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The Decline of the Chinese Council of Batavia

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CHAPTER 4

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

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

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

⁴¹⁰ Williams, *Overseas Chinese Nationalism*, 129.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

4.2 Nationalist consciousness, emancipation, and ethnic group solidarity

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Indonesians

The Chinese

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

⁴⁵³ L. Suryadinata, "The 1911 Revolution and the Chinese in Java: A Preliminary Study", in *The 1911 Revolution—The Chinese in British and Dutch Southeast Asia*, edited by Lee Lai To (Singapore: Heineman Asia, 1987), 112; Williams, *Overseas Chinese Nationalism*, 73, 168–69; Govaars-Tjia, *Dutch Colonial Education*, 55.

were peranakan or totok, Hokkien or Hakka, or from some other Chinese ethnic subgroup.⁴⁵⁴ The Chinese in the Indies were always quite distinct from other inhabitants of the colony, but they were far from united as a community. Friction between various economic classes often occurred, while group cohesion did not extend beyond familial borders. Membership in traditional Chinese organisations and underground secret societies were either exclusively peranakan or totok, or based on separate speech-groups. These bodies—established to serve the interests of its membership only—were for a long time sources of hostility between various segments of the Chinese community. The perceptive board members of the THHK understood that animosity and bloody feuds between people of common Chinese descent had to be combated in order to become a respected group in colonial society. The presence of a strong Chinese group might motivate the colonial administration to tone down its anti-Chinese bias. Group consciousness had to transcend parochial boundaries and extend to a feeling of membership in one great Chinese nation.⁴⁵⁵ Within this development of group solidarity, Confucianism should be applied as a moral system that would guide the Chinese in improving their social lives.⁴⁵⁶ Kwee Tek Hoay claims that Kang Youwei played a crucial role in ending the frequent clashes between the traditional associations. When speaking before leaders and members of various organisations in a packed THHK building in Batavia, Kang stressed the importance of harmony and unity of the Chinese people. From then on, according to Kwee, one did not often hear of friction among the associations that had led to frequent violence in the past.⁴⁵⁷ But how strong this united front was and how long it would last were open to question.

In the meantime, the overseas Chinese had caught the attention of the Chinese imperial government. Traditionally the policy of the Qing court toward the emigration of its subjects was explicit: emigration was prohibited and it was the duty of the local officials to enforce the

⁴⁵⁴ Nio, “Bij het 40-jarig Jubileum van de Tiong Hoa Hwe Koan-Batavia”, 297–98.

⁴⁵⁵ Williams, *Overseas Chinese Nationalism*, 22, 63–66.

⁴⁵⁶ Kwee Tek Hoay, *The Origins of the Modern Chinese Movement in Indonesia*, 11.

⁴⁵⁷ Kwee Tek Hoay, *The Origins of the Modern Chinese Movement in Indonesia*, 25–26.

prohibitions. Nevertheless, the emigration of Chinese from China's southeastern provinces occurred throughout most of the Qing dynasty and reached flood stage in the late 1840s. The gold rushes in California and Australia attracted large numbers of Chinese emigrants, while at the same time the notorious wholesale human trafficking in contract labour, known as the coolie trade, had begun. During the first two decades of the coolie trade, the Qing central government stuck to the traditional prohibitions against emigration and refused to acknowledge the atrocities of the system. The disinterest and non-action displayed by the imperial court stemmed from the view that regulation of the coolie trade would constitute acknowledgement of an evil. However in 1860 the Peking government was forced by the British and French to modify its prohibitions on emigration and from then on the government officially recognised the right of its subjects to emigrate, although prohibitive laws remained on the books until 1893. With the recognition of Chinese emigration and increasing popular hostility to the traffic in humans, the Qing government started to show more interest in the problems of the coolie trade. It began to distinguish between voluntary emigration and the coolie trade and attempted to prohibit the latter. From the 1870s Peking attempted to protect Chinese emigrants through the despatch of diplomatic and consular officials.⁴⁵⁸

Amidst these developments, the relatively successful overseas Chinese communities, especially in Southeast Asia caught the eye of the Chinese imperial court. Having been thrown in a state of political turmoil, and on top of that suffering from the humiliation of foreign interference in its internal affairs, the Manchu court realised that the capable, energetic, and financially strong overseas Chinese could be instruments of great usefulness. In 1893, the ban on emigration was repealed and a pardon was issued for emigrants who had left their country and the graves of their ancestors. This was soon followed by other measures to tie the Chinese abroad more closely to their ancestral country. Numerous governmental missions were sent to the Indies, often transported on a warship or a squadron of warships, with the aim of inspiring renewed loyalty towards China. Being

⁴⁵⁸ Irick, *Ch'ing Policy toward the Coolie Trade*, 11–15, 389–414.

confronted with hostile public opinion in the colony, the Indies Chinese experienced the rapprochement with the government of China as moral support.⁴⁵⁹

The rapidly expanding Chinese school system in the Netherlands Indies was soon taken under the wing of the Chinese Ministry of Education in Peking. Chinese teachers were sent to the Indies to teach in the THHK schools and special schoolbooks were printed in Shanghai. Starting in 1906, a Chinese school inspector visited the schools in the Indies on a yearly basis. The Chinese Ministry of Education also provided scholarships for outstanding students to further their education in Chinese secondary schools and universities.⁴⁶⁰ More official visits from China took place with the foundation of the Chinese Chambers of Commerce (Siang Hwee) in the Indies. The first Siang Hwee was established in 1901 in Batavia. Operating under the jurisdiction of the Department of Agriculture, Industry and Trade in Peking, The Siang Hwee primarily served as an agency of the Chinese government. Officials of the Chinese government were despatched to the Dutch East Indies to report on the state of Chinese affairs and the circumstances under which business was done. Until Chinese consuls were admitted to the Dutch East Indies in 1912, diplomatic affairs and Chinese grievances were handled by the Siang Hwee. This economic association was also active in social matters. Funds were raised to help victims when China was hit by natural disasters like famine or floods, and donations were given to Chinese social organisations such as orphanages. The Siang Hwee was also active in sending out ballots for elections held in China.⁴⁶¹

With the government of China playing such an active role in the life of its citizens, the colonial government was obliged to reconsider its restrictive policy towards the Indies Chinese. In 1904, the pass system was relaxed; travel passes were no longer issued for a specific trip but were made valid for a year. In 1910, Foreign Orientals were allowed to travel without passes in Java and Madoera, as long as they travelled between main business centres and markets situated along main

⁴⁵⁹ A. Vandenbosch, "A Problem in Java: The Chinese in the Dutch East Indies", *Pacific Affairs* 3:11 (1930): 1003.

⁴⁶⁰ Govaars-Tjia, *Dutch Colonial Education*, 55–56.

⁴⁶¹ Govaars-Tjia, *Dutch Colonial Education*, 58–59; Vandenbosch, "A Problem in Java", 1008–1009.

highways or railways, and greater freedom of residence was granted. The pass- and residence systems were abolished in Java and Madoera in 1914 and 1919. It must be remarked that another reason for easing the enforcement of the pass system was economic. As government control on the movement of Chinese into rural Java was tightened after the abolition of several revenue farms, Chinese retail trade was hampered, resulting in sharply declined sales and the inability to collect short-term loans or outstanding debts. Ultimately this also affected European wholesale trade and government revenue.⁴⁶²

Yet the colonial government's primary reason for strengthening ties with the Chinese community seems to have been political. Although the emancipation of Chinese society and its aspirations were welcomed by the colonial authorities, they were wary of the close links that existed between the Chinese organisations and the Straits Settlements and China. Many deemed it outrageous that Chinese government officials were allowed to enter the Indies with the purpose of "inspecting the well-being of Chinese colonial subjects".⁴⁶³ In 1907 a legislative act was adopted that paved the way for individuals to obtain European status (*gelijkstelling*) by means of voluntary assimilation to Europeans. A year later, the Hollandsch-Chineesche School (Dutch-Chinese School, HCS) was opened, while Chinese children were allowed to enter indigenous government schools as well. When in 1909 the imperial government of China proclaimed all children born of a Chinese mother or father, regardless of their place of birth or country of residence, to be Chinese nationals, the colonial government was quick to respond.⁴⁶⁴ A year later, the Dutch colonial government passed the Dutch Subject Law, which declared all Indies-born Chinese to be Dutch subjects. On 8

⁴⁶² Fromberg, "De Chineesche Beweging op Java", 427–28; Lohanda, "The 'Passen- en Wijkenstelsel'", 19–21. For more details on the passport- and residence systems, see Tjiok-Liem, *De Rechtspositie der Chinezen in Nederlands-Indië*.

