakans had to compete with the Indo-Europeans and indigenous people. Those population groups were able to handle the competition because they were backed by organisations that looked after their interests. The peranakans did not have an effective organisation that defended their interests.⁸⁶⁷

With the foundation of the first peranakan Chinese political party in the Netherlands Indies, the Indies Chinese finally made their way to the political arena. Under the presidency of H. H. Kan, the CHH strove to attain equal status with the Europeans. In order to achieve this, the party conveyed that it was important to accept the Dutch Subject Law so that the Indies Chinese could engage in local politics. Since only Dutch subjects were allowed to openly take part in political activities in the Indies, the CHH opened its membership exclusively to Indies-born Chinese (mainly peranakans). Foreign-born Chinese (mainly totoks) were only eligible for associate membership

⁸⁶⁴ The Chung Hwa Hui (CHH) originated from the Chung Hwa Hui Nederland, which was an organisation of peranakan Chinese students studying in the Netherlands. The students were dissatisfied with the inferior "Foreign Orientals" status of the Indies Chinese and strove for equality of status with the European group.

⁸⁶⁵ Setiono, *Tionghoa dalam Pusaran Politik*, 479–80.

⁸⁶⁶ Kwee Tek Hoay was a prolific peranakan writer of novels, drama, and philosophical and religious works. He was also known as the founder of a theosophical association called Tridharma, in Batavia in 1932. See Suryadinata, *Tokoh Tionghoa and Identitas Indonesia*, 39–61.

⁸⁶⁷ Suryadinata, *Tokoh Tionghoa and Identitas Indonesia*, 48.

without voting rights.⁸⁶⁸ This approach was in flat contrast to that of the policy advocated by *Sin Po*, which insisted on the importance of keeping one's Chinese nationality because it would only be a matter of time before China would attain the stature of a world power. Once China was able to compete with the other powerful nations, it would be in a position to demand equal status for the Indies Chinese, just as the Japanese received equal status in 1899.⁸⁶⁹

The CHH found most of its supporters among Dutch-educated, middle-class peranakans, but according to Kwee Tek Hoay the party was in general not very popular among the Indies Chinese. The party published little, did not run a proper propaganda machine, and rarely held meetings with Chinese intellectuals to discuss topical matters, and when it did organise a meeting, Dutch was the official language, which kept away people who were not proficient in Dutch.⁸⁷⁰

In 1932, another peranakan political party was founded. The Partai Tionghoa Indonesia (Chinese Indonesian Party, PTI) represented the Indies Chinese who sided with the Indonesian nationalists and supported the call for a future independent Indonesian state. The most prominent founder of the party was journalist Liem Koen Hian, who believed that the destiny of the Indies Chinese was tied up with the Indonesian nationalists and maintained that the peranakan Chinese were not guests in the archipelago, but permanent residents who were part of the Indonesian nation. He therefore demanded equality of rights and obligations with the indigenous Indonesians. Although Liem aimed to reorientate the peranakan Chinese to their country of birth, he did not advocate a total assimilation into the indigenous society. Peranakans should be free to preserve their cultural and religious values, as long as they saw themselves as sons and daughters of the Indonesian nation and carried out all the obligations as *Indonesiers*. He thus challenged the strictly

⁸⁶⁸ Suryadinata, *Peranakan Chinese Politics in Java 1917–1942*, 28–43.

⁸⁶⁹ Suryadinata, *Tokoh Tionghoa and Identitas Indonesia*, 10.

⁸⁷⁰ *Ibid*, 54.

ethnological concept of *bangsa Indonesia* maintained by the Indonesian nationalists, which included only indigenous Indonesians in the Indonesian nation.⁸⁷¹

Suryadinata has considered the question of the extent to which the Indies Chinese were involved in the Indonesian nationalist movement. Still, it is worth summarising the matter to complete the contextual framework in which the Chinese Council of Batavia operated. It is important to note that only a small number of Chinese was actively involved in Indonesian nationalist parties. Most Indies Chinese silently supported the CHH because only this party represented their interests; Chinese nationalism was too extreme and the Indonesian nationalists had made it clear that the Indies Chinese were not part of the Indonesian nation. Ideological differences also played a significant role. Not many Chinese were interested in joining the Sarekat Islam because only a few had converted to Islam and the association's origins lay in protecting indigenous commercial activities against Chinese business interests. The Indische Partij (Indies Party), the Indische Sociaal Democratische Vereeniging, (Indies Social Democratic Association) and the Partai Komunis Indonesia (Indonesian Communist Party, PKI) also failed to attract the Chinese, many of whom were traders and craftsmen who considered these parties' Marxist programs too radical.⁸⁷² But most Indies Chinese refrained from engaging in political matters because they were aware that they formed a very small and vulnerable group in Indies society. It was safer to focus on their own communal interests.

Of the three main Chinese political organisations, *Sin Po* and the PTI were closest to the Indonesian nationalists. The PTI had basically set the same goals as the Indonesian nationalists, which made them natural allies. *Sin Po* was sympathetic toward the Indonesian nationalist movement because it reasoned that the Indonesians and mainland Chinese were in the same boat; both were occupied to a greater or lesser extent by foreign powers.⁸⁷³ Solidarity was also endorsed

⁸⁷¹ Suryadinata, *Pemikiran Politik Etnis Tionghoa 1900–2002*, 87–94.

⁸⁷² Suryadinata, *Etnis Tionghoa dan Nasionalisme Indonesia*, 123–29.

⁸⁷³ *Ibid.*, 59–60.

by Soekarno, who wrote in his article “Indonesianism and Pan Asianism” that any defeat suffered by the imperialists, no matter in which part of the world, meant a victory for the Indonesians, and that any defeat suffered by the people under imperialist regimes meant defeat for the Indonesians.⁸⁷⁴ The CHH showed some sympathy to the Indonesian nationalist cause but could not really relate to it to the same extent as *Sin Po* and the PTI. The party was Indies-orientated and the social and economic position of its members relied on Dutch rule. *Sin Po* and the PTI, although not agreeing on the ultimate destiny of the Indies Chinese, teamed up against the CHH and labelled the party as “the enemy of the Indonesian nationalists”, “friend of the colonialists”, and “friend of the association of Chinese officers”.

Soekarno's theory about Pan-Asian Nationalism notwithstanding, most Indonesian nationalist parties—even Soekarno's PNI—did not admit the Chinese as full members. Article 4 in the party constitution stated that only native Indonesians were eligible for membership. Other Asians were only admitted as associate members.⁸⁷⁵ Soekarno saw the Chinese as fellow Asians who battled against the same type of enemy and it sufficed when the Chinese and Indonesians worked together. According to him, the moral support of a different ethnic group that looked at the Indonesian struggle for freedom more objectively was much more valuable than incorporating the Indies Chinese as *Indonesiërs*.⁸⁷⁶ Later on, Gerindo (Gerakan Rakjat Indonesia, or Indonesian People's Movement), which was founded by former Partindo members in 1937, was one of the few Indonesian nationalist parties that accepted peranakans—whether peranakan Chinese, Arabs, or Indo-Europeans—as full members. Amir Sjarifoeddin, one of the founders of Gerindo, stated that someone's nationality was not determined by blood, skin colour or the shape of one's face, but by one's life goal (*toejoean*), destiny (*nasib*), and desire (*kainginan*). People who share the same life

⁸⁷⁴ Ibid., 60.

⁸⁷⁵ Suryadinata, “Pre-War Indonesian Nationalism and the Peranakan Chinese”, 86–88.

⁸⁷⁶ Suryadinata, *Tokoh Tionghoa and Identitas Indonesia*, 34.

goals, destiny, and desires could be termed as one nation. Upon hearing that Gerindo accepted peranakans as full members, Liem Koen Hian immediately left the PTI and joined Gerindo.⁸⁷⁷

Although most Indonesian nationalist parties placed restrictions on ethnic Chinese membership, joint efforts to organise anti-Dutch campaigns did exist, as in the soccer boycott that took place in Surabaya in 1932. The boycott was inspired by a press release of the *Nederlandsch Indische Voetbal Bond* (Dutch Indies Football Union, NIVB) which announced that members of the Indonesian and Foreign Oriental press were not welcome to cover the upcoming football match in May because the “coloured people” always spoke ill of the NIVB. The football match was a *Steden Wedstrijd* (a match between football teams from different cities), which were usually organised by the NIVB and its Indonesian and Chinese partners, the *Persatuan Sepakraga Seluruh Indonesia* (Football Union of Indonesia) and the *Hwa Nan Voetbalbond* (Hwa Nan Football Union). The person behind the press release was a Dutch journalist from *D'Orient*, a football weekly under the editorial leadership of A. Zimmerman, a member of the conservative *Vaderlandsche Club*, which sought stronger ties between the Netherlands and its colonial possessions. Led by Liem Koen Hian, the peranakan press threatened to boycott the match and all other upcoming matches. His action found wide support and forty indigenous, Arab, and Chinese political parties and sports associations organised a boycott of soccer matches in an action that Liem and the Indonesian nationalists used to convey their political ideas and condemn Dutch colonialism.⁸⁷⁸

There were also close ties between the Indonesian nationalists and the Chinese-Malay press, and several Indonesian nationalists used the Chinese newspapers to spread their ideas. They considered the Chinese press a safe platform to voice their thoughts because the Indonesian newspapers were subject to more intense government surveillance. Even though *Sin Po* stood for Chinese nationalism, it was not aloof from the Indonesian nationalist movement. It maintained

⁸⁷⁷ Suryadinata, *Etnis Tionghoa dan Nasionalisme Indonesia*, 142.

⁸⁷⁸ Bayu Aji, *Tionghoa Surabaya dalam Sepak Bola 1915-1942*, 112–14.

warm relations with Indonesian nationalists such as Soekarno and reported every important event in their struggle with the Dutch. In addition to *Sin Po*, *Keng Po*, *Sin Tit Po*, and *Pewarta Soerabaja* also provided extensive coverage of the Indonesian nationalist movement from the foundation of Boedi Oetomo, the PNI, and the PPPKI, to the day of *Soempah Pemoeda*, and of course the arrests of prominent nationalist leaders and their trials.

Indonesian nationalists were also inspired by *Sin Po*'s ardent advocacy of Chinese nationalism. It was this kind of spirit that Indonesian magazines and newspapers needed to effectively spread the message of nationalism and reach the ultimate goal of independence from the Dutch. When Soekarno was still a student at the *Technische Hoogeschool* in Bandoeng he already maintained close relations with leading *Sin Po* figures, including chief editor Tjou Boe San.⁸⁷⁹ Many prominent Indonesian journalists had also been apprentices at Chinese newspapers, which were in many respects more developed than the Indonesian press. Many had their own printing offices and had better managerial and financial systems in place.⁸⁸⁰ For Chinese newspapers that were sympathetic to the Indonesian struggle for independence, Indonesian journalists were indispensable, and most were involved in the nationalist movement themselves and understood better than anyone else the activities and spirit of the nationalist movement. Among the more prominent of them were D. Koesoemaningrat, Saeroen, and W. R. Soepratman—who composed *Indonesia Raya*, the national anthem of Indonesia.⁸⁸¹ The fact that the Chinese were not allowed full membership of Indonesian nationalist parties did not affect the close cooperation between the Chinese press and the nationalists. Only *Sin Tit Po*, the mouth piece of the PTI protested against the exclusion of peranakan Chinese from most Indonesian political parties.

⁸⁷⁹ Kwee, *Beknopt Overzicht der Chineesche Geschiedenis*, 221–22; Suryadinata, *Tokoh Tionghoa and Identitas Indonesia*, 12; Wahid, “Modal Cina dan Nasionalisme Indonesia”, 105–106.

⁸⁸⁰ Suryadinata, *Etnis Tionghoa dan Nasionalisme Indonesia*, 56–57.

⁸⁸¹ *Sin Po* was also the first newspaper to publish the text of *Indonesia Raya*.

