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## **The Decline of the Chinese Council of Batavia**

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### **Citation**

Erkelens, M. (2013, October 15). *The Decline of the Chinese Council of Batavia*. Retrieved from <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/21954>

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Cover Page



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**Author:** Erkelens, Monique

**Title:** 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

**Issue Date:** 2013-10-15

# **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

PROEFSCHRIFT

ter verkrijging van  
de graad van Doctor aan de Universiteit Leiden,  
op gezag van Rector Magnificus prof. mr. dr. C.J.J.M. Stolker,  
volgens besluit van het College voor Promoties  
te verdedigen op dinsdag 15 oktober 2013  
klokke 15.00

door

Monique Erkelens  
geboren te Rotterdam  
in 1981

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Writing this Ph.D dissertation has been quite a long process with the occasional ups and downs. Nevertheless, it has been a very inspirational and instructive period of my life, and I am truly grateful for the chance given to me by the Research School of Asian, African, and Amerindian Studies (CNWS) and the Institute for History of Leiden University to conduct this research and present my results in this dissertation. I also thank the Friends of the Kong Koan Archive Foundation, which in various ways have supported this research. But I should thank many more people for giving me their support all these years.

The rules of Leiden University do not permit me to thank my promotor here. Yet I think I am allowed to remark that if Professor Dr Leonard Blussé had not pushed me on, I would have said the academic world goodbye after my MA graduation in 2005. His faith in me as a person and researcher has given me the confidence needed to engage in this research project. I am also deeply indebted to Dr Leo Douw from the University of Amsterdam who has guided me through the whole writing process.

Special thanks go to Dr Chen Menghong, who has so patiently taught me how to read the Chinese archival sources. With her thorough knowledge of the Kong Koan Archive, ‘elder sister’ Menghong has helped me from the moment I started writing my proposal for a Ph.D position at CNWS until completing my manuscript. I would also like to express my sincere appreciation to the late Ir H. S. Liem who has been kind enough to meticulously read my chapters and give me his honest and critical but constructive comments. It is sad that Mr Liem did not live to be present at my PhD defence, but I am happy that he was able to read the manuscript in its final version. I would like to thank Mrs Liem for her hospitality every time I visited her and her husband. The homemade quiches which she always served in all kinds of variety for lunch were a true delight. I am also

deeply indebted to Mrs L. N. Goei who has been so enthusiastic in telling me about her grandfather, the last Chinese major of Batavia, Khouw Kim An. Her vivid memory has truly been a big contribution to this dissertation. I also thank Mr Goei for his kindness, witty sense of humour, and hospitality. I thank Peter Eman and Tuti Eman-Kartadi for sharing their family history and allowing me access to their private photo collection. This dissertation would also never have been completed without the assistance of Lincoln Paine who took care of the English editing.

I should also thank fellow researchers Dr Patricia Tjiok-Liem and Mona Lohanda for sharing with me their thoughts and sources on the Chinese Council. I thank my colleagues at the Institute for History for their advice and friendship: Dr Alicia Schrikker, Dr Andreas Weber, Dr Carolien Stolte, Pham Van Thuy, Farabi Fakhri, and Abdul Wahid. This list should also include Dr Ellen Cai, and Dr Cheng Weichung and my former office mate and dear friend Dr Agus Suwignyo. We formed a happy team, the four of us.

A special thank you goes to Mrs Marijke van Wissen, secretary to the Encompass training program, who has helped me with so many things. But most of all, she was always available when I needed to complain or vent my frustrations. Also a big thank you to my Encompass friends: life in Leiden would certainly not be as fun without all of you. Thank you Uji Nugroho for designing the cover of this dissertation. I am also grateful to Dr Koh Keng We for his advice and friendship.

My dissertation could not have been written without a number of visits to the Arsip Nasional Republik Indonesia (ANRI) and the Perpustakaan Nasional Republik Indonesia (Perpusnas) in Jakarta. The first visit with a small group of Leiden students and Professor Blussé was sponsored by Leiden University Fund (LUF). I will not easily forget that trip when we had to wade knee deep through the *banjir* flood in order to reach the ANRI. I would like to thank the staff of ANRI and Perpusnas for all their assistance. Thank you Dr Yeri Wirawan and Dr Bondan Kanumoyoso for keeping me company after a long day in ANRI or Perpusnas. A special thank you to ‘tante’ Myra Sidharta who has been so kind and hospitable while I was in Jakarta. I admire her strength, wisdom

and way of life. She truly is a great inspiration. A special thank you goes to Dr Annelieke Dirks, who also on a LUF scholarship was in Jakarta at the same time I was looking for sources in ANRI in 2007. By sheer accident, she found a real treasure for me: a thick pack of sources about the Chinese Council of Batavia that was misplaced in a file she had requested for her own research. Had she not requested that file, I would never have found these long lost extremely valuable sources!