⁴⁶³ "Het Chineezenvraagstuk", *De Indische Gids* 27:2 (1905): 1890–91; "Het Chineesche vraagstuk in Indië", *De Indische Gids* 28:2 (1906): 1745–46.

⁴⁶⁴ Ong Eng Die, *Chineezenvraagstuk in Nederlandsch-Indië: Sociografie van een Indonesische Bevolkingsgroep* (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1943), 255.

May 1911, the issue was more or less settled in Peking in a consular agreement between China and the Netherlands Indies by which the imperial government acknowledged that in cases where the *peranakan* Chinese were in Dutch territories, the question of whether a person was Dutch or Chinese was to be determined according to Indies law. It was also agreed that Indies Chinese who wished to return to China could reclaim their Chinese nationality. China by no means abandoned its claim over the Indies Chinese and the end result of the consular meeting was that the *peranakan* Chinese held dual nationality. It should be mentioned that the Dutch Nationality Law of 1892, which defined Indies-born Asians as inhabitants (*ingezetenen*) of Dutch territories but non-Dutch (*niet-Nederlander*) was still in effect. The law drew a distinction between *Nederlanders* and *niet-Nederlanders* (the indigenes and other Asians). Therefore two kinds of subjects existed: *Nederlanders* who were Dutch subjects and *niet-Nederlanders* who were Dutch subjects. Thus, the Dutch Subject Law of 1910 did not elevate the status of the Chinese; they remained Foreign Orientals with a status inferior to that of Europeans. Furthermore, the Dutch agreed to the establishment of a Chinese consulate in the Indies. However, from the Dutch point of view, the consuls were not to be considered diplomats but merely trade agents responsible for the commercial interests of their compatriots.⁴⁶⁵ The Dutch Office for Chinese Affairs kept a watchful eye on the consuls and alerted the director of internal affairs when they went beyond their remits, as they often did in Chinese education.⁴⁶⁶

In 1914, the hated police courts were abolished and the *Landgerecht*—a court with jurisdiction over all population groups—was established in the same year. A process of legal unification followed. Most steps taken by the colonial government to bind the Indies-Chinese closer to their country of residence were welcomed, but the Chinese remained unhappy with the

⁴⁶⁵ Ong Eng Die, *Chineezzen in Nederlandsch-Indië*, 244–45. See also Fromberg, “De Chineesche Beweging op Java”, 431–46.

⁴⁶⁶ Confidential letter of the Advisor for Chinese Affairs to the Director of Internal Affairs on 9 November 1917, no. 409/17, Binnenlandsch Bestuur, no. 2192, Bemoelingen van de Chinese Consuls htl, 1916–1918, ANRI, Jakarta.

nationality situation and few Chinese took the opportunity of obtaining European status as the conditions attached to this sort of naturalisation process were either unfeasible or repugnant. Individuals who wished to obtain European status were required to have a thorough (speaking) knowledge of Dutch, possess a certain amount of property, perform military service, and agree to the equal division of property among children (according to Chinese law Chinese daughters were excluded from family inheritance). The Chinese did not want assimilation but an improved status as foreigners, such as that enjoyed by the Japanese since 1899.⁴⁶⁷ This fervent wish was underlined by Major Khouw Kim An in his tribute to Queen Wilhelmina when she celebrated her jubilee. He praised all the efforts of the government under the Queen's leadership to improve the lives of the Indies Chinese in the previous twenty-five years, but regretted that the government had not taken the last, most important step of conferring equal status upon the Chinese.⁴⁶⁸

The colonial government's attempt to improve the lives of the Indies-born Chinese did weaken the fragile unity of the peranakan and totok Chinese. Now that most of the major grievances were removed,⁴⁶⁹ peranakans tended to align themselves more with the colonial government. At the same time, the Chinese revolutionaries under the leadership of Dr Sun Yat-sen increasingly gained support among the overseas Chinese. Kang Youwei's reform movement and Sun Yat-sen's revolutionary party had been battling about which form of government would be in China's best interests and competed with each other to win the support of the overseas Chinese. Kang's

⁴⁶⁷ Ong Eng Die, *Chineez in Nederlandsch-Indië*, 241–42; F. Tichelman, "Early Emancipation and Inter-ethnic Relations on Java", *Kabar Seberang* 24–25 (1995): 221; Vandenbosch, "A Problem in Java", 1009–10. For more details on the Dutch Subject Law and the naturalisation process, see Tjiok-Liem, *De Rechtspositie der Chinezen in Nederlands-Indië*.

⁴⁶⁸ L. F. van Gent, W. A. Penard and E. Moresco, *Gedenkboek voor Nederlandsch-Indië: Ter Gelegenheid van het Regeeringsjubileum van H. M. de Koningin, 1898–1923* (Batavia: Kolff, 1923), 47–48.

⁴⁶⁹ Even though the police courts were replaced by the uniform *Landgerecht* (local tribunal), criminal cases involving the Chinese were still handled by the *Landraad*, the court for the indigenous people. The Chinese were also not granted equal status with the Europeans, with the exception of those undergoing a naturalisation process.

reformists were in favour of reinstating the young Emperor Guangxu as a constitutional monarch while implementing reforms that would combine modern technology with the teachings of Confucius. The revolutionaries had set their minds on overthrowing the Manchu regime and founding a Chinese Republic.⁴⁷⁰ Gradually most overseas Chinese, including followers of Kang Youwei, regarded the Manchu rulers as too corrupt, and with the death of Emperor Guangxu in 1908, the reformists lost their *raison d'être*.⁴⁷¹ The throne was left in the hands of ignorant and vainglorious Manchu princes and the Empress Dowager named her three-year-old grand-nephew Puyi as Guangxu's successor. Puyi's father, the second Prince Chun, acted as regent but proved unfit for the troubled period the Qing dynasty found itself in.⁴⁷² As a result, an increasing number of overseas Chinese in North America and parts of Southeast Asia shifted allegiance to the revolutionary ideas of Sun Yat-sen. The efforts made on behalf of the revolutionary cause varied from moral support to financial contributions and from the spread of revolutionary propaganda to tracking down and killing Manchu officials in the overseas settlements, even at the risk of one's own life.⁴⁷³

The identification of the overseas Chinese with the revolutionary cause was a result of the Manchu ruling house's inability to protect its overseas subjects. The overseas Chinese strongly felt that their inferior status in colonial society and China's deterioration were related, and they blamed the ills inflicted on them by their imperial hosts to the weakening of the government in their ancestral land. They looked at the strong, modernised Japanese state that was able to protect and improve the position of the Japanese in the Indies. The overseas Chinese were also in need of a strong Chinese nation with a ruling house capable of handling diplomatic affairs. The Manchu's way of handling diplomacy had only resulted in concessions to the imperialists. Therefore, they

⁴⁷⁰ Spence, *The Search for Modern China*, 234.

⁴⁷¹ Shih-shan Ho Tsai, "The Revolution of 1911 and the Role of the Overseas Chinese", 11.

⁴⁷² Fairbank and Reischauer, *China*, 401.