7.2 The three political streams and their strongholds

The public land sales in Batavia not only had strengthened the position of the Chinese Council, but had left a positive mark on the integration of the peranakan Chinese in both urban and rural regions of the residency as well. The stereotype of the Chinese deriving their profits from trading activities has largely obscured their pioneering role in opening up the Ommelanden, but the development of new agricultural territories by the Chinese not only contributed to the local economy but also to interracial relations. Under the auspices of the VOC the Chinese took up market gardening and engaged in agricultural pursuits in the Ommelanden.⁸⁸² The main crop on these private lands was rice, mostly cultivated in the western (Tangerang) and eastern part (Meester-Cornelis) of the residency. Other crops included sugar, nuts, coffee, tobacco and indigo. The cultivation of these crops required intensive labour, and a large number of native labourers lived and worked on the Chinese owned land. Despite the frequent usury practices, the Chinese landlords were rather indulgent in dealing with their native tenants and both lived peacefully together.⁸⁸³ In fact, native tenants preferred Chinese landlords over the Europeans. Although the Dutch took offence at the usury practices of the Chinese landlords, they had to admit that there existed a quite friendly relationship between the Chinese landlords and their native tenants. Without lowering their debts, the Chinese landlords provided a listening ear to their tenants, frequently asked about their family's whereabouts and took notice of their complaints.⁸⁸⁴ As a result most of these Indies-born peranakans were socially absorbed into indigenous life, which made the peranakan community of Batavia quite distinctive from the peranakan communities in Semarang and Soerabaja. The colonial government's implementation of its land repurchase policy in 1910 did not have a great impact on the integration of the peranakans in the region. In Semarang and Soerabaja Chinese settlement

⁸⁸² Blussé, *Strange Company*, 84–87. More than two-thirds of the Chinese settled in the Ommelanden. See Lohanda, *The Kapitan Cina of Batavia*, 201.

⁸⁸³ Lohanda, *The Kapitan Cina of Batavia*, 252–56.

⁸⁸⁴ De Veer, *Particuliere Landerijen en de Openbare Veiligheid*, 44–45.

remained solidly in the city. Although there was a great deal of social interaction between the different ethnic groups and acculturation toward the European way of life on the one hand and the Indonesian on the other, the Chinese persisted in their desire to live among members of their own kind. This helped foster the densification process and tended to exclude other races from moving into the Chinese quarters. *De Chineesche Kamp* remained a clearly defined area with its distinctive spatial and physical characters.⁸⁸⁵

The fact that the peranakan Chinese were well integrated in virtually every corner of the residency helped reduce tension between the indigenous, Arab and Chinese communities. For this reason, the Chinese turbulences of 1912–13 did not escalate in Batavia (see chapter 4). Whereas Batavia had a mixed population of both urban and rural dwellers, the population of Soerabaja was mostly urban, which caused economic rivalry between the Chinese, indigenous and Arabs. Most peranakans in Batavia were also nonresistant to totok nationalist influences and refrained from joining *singkeh* organisations because they were unable to identify themselves with their aims. Their successful integration kept them aloof from the nationalist activities of the *singkeh* Chinese. Despite the emotional tie with their ancestral country, it was their fervent wish to stay in the Dutch East Indies. It was not surprising, therefore, that *Sin Po's* anti-Indies campaigns were all doomed to failure. Its hostile campaign against the Chinese officers also proved to be fruitless in Batavia. It was a different story in Soerabaja. Also in this case the urban character of the city and the high density of the Chinese quarters caused friction, this time between the peranakans and totoks. When the latter arrived in great numbers at the turn of the twentieth century, economic competition heated up, disturbing the peaceful lives of the former. In fact, the totoks even out-shined the peranakans in some branches of the local economy. The influential totok community in Soerabaja was also very successful in dismantling the power position of the Chinese officers. The unfilled vacancies and the inability to quickly overcome the riots by totok Chinese during the New Year festivities in 1912

⁸⁸⁵ Widodo, *Chinese Settlements in a Changing City*, 2–3 (part 3); Willmott, *The Chinese of Semarang*, 15.

demonstrated that the institution had lost its credibility in the Chinese community. The Chinese Council of Batavia managed to keep the disturbances to a minimum but owed this success also to the non-peranakan Chinese officers in the Council. The Soerabaja Council consisted only of peranakans.

While going over these conclusions, the question comes to mind whether Suryadinata's classical analysis of the three political streams of the Chinese movement in the Dutch East Indies is still sustainable. According to his analysis Batavia was *Sin Po's* bulwark, while the CHH had its main base in Semarang and the PTI in Soerabaja. Suryadinata characterises Batavia as a city heavily subjected to nationalist influences due to its close links with Singapore, the centre of Chinese nationalist activities in Southeast Asia. He also mentions that new Chinese migrants who came to Java arrived mainly through Batavia, often bringing with them the latest ideas of Chinese nationalism. It was therefore not surprising that the first Pan-Chinese organisation (THHK) in Java was formed in Batavia. He continues his argument by pointing out that pan-Chinese organisations like the Siang Hwee and Soe Po Sia were also very active in promoting the relationship between the overseas Chinese and China. As *Sin Po* was also established in Batavia and was able to stir up public opinion by carrying out its China-orientated message, he identifies the residency as its main base.⁸⁸⁶ Yet, its controversial expressions did not necessarily represent Chinese public opinion, especially not in Batavia. The fierce campaigns staged by *Sin Po* against the Chinese officers, the Dutch Subject Law and Chinese participation in the People's Council all utterly failed. Prominent peranakan Chinese accepted membership of the People's Council, the Dutch Subject Law remained enforced and the peranakan community fought hard to preserve the officer system. In general the peranakan Chinese managed to resist the nationalist influences and most peranakans even showed aversion to the *singkeh* movement.

⁸⁸⁶ Suryadinata, *Peranakan Chinese Politics in Java 1917–1942*, 54–57.

Semarang was far from Batavia and communications with the outside world were therefore more difficult, according to Suryadinata. It had a stable peranakan community and peranakan businessmen were rather well established in the city. Hence the peranakans of Semarang were not keen on taking part in Chinese nationalist activities. Widodo however claims that Semarang was one of the most important centres for Chinese nationalism. The city was frequently visited by delegates of the Chinese imperial regime. One special inspector for the Chinese schools in Java used Semarang as his base for future inspections. The proclamation of the Chinese Republic on 1 January 1912 also led to an outburst of joy in the city, with the Chinese celebrating the historical event with great enthusiasm.⁸⁸⁷ Suryadinata furthermore mentions that most CHH members in Semarang were employees of the Semarang based Oei Tiong Ham concern.⁸⁸⁸ The Oei Tiong Ham concern may have contributed to the strength of the CHH branch of Semarang, but this does not necessarily mean that Semarang was the centre of the Dutch East Indies orientated peranakan Chinese. The outcome of the conference held in Semarang in 1917, during which a decision was to be taken about sending delegates to the People's Council, was that the Indies Chinese were foreigners and that they should refrain from any local political involvement.⁸⁸⁹ This momentous gathering was held just eleven years before the formation of the CHH. Mona Lohanda has also shown that the leadership of the party mainly rested with peranakan Chinese from Batavia. In fact, she claims that in effect CHH leadership was shared among H. H. Kan and two prominent members of the Chinese Council of Batavia: Major Khouw Kim An and Captain Lie Tjian Tjoen.⁸⁹⁰ The fact that the CHH was a party backed by Chinese officers and supporters of the officer system does not correspond with the unpopularity of the institution in Semarang. The argument that the CHH was based in Semarang is therefore not very convincing.

⁸⁸⁷ Widodo, *Chinese Settlements in a Changing City*, 23.

⁸⁸⁸ Suryadinata, *Peranakan Chinese Politics in Java 1917–1942*, 56.

⁸⁸⁹ Widodo, *Chinese Settlements in a Changing City*, 24.

⁸⁹⁰ Lohanda, *Kapitan Cina of Batavia*, 172.

Suryadinata claims that the popularity of the PTI in Soerabaja was due to the close contacts between the Indonesian nationalists and peranakan Chinese. Like Batavia and Semarang, Soerabaja had a stable peranakan community. But the striking feature of Soerabaja, Suryadinata argues, were the close ties between the Indonesian nationalists and peranakan Chinese and Arabs. Such intensive contacts were absent in Batavia and Semarang. He refers to the close cooperation between the Soerabaja based Chinese newspapers and the Indonesian nationalists, the meetings attended by Indonesians and peranakans in which common issues were discussed, and the close ties between the Indonesian Soccer Federation and peranakan Chinese soccer teams as proof for his argument.⁸⁹¹ In the previous paragraph it is shown that *Sin Po* also maintained warm relations with the Indonesian nationalists. The joint press efforts in Soerabaja were thus not unique. The PTI may have received much support in Soerabaja, but the party may have been popular in other parts of Java as well, especially in those regions where peranakan Chinese lived side by side with their indigenous neighbours. Bondan Kanumoyoso has shown that in the VOC era, Chinese entrepreneurs, agriculturists and rural labourers in the Ommelanden of Batavia interacted closely with the indigenous people. This close interaction continued after the end of the VOC hegemony.⁸⁹² In Buitenzorg, Meester-Cornelis and Tangerang in West Java, an estimated number of 30,000 Chinese farmers lived among indigenous farmers and for 90 percent these farmers had adopted an indigenous lifestyle. They maintained close social contacts with the indigenous people, many of them had indigenous spouses, they—both men and women—worked on the plantations or rice fields, and dressed and behaved like their indigenous neighbours. The only way to differentiate between them and the indigenous people was to take a peek in their homes where family altars could be found or other tokens of Chinese religious beliefs and traditions.⁸⁹³ This group of peranakan Chinese was reluctant to join the ultra-nationalist Chinese because of their close ties with

⁸⁹¹ Suryadinata, *Peranakan Chinese Politics in Java 1917–1942*, 56–57.

⁸⁹² Kanumoyoso, “Beyond the City Wall”, 73.

⁸⁹³ Suryadinata, *Pemikiran Politik Etnis Tionghoa 1900–2002*, 97.

the indigenous community.⁸⁹⁴ Because of their humble background it was also not likely that they would join the CHH as this party was commonly depicted as the party for rich businessmen and landowners. In light of this, Suryadinata's conclusion that support for the PTI was weak in West Java where people were heavily engaged in trade is a bit odd.

The fact that the virulent anti-Chinese outbursts mainly occurred in Central and East Java and were especially hard to overcome in Soerabaja also weakens Suryadinata's argument. The unrest in Batavia was much faster resolved and did not occur as often as in the rest of Java. Soerabaja may have had a stable *peranakan* community, but the *totok* community was very much present. How influential this *totok* community was is shown by the unpopularity of the Chinese officer system in the city. The *totoks* managed to discredit the Chinese officers to the extent that the officers were forced to surrender to the ongoing criticism. By contrast, the Chinese officer system in Batavia managed to survive all the verbal attacks and remained an authority in the Chinese community, albeit in the end it had to share power with the new community leaders.

Thus, although Suryadinata certainly has given a credible overview of *peranakan* Chinese politics on Java, his analysis of the three main political organisations and their strongholds on Java is open to question. As Lohanda has pointed out, the strength of a political party is not determined by simply looking where it was first established. One has to take into account the nature of the *peranakan* and *totok* communities, the relation between these communities, their relationship with the indigenous and Arab communities, but also the history of their establishment and Dutch local policy in these regions. Only then is one able to estimate whether a particular political organisation was successful in a certain region.⁸⁹⁵ Although the outcome of my research calls Suryadinata's analysis into question, further research is still necessary for a complete study of the distinct

⁸⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 98.

⁸⁹⁵ Lohanda, *Kapitan Cina of Batavia*, 174–75.

characteristics of the Chinese communities on Java. Unfortunately the scope of this dissertation does not allow me to elaborate more.

7.3 The Chinese Council after its resurrection: changes and adjustments

Although the Chinese officers were reinstated in Batavia, the Chinese Council was struggling to regain its central position in the Chinese community. In the late 1920s, the Chinese Council was experiencing serious financial difficulties because of the excessive ground tax (*verponding*) imposed on the Council's land in the period 1922–27.⁸⁹⁶ The Council was unable to cope with the exorbitant tax assessments and in August 1928 the Chinese Council still owed a staggering f 28.691,87 that had been levied on three plots of land over the period 1924–27. On 22 August 1928, the inspector of finances issued three enforcement orders to the Chinese Council for the tax arrears and imposed a fine of f 1.434,60 for the overdue tax.⁸⁹⁷ After the warrants were issued Major Khouw Kim An and the inspector of finances discussed an arrangement for paying off the debt in instalments of one thousand guilders per month and that the Council's income received from people paying off their mortgages at the end of the year—approximately six to seven thousand guilders—would be applied to the arrears as well.⁸⁹⁸

The excessive ground tax imposed on the Council's land increased the Council's total expenditures by approximately forty percent. This spectacular increase had resulted in a yearly financial deficit of ten thousand guilders and the Council was at risk of the colonial government confiscating its properties. The confiscation of the Council's properties by the tax collectors office

⁸⁹⁶ The *verponding* was in particular very high on lands that served as construction sites and as a consequence greatly increased in value. Sums of $\frac{3}{4}$ and even 1 cent per square meter per month were not exceptional. See Van der Hoek, "De Particuliere Landerijen in de Residentie Batavia", 52–53.