I would like to thank my dear parents and brother for always being there for me and standing behind the decisions I have made in life. Their support has motivated me to do my utmost best in everything. I also thank my family in Surabaya and Jakarta for their warm welcome when I visited Indonesia to do some treasure hunting in the archive and library. I thank all my dear friends who have become like family to me: Wendy Goey, Patricia Kusuma, Cindy Goey, Lisa Hagen, Lisa Hu, Raymond Kusuma, Ebed Litaay, and Handoko Suwandono. I am especially indebted to Wendy for helping me with the illustrations in this dissertation. I also appreciate the friendship of my former co-students of the Sinology Department with whom I still have warm relations. Last but definitely not least I would like to thank my husband Bambang Irawan Harsono for his boundless patience and love. His positive view on life and constant encouragement to chase my goals have given me the confidence I needed.

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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

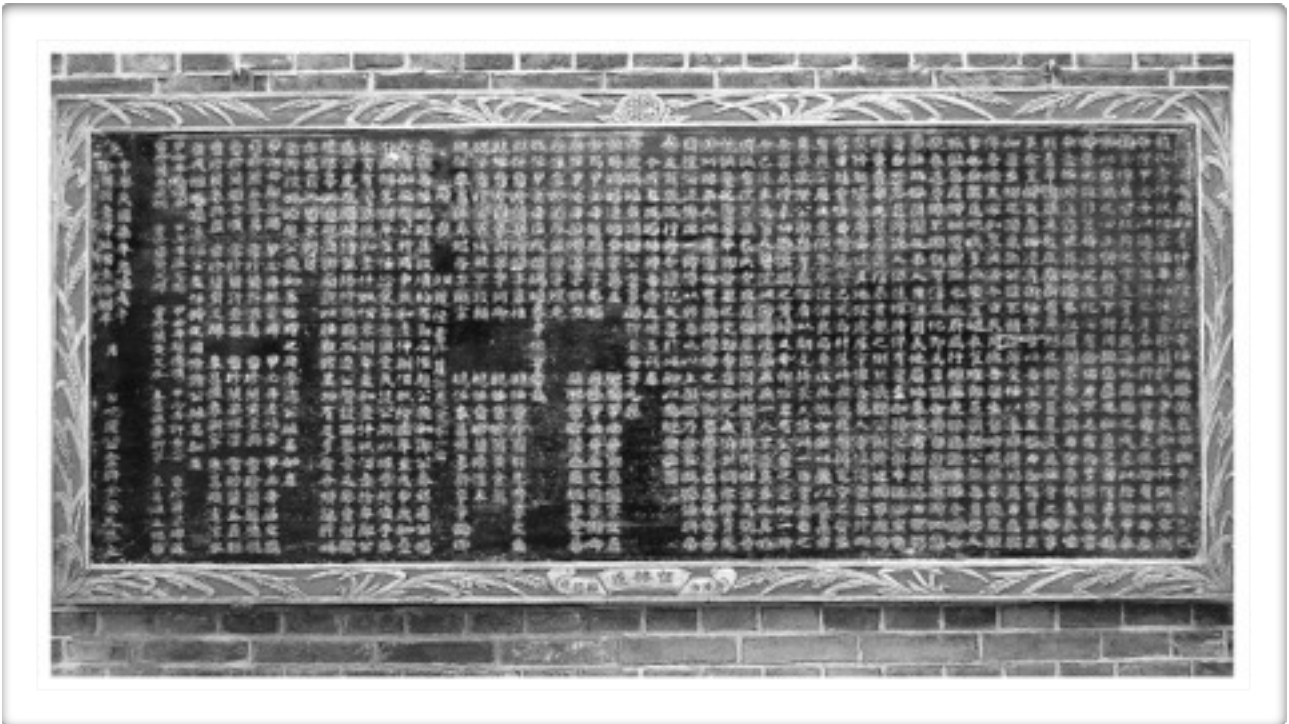
<i>Pamerintahan-familie</i>	Elite peranakan Chinese families who have produced a considerable number of Chinese officers
<i>Particuliere landerijen</i>	Private lands
<i>Pasar Gambir</i>	Annual fair
<i>Pasar malam</i>	Evening fair
<i>Pasisir</i>	Java's northeast coast
<i>Passenstelsel</i>	Pass system 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.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> 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 events<sup>2</sup>, 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.<sup>3</sup> 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.<sup>4</sup>

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

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<sup>2</sup> Such as the reconstruction of a temple.

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

<sup>4</sup> 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*<sup>5</sup> 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.<sup>6</sup>

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

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<sup>5</sup> 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.

<sup>6</sup> 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.<sup>7</sup> 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.<sup>8</sup> 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

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

<sup>8</sup> 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.<sup>9</sup> 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

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<sup>9</sup> 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".<sup>10</sup> 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

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<sup>10</sup> 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,<sup>11</sup> 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.<sup>12</sup> 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

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<sup>11</sup> 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.