⁴⁷³ Shih-shan Ho Tsai, "The Revolution of 1911 and the Role of the Overseas Chinese", 11–14.

supported the revolutionaries who were hinting at the expulsion of the ruling Manchus. The dynasty's "Mandate of Heaven" had quite evidently expired.⁴⁷⁴

The revolutionaries did not gain much ground in the Indies, as the Dutch colonial government kept a suspicious eye on their revolutionary activities. In 1907, Sun Yat-sen was refused entry to the Dutch East Indies, and he never had direct contact with the Indies Chinese on their home ground.⁴⁷⁵ Most support for the revolutionaries came from the totok Chinese whose revolutionary activities were carried out in secret in the Soe Po Sia book clubs, which were affiliated with the Tung Meng Hui (Revolutionary Alliance), which Dr Sun founded in 1905 while he was still in political exile in Japan and which is considered the forerunner of the Kuo Min Tang party.⁴⁷⁶

In 1909, the first Soe Po Sia of the Dutch East Indies was established and introduced its members to revolutionary political ideas through the distribution of books, newspapers, and periodicals. The clubs were also frequently venues for public or secret lectures and meetings.⁴⁷⁷ The colonial authorities kept a close eye on the Soe Po Sia and deported any radical they deemed a threat. Most peranakans were in favour of the Confucian reform movement of Kang Youwei and redirected their attention to the *status quo* in the Indies, keeping their distance from revolutionary activities.⁴⁷⁸ This explains why the peranakans did not join the totoks with the same degree of enthusiasm when the last Manchu emperor abdicated in January 1912. Any involvement in Chinese political affairs was also strictly forbidden by the colonial authorities. In its board meeting of 20 November 1915, the Batavian Chinese Council discussed a confidential letter from the assistant-

⁴⁷⁴ Shih-shan Ho Tsai, "The Revolution of 1911 and the Role of the Overseas Chinese", 8; Yen Ching-hwang, "Nanyang Chinese and the 1911 Revolution", in *The 1911 Revolution—The Chinese in British and Dutch Southeast Asia*, edited by Lee Lai To (Singapore: Heineman Asia, 1987), 20–34.

⁴⁷⁵ Suryadinata, "The 1911 Revolution and the Chinese in Java", 112

⁴⁷⁶ Suryadinata, "The 1911 Revolution and the Chinese in Java", 109–110.

⁴⁷⁷ Govaars-Tjia, *Dutch Colonial Education*, 60–61.

⁴⁷⁸ Suryadinata, "The 1911 Revolution and the Chinese in Java", 112.

resident⁴⁷⁹ which instructed the officers that no one in the Chinese community was to show any emotion with regard to the political developments in China. Demonstrations were strictly forbidden, as well as hoisting any Chinese flag. Neighbourhood chiefs were then instructed by the officers to announce these rules in the Chinese neighbourhoods. Any violator would be punished severely, as well as the neighbourhood chief who was in charge of the quarter in which the violator lived. This warning by the colonial government was probably a result of the political turmoil in China following the establishment of the Chinese Republic and the riots that took place in a number of Javanese cities in 1912, which will be discussed later on. The passive and obedient attitude by the peranakans was not appreciated by the totok Chinese, who viewed the peranakans as cowards, disloyal to the Chinese nation, and slaves of the Dutch.⁴⁸⁰ Thus Kwee Tek Hoay's conclusion that Kang Youwei's influence helped end rifts between peranakans and totoks should be taken with caution. If a feeling of unity ever existed, it was very short-lived or merely superficial.

The split between the peranakans and totoks was manifested in various newspapers and political organisations. The China-orientated Sin Po Group was a political organisation that sprang from the *Sin Po* newspaper, established in Batavia in 1910, and represented the totok Chinese. The group embraced Chinese nationalism, rejected the HCS and Dutch Subject Law of 1910, and refused to participate in local politics, which was made possible for the Indies Chinese with the establishment of the People's Council (*Volksraad*) in 1918. According to the Sin Po Group, in the end all Indies Chinese would return to their ancestral country; their stay in the colony was only temporary. Pieter Fromberg warned that aversion to participation in colonial affairs and contempt for Dutch education—that is, the refusal to learn from others—indicated an extreme form of nationalism. Extremist nationalism as such would stand in the way of progress and development.⁴⁸¹

⁴⁷⁹ Dated 28 October 1915, no. 339/G.

⁴⁸⁰ Chinese minutes, no. 21026, 20 November 1915: pp. 60–61; Malay minutes, no. NM3, 20 November 1915: pp. 98–99. See also “Een Chinees over de Chineesche Beweging”, *Koloniaal Tijdschrift* 1:2 (1912): 667–72.

⁴⁸¹ Fromberg, “De Chineesche Beweging op Java”, 656–57.

The Sin Po Group advocated the unity of peranakans and totoks but the gap between them seemed unbridgeable.

The more moderate, Indies-orientated *Perniagaan* newspaper represented the peranakan Chinese. In 1928 the Chung Hwa Hui (Chinese Organisation, CHH) was founded, the first political party representing the peranakan Chinese. Unlike the Sin Po Group, the CHH wished to participate in local politics. The organisation regarded the Indies as the home of the peranakan Chinese and that Western education was therefore needed; Chinese education alone was insufficient for a successful life in the Indies.⁴⁸² The Chinese community saw the emergence of a third faction with the foundation of the Partai Tionghoa Indonesia (Chinese Indonesian Party, or PTI) in 1932. This political organisation sought allegiance with the Indonesian nationalist movement.⁴⁸³ Leo Suryadinata has studied the struggle within these political groups and their ideological differences. He traces the strongholds of the political streams back to the three main cities on Java: the Sin Po Group was all-powerful in Batavia, the CHH was based in Semarang, and the PTI was most prominent in Soerabaja.⁴⁸⁴

The Arabs and Indonesians

Signs of broad group consciousness were also prevalent among the Arabs and Indonesians. In keeping with the temper of the twentieth century, the Arabs in the Indies also tried to “forge a collective Arab identity”. Elite Arab businessmen took the lead in this search for identity by building up educational institutions and engaging themselves in the world of print. They were inspired by the schools of the Ottoman Empire, to which, from the late nineteenth century onwards,

⁴⁸² Ong Hok Ham, *Riwayat Tionghoa Peranakan di Jawa* (Depok: Komunitas Bambu, 2005), 135–36.

⁴⁸³ M. Osman, *Perkembangan Nasionalisme Masyarakat Cina di Jawa dan Partai-partai Politiknya: 1900–1945* (Jakarta: Studi Klub Sejarah Fakultas Sastra, Universitas Indonesia, 1986), 6–8.

⁴⁸⁴ See Suryadinata, *Peranakan Chinese Politics in Java 1917–1942*.

numerous sons of elite Arab families in Java had been sent to obtain modern education.⁴⁸⁵ The Arab community became politicised in a manner comparable to the way the Chinese had become when the Manchu dynasty was overthrown by the Chinese nationalists in 1911. Political consciousness among the Indies Arabs emerged when the Ottoman Empire was weakened as a world power in the years leading up to World War I and dissolved in 1922, after which one year later Atatürk established the Republic of Turkey.⁴⁸⁶

The new Indonesian elite was the result of the Ethical Policy and the association principle, which sought to combine “Eastern experience” with “Western wisdom”. Progressive politicians, confirmed believers of the association principle, had called for the establishment of more European-style education in the Dutch language for a rising Westernised Indonesian elite that could take over much of the work of Dutch civil servants. But handing over more responsibilities to this elite group turned out to be complicated. The dualist structure of the *Binnenlandsch Bestuur*, in which the Dutch officials were considered superior to their native counterparts, was retained. The governmental posts of governor-general, resident, assistant-resident, and *controleur* remained inaccessible to indigenous officials. Native people were only allowed to hold subordinate offices.⁴⁸⁷

Indonesian dissatisfaction over their inferior position in colonial society, coupled with the drive for progress led to the establishment of emancipative organisations, their charters suffused with the words of progress, uplift, prosperity, and social welfare. The Ethical Policy was thus not only reserved for the Dutch; competition came from indigenous innovators who had developed their own ideas of modernisation, progress, and civilisation. Unlike the Chinese ones, the Indonesian

⁴⁸⁵ S. K. Mandal, “Forging a Modern Arab Identity in Java in the Early Twentieth Century”, in *Transcending Borders: Arabs, Politics, Trade and Islam in Southeast Asia*, edited by H. de Jonge and N. Kaptein (Leiden: KITLV Press, 2002), 163–65.

⁴⁸⁶ C. Finkel, *De Droom van Osman: Geschiedenis van het Ottomaanse Rijk 1300–1923* (Amsterdam: Mets and Schilt, 2008), chaps. 15 and 16; Mandal, “Forging a Modern Arab Identity in Java”, 168.