⁸⁹⁷ Malay minutes, no. NM5, 12 September 1928: pp. 354–55. See also the enforcement orders issued by the inspector of finances on 22 August 1928, the Kong Koan Archive, MR2B I/IX, no. VI, Leiden.

⁸⁹⁸ Letter of the inspector of finances to the chairman of the Chinese Council of Batavia, 1 September 1928, no. 2834/Inv.-, the Kong Koan Archive, MR2B I/IX, no. VI, Leiden.

would not be accompanied by the colonial government taking over the Council's responsibilities to the Chinese community. Fearing a takeover of its properties, the Chinese Council had submitted an official request to the colonial government for financial support.⁸⁹⁹

Perhaps the financial crisis arising from the tax problem was the reason why on 9 September 1927 the Chinese associations of Batavia assembled to discuss the future of the Chinese Council. The outcome of the assembly was that a request would be sent to the resident of Batavia to alter the composition of the Chinese Council. The Chinese associations wished to add several non-official members to the Council. Ideally, the number of the non-official members would equal the number of Chinese officers apart from the chairman, who would thus retain the decisive vote in the case of a tie. These non-official or private members were to be appointed by the colonial government based on the nominations of the Chinese associations and they were to assist the Chinese officers in managing the properties of the Chinese Council. It was not so much the desire to have more joint-decision making powers in the administrative affairs of the Council that led to the requested rearrangement of membership; the aim of the associations was to make the financial management of the Council's (that is, the Chinese community's) properties more public. The associations reasoned that the Council's ability to purchase the real estate that served primarily for Chinese cemeteries derived from the "grave funds" raised from the Chinese community since the time of the VOC. The same applied for the other funds held by the Council. A committee was appointed in the meeting, chaired by Tio Tek Hong, to draft the request and on 10 November 1927 it was sent to the resident of Batavia.⁹⁰⁰

The resident forwarded the committee's request to the Council, which discussed it at its meeting of 27 December 1927. It appears that the idea of admitting non-official members to the Council had already been suggested by Major Khouw Kim An ten years earlier. In July 1917 he

⁸⁹⁹ Malay minutes, no. NM5, 29 January 1929: pp. 372-73.

⁹⁰⁰ Malay minutes, no. NM5, 27 December 1927: pp. 304-305; Yo Heng Kam, "Reorganisatie van den Chineeschen Raad", *De Chineesche Revue* (July 1928): 77-81.

officially submitted a proposal to the colonial government to add four non-official members (peranakans and totoks) to the five official members of the Chinese Council. In addition he also suggested appointing two persons to form a Council committee in order to inspect the Council's account books. According to the major, most officers were very sloppy and too lazy to accurately manage and check the account books. His proposals had been rejected at the time because the colonial government was making arrangements to abolish the institution of Chinese officers. Now, the Chinese community itself was calling for the admission of non-official members to the Council. Major Khouw applauded the request and the full Council approved the measure by seven votes to one. One officer recommended that they look for non-official members among not only the peranakans, but also the totok community, as Khouw had suggested a decade before, and this, too, was approved.⁹⁰¹

The one dissenting vote had come from Captain Yo Heng Kam, who argued that an equal number of private and official members would give rise to a disproportionate balance between the formal representatives (the Chinese officers) and the represented interests (the Chinese community). He also foresaw problems when taking votes. An equal outcome of a voting—which could still be won by the officers with the chairman's vote—would sharpen the conflict between the “officials” and “non-officials”. According to Yo, the aim should be to create an organisation in which the officers functioned as trusted representatives of the Chinese community and execute its common opinion under close supervision of members of the community. He therefore proposed adding to the Council twelve to fifteen private members chosen from and by the Chinese community to form a committee that would have full control over the Council's properties in accordance with the current statutes. The officers would be responsible for the day-to-day administration of the Council and implementation of the Council's decisions. The captain argued that the Chinese Council's funds derived from the Council's properties and that these properties had been financed by the Chinese

⁹⁰¹ Malay minutes, no. NM5, 27 December 1927: pp. 304–10

community since the era of the Dutch East India Company, thus it would be reasonable to give the private members more control over the Council's affairs and in particular its properties. To dispel concern over the unbalanced ratio between the private and official members, he suggested giving the chairman of the Council the right to recommend that the resident cancel questionable decisions or decisions that violated the Council's statutes. This way the right to observe that the Council's decisions were in accordance with its spirit or statutes remained with the colonial government.⁹⁰²

Lieutenant Tan Yam Hok worried that the chairman would not be comfortable cancelling decisions, but Captain Yo replied that the chairman could only *propose* the resident to cancel questionable decisions: "If the resident agrees that the decisions in question are in violation of the Council's statutes, he will give his approval for cancellation." Lieutenant Tan In Hok objected to the chairman's right to intervene: "Captain Yo Heng Kam's proposal practically implies that we all have to do what the chairman tells us to. I strongly disagree with this! Are we not all representatives of the Chinese people?" The captain was astonished by the lieutenant's comment and replied: "I have never said anything about obeying the chairman at all times. Moreover, the Chinese people do not regard us Chinese officers as their representatives. If they did, they would have never submitted a request to add private members to the Council in the first place!"⁹⁰³ The captain claimed that the request submitted by the Chinese community was nothing more than a provisional compromise. In actual fact, ordinary Chinese wanted a formulation in which the private members would be in the majority. Fearing that the government would judge this proposal as premature and reckless, it had settled for a one-to-one ratio of official and unofficial members.⁹⁰⁴ Lieutenant Tan In Hok did not respond, but Lieutenant Lie Boen Sin suggested that the prestige of the Chinese officers would be

⁹⁰² Malay minutes, no. NM5, 27 December 1927: pp. 305–306; Yo Heng Kam, "Reorganisatie van den Chineeschen Raad", 78–79, 85–88.

⁹⁰³ Malay minutes, no. NM5, 27 December 1927: pp. 307–308.

⁹⁰⁴ Yo Heng Kam, "Reorganisatie van den Chineeschen Raad", 86.

harmd by the inclusion of private members to the Council, but Yo argued that it was the other way around: the Chinese officers were losing prestige within the community because the Council remained a “conservative institution of concealed mystery”. Democratisation of the Council would allow the community more access to the Council and its affairs and thus open the door for closer cooperation. The disclosure of the Council's affairs and close cooperation with the Chinese community would eventually restore the prestige the officers had lost. Yet, Captain Yo Heng Kam's efforts to convince his colleagues were to no avail: his motion was declined by seven votes against one.⁹⁰⁵

One year later, at the Council meeting of 20 December 1928, Major Khouw announced that by Gouvernementsbesluit of 2 November 1928, no. 25, the governor-general had acceded to the community's request to admit non-official members to the Chinese Council. The colonial government apparently realised that it was necessary to grant the Chinese citizens of Batavia some sort of co-management, so they would continue to support the institution of Chinese officers. According to the decree, six private members would be added to the six official members (the chairman not included). The major also informed the Council members that he had already instructed the neighbourhood chiefs to circulate a letter in their wards notifying residents of their right to nominate candidates for private membership in the Chinese Council. In the meantime, seven Chinese associations had already sent their nominees to the Chinese Council, which duly passed on a formal list of nominees to the resident.⁹⁰⁶ Then in a special meeting on 29 January 1929, the resident of Batavia officially inaugurated six new members.⁹⁰⁷

⁹⁰⁵ Malay minutes, no. NM5, 27 December 1927: pp. 308–10; Yo Heng Kam, “Reorganisatie van den Chineeschen Raad”, 84.

⁹⁰⁶ Malay minutes, no. NM5, 20 December 1928: pp. 365–66.

⁹⁰⁷ Gouvernementsbesluit of 7 January 1929, no. C65/1/1. The members were Tan Pia Teng; Lauw Pin San, alias Lauw A Hin; Nio Peng Long; Ie Tjoen Lim; Tjoeng Tjoe Sioe; and Lie Shan Ming.

The resident explained that the appointment of these new members was based almost entirely on the recommendations and wishes of the Chinese associations. It was the fervent wish of the Chinese associations to find representatives from each significant ethnic (Chinese) settlement in Batavia, including the totok community.⁹⁰⁸ Nevertheless, he clarified that the right of appointment or removal remained exclusively reserved for the government or its representatives (technically, the governor of West Java made the appointments). The government was not obligated to base its appointments solely on nominations of the Chinese associations. Granting the Chinese associations the right to nominate candidates for the Chinese Council would violate their statutes and make them semi-official institutions, which these associations were not intended to be. Therefore, the governor of West Java appointed these non-official members based on his own good judgement, although he took into account the recommendations of the Chinese associations. The resident then urged that the Council's statutes, as determined by Residentsbesluit of 20 August 1907, no. 15548/36, be made consistent with the current arrangement of membership as soon as possible.⁹⁰⁹ He also briefly addressed the financial problems of the Council and suggested that the Council members, while awaiting the government's response for their request for financial help, consider introducing an effective austerity policy, without losing sight of the Council's principal aims.⁹¹⁰

As part of the new policy of putting the Council's affairs before the public, the Chinese Council sent a report of the inaugural meeting of January 1929 to the press, including a copy of the

⁹⁰⁸ The fact that the governor of West Java had taken account of this wish can be proven by newly appointed member Lie Shan Ming who asked Major Khouw Kim An to repeat in short the speech of the resident as he did not understand any Dutch and was still not proficient enough in the Malay language. See Malay minutes, no. NM5, 29 January 1929: pp. 378–79. In the meeting of 4 May 1931, it was announced that private members Tan Pia Teng and Ie Tjoen Lim had resigned because the former went back to China and the latter moved to another place. Tan Pia Teng's return to China also shows that members of the totok community served as private members. These gentlemen were replaced by Chang Cheng Liong and Ong Kek Tjoe. See Malay minutes, no. NM6, 4 May 1931: pp. 74–75.

⁹⁰⁹ Malay minutes, no. NM5, 29 January 1929: pp. 368–81.

⁹¹⁰ Malay minutes, no. NM5, 29 January 1929: pp. 372–73.

resident's speech. The news that the Chinese Council was labouring under great financial difficulties came as a real bombshell. *Sin Po* reproached the Council and accused the officers of improper management. *Sin Po* wrote that according to an unnamed source the Chinese Council only received an income of three thousand guilders each month, while the ground tax levied over its land was no less than thirteen thousand guilders, which implied that the value of the Council's land was at least one million guilders. How was it possible, *Sin Po* wrote, that the Council received only three thousand guilders each month from over one million guilders worth of land? "Based on these numbers", *Sin Po* wrote, "the Chinese Council can serve as a perfect example for everyone or every company that wishes for instant . . . bankruptcy". The newspaper also ridiculed the Council's request for financial support to the colonial government: "This is really beyond ludicrous: the tax officer under government employment imposes a tax so extraordinary high—causing the Chinese Council to be as good as dead financially, and to help the Chinese Council out of its financial despair, the Council is asking the colonial government for support—the same government that is imposing the excessively high ground tax!"⁹¹¹ The *Sin Po* article caused much commotion among the Chinese officers. In the first official Council meeting with the private members, Major Khouw Kim An explained that the yearly deficit of ten thousand guilders was caused by nothing else than the excessively high ground tax imposed on the Council's land between the years 1922–27. The reason why the ground tax was so high had to do with the houses built on the land, especially in Goenoeng Sahari and Djati. The chairman said that the Council actually had the right to recover part of the ground tax from the homeowners, but because the tax assessment had come out too late the Council had lost this right.⁹¹² Since the late tax assessment was not the Council's mistake, the Council had submitted a request for financial support from the government. The chairman also explained that the Council's main function was to aid the underprivileged in the Chinese

⁹¹¹ *Sin Po*, 1 February 1929.

