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The Decline of the Chinese Council of Batavia

Erkelens, M.

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Author: Erkelens, Monique

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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 Verscherping 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 Siauw 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 *majoer 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.