⁴⁸⁷ W.H. van den Doel, *Afscheid van Indië: De Val van het Nederlandse Imperium in Azië* (Amsterdam: Prometheus, 2001), 23–25.

organisations were orientated towards ethnicity, ideology, or religion. Group cohesion seldom extended beyond speech-groups or regional ties. Nationwide organisations did not gain ground until the late 1920s, when the nationalist concept of *bangsa Indonesia* (Indonesian people) was created.⁴⁸⁸ The only bond linking the Indonesians from the different parts of the archipelago together was the Islamic faith. The rapid expansion of Islamic-based associations like the Sarekat Islam and Muhammadiyah showed a revived interest in the Islamic faith. Islam increasingly took a central position in the nationalist awakening of the Indonesians. It was not Western ideas but Islam that provided the model of raised consciousness among the Indonesians.⁴⁸⁹ Robert van Niel summarised the importance of Islam in indigenous life as follows:

To the Indonesians Islam was much more than a religion—it was a way of life. As such, it came more and more to stand for everything that was indigenous as opposed to foreign. Islam came to be a factor of unity within the growing self-consciousness of Indonesians, and at the same time came to be a criterion of national solidarity, of brown man against white.⁴⁹⁰

Indonesian emancipation was not only a result of Dutch “lofty” ideals. Developments elsewhere in Asia contributed significantly to the awakening of the indigenous people. The victory of Japan in the Russo-Japanese War (1904–1905) made a deep impression. For the first time, an Asian country had defeated a European power on its own terms. The Japanese victory was a signal that through hard work and sacrifice Asians could work their way up to becoming first-rate citizens

⁴⁸⁸ Wertheim and The Siauwi Giap, “Social Change in Java”, 245–47.

⁴⁸⁹ J. van Doorn, *A Divided Society: Segmentation and Mediation in Late-Colonial Indonesia* (Rotterdam: Erasmus University, Faculty of Social Science, CASP, 1983), 9–13.

⁴⁹⁰ R. van Niel, *The Emergence of the Modern Indonesian Elite* (Leiden: Foris, 1984), 82.

on the world stage.⁴⁹¹ The indigenous people also followed the progressive reforms in the Philippines and British India with great interest. In 1907 the Philippine Assembly was inaugurated, the first native-controlled legislative body in the colonial world. Nine years later, United States Congress passed the so-called Jones Act by which the United States officially pledged to grant independence to the Philippines as soon as a stable Filipino government could be established. Meanwhile, the British government opened more vacancies in the Indian Civil Service to Indians and the Government of India Act of 1919 contained far-reaching administrative reforms. Certain departments such as public security and finances remained under the control of the British governor, but equally important departments such as local administration, education, public works, healthcare, agriculture and irrigation were handed over to Indian ministers accountable to democratically-chosen provincial councils.⁴⁹²

Inspiration also came from closer to home. Indonesian intellectuals admired the awakening of the Chinese that had led to the establishment of a successful school system. Realising that education was the main feature of progress, the intellectuals called for a similar movement to be launched by the Indonesians.⁴⁹³ The Chinese press was also a source of inspiration. In 1886 a certain Tjoa Tjoan Lok successfully made a bid for the ownership of the Dutch printing firm Gebroeders Gimberg and Co. and the right to publish its newspaper, *Bintang Timoer*, in a public auction that took place in Soerabaja. The sale of the printing firm to Tjoa Tjoan Lok marked the beginning of Chinese participation in newspaper publication, and other Chinese decided to try their luck in the printing press business. Within a short span of time numerous Chinese-Malay printing presses were set up and Chinese-Malay newspapers mushroomed across Java.⁴⁹⁴

⁴⁹¹ Van Dijk, “Een Kolonie in Beweging”, 61.

⁴⁹² Van den Doel, *Afscheid van Indië*, 19–20, 50–54.

⁴⁹³ A. B. Adam, *The Vernacular Press and the Emergence of Modern Indonesian Consciousness, 1855–1913* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Southeast Asia Program, Cornell University, 1995), 104–105.

⁴⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 63–71.

The Malay press was an important medium to reach and educate the masses by spreading new ideas, thoughts, and opinions that could contribute to a collective awakening and, in a later stage, nationalist consciousness. Newspapers were able to open people's eyes to the reality of their status in colonial society, to reassess their identity and to bolster a feeling of group consciousness. The Chinese-Malay press came to function as an important medium for the intellectual development of the indigenous masses and played an important role in improving the quality of the indigenous press. Indigenous journalists were invited to work at Chinese-Malay newspapers to gain more publishing experience. There they were taught the techniques of the printing business, newspaper management, and of course journalism.⁴⁹⁵

The *pergerakan*

At the turn of the twentieth century, a new era began in which colonial civil society underwent significant changes. It was an era in which the Indonesians, Chinese, Arabs, and Indo-Europeans became conscious of their status in colonial society and began to demand equal rights with the Dutch. It was an era in which followers of new ideologies (socialism, communism) emerged as political power groups and old cultural (Confucianism) and religious concepts (Islam) were revived. People began to see the world in new ways and felt they could change it. Even though Takashi Shiraishi pointed in particular to the indigenous when summarising this awakening, his summary is also applicable to the Chinese, Arabs and Indo-Europeans:

It [this awakening] was and still is called the *pergerakan* [movement], in which 'natives' moved [*bergerak*] in their search for forms to express their new political

⁴⁹⁵ A. Wahid, "Modal Cina dan Nasionalisme Indonesia: Industri Pers Cina pada Masa Pergerakan Nasional, 1910–1942", *Lembaran Sejarah* 2:1 (1999): 107–11.

consciousness, put in motion [*menggerakkan*] their thoughts and ideas, and confronted the realities of the Indies in the world and in an age they felt to be in motion.⁴⁹⁶

This awakening was expressed in newspapers and journals, in rallies and meetings, in labour organisations and strikes, in associations and political parties, but also in such forms as novels, songs and theatres, and revolts.⁴⁹⁷ A new trend in outward appearances was also visible: indigenous, Arabs, and Chinese all started to dress in a Western manner.⁴⁹⁸ To the Dutch, the *pergerakan* was simply modern or a natural phenomenon as all the major forms in which the *pergerakan* found its expression were familiar. But to the indigenous, Arabs and Chinese, the *pergerakan* was revolutionary because now they were able to say what they had always been unable to say.⁴⁹⁹

4.3 A divided society: racial segregation and ethnic conflict in early twentieth century Java

During the Chinese New Year celebration in February 1912, Dutch bans on fireworks and flag hoisting led to disturbances between the Chinese and the police in Soerabaja.⁵⁰⁰ When the Chinese of Soerabaja closed their shops during the riots, the city suffered a shortage of staple foods, but Arab retail traders continued selling rice to the native people at normal prices.⁵⁰¹ They refused

⁴⁹⁶ T. Shiraishi, *An Age in Motion: Popular Radicalism in Java, 1912–1926* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1990), p. xi.

⁴⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. xi.

⁴⁹⁸ Cornelis (K.) van Dijk, “Sarong, Jubbah, and Trousers: Appearance as a Means of Distinction and Discrimination”, in *Outward Appearances: Dressing State and Society in Indonesia*, edited by H. Schulte Nordholt (Leiden: KITLV Press, 1997), 58.

⁴⁹⁹ Shiraishi, *An Age in Motion*, 339–40.

⁵⁰⁰ As the Dutch government had not yet recognised the Chinese Republic, the colonial government issued a ban on hoisting the new Chinese republican flag.