⁹¹² On certain private lands the landlord was entitled to recoup the ground tax which he owed to the government from the leasehold tenants. See Van der Hoek, "De Particuliere Landerijen in de Residentie Batavia", 52.

community. The Council provided tuition fees for poor children enrolled at the THHK schools, subsidised a number of other schools, gave financial aid to poor elderly women without families, and provided coffins for poor deceased people. The large expenditures of the Chinese Council were certainly not cases of mismanagement. One of the private members then suggested inviting the press to come to the Council meetings. Hoping that this might stop the media's presumptuousness the other members agreed. Major Khouw said to welcome the press at the Council meetings and did not object to any criticism as long as it was constructive. He hoped that *Sin Po* in particular would stop its premature and bold reports about the Chinese Council.⁹¹³

In the Council meeting of February 1929, it was decided to invite the press to the monthly board meetings. A few days before each meeting the Chinese Council handed out a list of topics to be discussed, and it was then up to the newspapers to decide whether they would send their representatives to the meetings. By inviting the press to the monthly meetings, the democratisation of the Chinese Council was complete and its affairs became more transparent and accessible to the public.⁹¹⁴

The appointment of private members to the Chinese Council was to ensure a close cooperation with the Chinese officers for the good of the Chinese community, but initially the cooperation between the official and private members went a little bit uneasy. At the request of the private members the monthly board meetings were set on Tuesday at seven p.m.⁹¹⁵ So far the Council members had never convened on a specific day because the Chinese officers were usually available at any time. Within a year, this decision was overturned because it turned out that many of the private members were often absent and it was decided to conduct the monthly board meetings again on any day of the week.⁹¹⁶ The frequent absence of some private members in the beginning

⁹¹³ Malay minutes, no. NM5, 2 February 1929: pp. 382–88, and 9 March 1929: p. 399.

⁹¹⁴ Malay minutes, no. NM5, 2 February 1929: pp. 382–88.

⁹¹⁵ Malay minutes, no. NM5, 20 August 1929: pp. 454–55.

⁹¹⁶ Malay minutes, no. NM6, 20 May 1930: p. 29.

caused some irritation among the Chinese officers. At the Council meeting of 9 March 1929 one private member indignantly asked why the amendment of the Council's statutes was discussed as the fourth item on the agenda. He uttered that the amendment of the statutes was a matter of high importance that should be discussed as the first item on the agenda. The major responded by telling him that this item had been discussed repeatedly in previous meetings. He explained that undecided matters needing further discussion were usually placed at the end of the agenda as new items were given priority. The major then remarked: "Had you been present at the previous meetings you would have known this." Lieutenant Na Tjioe Kim went a little further than that and said: "If certain members do not show up at Council meetings and do not care about what is discussed in these meetings, they only have themselves to blame. If for this reason they miss out on certain discussions, they have no reason to object to these repeatedly discussed items being placed at the end of the agenda in the next meetings."⁹¹⁷ It also appears that there were misunderstandings among the private members about the Chinese Council's subordination to the colonial government. When discussing the amendment of the Council's statutes, the chairman said that the amendments would be sent to the resident for approval. One of the private members remarked that he always thought that any decision made by the Chinese Council was binding. The major then pointed out to him that "the Chinese Council always has to answer to the colonial government and that the resident also has the right to cancel any decision that he finds inappropriate or in violation with the Council's statutes."⁹¹⁸

There was also a heated discussion about hoisting the Chinese nationalist flag on Chinese public holidays. Several private members noted that some foreign embassies in China flew their flags at half-mast on the anniversary of Dr Sun Yat-sen's death and felt that the Chinese Council should do the same way. Lieutenant Tan In Hok reminded them that they lived in a Dutch colony

⁹¹⁷ Malay minutes, no. NM5, 9 March 1929: pp. 405–406.

⁹¹⁸ Malay minutes, no. NM5, 9 March 1929: pp. 406–407.

and that the colonial government had prohibited the Chinese Council from raising the Chinese nationalist flag. Captain Yo Heng Kam proposed a compromise: on Chinese public holidays the Chinese Council could raise the Dutch flag. This proposal however encountered opposition from the private members. They maintained that the Chinese Council represented the Chinese community and that only the Chinese flag was appropriate. The major then explained that the foreign embassies' plan of hoisting their flags at half-mast was a gesture of respect towards their host country. But the Chinese Council of Batavia was situated in a Dutch colony and had to abide by the rules of the colonial government. One of the private members then blurted out: "Is the Chinese Council property of the Dutch government or the Chinese community! The Chinese Council has always looked out for the interests of the Chinese community here. It would be different if the Chinese Council belongs to the Dutch government!" The major then explained that even though the Chinese Council was financed by money from the Chinese community, the Chinese Council had always been subordinate to the colonial government. "Since the era of the Company, the colonial government has appointed and dismissed Council members; it has seen to it that decisions of the Council were in accordance with its statutes; and it has given the Chinese Council the legitimacy to manage civil affairs and properties of the Chinese community. Therefore the Chinese Council always has to follow the laws and regulations of the Dutch colonial government." The private members then proposed hoisting both the Dutch and the Chinese nationalist flags. Lieutenant Tan In Hok then intervened by reminding the private members that they were engaging in political affairs while, according to the decree of the governor of West Java, private members of the Chinese Council were only appointed for the management of the Chinese Council's properties. The discussion then abruptly came to an end.⁹¹⁹

Inviting the press to the meetings helped the process of democratisation, but of course also cleared the path for more criticism. *Sin Po*, *Siang Po* (previously *Perniagaan*), and *Keng Po* in

⁹¹⁹ Malay minutes, no. NM5, 12 April 1929: pp. 431–32, and 13 June 1929: pp. 440–43.

particular took the opportunity to attend the board meetings. At the April 1929 meeting, it turned out that the schools receiving subsidy from the Chinese Council had never sent the Council an account of their finances, with the exception of the THHK Batavia. One of the private members then suggested that from now on the Chinese Council should demand a financial report from these schools every three months. If the schools fail to do so, the Chinese Council would stop the subsidy flow. The proposition was adopted.⁹²⁰ *Sin Po* had sent a representative to the meeting and did not hesitate to point out the errors of the Chinese Council in this case. The fact that the schools were not required to regularly send a financial account was beyond comprehension, according to the newspaper:

The Council never has resisted the supervision of the resident over its finances and therefore it is really surprising that the Council never finds it necessary to inspect the financial management of the organisations it supports. The Chinese Council does not have to be suspicious of the school boards, but business is business. If the Chinese Council decides to financially support an organisation, it has to know how this organisation operates, how its financial administration is managed and if its income and expenses are in order. The Council should at least know how its money is spent, and this should all be in black on white.⁹²¹

One reason for this neglect might be, *Sin Po* argued, that up until the admission of the private members, the Council had always been shrouded in mystery. But now that the Council was opening its affairs to the public it had to set an example, because everyone knew about the many irregularities in the administration of Chinese organisations.

⁹²⁰ Malay minutes, no. NM5, 12 April 1929: p. 420.

⁹²¹ *Sin Po*, 15 April 1929.

The heated discussion between the private Council members and the Chinese officers about the Chinese nationalist flag hoisting on Chinese public holidays also invited *Sin Po*'s criticism. It rebuked the weak attitude of the Chinese officers towards the government that had forbidden the Chinese Council to hoist the Chinese nationalist flag on the memorial day of Dr Sun Yat-sen's death:

The attitude of the Chinese officers in this matter is familiar; they do not insist on doing the right thing [namely, raising the nationalist flag in honour of Dr Sun], no, they even help bringing forward all kinds of reasons why the Chinese nationalist flag should not be hoisted in front of the Chinese Council.

No one has ever seen a Chinese flag at their houses, but never do they dare to forget hoisting the tricolour on Dutch public holidays, for instance on 31 August.

If they wish to honour the Dutch Queen as officials of the colonial government, *soit*, but this does not mean they should neglect their own people, at least if they do not wish to make their titles of "Chinese headmen" a laughing stock.⁹²²

Sin Po also persisted in confronting everyone defending the institution of Chinese officers. When People's Council member Loa Sek Hie claimed that many Chinese people still could not do without the mediation of the Chinese officers when dealing with colonial government officials, *Sin Po* countered:

The reason Mr Loa Sek Hie brings forward is appallingly weak and has no meaning. Many Chinese people still bathe in the river, but this does not prove that river water is better than tap water. The fact that many Chinese people still use river water to wash

⁹²² *Sin Po*, 24 June 1929.

themselves should not be used as an argument that the Chinese people still need river water. Those people should instead be taught not to use river water but tap water which is much more hygienic.

The reason why many Chinese people still turn to the Chinese officers is because most of these people are still “afraid” or feel “awkward” when dealing with the Dutch directly. This is a case of an “inferiority complex” which should be put to an end immediately and should not be nurtured. They have to be taught not to be “afraid” or feel “awkward” when dealing with a European official . . . and there is no faster way to teach them how to lose this attitude . . . than radically abolish the institution of Chinese officers. To continue this outdated institution is to continue this sense of inferiority. . . .

From a political perspective as well as from a psychological perspective it is best to terminate this institution.⁹²³

7.4 The final years of the Chinese Council: the centre of the Chinese community?

The Council’s request for an extra subsidy was granted and from 1930 onwards the colonial government issued a monthly contribution of 475 guilders to the Chinese Council. This money was to be used exclusively for the Council’s activities on behalf of the government: immigration, tax collection, and matters of justice and police.⁹²⁴ However, the inspector of finances had ordered the Chinese Council to remit the full amount of government subsidy to the tax office first in order to pay off the tax arrears.⁹²⁵ The Chinese Council continued to struggle with budgetary deficits and tax arrears and in 1932 the colonial government also cut two thousand guilders from its subsidy. The

⁹²³ *Sin Po*, 23 August 1929.

⁹²⁴ Malay minutes, no. NM6, 23 January 1930: p. 7.

⁹²⁵ Letter of the inspector of finances to the chairman of the Chinese Council of Batavia, 1 September 1928, no. 2834/Inv.-, the Kong Koan Archive, MR2B I/IX, no. VI, Leiden.

Chinese Council faced additional cutbacks on its budget for school subsidies, temple management, and annual religious festivities, in the salaries of its personnel, and in its transportation budget.⁹²⁶ Furthermore the Council was forced to deny requests for mortgages and other loans.⁹²⁷ In late 1934, the Chinese Council had to acknowledge the municipality's superiority when the Council and a number of Chinese organisations were unable to raise enough funds to build a modern Chinese cemetery in Tandjoeng Djembatan Doeren, west of the Bandjir Canal. However, the plan was never effectuated.⁹²⁸

Budget deficits were caused not only by the extraordinary high taxes imposed on the Council's land. The great economic depression of the 1930s, which hit the Indies economy very hard, also affected the Council's budget. The Chinese Council was deluged with demands for financial support from Chinese men who had lost their jobs. Sometimes up to thirty men a day came to the Council asking for an allowance. The Chinese Council reserved extra money for poor relief, but in the end it was forced to restrict aid to people over the age of sixty and the disabled.⁹²⁹ With the increase of the poor and needy, the Council also had to double its expenses for buying coffins, as fewer and fewer people could afford to buy a coffin.⁹³⁰ Even though the Council had set a maximum quota of 150 women receiving a monthly allowance in 1925, this number had risen to 250 women in 1937. The Council could no longer ignore the increase of women in desperate need of financial support in these difficult times. But to help as many underprivileged women as possible, the Council had to reduce the distribution from three or four guilders to two guilders per

⁹²⁶ The Chinese Council paid for the transportation of Council members when their presence was needed in the *Landraad* or the Council of Justice.

⁹²⁷ See the Malay minutes of the Chinese Council board meetings of the years 1925–1933 (nos. NM5 and NM6).

⁹²⁸ Malay minutes, no. NM6, 9 november 1933: pp. 141–142, 15 August 1934: pp. 168–172 and 30 November 1937: pp. 231–32.

⁹²⁹ Malay minutes, no. NM6, 26 September 1931: pp. 90–1 and 22 December 1931: pp. 94–8.