<sup>12</sup> 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.<sup>13</sup> 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.<sup>14</sup>

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

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

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

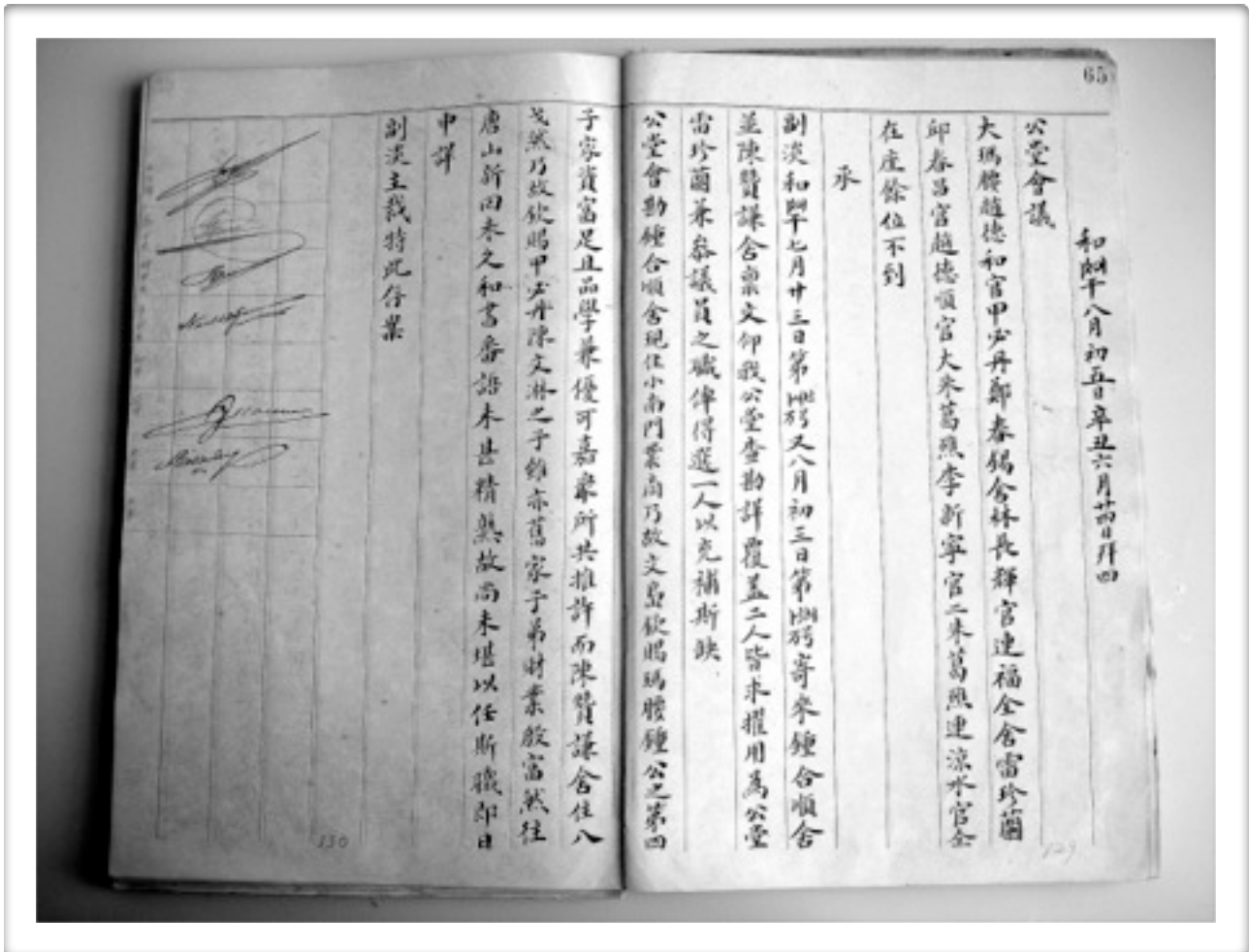
and published by herself, Leonard Blussé, Nie Dening, Wu Fengbin, and various other staff members of the Nanyang Research Institute of Xiamen University.<sup>15</sup> The Malay minutes have only once been the subject of an essay written by Giok Bwee Hesselting-Tjan, in the introductory volume on the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

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.

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<sup>15</sup> 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).

<sup>16</sup> 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.<sup>17</sup> 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

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<sup>17</sup> 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.<sup>18</sup>

Towards the end of the nineteenth century, the three sons of Khouw Tian Sek lived in three mansions on Molenvliet (now Jalan Gajah Mada).<sup>19</sup> 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.<sup>20</sup> 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

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<sup>18</sup> 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.

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

<sup>20</sup> 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*”.<sup>21</sup> 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

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

the ‘*Officier der Orde van Oranje Nassau*’.<sup>22</sup> 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

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<sup>22</sup> “Officer in the Order of Orange-Nassau”.

Chinese community.<sup>23</sup> 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.<sup>24</sup> 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:<sup>25</sup> houses which Khouw Kim An left to his children.<sup>26</sup> 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.<sup>27</sup> 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

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<sup>23</sup> 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.

<sup>24</sup> Priyomarsono, *Rumah Mayor China di Jakarta*, 14.

<sup>25</sup> 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.

<sup>26</sup> 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.

<sup>27</sup> Priyomarsono, *Rumah Mayor China di Jakarta*, 21.

middle part of the mansion, but the project failed during the Asian financial crisis in the 1990s.<sup>28</sup> 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.

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<sup>28</sup> *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