⁵⁰¹ Nevertheless, the inconvenience caused by the market strike did anger the natives who could not always buy the rice they needed. Natives—especially the Madoerese—attacked the Chinese and beat them up. See Shiraishi, “Anti-Sinicism in Java’s New Order”, 202.

offers from the Chinese to take over their supplies. In fact, the Arabs refused to sell rice to the Chinese at all, even when gold was offered, thereby sabotaging the plans of the instigators who hoped that people would revolt because of the food shortage. The result was severe strain between the Chinese and Arab communities.⁵⁰² Simultaneously, bitterness over the economic freedom hitherto enjoyed by the Chinese had aroused Arab animosity towards the Chinese.⁵⁰³ In the following months, tension between the two ethnic communities rose to higher levels, eventually resulting in riots from 27 October to 2 November 1912, when there was heavy fighting between Chinese and Arabs and Chinese shops were ransacked by Arabs. Among the eight dead were five Chinese, two Arabs, and one European.⁵⁰⁴ Similar conflicts between Chinese and Arabs occurred in Bangil, Tuban, and Cheribon.⁵⁰⁵ In Batavia, Chinese children spread rumours about the storage of litres of pork fat by the Chinese to pour over the Arabs.⁵⁰⁶

In October 1918, an influenza epidemic killed many people in the city of Kudus. Out of concern that the epidemic might cause more deadly victims, a group of Chinese youngsters staged a ceremonial procession in front of the Chinese temple in the hope that it might stop the outbreak. The procession caught the eye of a group of *hajis*⁵⁰⁷ who owned tobacco factories in the city but operated at a competitive disadvantage to the Chinese. Upon seeing the procession, they tried to stir up unrest by turning their employees and members of the local Sarekat Islam branch against the Chinese. The workers and members of Sarekat Islam began mocking the Chinese and the incident quickly escalated into skirmishes between the indigenous and Chinese. On the following night, 31 October 1918, Chinese neighbourhoods and shops were ransacked and set on fire by thousands of Sarekat Islam members, many of whom came from outside the city. There were hundreds of

⁵⁰² “Persoverzicht: De Chineesche Pers, oktober-november 1912”, *Koloniaal Tijdschrift* 2:1 (1913): 333.

⁵⁰³ “Chineezen en Arabieren”, *De Indische Gids* 35:1 (1913): 107.

⁵⁰⁴ “Chineezen in botsing op Java”, *De Indische Gids* 34:2 (1912): 1656–57.

⁵⁰⁵ Lohanda, *Growing Pains*, 131–35.

⁵⁰⁶ Malay minutes, no. NM2, 4 November 1912: p. 124.

⁵⁰⁷ The term “haji” refers to a devoted Muslim who has made the pilgrimage to Mecca.

casualties and sixteen people were killed. Forty houses were burnt down, a Chinese temple was destroyed and several Chinese shops and factories were damaged. Some people were burnt or buried alive when their houses were destroyed.⁵⁰⁸

These two examples of virulent anti-Chinese violence are highlighted here for the purpose of illustrating that racial relations in the Dutch East Indies had changed dramatically in the second decade of the twentieth century. The reason for this deterioration in racial relations was twofold. First, rivalry in business created sharp boundaries between the ethnic groups. After the revenue farms had been dismantled in the 1890s, the Chinese sought new investment opportunities in the *kretek* (clove) cigarette and batik industries, entrepreneurial domains hitherto dominated by the indigenous bourgeoisie and the Arabs.⁵⁰⁹ The competition was aggravated with the arrival of Chinese newcomers, mostly of Hakka and Cantonese origin. Traditionally these *singkehs* had found patrons in the existing peranakan business networks. But when the tax farms were placed under direct government management and rural credit banks replaced the Chinese moneylenders, the *singkehs* had no reason anymore to assimilate in the peranakan community and shifted their attention to other businesses. The aggressiveness of the need-driven newcomers from China set off fear among the indigenous merchants. In 1909 the Sarekat Dagang Islam was formed to ward off Chinese competition from the established indigenous industries.⁵¹⁰ Second, the colonial government shared some of the blame. Chinese vulnerability to native antagonism was fostered by the government's strategy of slandering the Chinese for standing in the way of native progress.⁵¹¹ The

⁵⁰⁸ Setiono, *Tionghoa dalam Pusaran Politik*, 375–79. For more details on the anti-Chinese riots in Kudus, see The Siauw Giap, “Group Conflict in a Plural Society”, *Revue du Sud-Est Asiatique et de l'Extrême-Orient* 1 (1966): 1–31.

⁵⁰⁹ A. Azra, “The Indies Chinese and the Sarekat Islam: An Account of the Anti-Chinese Riots in Colonial Indonesia”, *Studia Islamika: Indonesian Journal for Islamic Studies* 1:1 (1994): 36–37; Mandal, “Forging a Modern Arab Identity in Java”, 165; D. Noer, *The Modernist Muslim Movement in Indonesia, 1900–1942* (Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1973), 102–103.

⁵¹⁰ Rush, *Opium to Java*, 243–44.

⁵¹¹ Shiraishi, “Anti-Sinicism in Java's New Order”, 190.



Tram carriage displaying Batavia's ethnic diversity, c.1881-1889

lack of an “Indies identity” also contributed to popular hatred towards the Chinese. For centuries the Dutch had enforced a policy of racial segregation because they discouraged intense interaction between the ethnic groups in the colony, especially between the Chinese and the native people.⁵¹² In keeping every group in ethnocultural confinement, the Dutch prevented the various population groups in the archipelago from developing a shared “Indies identity”. This lack of a common identity in turn contributed to the modern development in which each ethnic group started to emphasise its own distinct racial identity, manifested in educational institutions, socio-political societies, cultural associations, and economic organisations. Apart from institutionalising their own

⁵¹² Tichelman, “Early Emancipation and Inter-ethnic Relations on Java”, 214–15.

activities, the ethnic groups sealed themselves off from one another and began to display an increasing intolerance toward one another.⁵¹³

As I have shown in previous chapters, the Dutch segregation policy was first introduced by the Dutch East India Company to secure its lasting rule and it was maintained in part to limit the spread of Islam among the Chinese. Prior to the arrival of the Company on Java, many Chinese immigrants embraced Islam and created a (Muslim) *peranakan* culture with many affinities with the Javanese Islamic world in which they lived.⁵¹⁴ Despite the restrictions on ethnic amalgamation enforced by the Company, Islam continued to attract Chinese converts. Financial considerations appear to have been a catalyst for conversion because middlemen and tax farmers of Chinese descent were more acceptable to the local population if they were Muslims. Converting to Islam was also a way for the Chinese to escape the head tax levied upon them by the Company. Finally, due to the scarcity of Chinese women in Java, Chinese immigrants married indigenous women who sometimes made religious demands.⁵¹⁵ Because most of these Javanese women came from families whose religious orientation was native Javanese with a nominal adherence to Islam, their version of Islam was considerably less orthodox than that found in Madoera or Sumatra.⁵¹⁶ By 1770, the Dutch East India Company acknowledged the category of Chinese Muslims by appointing a chieftain to

⁵¹³ Van Doorn, *A Divided Society*, 12, 24–25.

⁵¹⁴ Rush, *Opium to Java*, 89–90.

⁵¹⁵ P. Carey, “Changing Javanese Perceptions of the Chinese Communities in Central Java, 1755–1825”, *Indonesia* 37 (April 1984): 12; The Siau Giap, “Religion and Overseas Chinese Assimilation in Southeast Asian Countries”, *Revue du Sud-Est Asiatique et de l’Extrême-Orient* 2 (1965): 69–71; Van Mastenbroek, *De Historische Ontwikkeling van de Staatsrechtelijke Indeeling der Bevolking van Nederlandsch-Indië*, 25.