⁹³⁰ Malay minutes, no. NM6, 14 August 1936: pp. 197–198 and 26 November 1936: pp. 205–206.

person.⁹³¹ At the same time, the Council's income from its real estate and burial grounds decreased severely. The Council frequently received requests from tenants asking for rent reductions because of economic hardship. The Council was forced to grant most of these requests, and usually reduced the rent with ten to fifteen percent.⁹³² The selling of burial plots and graves also declined, not necessarily because of the economic depression but because healthcare had improved significantly, resulting in a lower mortality rate.⁹³³

The Chinese Council also lost land to the government. In chapter 3 we saw that in 1910 the colonial government passed a law entitling the government to repurchase private lands for industrial development and political reasons. Between 1912 and 1931, a total of 456,709 hectares of private lands across the entire archipelago was repurchased or expropriated by the colonial government. Between 1931 and 1936 no private lands were bought back because of necessary austerities.⁹³⁴ Land was also repurchased from the Chinese Council. Seeing that the local authorities were bit by bit repurchasing land and taking into account the poor state of the Council's budget, some Council members suggested selling all the land owned by the Council to the local authorities, on the condition that the selling price was sufficient to cover all the monthly expenses of the Council. The other members agreed and in early 1930 the Chinese Council informed the governor of West Java that it was willing to sell all its land to the local authorities, with the exception of existing graves on the Council's land, land that was currently used for graves, and land that was reserved for the expansion of existing cemeteries. The governor did not respond to the offer and the Chinese

⁹³¹ Malay minutes, no. NM6, 30 November 1937: pp. 229–30.

⁹³² Malay minutes of the Chinese Council board meetings of the years 1931–1932 (no. NM6).

⁹³³ The income from selling burial plots (*sioehék*) and graves (*koeboeran*) was 7,475 guilders in 1931. The Council estimated that for the year 1932 this amount would drop to 6,600 guilders. See Malay minutes, no. NM6, 22 December 1931: p. 95.

⁹³⁴ *Memorie Penjelasan Atas Undang-Undang No. 1 Tahun 1958 Tentang "Penghapusan Tanah-Tanah Partikelir"*, Undang Undang Republik Indonesia Nomor 1 Tahun 1958 Tentang Penghapusan Tanah Tanah Partikelir.

Council prepared for more years of financial adversity.⁹³⁵ It was not until 1940 that the Council's budget again showed a surplus.

From the records of the monthly board meetings it can be concluded that in the 1930s and 1940s, the Chinese Council of Batavia's primary function was to manage its properties and endowments for the public welfare. While the colonial government had assumed many of its responsibilities, the Council handled land sales, examined applications for construction permits, maintained and managed the Chinese cemeteries, judged requests for the excavation of bodies and their transport to China, assisted in immigration affairs, conducted regular inspection of Chinese schools, and afforded financial assistance to schools and the poor and needy. The Chinese Council was little or not involved anymore in marital affairs, conflicts within the community, and police affairs. The development of the municipal government also affected the Chinese Council as these local authorities increasingly purchased more land from the Council for infrastructural expansion and also took over some activities of the Council. During the 1930s the frequency of the board meetings declined and fewer members attended. In the period 1927–31 the Chinese Council convened about nine times a year with usually an average of six to nine members present. By the *Gouvernementsbesluit* of 31 December 1932, no. 5, the number of officers and official members of the Chinese Council was reduced to three: one major, one captain, and one lieutenant, who received allowances of only 300, 250, and 200 guilders respectively.⁹³⁶ The frequency of the board meetings dropped to an average of only three meetings per year in the period 1932–41 with four or five Council and private members attending. Sometimes meetings were cancelled because not enough members were present.

The Chinese Council of Batavia was no longer the centre of the Chinese community and the Chinese officers were no longer the absolute representatives of the Chinese people. The Chinese

⁹³⁵ Malay minutes, no. NM6, 23 January 1930, pp. 1–2 and 22 December 1939: pp. 256–58.

⁹³⁶ *Memorie van Overgave van de Residentie Batavia van den Resident van Batavia* L. G. C. A. van der Hoek, NA, The Hague.

Council merely served as a charitable organisation and even lost this position towards the end of the 1930s. The Chinese officers still managed the public properties of the Chinese community and fulfilled important social functions, but could no longer uphold the status of community leaders. Critiques from the Chinese press had faded. Most newspapers were preoccupied with political events in and outside the Netherlands Indies and paid less attention to the Chinese Council. Now and then *Sin Po* devoted some space to report on it, but these never made the sort of headlines they had twenty years before. In general, attention for the Chinese Council was overshadowed by the looming political issues of the day: the possible outbreak of a big war in Europe, the struggle for independence of the Indonesians and the future of the Chinese community under a possible Indonesian leadership, and an increasingly aggressive Japanese state that had invaded China and showed signs of expanding its sphere of interest in the whole region. People listened to politicians, followed and participated in political debates and looked upon these politicians as their role models. The Chinese Council stayed out of politics. Political activity was left to the leaders of the three political streams (Sin Po Group, CHH and PTI) who were competing against each other in the 1930s. It was palpable that these Chinese politicians had taken over the position of community leaders. After more than three centuries, the Chinese officers in Batavia were no longer the central figures in the Chinese community.

The last board meeting of the Chinese Council before Japanese occupation ended Dutch rule in the Indies, took place on 11 October 1941. When the Japanese troops invaded the Netherlands Indies in 1942 and detained Major Khouw Kim An in a prison camp in Tjimahi, the Chinese Council was deprived of its chairman and the Chinese people of Batavia were left without “their leader”. With his death on 13 February 1945, an era ended. Although he headed an institution that lost much of its flair in the twentieth century, Khouw Kim An—with his unbounded enthusiasm and tireless effort—had remained an authoritative figure in the Chinese neighbourhoods but also in local government circles.

Independent Indonesia

Throughout the Japanese occupation and the struggle for independence, some Indies Chinese openly sided with either the Dutch or the Indonesians, but most remained neutral and were primarily concerned with the safety of their family and property. This noncommittal attitude raised doubts among Indonesian nationalists as to the loyalty of the Chinese to a future Indonesian nation, and it sometimes led to violent outbursts against Chinese communities by Indonesian revolutionaries.⁹³⁷ After independence, the new leaders of the archipelago were confronted with the development of the new unitary state. Matters that required attention at the time were the expansion and professionalisation of the army, the bureaucracy and judiciary, drafting a constitution, restoring the economy, and the development of a national awareness. The government's policy with regard to the ethnic Chinese was ambiguous. Most Indonesians, including politicians, stuck to their opinion of the Chinese: the Chinese remained a separate group of foreigners whose actions were only driven by profit. Their loyalty lay with the Dutch, and after the People's Republic of China was founded in 1949, many Indonesians feared that the ethnic Chinese would shift their allegiance to communist China. On the other hand, the economically strong Chinese remained essential to the development of the young republic.⁹³⁸

In April 1946 the provisional republican government in Yogyakarta issued a citizenship law that made the Chinese Indonesian citizens. But due to the Chinese Nationality Law of 1909, the Chinese government still regarded the Indonesian Chinese as Chinese nationals. This dual nationality became a problem because to the Indonesians, dual nationality was the same as dual loyalty. During the Afro-Asian Conference in Bandung in 1955, the Dual Nationality Treaty was signed by the Chinese and Indonesian ministers of foreign affairs. This treaty made provisions for

⁹³⁷ J. Purdey, *Anti-Chinese Violence in Indonesia, 1996–1999* (Singapore: Singapore University Press, 2006), 7–8.

⁹³⁸ L. Suryadinata, *Indigenous Indonesians, the Chinese Minority and China: A Study of Perceptions and Policies* (Ann Arbor, Mich.: University Microfilm International, 1982), 154–55.

Indonesian Chinese holding dual nationality to be released from the Chinese citizenship. China thereby renounced its claim on Indonesian citizens of Chinese descent.⁹³⁹

However, legal citizenship did not guarantee the same legitimacy of belonging to the Indonesian nation. The Chinese were still treated as a separate group and subject to different sorts of discrimination, varying from unequal treatment by lower officials to stern economic restrictions (the Benteng system and the PP10).⁹⁴⁰ Nonetheless, three important pillars of the Chinese community were allowed to continue their activities: the Chinese schools, the Chinese press, and the Chinese associations.⁹⁴¹ For the Indonesian Chinese a period of great uncertainty had begun. After the general turmoil of the struggle for independence, the Indonesian Chinese found themselves in a country vastly different from before, now being ruled by the group that used to be below them on the hierarchical ladder. They were at the mercy of Indonesian leaders and society who looked at them with great suspicion.

The choice of integrating or assimilating into Indonesian society was a debate that dominated among the Indonesian Chinese during the Sukarno era. The ethnic Chinese political party Baperki (Badan Permusjawaratan Kewarganegaraan Indonesia, Indonesian Citizenship Consultative Body) was in favour of integration, but opined that the pribumi should stop seeing the peranakan Chinese as foreigners and accept them as one of the ethnic groups (*suku*) of Indonesia. While Baperki emphasised the rights of the Indonesian Chinese, another organisation stressed their obligations. The Institute for the Promotion of National Unity (Lembaga Pembina Kesatuan

⁹³⁹ Ibid., 154–55, 160; Coppel, *The Indonesian Chinese in Crisis*, 26–27.

⁹⁴⁰ J. A. C. Mackie, “A Preliminary Survey”, in *The Chinese in Indonesia: Five Essays*, edited by J. A. C. Mackie (Honolulu: University Press of Hawaii, 1976), 11–13. The Benteng system sought to protect pribumi importers from Dutch and Chinese competition by reserving highly profitable import licences for pribumi importers. The PP10 imposed restrictions on ethnic Chinese rural retailers.

⁹⁴¹ L. Suryadinata, “Ethnic Chinese and National Integration in Southeast Asia”, in *Proceedings of the Symposium “Human Flow and the Creation of New Cultures in Southeast Asia”, December 3–5 1996* (Tokyo: Institute for the Study of Languages and Cultures of Asia and Africa, 1998), 87.

Bangsa, LPKB) reasoned that if the Indonesian Chinese wanted to be accepted by the pribumi, they should show more loyalty by assimilating into Indonesian society. This assimilation process could be accelerated by inter-marriage and abandoning all facets of Chinese identity, including name, customs, language, and religion. Clashes between the two organisations occurred frequently, in which Baperki branded name changing and biological assimilation as undemocratic and violations of human rights and the LPKB accused Baperki of being 'exclusive'. President Sukarno supported Baperki's integrationist model, but the army, increasingly suspicious of Baperki's and Sukarno's proximity to the Indonesian Communist Party sided with LPKB.⁹⁴²

After the ill-fated coup of 1965 and subsequent anti-communist purge, Suharto took over presidency. The political system he introduced was shaped by the chaos that had preceded it and he convinced many of the necessity of a strong state.⁹⁴³ During his reign Suharto made sure that the Indonesian society became depoliticised and adhered to one state ideology (*Pancasila*). He secured the unconditional support of the army, and gave high priority to economic development.⁹⁴⁴ For the Chinese it was the beginning of a turbulent period, during which they were exposed to public ridicule and hostilities. They were associated with the hated PKI and blamed for the economic downturn, and in some regions violent outbreaks occurred.⁹⁴⁵ China even sent ships so that the Chinese who did not feel safe anymore could repatriate, though only a few thousand Chinese went.⁹⁴⁶ Most Chinese thought they would adapt easier to the new Indonesian society than to communist China. The government was convinced that the Chinese could not be trusted and that Chinese culture and identity did not belong in Indonesia. Therefore in the New Order, everything

⁹⁴² Coppel, *The Indonesian Chinese in Crisis*, 43–46.

⁹⁴³ Purdey, *Anti-Chinese Violence in Indonesia*, 15.

⁹⁴⁴ Ricklefs, *A History of Modern Indonesia*, 342–73.

⁹⁴⁵ Coppel, *The Indonesian Chinese in Crisis*, 63–64.

⁹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 90.

“Chinese” in Indonesian society was banned and an assimilation policy was introduced.⁹⁴⁷ Chinese political parties and organisations were closed, the Chinese press dismantled, the Chinese were strongly urged to adopt Indonesian-sounding ones, Chinese schools had to close their doors, and all public acts of Chinese culture and religions had to be eliminated. But at the same time Indonesian Chinese business was encouraged by the Suharto government. The Chinese remained a vulnerable group, lacking a sound legal basis in Indonesian society and they were forced to establish “friendships” with business partners, members of the army or government to assure the safety of their family and development of their business.⁹⁴⁸ Nowadays, the Chinese enjoy more cultural and religious freedom and the Indonesian government has taken hopeful steps to eliminate discriminatory laws.

The Chinese Council of Jakarta

During the uncertain period of the Japanese invasion (1942–45) and the struggle for independence (1945–49), the Chinese Council of Batavia (the Chinese Council of Jakarta since the Japanese occupation) was not able to run its activities on a regular basis. After Indonesia gained independence from the Netherlands, the Council resumed its duties. Of the permanent members before independence, only Captain Lie Tjian Tjoen and Lieutenant Lie Boen Sin returned in the Council. On 24 August 1950 the mayor of Jakarta officially appointed ten new Council members. Thus when the Chinese Council resumed its board meetings again on 8 September 1950, the Council consisted of one chairman (Captain Lie Tjian Tjoen) and eleven members.⁹⁴⁹ In the young republic the Chinese Council was no longer a semi-official establishment of community leadership.