⁵¹⁶ G. W. Skinner, “Change and Persistence in Chinese Culture Overseas: A Comparison of Thailand and Java”, *Journal of the South Seas Society* 16 (1960): 96–97.

oversee the Chinese (Muslim) *peranakans* of Batavia (*kapitan peranakan*).⁵¹⁷ During the time of the Company, *peranakans* were those Chinese who had converted to Islam.⁵¹⁸

Before the outbreak of the Java War (1825–30), Chinese assimilation into Javanese society in the central Java principalities of Surakarta and Yogyakarta even went so far that some “Javanised” Chinese entered Javanese court circles. Peter Carey observes that “the Javanese elite enjoyed many contacts with the Chinese communities and made full use of the skills the latter had to offer. This was especially noticeable in the fields of tax-farm administration, commercial enterprise, and military expertise.”⁵¹⁹ But contacts with the Chinese in court circles were by no means limited to purely business and financial matters. A particular interest in Chinese-derived gambling and entertainments, such as fireworks displays, resulted in close social contacts between the Chinese elite and members of the *kraton* (palace), while casual liaisons between local rulers and attractive (Muslim) *peranakan* women sometimes led to Javanese rulers taking Chinese women as secondary wives.⁵²⁰ From the Chinese point of view, close ties with the Javanese courts were often a “*sine qua non* for their commercial success in the hinterland, and they actively sought to strengthen these ties through marriage and personal relationships.”⁵²¹ Carey summarises the relationship between the Javanese courts and Chinese communities in central Java before the Java

⁵¹⁷ C. Salmon, “Ancestral Halls, Funeral Associations, and Attempts at Resinicization in Nineteenth-Century Netherlands India”, *Sojourners and Settlers: Histories of Southeast Asia and the Chinese: In Honour of Jennifer Cushman* (St. Leonards, NSW: Allen and Unwin, 1996), 194. The office of *kapitan peranakan* was terminated in Batavia in 1827. In the years thereafter, the Dutch gradually abolished the office in the rest of Java, Madoera, and also Makassar as most of the *peranakans* had completely assimilated into native society.

⁵¹⁸ Van Mastenbroek, *De Historische Ontwikkeling van de Staatsrechtelijke Indeeeling der Bevolking van Nederlandsch-Indië*, 26.

⁵¹⁹ Carey, “Changing Javanese Perceptions of the Chinese Communities in Central Java”, 16.

⁵²⁰ *Ibid.*, 20.

⁵²¹ *Ibid.*, 3–4.

War as being based on a marked degree of reciprocity, common interest, and inter-communal cooperation.⁵²²

This more or less harmonious relationship began to change as Dutch rule on Java intensified. In the years leading up to the Java War, Dutch rule on Java became firmly established. By then, the Chinese were widely employed as tax farmers by both the Javanese aristocracy and increasingly by the colonial government, especially for tolls and opium farms. This made the Chinese targets of popular resentment. Hatred toward the Chinese intensified when economic conditions in central Java started to decline sharply and large-scale abuses by the Chinese tax farmers became more frequent. Prince Diponegoro, who in 1825 rebelled against the Dutch during the Java War, branded the Chinese as traitors and issued an order to kill those who did not want to adopt the Islamic faith. Feeling exposed and threatened, the Chinese now felt that assimilation into Javanese society was much less appealing,⁵²³ and conversion to Islam was more and more perceived as a serious threat to the survival of Chinese identity. Another important consideration was that class and ethnicity tended to coincide in Java and that upward mobility carried the Chinese in the direction of the elite stratum. So long as the Javanese courts still displayed ethnic confidence and cultural vigour, the honourable titles bestowed on the most prominent and talented Chinese were very much coveted. But as the socio-political structure in Java changed with increasing Dutch domination, honours from the shadow courts of Djokjakarta and Surakarta meant less and less and it was liaisons with representatives of the Dutch crown that were coveted. By the nineteenth century the elite in Java was unmistakably Dutch, rather than indigenous Javanese.⁵²⁴

In the second section of this chapter, it was pointed out that a renaissance movement of Chinese culture took place at the end of the nineteenth century. Yet, Claudine Salmon has shown

⁵²² *Ibid.*, 3.

⁵²³ *Ibid.*, 32–41; The Siauw Giap, “Religion and Overseas Chinese Assimilation in Southeast Asian Countries”, 73; Tichelman, “Early Emancipation and Inter-ethnic Relations on Java”, 219.

⁵²⁴ Skinner, “Change and Persistence”, 90–91.

that already in the mid-nineteenth century the (Muslim) peranakan society in the Indies was undergoing cultural changes. Attempts were made to “resinicise” the (Muslim) peranakan Chinese and to revive Confucian social order through the establishment of Chinese socioreligious associations throughout the Indies. These temples and funeral associations gave financial assistance to the poor and needy Chinese in the areas where the associations were based. But the particular aim of the associations was to preserve Chinese identity. The founders of the associations observed the merging of the (Muslim) peranakans with the local population and the adoption of Muslim culture and superstitious beliefs with dismay, and they feared that (Chinese) civilisation would fall into oblivion. By reviving traditional Chinese customs with respect to funerals and marriages and encouraging (Muslim) peranakan women to wear traditional Chinese dress, serious attempts were made to curb the Islamisation and assimilation of peranakan Chinese into indigenous society. The establishment of ancestral temples and funeral associations in significant numbers and the promotion of Chinese *esprit de corps* showed that certain segments of the Chinese community in the Indies were determined to halt the Islamisation process and to redirect their countrymen towards the customs of their ancestral land.⁵²⁵ In the nineteenth century it was also common among rich families to send their sons to China to be acculturated.⁵²⁶ However, in the long run such efforts to sustain a Chinese identity were largely overwhelmed by the local environment. Adoption of the European and Indonesian ways of life was widespread among the Indies Chinese, resulting in a typical peranakan culture as seen in the nineteenth and twentieth century, but nevertheless with important features of Chinese culture.⁵²⁷

In the twentieth century, it was no longer necessary for the Dutch to keep the system of ethnic stratification in force. The rise of modern politics went hand in hand with the awakening of

⁵²⁵ Salmon, “Ancestral Halls, Funeral Associations, and Attempts at Resinicization in Nineteenth-Century Netherlands India”, 183–214.

⁵²⁶ Rush, *Opium to Java*, 90.

⁵²⁷ *Ibid.*, 90–92.

the Chinese as Chinese, the Arabs as Arabs, and the natives as natives. Shiraishi argues that segregation was maintained by the spirit of the era: “It was no longer necessary to require Chinese and natives to wear their own distinctive dress. It became perfectly permissible for Chinese and natives to appear in public in European dress, for the new politics quickly implanted racial distinctions in everyone’s mind.”⁵²⁸

4.4 Changes in ethnic community leadership

The *pergerakan* not only embodied the process by which non-Western groups in the Dutch East Indies were moving towards nationalist consciousness. It also comprised the emergence of a new Western-trained elite in the Chinese, indigenous, and Arab communities. The new elite represented Western modernity; they went to Dutch schools and some even had the opportunity to further their education in the Netherlands. Some increasingly took interest in practical professions such as medicine, journalism, engineering, and law, while others were exposed to modern political ideas that stimulated them to become active in political organisations after returning to the Indies. Through these organisations, they sought to improve the lot of their people and demand equal rights with the Dutch. Other politically active people ran as candidates for municipal, regency, and provincial councils for the same reason. The new elite represented progress and development and they increasingly usurped the roles of traditional community leaders, who were more and more considered as remnants of the past. The latter’s authority was rooted in the era of the Cultivation System, when their predecessors were appointed not for their competence or outstanding education, but on the basis of hereditary rights, wealth, and their loyalty to the Dutch. These principles were not consistent with modern ideas of good government and people began to abandon the traditional community leaders to follow the new elite.

⁵²⁸ Shiraishi, “Anti-Sinicism in Java’s New Order”, 205.

The institution of Chinese officers

According to Donald Willmott's carefully observed study of the Chinese of Semarang, in the twentieth century leadership of the Chinese community fell into four distinct categories:

1. Administrative leadership: participation in the actual day-to-day governing of the Chinese community;
2. Political leadership: leadership in organisations that attempted to influence the Dutch or Indonesian governments, to support the government or people of China, or to give political orientation to the local Chinese;
3. Commercial leadership: leadership in business or commercial organisations or affairs;
4. Organisational leadership: leadership in community organisations, such as schools, charitable institutions, religious societies and mutual-aid clubs.⁵²⁹

Although Willmott's theories on Chinese community leadership are mainly based on the Chinese population of Semarang, his conclusions are still useful to sketch a general outline of Chinese leadership in the rest of Java. According to Willmott, during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries the Chinese officers had a virtual monopoly of all four types of leadership. Administrative rule was carried out by the Chinese Council when the colonial government applied a system of indirect rule on the Chinese through the Chinese officers. As revenue farmers and landowners the officers had a dominant position in commerce, and they usually took the lead in religious festivities and charitable events in the Chinese community. Political aspirations among the Chinese only started to blossom in the twentieth century and it is safe to say that "political" leadership, as Willmott uses it, was of minor importance before the twentieth century.⁵³⁰

⁵²⁹ Willmott, *The Chinese of Semarang*, 159.