⁹⁴⁷ A. Heryanto, “Ethnic Identities and Erasure: Chinese Indonesians in Public Culture”, in *Southeast Asian Identities: Culture and the Politics of Representation in Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, and Thailand*, edited by J. S. Kahn (London: Tauris Publishers, 1998), 103.

⁹⁴⁸ Purdey, *Anti-Chinese Violence in Indonesia*, 21.

⁹⁴⁹ Malay minutes, no. NM7, 8 September 1950: p. 1.

On 31 July 1952 Lie Tjian Tjoen and Lie Boen Sin were honourably discharged from their captain and lieutenant function by the mayor of Jakarta. They remained permanent members of the Chinese Council, but no longer as ‘*kapitein en luitenant der Chineezen*’. With their official discharge as captain and lieutenant, the function of Chinese officer was withdrawn and the Chinese Council became a social institution.⁹⁵⁰

In the 1950s the Chinese Council of Jakarta convened once a month and sometimes even two to three times a month when urgent matters needed to be discussed. Although there were eleven members in the Council, normally only six to seven members attended the board meetings chaired by Lie Tjian Tjoen. The Chinese Council resumed its social activities and continued the management of its landed properties. The Council looked after the Chinese graveyards, temples and *rumah abu* (house of ashes), gave financial support to Chinese schools, hospitals, social organisations and foundations, and contributed to victim relief after natural disasters had struck. It closely cooperated with leading Chinese organisations such as the Sin Ming Hui. It still sold and leased land and real estate, provided mortgages, and granted credit to organisations and private individuals. The mayor of Jakarta formed the bridge between the Chinese Council and the Indonesian government. The Chinese Council was also obligated to submit its budget to the mayor for approval every year.⁹⁵¹

Because the Council now merely functioned as a social institution, it was no longer subject of agitated political debates or fall-outs between prominent Chinese politicians. It dedicated itself to its social tasks and charitable aims and administered its remaining lands, real estate and Chinese cemeteries. It does appear that the Japanese occupation followed by the armed struggle for independence had caused confusion among people about the Council’s landownership.⁹⁵² The

⁹⁵⁰ Malay minutes, no. NM7, 29 August 1952: pp. 2–3.

⁹⁵¹ Malay minutes, no. NM7, 14 December 1950: pp. 17–18 and 21 February 1951: pp. 32–33.

⁹⁵² During the Japanese occupation, all private lands fell into the hands of the Balatentara Dai Nippon (Japanese army). See the “Investigation concerning the private lands of the Chinese Council”, the Kong Koan Archive, Leiden.

Chinese Council frequently had to deal with people destroying Chinese graves for the purpose of building houses. It is not clear whether people actually assumed that the Chinese Council no longer had rights of landownership or that they just made use of the situation by feigning ignorance. In a special press conference on 4 July 1951 the Chinese Council asked the press to announce that the land still belongs to the Chinese Council and that people wishing to move graves should first send an official request to the Council. The Council would not tolerate the desecration of graves and would not hesitate to call in the assistance of the police. The *wedana* of the lands concerned also explained that Indonesian people wishing to move graves were expected to appeal to the Board of Religion first and Chinese people should turn to the Chinese Council.⁹⁵³

In the 1930s the *gemeente* took on the responsibility of the financially weak Chinese Council to construct a new Chinese cemetery, but the plan was never put into effect. In 1950 the idea to construct a modern Chinese graveyard was raised again. It was agreed to build the cemetery in Djelambar Ilir (current West Jakarta), in close cooperation with the municipality of Jakarta. The new cemetery was opened in early 1955.⁹⁵⁴ In 1954 the Council members decided to build a new office for the *Kong Koan* in Jalan Laotze, behind the Wan Kiak Sie temple. The move from the old office in Tongkangan to the new building took place at the end of 1954. From 1955 onwards the Chinese Council held its meetings at the new location.⁹⁵⁵

Just like the colonial government had started to repurchase land from the Chinese Council for infrastructural development in the early twentieth century, the Indonesian government also increasingly bought lands from the Council for “public interest”. In late 1954 the government bought five plots of land (Djelambar/Zoetendal, Schoonzigt, Tandjung Lengkong, Djati and Gunung

⁹⁵³ Malay minutes, no. NM7, 26 June 1951: pp. 58–60, and 4 July 1951: pp. 61–63; “Sisa Masyarakat Tionghoa Koeno di ini Kota: Kong Koan di Djakarta”, *Star Weekly* 184 (July 1949): 25–27.

⁹⁵⁴ Malay minutes, no. NM7, 14 December 1950: pp. 15–16; 21 February 1951: pp. 31–32; 21 March 1952: pp. 128–130; and no. NM9, 28 January 1955: pp. 22–23.

⁹⁵⁵ Malay minutes, no. NM8, 28 April 1954: pp. 158–160, and 25 August 1954: p. 187.



Former office of the Chinese Council of Batavia on Jalan Laotze

Sahari—all in the centre of Jakarta) from the Council for two million rupiahs. In order to purchase the lands, the Indonesian government invoked law no. 6 of 1953, which stated the need to return a number of private estates to the state. The law was ratified by the President of the Indonesian Republic on 11 March 1953. With this law the government of the Republic of Indonesia announced that it wished to abrogate the system of private lands in Indonesia and return those lands to the state. The law also prohibited the Council to sell land as building sites (*kavelingen*) to third parties, because the government had branded the private lands of the Chinese Council public utility. It was evident that the Indonesian authorities wished to exercise tight control over the Council's lands.⁹⁵⁶ By law no.1 of 1958 the Indonesian Republic did away with all the private lands in the archipelago.⁹⁵⁷ After the proclamation of independence in 1945, half of the original areas of private lands were left (1,150,000 hectares, for the greater part situated in West Java). The Indonesian Republic continued the policy of repurchasing on the basis of mutual agreements between the government and the landlords (like the repurchase of the lands of the Chinese Council in 1953). Because of the fast pace of revolutionary changes in the country, it soon became apparent that this process was too slow. Therefore the government decided to put an end to the *particuliere landerijen* once and for all by passing law no. 1 of 1958.⁹⁵⁸ The government reasoned that the private lands were a source of problems as the tenants lived and worked under poor circumstances owing to the *landheerlijke rechten* of the landlords, who ruled over their lands as little potentates. The private lands were in effect little states within a state, which was unsuitable for a modern country.⁹⁵⁹ The extraordinary rights were also in conflict with the principle of social justice, one of the five pillars

⁹⁵⁶ Malay minutes, no. NM8, 22 May 1953: pp. 81–82; 25 August 1954: p. 184; and no. NM9, 22 October 1954: pp. 1–2 and Notary agreement for the relinquishment of landownership rights, no. 212, 19 November 1954, the Kong Koan Archive, Leiden.

⁹⁵⁷ Undang Undang Republik Indonesia Nomor 1 Tahun 1958 Tentang Penghapusan Tanah Tanah Partikelir.

⁹⁵⁸ S. Soemardjan, "Land Reform in Indonesia", *Asian Survey* 1:12 (Feb. 1962): 24.

⁹⁵⁹ Memori Penjelasan Atas Undang-Undang No. 1 Tahun 1958 Tentang "Penghapusan Tanah-Tanah Partikelir", Undang Undang Republik Indonesia Nomor 1 Tahun 1958 Tentang Penghapusan Tanah Tanah Partikelir.

of the *Pancasila*. Henceforth all private lands were abolished in 1958, and all the rights and privileges held by the previous landowners were assumed by the government. The landlords were given a choice between selling their land directly to Indonesian farmers (the price was to be determined by the government) or transferring the owner rights to the government, after which the authorities redistributed those among the indigenous farmers on the former estates. It was still possible for the landlords to obtain a license from the government to operate their agricultural enterprises on their former private estates within the time limitations provided by the agrarian law.⁹⁶⁰ The expropriation law was implemented in a time when the political climate of Indonesia was moving towards a culmination of the process of economic decolonisation: the take-over and nationalisation of corporate Dutch properties between 1956 and 1959 by the Indonesian government.⁹⁶¹ After the passing of the expropriation law the Chinese Council lost all its lands.

On 18 March 1959 former *Kapitein der Chineezen* Lie Tjian Tjoen resigned as chairman and member of the Chinese Council after having been in function for 46 years. Tan In Hok replaced him as the new chairman of the Council.⁹⁶² From 1960 onwards the frequency of the board meetings declined with an average of four meetings a year. With the Indonesian government repurchasing and expropriating the private lands, the Chinese Council lost most of its properties. It degenerated from functioning as an authoritative institution of Chinese community leadership in the Dutch East Indies to a small administrative office for Chinese temples and burial grounds in Jakarta. The contents of the minutes of board meetings also confirm this. They do not reveal any sign of dynamic discussions or shocking developments. The Council members only dealt with social and religious

⁹⁶⁰ N. F. Rachman, *Land Reform dari Masa ke Masa: Perjalanan Kebijakan Pertanahan 1945–2009* (Yogyakarta: Tanah Air Beta, 2012), 23–24; Soemardjan, “Land Reform in Indonesia”, 24–25.

⁹⁶¹ J. T. Lindblad, “The Economic Decolonisation of Indonesia: A Bird’s-eye View”, *Journal of Indonesian Social Sciences and Humanities* 4 (2011): 12–19.

⁹⁶² Lie Tjian Tjoen started his career as a Chinese officer on 4 January 1913. See Malay minutes, no. NM10, 18 March 1959: p. 13.

affairs in the community and this lingered on for another two decades or so. On 8 July 1964 the Chinese Council held its last board meeting. Presumably it was dissolved in the 1980s or 1990s and reorganised into a series of separate temple foundations, a cremation society and an administrative office for Chinese burial grounds. After more than two hundred years of existence, the Chinese Council of Batavia/Jakarta disappeared from the Chinese community.

7.5 Conclusion

The decision of the colonial government to restore the Chinese Council of Batavia in 1927 was for the most part influenced by the pleas of the Chinese community not to abolish the institution. With the support of the Chinese community it seemed like the Chinese officers were able to regain their position as community leaders, and make the Chinese Council the centre of the Chinese community again. However this is not exactly how it turned out. One reason is that over the years the colonial government had taken over several core activities from the officers. When the municipal government was introduced, it assumed most of the Council's functions. The municipality even stepped in when a new Chinese cemetery had to be built. The surprising plea for the continuation of the Chinese officer system stemmed from the continued need for the Chinese officers to serve as intermediaries between the Chinese community and the colonial government. But the Chinese community was foremost concerned with the properties that were managed by the Chinese Council. Fearing that those properties would fall in the hands of the colonial government, it protested the plans to abolish the institution. The request for joint decision making in the financial affairs of the Chinese Council illustrated the Chinese community's principle concern: the democratisation of the Chinese Council and disclosure of its finances, which did in fact belong to the Chinese community. This was also a sign of Chinese distrust of the Dutch. As long as they were not given the same status as the Europeans, they did not risk surrendering any sort of self-determination. The Chinese wanted to control their own properties and institutions. The Chinese officers and the Council still

represented Chinese independence (although to a much lesser extent than before). The officers were to continue their tasks together with other leading members of the community. Therefore, the Chinese urged that the officers be retained but at the same time requested more community control over the institution.

But by the 1930s it appeared that the really influential people in the Chinese community were the leaders of the Chinese political parties and organisations. Concern about the indigenous nationalists' struggle for independence, the looming war in Europe, and increasing Japanese aggression in Asia dominated life in the Indies society. People sought the support of political leaders who were more up against the challenges in these stirring times, which was beyond the purview of the Chinese Council, whose activities were limited to the co-management of its land and cemeteries, the rendering of mortgages and loans, the provision of subsidies to schools and the poor, and temple management. The Chinese Council had regressed from the centre of the Chinese community to a mere charitable institution that co-managed its properties with the Chinese community. And because of the strained circumstances as a result of the economic depression the Council even had difficulties to execute these tasks. The infrequent meetings, absence of Council members, lack of responsibilities, and less attention of the press all contributed to the Chinese Council's fading away.