⁵³⁰ *Ibid.*

In the first two decades of the twentieth century, the Chinese officers retained some administrative leadership, although the colonial government increasingly took over important administrative tasks. Commercial and political leadership passed almost completely into the hands of the Siang Hwee and Chinese political societies. The development of political awareness by groups like the Siang Hwee and Soe Po Sia was initially China-orientated and helped focus the Indies Chinese on Chinese nationalism. However, it was not always possible to identify the welfare of the overseas Chinese with that of the Chinese state. Most Indies Chinese became emotionally rather than politically attached to China, and were more concerned with improving the lot of the local Chinese. It became increasingly important to have Chinese representatives in the provincial, regency, and municipal councils, and of course in the People's Council (*Volksraad*). Even though the authority of these political boards was limited, holding seats in these councils gave the Chinese the chance to actively participate in the Indies politics and improve the welfare of their community as a whole, something the Chinese Council had failed to do. Organisational leadership was divided between the Chinese Council and the Siang Hwee.⁵³¹ Thus, the dispersion of Chinese community leadership in the early twentieth century can be viewed as a power struggle between the newcomers (the leaders of the Chinese movement) and the old established order (the Chinese officers).

The growth in attacks against the institution of Chinese officers

The struggle for leadership over the Chinese community was accompanied by fierce criticism directed at the Chinese officers. The Chinese-Malay press in particular had no scruples about venting its spleen on the Chinese officer system. On 16 June 1914 the editor in chief of the Semarang-based newspaper *Warna Warta* showed his contempt for the Chinese officers whose appointments were in most cases based on their ability to collect money:

⁵³¹ Ibid., 160; Williams, "The Ethical Program and the Chinese of Indonesia", 112–13.

They [the Chinese officers] are not asked to take an examination or do some other test, neither are they asked to have sufficient knowledge or to be educated. It does not matter whether a Chinese community leader is able to speak his [the Chinese] language, as long as he has plenty of money. A majority of these officers do not have any knowledge of the law, so it is safe to say that they also do not know anything about the *Chinese* laws, customs and traditions. They even do not have a command of the Chinese language. And yet, these incompetent people serve as advisors in the indigenous courts of justice (*Landraad*) and the Council of Justice (*Raad van Justitie*). One might ask how this could happen. The answer would be that anything is possible in the Dutch East Indies.⁵³²

Two days later, the editor in chief continued his condemnation of the Chinese officer system by comparing the situation of the Dutch East Indies with that of the Netherlands. He wondered how the Dutch would react if a farmer were to be appointed a mayor, just because he had plenty of livestock and sufficient other financial resources. He was convinced that the Dutch people would certainly not accept that. Then why, he wondered, would the colonial government invest in the education of the Chinese people, invest in their intellectual development and progress, but at the same time still expect them to accept a leadership system that is based on old-fashioned and feudal principles? He advised the government to allow free election. Then the Chinese people would be able to choose their own representatives and base their choice on a person's ability and competence. He argued that it might be an even better idea to follow the Straits Settlements and abolish the Chinese officers with their ridiculous military titles at once.⁵³³

⁵³² *Warna Warta*, 16 June 1913.

⁵³³ *Warna Warta*, 18 June 1914. The chieftain system in the Straits Settlements was officially abolished in 1826.

The editors of *Pewartar Soerabaja* expressed great indignation about the usage of the honourable title *padoeka* (your excellency) in certain periodicals when referring to the Chinese officers: “So there are still backward people who honour these officers, while in these times they are nothing but bastards, the second plague of Java!”⁵³⁴ According to the newspaper, educated Chinese no longer held their officers in high esteem and were themselves reluctant to apply for an officer post, the introduction of official uniforms notwithstanding.⁵³⁵ The fact that the prestige of the officers had dropped significantly was also shown by the Soerabaja-based newspaper *Tjhoen Tjhioe*, which reported an incident in December 1915 involving a Chinese lieutenant who allegedly used counterfeit money at a local market. Upon hearing the alleged crime, the village head ordered his *kamitoewa* (head of hamlet) to bring the Chinese before him. Even though the lieutenant identified himself as a Chinese officer, he was forced to come along by the *kamitoewa*, who in the meantime had pulled his dagger (*keris*). “A Chinese lieutenant brought in to a village head! Where has the prestige of the Chinese race gone?” According to the newspaper it was no wonder that the Chinese people no longer looked up to their community leaders.⁵³⁶ *Pewartar Soerabaja* suggested that the colonial government link the post of Chinese major to the presidency of Chinese trade organisations. The vice-presidents of those organisations could be appointed to captain, while the commissioners could take up the post of lieutenant.⁵³⁷ Another solution would be allowing the Chinese to select their own community leaders.⁵³⁸

Voting rights would not make any difference in the recruitment of capable men for the function of Chinese officer according to *Sin Po*, which argued that during election time wealthy

⁵³⁴ “Persoverzicht: De Chineesche Pers, mei-juni 1912”, *Koloniaal Tijdschrift* 1:2 (1912): 847; “Persoverzicht: De Chineesche Pers, maart-april 1914”, *Koloniaal Tijdschrift* 3:2 (1914): 957.

⁵³⁵ “Persoverzicht: De Chineesche Pers, juli-augustus 1912”, *Koloniaal Tijdschrift* 1:2 (1912): 1134; *Pewartar Soerabaja*, 12 September 1914.

⁵³⁶ “Persoverzicht: De Chineesche Pers, december 1915”, *Koloniaal Tijdschrift* 5:1 (1916): 383–84.

⁵³⁷ “Persoverzicht: De Chineesche Pers, juli-augustus 1912”, *Koloniaal Tijdschrift* 2 (1912): 1134.

⁵³⁸ “Persoverzicht: De Chineesche Pers, september 1914”, *Koloniaal Tijdschrift* 3:2 (1914): 1686.

candidates seeking the post would be able to bribe the less fortunate Chinese into voting for them and thus rich incapable men would still be elected. According to *Sin Po*, this was also the case in the Dutch Parliament in The Hague. The newspaper claimed that nearly half of the members of the Dutch Parliament had paid big money to be seated in the meetings: “Not to discuss important matters or to submit a useful proposal that could help their people, no, only for the reason to receive honour and to be addressed as *Hoog Edel Gestrenge Heer!*”⁵³⁹ Apparently *Sin Po* did not think much of the Dutch political system. It would be best, according to the newspaper, to abolish the whole captain system. The officers were of no use for the Chinese community anyway, as their authority was limited. For instance, they were not allowed to make actual decisions in conflicts between community members; they merely had the authority to give advice in trials.⁵⁴⁰ The indigenous leaders had far more authority. The regent was also the judge and chairman in the Regency Council of Justice (*Regentschapsgerecht*) and thus allowed to decide over small conflicts and violations of the law.⁵⁴¹ On the other hand, *Sin Po* argued, a Chinese officer would use all his powers to make someone’s life miserable if he chose to.⁵⁴² But even if the officers were given more authority, the Chinese community would not benefit from that since most officers regarded their posts as a sideline to which they would devote themselves only if they had time. Their principal occupation—mostly trade or something else that would bring financial benefit—always came first.⁵⁴³ Many officers also left their responsibilities to their secretaries and worried little if at all about their community.⁵⁴⁴

Personal actions against the Chinese officers also occurred. In 1904, Chinese protested against the appointment of a captain in Buitenzorg who was said to be “uncultivated”. A year later a

⁵³⁹ *Sin Po*, 1 December 1916.

⁵⁴⁰ *Sin Po*, 6 December 1916.

⁵⁴¹ *Sin Po*, 7 December 1916.

⁵⁴² *Sin Po*, 25 October 1916; *Sin Po*, 17 November 1916.

⁵⁴³ *Sin Po*, 29 July 1915.