After Indonesia's independence, periods of relative stability and accommodation alternated with bouts of political chaos and aggression towards the Chinese. In the colonial era, the Chinese could not abide even the possibility of being ruled by Indonesians at the neighbourhood or municipal level. Now they found themselves in a society ruled by Indonesians who looked at them with great suspicion and governed them with highly discriminatory laws. Some Chinese could not cope with the new leadership and repatriated, but most of the Indonesian Chinese stayed and after the start of the reformation era, most discriminatory laws and practices disappeared. This cannot be said about the Chinese Council of Jakarta. Although it reopened its doors during the postwar

struggle for independence, it never played the important role it had in the past. After the Indonesian government took over all the lands of the Council, it functioned simply as a temple and funeral society.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The discovery of the Kong Koan Archive in 1995 has created great opportunities for scholars to uncover the ins and outs of the Chinese community of Batavia and place these in the wider context of the history of the Indonesian Chinese. This study examines the Chinese community of Batavia in the early twentieth century. Although the material on the twentieth century reveals less details than those on previous centuries, there is still plenty of data to illustrate and analyse the fast-paced developments within the Chinese community in the era of modern state formation, emancipation, and nationalism between 1900 and 1942. It is unfortunate that the archives kept by the Chinese Councils of Semarang and Soerabaja have disappeared completely. Therefore, a complete comparison of Batavia, Semarang, and Soerabaja is unfeasible at this point. Yet, the archival remains of the Chinese Council of Batavia, together with Dutch archival material and newspaper sources, reveal interesting developments within the Chinese communities on Java and allow at least a partial reconstruction of Chinese society not only in Batavia but also in Semarang and Soerabaja.

Dutch policy towards the Indies Chinese was subject to many changes throughout the centuries and was quite ambiguous. After the Dutch East India Company established itself in Batavia, Chinese immigrants were encouraged to take up residence in this newly conquered city and its hinterland. The industrious Chinese proved a valuable asset for the region's economy. In the years mounting to the Chinese massacre, the High Government attempted to curb Chinese immigration to Batavia as the flood of Chinese immigrants into the town and the Ommelanden began to alarm the authorities. After the pogrom of 1740, the Chinese fled or were ousted by the Dutch, which crippled the Dutch town's ability to function. As it dawned on the Dutch that they needed the Chinese to revive the economy, their hostility waned and the situation returned to

normal. The Chinese were given a free hand in trade again and excelled as landowners, tax farmers, and operators in small-scale retail trade.

By the end of the nineteenth century, new ideas about the future of the colony and its subjects called for a change of course. The introduction of free enterprise left the colony's economy increasingly subject to market forces, while the development of modern state structures resulted in a more hands-on government. One important step of this hands-on government was the introduction of a modern tax system, which replaced the Chinese as tax farmers. It was quite a natural process: modern state formation reshuffled the position of all players in the colonial state. At the same time feelings of anxiety among the Dutch resurfaced when the Chinese dominance in Java's economy appeared threatening again. As a result, Chinese economic activities were curtailed again and laws to restrict their mobility were rigidly enforced. But after the Chinese government showed more interest in its overseas subjects in the twentieth century, the Dutch quickly lifted its restrictions and accommodated the Chinese people's needs. The constant change in policy towards the Chinese shows that the Dutch needed the Chinese, but at the same time distrusted them.

The fortunes of the institution of Chinese officers followed the constant adjustments in Dutch policy towards the Chinese. The institution was brought to life for pragmatic reasons. The Dutch needed the Chinese to contribute to the local economy, but were reluctant to show more interest in them. As long as the economy flourished and the Chinese officers kept their countrymen in check, the Dutch did not wish to become more involved in the Chinese community. After the atrocities of 1740, the High Government could not but monitor the Chinese officers more carefully. The nineteenth century was quite peaceful and the Chinese Council developed into an authoritative semi-official institution. Owing to the strict control of the Chinese officers over their countrymen, the Chinese neighbourhoods formed an organised community. This changed in the twentieth century when the Dutch introduced a hands-on policy towards their colonial possession in the East. The colonial government's increased involvement in the lives of its subjects and the burgeoning

emancipation of the groups over which they ruled had an impact on the institution of Chinese officers. The rationalisation of the bureaucracy increasingly led to the introduction of a more efficient, business-like administration with leaders who were legitimately chosen. Tradition, feudal concepts and nepotism were no more the ideal prerequisites for a position of leadership in the community. The Chinese officers were therefore targeted. Virulent criticism directed at the traditional leaders of the Chinese and the governmental take-over of their tasks made the Chinese officers more and more unwanted and redundant. In the end, the colonial government wished to rule directly over the Chinese, thereby hinting at abolishing the Chinese officers once and for all.

The Indies Chinese were well aware of the ambiguous attitude of the government. Chinese distrust towards the ruling class ran deep, and it was this distrust that saved the Chinese Council of Batavia. Amidst the turbulent developments of the early twentieth century, it was the Chinese Council that secured Chinese interests. Its officers administered the properties of the Chinese community, saw to it that order was maintained in the neighbourhoods, and fulfilled an important social welfare role. Although in the twentieth century the Chinese officers became the target of Chinese nationalists and an increasing number of tasks were taken over by the colonial government, in Batavia the Chinese Council still helped sustain an organised Chinese community, and was in general able to ward off Dutch and native antagonism, and the aggressive Sino-centric activists. When the colonial government, increasingly zealous about treating its subjects more equally, proposed abolishing the Chinese Council and placing the Chinese people under its direct administration, the Batavian Chinese were quick to reject the plan. As long as the Chinese were not elevated to the same status as the Dutch, they were still at the mercy of the government's whims. The Chinese Council was a symbol of Chinese self-determination and the Chinese officers were important guardians of this. Without the institution of Chinese officers, all affairs of the Chinese would be in the hands of the Dutch, whom they distrusted. Therefore the system was worth fighting

for, as it constituted their last form of self-reliance. If anything was to change, the Chinese community wanted more control over the Council and its properties, and transparency in its affairs.

Dutch efforts to rationalise city administration were thwarted by ethnic animosities, cutbacks, and lack of consensus among government officials about what to do. Their lack of awareness of what was really going in their colony is manifest from the reaction of the Indies Chinese to their plans, and the authorities' surprise at it. In 1927 the Chinese Council of Batavia was resurrected and its officers were given the green light for resuming their activities with the assistance of private members. Although the Chinese wanted equal status with the Dutch they settled for control over their own affairs and (relative) autonomy. At this stage the Council increasingly operated as it had in the old days, when the emphasis was on its social tasks. After almost a decade of inactivity during the Japanese occupation and the early years of independence, the Chinese Council of Jakarta tried to resume its duties with the appointment of ten new members and a new building. However, within a few years the Indonesian Republic had confiscated most of its properties and assumed most of its social functions. At the end of the 1950s the Council was nothing more than a temple and cremation association. After exercising administrative control over the Chinese community for two centuries, the activities of the Chinese Council slowly came to an end.

APPENDIX I

THE CHINESE OFFICERS OF BATAVIA, 1900–42⁹⁶³

1. Chinese majors and chairmen of the Chinese Council of Batavia

Name	Period of office
Tio Tek Ho	1896–1908
Khouw Kim An	1910–19, 1927–42

2. Chinese captains and members of the Chinese Council of Batavia

Name	Period of office
The Tjoen Sek	1887–1908
Lauw Tjeng Siang	1891–1903
Lim Tiang Hoei	1896–1905
Nie Hok Tjoan	1896–1910
Tjung Boen Tek	1903–12
Tio Tek Soen	1907–15
Khouw Kim An	1908–10
Nio Hoei Oen	1913–16
Lie Tjian Tjoen	1917–19, 1929–52
Yo Kim Thay	1927–29
Yo Heng Kam	1927–32

⁹⁶³ Some names appear twice or even three times in this chart because some members of the Council were promoted from lieutenant to captain or even, as in Khouw Kim An's case, to major of the Chinese Council.

Remarks:

Acting captains:

Lie Tjian Tjoen, 1915–17

Khouw Keng Liong, 1915–17

3. Chinese lieutenants and members of the Chinese Council of Batavia

Name	Period of office
Khoe Tjoen Tjiang	1891–1903
Tjung Boen Tek	1899–1903
Oey Keng Hin	1899–1903
Khouw Oen Hoewi	1899–1905
Tio Tek Soen	1899–1907
Tjoeng Hap Soen	1901–1903
Lie Hin Liam	1905–1906
Khouw Kim An	1905–1908
Khoe A Fan	1905–13
Nio Hoei Oen	1905–13
Oey Boen Hoey	1906–12
Oey Boen Soey	1906–12
Liauw A Joeng	1910–12, 1913–22
Khouw Keng Liong	1910–17
Lie Tjian Tjoen	1913–17
Nio/Liong A Tjan	1913–25
Oey Kim Liong	1913–25
Oh Sian Tjeng	1913–25
Tan Tjin Bok	1917–19
Lie Sin Leng	1917–23
Lay Soen Hie	1917–27
Yo Kim Thay	1922–27
Yo Heng Kam	1925–27
Tan Yam Hok	1925–32
Na Tjioe Kim	1927–29
Tan In Hok	1927–32
Lie Boen Sin	1927–42

Remarks:

Acting lieutenants:

Lie Sin Leng, 1915–17

Tan Tjin Bok, 1916–17

Lie Boen Sin, 1924–27

4. First Secretaries of the Chinese Council of Batavia

Name	Period of office
Lie Sin Leng	1894–1917
Tan Boen Sing	1922–42

5. Second Secretaries of the Chinese Council of Batavia

Name	Period of office
Nie Liang Soey	1895–1908
Khoe Siau Eng	1908–22

From 1918 onwards the Chinese Council employed only one secretary.

6. Private members of the Chinese Council of Batavia

Name	Period of office
Nio Peng Long	1929–30
Tan Pia Teng	1929–32

Name	Period of office
Lee Shan Ming	1929–32
Tjoeng Tjoe Sioe	1929–32
Ie Tjoen Lim	1929–32
Lauw Pin Sam/Lauw A Hin	1929–40
Lie Soe Sin	1930–32
Kwok Tin Yu	1930–32
Chang Cheng Liong	1931–40
Ong Kek Tjoe	1931–42
Tjiong Boen Kie	1940–42

APPENDIX II

LIST OF POSSESSIONS OF THE CHINESE COUNCIL OF BATAVIA (1917)

1. Mortgages

Given out to	Remaining sum in guilders to be paid off
Tiong Hoa Hwee Koan	12.700
Oey Soen Tek	3.300
Tjie Eng Hok	15.000

2. Possessions: land

Name of plot	Ground tax no.	Value in guilders
Djati	7552	13.276.-
Slipi	5961	46.700.-
Siangteeja	8135	2.500.-
Plot-building Chinese Council	6719	6.000
Plot-building Chinese Council	924	720.-
Plot-building Chinese Council	8101	720.-
Goenoeng Sahari + Pintoe Besi	2389-7169	114.144
Goenoeng Sahari + Pintoe Besi	11935	62.940
Goenoeng Sahari + Pintoe Besi	2390	3.622
Grogol (Schoonzigt)	5426	7.500.-

Name of plot	Ground tax no.	Value in guilders
Kampong Goesti	5556	2.000.-
Zoetendaal	6389	37.900
Pesing	5868/6337	34.600.-
Pegangsaan Djembatan Merah	2392	1.000.-
Plot-Tongkangan	3014	2.400

3. Possessions: real estate⁹⁶⁴

Building	At the name of	Ground tax no.	Value in guilders
Rental house in Gang Kepiting and Tongkangan	Temple Hie Keng Jo Si Hoetjo	1590	6.840.-
Rental house in Gang Kepiting and Tongkangan	The Chinese Officers	2916	6.000.-
Rental house in Tongkangan	Chinese Temple Antjol	3917	1.800.-
Rental house in Tongkangan	Lim Tiang Seng	2391	300.-
Rental house in Tongkangan	Hoat Tjie Kong Chinese Temple	2321	1.200.-

4. Possessions: cash

Amount of cash in guilders as of Aug. 31, 1917	Note
31.65	

⁹⁶⁴ The yields of the monthly rent of these houses are for the use of the temples.

The house at the name of Lim Tiang Seng concerns a donation. The transfer of name has not been completed yet.

Amount of cash in guilders as of Aug. 31, 1917	Note
13.172.65	At Bank Escompto My.

5. Possessions: stocks & bonds

Bond no.	Series	Amount in guilders
752	H	500.-
792	F	500.-

6. Income: rent

Plot	Ground tax no.	Rent in guilders
Djati	7552	1.800
Goenoeng Sahari Pintoe Besi	2389, 11935, 7169	5.300
Pesing Ilir, Zoetendaal, Slipi, Grogol, Kampong Goesti, Pesing Koneng	5868/6337, 6389, 5556, 8135, 5426, 5961	8.020

APPENDIX III

INCOME AND EXPENSES OF THE CHINESE COUNCIL OF BATAVIA

(1917)

Account book

Income:	f 74.753.46
Expenses:	<u>f 74.225.36</u>
Positive balance:	f 528.10

Income

The income of the Chinese Council was derived from half-year land rents, interest on mortgages, the payment of mortgages, the selling of plots of land for public interests like the *Staatsspoor* (railways) and the *Bedelaarskolonie*, and the like.

Expenses

The Council's greatest expense was salaries, which averaged roughly f 650–700 per month. Other major line items were for maintenance and expenses of the Council's properties; taxes; lighting; and loans to servants/staff.

Special expenses:

1. Salary Chinese vaccinator 1916: f 1.020.-
2. Allowance for the old and needy: f 4.652.50
3. Allowance for the purchase of coffins: f 170.75
4. Allowance for school tuition poor children: f 85.64

5. Contribution to the Health Department: f 2.500.-

6. Subsidy for the Tiong Hoa Hwee Koan school(s): f 4.800.-

7. Subsidy to Hati Soetji: f 600.-

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SUMMARY

SAMENVATTING

Het instituut der Chinese officieren was een buitengewoon fenomeen in de Chinese gemeenschap van Batavia. Ruim drie eeuwen lang droeg het instituut zorg voor de bestuurlijke en sociale aangelegenheden binnen de Chinese samenleving. Het begon op 11 oktober 1619 toen de stichter van Batavia, Jan Pieterszoon Coen, de aanzienlijke Chinese koopman Souw Bing Kong aanstelde als 'kapitein der Chineezers'. Hem werd de opdracht gegeven zich te ontfemen over zijn landgenoten en orde te scheppen binnen de kleine gemeenschap. Tegelijkertijd functioneerde hij als een tussenpersoon die de regels van de Vereenigde Oost Indische Compagnie vertaalde en overbracht op zijn landgenoten. Geleidelijk aan nam in Batavia de Chinese bevolking toe en werden andere officieren (luitnants) aangesteld om de kapitein te assisteren in zijn werkzaamheden. In de achttiende eeuw organiseerden de officieren zich in een Chinese Raad en in 1837 werd een majoor aangesteld die leiding nam over het gehele instituut. Hij werd de voorzitter van de Chinese Raad en tevens leider van de Chinese gemeenschap in Batavia. In de negentiende eeuw vormden de Chinezen een in sterke mate georganiseerde gemeenschap onder leiding van de Chinese Raad en haar officieren. De Chinese Raad was nu een semi-onafhankelijke organisatie die de Nederlandse koloniale overheid assisteerde bij het besturen van de Chinese gemeenschap door onder andere de belasting te innen, wetten en regels uit te leggen, en te bemiddelen in kleine geschillen. De officieren waren ook verantwoordelijk voor de coördinatie van tal van sociale, civiele en religieuze aangelegenheden. Zij zorgden voor gratis onderwijs, registreerden huwelijken, beheerden de Chinese begraafplaatsen en hielden het begrafenisregister bij, organiseerden religieuze ceremonies, en beheerden de Chinese tempels. Het instituut bestond niet alleen in Batavia. Ook in Semarang en Soerabaja (Surabaya) vormden Chinese officieren een georganiseerd bestuur.

De Chinese officieren werden aangesteld door de gouverneur-generaal. Alleen rijke personen kwamen in aanmerking voor het ambt van Chinees officier, want alleen zij die succesvolle handelaren, landeigenaren of belastingpachters waren verwierven aanzien binnen de Chinese gemeenschap. Derhalve was de Chinese Raad een elitaire instelling en lidmaatschap van de Raad garandeerde gezag, prestige en invloed binnen de Chinese samenleving. De officieren werden geassisteerd door secretarissen, wijkmeesters, en ander personeel. Deze laatsten waren geen lid van de Chinese Raad. Maar zelfs de functies van secretaris en wijkmeester waren populair omdat deze toch direct verband hielden met de Chinese Raad.

Dit begon echter te veranderen in de twintigste eeuw toen de Chinese Raad flink aan macht en autoriteit moest inboeten. In de laatste decennia van de negentiende eeuw kwamen er steeds meer stemmen op in Nederlandse en Indische overheidskringen dat Nederland een andere rol te vervullen had in haar kolonie in het oosten. In plaats van Indië te behandelen als een wingewest en monopolie van de Nederlandse overheid, werd het tijd om de archipel open te stellen voor particuliere bedrijven en Nederlandse burgers die zich er wilden vestigen. Ook werd het bestuur in zekere mate gedecentraliseerd en gedemocratiseerd. Deze ontwikkelingen brachten een impuls aan moderne staatsvorming waarbij meer aandacht werd besteed aan de professionalisering van het overheidsapparaat en rechtswezen, en verbetering van de infrastructuur en gezondheidszorg. Ook begon de koloniale overheid zich steeds meer te ontfermen over de 'inlanders' en investeerde zij steeds meer in hun welzijn en geestelijke ontwikkeling. Maar ook de andere bevolkingsgroepen roerden zich. De ontwikkelingen in het Chinese Keizerrijk, het Ottomaanse Rijk en elders in Azië brachten een emancipatiebeweging teweeg onder de Chinezen, Arabieren en Indonesiërs. Zij richtten tal van culturele en religieuze organisaties op, die na verloop van tijd ook een politiek karakter kregen. Deze ontwikkelingen hadden grote gevolgen voor het instituut der Chinese officieren op Java. De veranderingen in het overheidsbeleid en aanpassingen in wetgeving leidden ertoe dat verschillende taken van de Chinese officieren werden overgenomen door de overheid. Met

de opkomst van het Chinees nationalisme werden de officieren tevens tot doelwit gemaakt van Chinees nationalistische belangengroepen die hun afkeer en vijandigheid tegen het eeuwenoude bestuurlijke instituut begonnen te tonen.

Met name de Chinees-Maleise krant *Sin Po* profileerde zich in de aanval tegen de Chinese officieren. De krant vond dat het instituut der Chinese officieren niet meer paste in de moderne tijd. Bovendien gedroegen de Chinese officieren zich als lakeien van de Nederlanders en keken zij nauwelijks om naar hun landgenoten. Andere kranten sloten zich bij de acties tegen de Chinese officieren aan en het leek alsof de dagen van het eeuwenoude instituut waren geteld. Dit bleek inderdaad in de steden Semarang en Soerabaja zo te geschieden. Maar in Batavia werd, na de afschaffing van de Chinese Raad door de koloniale overheid, een paar jaar later het instituut alsnog opnieuw geïnstalleerd. Klaarblijkelijk hadden de Chinezen in Batavia de Chinese Raad en haar officieren nog nodig en hevige protestacties tegen de overheidsmaatregelen overstemden de acties van de *Sin Po*. In 1927 besloot de koloniale regering het Chinese bestuurssysteem niet op te heffen, althans niet in Batavia. De Chinese Raden in Semarang en Soerabaja werden ontheven in respectievelijk 1931 en 1934. De Chinese Raad van Batavia bleef nog tot in de vroege jaren van de Indonesische Republiek een belangrijke rol spelen in de Chinese samenleving.

Dit proefschrift onderzoekt de crisis jaren van de Chinese Raad in Batavia en focust met name op de periode 1870–1942 waarin bovengenoemde ontwikkelingen leidden tot toenemende acties tegen het officieren systeem, maar ook tot de ‘overwinning’ van de officieren (in Batavia) op deze ernstige golf van kritiek. Toch is het de vraag of de officieren nog steeds invloedrijk waren binnen hun gemeenschap en nog behoorden tot de zeer gerespecteerde Chinese elite. Het onderzoek zal het karakter van de Chinese samenleving weergeven en de positie van de Chinese Raad analyseren. Het zal blijken dat de omstandigheden in Batavia, Semarang en Soerabaja erg van elkaar verschilden en dat deze omstandigheden mede het voortbestaan van de Chinese Raden bepaalde. Ook wordt een blik geworpen op het scala aan ontwikkelingen die een grote impact

hadden op vrijwel elk aspect van het koloniale leven, zoals de opkomende moderne koloniale samenleving, de opkomst van het Chinees nationalisme en haar impact op de Chinese samenleving, en de onderlinge verhoudingen tussen de verschillende bevolkingsgroepen.

Het onderzoek bestaat uit zeven hoofdstukken, waarbij elk hoofdstuk steeds een verschillend aspect behandelt van de ontwikkelingen omtrent de Chinese Raad en haar officieren in Batavia:

Hoofdstuk één bevat een historiografisch overzicht van de Chinese emigratie vanuit China naar de Nanyang, de vestiging van de Chinezen in Batavia, en het begin van het officieren systeem, om een context te creëren voor de rest van het proefschrift. Een korte omschrijving van Batavia in die tijd (tot aan de twintigste eeuw) heeft hetzelfde doel.

Hoofdstuk twee behandelt de Chinese Raad van Batavia in de twintigste eeuw. In het hoofdstuk wordt uitgelegd hoe het Chinese bestuur was ingebed in het raamwerk van het koloniale bestuur. Verder komen aan bod de dagelijkse werkzaamheden van de Raad, de taken en verantwoordelijkheden van de Chinese officieren en hoe de officieren werden gerecruteerd.

Hoofdstuk drie analyseert de intensivering van het koloniale bestuur in Nederlands-Indië en de impact hiervan op de Chinese bevolking en de Chinese Raad.

Hoofdstuk vier kijkt terug op het Chinees nationalisme en analyseert hoe nieuwe ideeën en theorieën over leiderschap de positie van de Chinese Raad en haar officieren in de Chinese gemeenschap begonnen te bedreigen. Vergelijkbare sentimenten wat betreft leiderschap waren ook aanwezig onder de Arabieren en Indonesiërs. Dit hoofdstuk behandelt daarom ook de onvrede van andere etnische groepen wat betreft hun leiders.

Hoofdstuk vijf analyseert het antwoord van de koloniale overheid op de sociale veranderingen binnen de koloniale maatschappij en in het bijzonder binnen de Chinese gemeenschap. Uit het hoofdstuk zal blijken dat de overheid eigenlijk niet wist hoe zij de problemen

binnen de Chinese gemeenschap aan moest pakken. Uiteindelijk moest de hulp van een buitenstaander worden ingeroepen.

Hoofdstuk zes evalueert de verrassende reactie van de Chinezen op het plan van de overheid om het instituut der Chinese officieren af te schaffen.

Hoofdstuk zeven behandelt de latere jaren van de Chinese Raad van Batavia en toont hoe de Chinese officieren na een periode van grote onrust en onzekerheid hun taken weer probeerden op te pakken.

Het Kong Koan Archief is een cruciale bron om de ontwikkelingen in de Chinese samenleving te ontsluiten. Met name de vergaderingnotulen die bijgehouden werden door de secretaris van de Chinese Raad van Batavia bevatten een schat aan informatie over hoe de Chinese Raad opereerde en hoe de Chinese officieren functioneerden. De Chinees-Maleise pers is een goede bron om de sentimenten binnen de Chinese samenleving te peilen. Nederlands archief materiaal zorgt voor de openbaring van de overwegingen van het koloniale bestuur in de kwestie van de Chinese Raad. Aan de hand van deze bronnen wordt getoond dat de Chinese Raad te Batavia een bijzondere positie innam in de Chinese samenleving, en dat deze bijzondere positie haar voorlopig van haar ondergang redde.

CURRICULUM VITAE

Monique Erkelens was born in Rotterdam on 7 January 1981. In 2005 she obtained an MA degree in the Languages and Cultures of China Program of the Faculty of Humanities, Leiden University. After her graduation she worked as a temporary researcher on the Kong Koan Database Project. In 2007 she received a Ph.D scholarship from the Research School of Asian, African, and Amerindian Studies (CNWS) of Leiden University. From November 2011 until September 2012 she was the coordinator of the Encompass program at the Institute for History at Leiden University. Since March 2009 she is the secretary of the Friends of the Kong Koan Archive Foundation. Her research interests are the history of the overseas Chinese, early modern Chinese history, and early modern Indonesian history.