⁵⁴⁴ *Sin Po*, 1 December 1916.

boycott was organised against the appointment of a lieutenant whom the Chinese considered unsuitable.⁵⁴⁵ In March 1912 the Batavian major was denied a role in the planning of festivities to celebrate the foundation of the Chinese Republic. He was considered too close to the colonial regime and it was felt that he had no business participating in Chinese nationalist activities.⁵⁴⁶ In June 1912, a group of Cantonese tore the Dutch flag from the house of a lieutenant in Semarang and trampled on it, a clear message that the Chinese officers were considered to be merely puppets of the colonial government.⁵⁴⁷ In the same year a newly appointed captain in Makassar was thrown onto a table and threatened by a furious Chinese crowd.⁵⁴⁸ In 1916 plans were made by a group of Chinese in East Java to mobilise the Chinese community against the Chinese officer system and plead for its termination with the local government.⁵⁴⁹

The most serious and violent outbreaks against the Chinese officers occurred during the festivities organised to celebrate Chinese New Year and the downfall of the Manchu imperial regime. In February 1912, local authorities in Batavia decided not to grant permits to hoist the Chinese republican flag during the Chinese New Year festivities because the Netherlands had not yet officially recognised the Chinese Republic. Despite the official ban, a number of Chinese hoisted the republican flag anyway. The first Chinese to (perhaps unknowingly) violate the restriction was interestingly enough a Chinese officer and shop owner of Hakka origin. When selling the republican flags to a group of Hakka and Macao Chinese, he assured them that it was allowed to hoist the flags and when the police arrived and ordered the flags taken down, the crowd refused and turned hostile to the police. It also vented its anger on the Chinese major of Batavia. The Hakka and Macao Chinese accused him of deliberately misleading them by giving out permits

⁵⁴⁵ Williams, *Overseas Chinese Nationalism*, 128.

⁵⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 129.

⁵⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴⁸ "Persoverzicht: De Chineesche Pers, mei-juni 1912", *Koloniaal Tijdschrift* 1:2 (1912): 847.

⁵⁴⁹ *Sin Po*, 17 November 1916.

to hoist the republican flag, while at the same time pleading with the resident to prohibit the flag hoisting.⁵⁵⁰ The grudge against the major was severe; threats accumulated and there was even a bounty of 12,000 guilders on his head.⁵⁵¹

Even the building that housed the THHK was at risk. Upon discovering that the republican flag had not yet been hoisted, a number of Hakka Chinese demanded that a caretaker hoist the flag immediately, but the THHK did not yet have a republican flag. In their rage, the Hakka Chinese destroyed the windows and lanterns of the building. Finally, with the assistance of the military, the situation in Batavia returned to normal. The crowd dispersed and every republican flag was hauled down. Twenty persons were arrested. The following day, everyone who had been arrested was released, except for four ringleaders, who were detained a few days more. Through mediation by a delegation of representatives of all Chinese groups in Batavia they were eventually released. The delegation had vouched for the four ringleaders that they would not disobey the authorities again.⁵⁵²

The situation in Soerabaja was far more serious. Whereas unrest in Batavia lasted a day, it took the authorities of Soerabaja ten days to restore order. On 17 February 1912—it was Chinese New Year's eve—a police commissioner, assisted by a few supervisors, patrolled through the Chinese neighbourhoods. Upon seeing a group of Chinese endangering ongoing traffic by setting off fireworks in the middle of the street, the police commissioner asked the group to suspend its fireworks activities. The local authorities had granted permission to set off fireworks during Chinese New Year provided that it would not endanger the safety in the neighbourhoods. The revellers ignored the order and when the police commissioner attempted to arrest one of the violators, the Chinese immediately called out for help. In an instant, members of a Cantonese gang

⁵⁵⁰ “Een Chinees over de Chineesche Beweging”, *Koloniaal Tijdschrift* 1:2 (1912): 668–69.

⁵⁵¹ “Persoverzicht: De Inlandsche Pers, februari 1912”, *Koloniaal Tijdschrift* 1:1 (1912): 353–54.

⁵⁵² Lohanda, *The Kapitan Cina of Batavia*, 196–98; Oei Kiauw Pik, “Officieel Relaaas van de Chineesche Opstootjes te Batavia en Soerabaja”, *Koloniaal Tijdschrift* 1:1 (1912): 601–602; “Een Chinees over de Chineesche Beweging”, *Koloniaal Tijdschrift* 1:2 (1912): 668–69.

appeared from every corner of the street and started to attack the police men while shouting “Kill them!” When assistance arrived, a part of the gang fled to a nearby shop where the Chinese shop owner was counting his day’s earnings. When the police arrived, the gang had already left through the back door, taking with them the four hundred guilders worth of silver the shop owner had taken in that day. Shortly after this, another group went to the major’s house to complain about police brutality and the ban on fireworks. At that moment the major was hosting a New Year’s Eve party and he ordered the Chinese to submit their complaints to the Chinese captain. But the captain was not in because he was on his way to the same party. The group then moved back to the major’s house and when the situation got tense, the major and captain called in the assistant-resident, who ordered an investigation into the alleged police brutality earlier that day, but concluded that the police had followed protocol.⁵⁵³

Two days later, an agitated crowd assembled in front of the Soe Po Sia building where a proclamation had been posted summoning people to go to the major’s residence to compel him to hoist the Chinese republican flag and cut off his queue. A Chinese neighbourhood chief wearing a queue happened to pass by and sought to read the proclamation, only to be attacked by the mob and forced to cut off his queue. The assistant-resident arrived at the scene with the Chinese captain and the presidents of the Siang Hwee and Soe Po Sia and tried to calm the crowd and ordered police protection for the major. Later that day, the captain stopped by the office of the assistant-resident to report that the situation had returned to normal, but not long after that, a gang of two to three hundred Cantonese ransacked the same captain’s house and broke almost everything in it with the exception of the family altar. The gang then went on to the house of the major where, ignoring the police they stormed into the yard. The police fired on the crowd, killing one and wounding several others. Part of the gang then fled to the Soe Po Sia building, where they were arrested.⁵⁵⁴ The next

⁵⁵³ Oei Kiauw Pik, “Officieel Relas van de Chineesche Opstootjes te Batavia en Soerabaja”, 602–603.

⁵⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 603–604.

day the Chinese neighbourhoods appeared peaceful, but it was reported that a group of Cantonese had compelled Chinese shop owners to close their business, threatening them with violence if they ignored the order. Chinese wholesale traders also received threatening letters in which they were warned not to conduct business, and even European traders received death threats. As a result, owners of stores and pawnshops kept their doors closed in the days that followed. After four days, on 24 February 1912, the authorities decided to take radical action. The police arrested more than 500 people, followed by another 250 over the next two days. Police officers patrolled the commercial district to boost confidence in Chinese trade activities. During the ten-day disturbance 850 Chinese were detained. Of those arrested, 173 were quickly released because police investigation revealed that they were Hokkien Chinese who had been arrested by mistake. A majority of the detainees turned out to be illegal immigrants without a valid residence permit and they were expelled by the authorities.⁵⁵⁵

The situation in Semarang seemed to have been more peaceful. Johannes Widodo mentions that the proclaiming of the Republic of China was celebrated with great enthusiasm. The five-coloured Chinese flag was hoisted side by side with the Dutch tricolour flag and gates with Chinese characters were erected in every street in the Chinese quarter in Semarang.⁵⁵⁶ Also Liem Thian Joe mentions the hoisting of the two flags in Semarang.⁵⁵⁷ Apparently it was permissible to hoist the Chinese flag or the government did not get word of it because the situation in Semarang remained

⁵⁵⁵ Ibid., 604–606.

⁵⁵⁶ J. Widodo, *Chinese Settlement in a Changing City: An Architectural Study on the Urban Chinese Settlement in Semarang, Indonesia* (Leuven: Department of Architecture, Urban & Regional Planning, University of Leuven, 1988), 23 (part 1).

⁵⁵⁷ Liem, *Riwayat Semarang*, 237–38.

calm. The resident of Semarang was very pleased with the placid situation and thanked the Chinese major, captain and neighbourhood chiefs for their efforts in warding off serious incidents.⁵⁵⁸

When summarising the incidents during the Chinese New Year festival, one cannot help noticing that there was a significant difference between Batavia and Soerabaja with regard to the cause and nature of the disturbances. The incident in Batavia was merely caused by a festive mood that got out of hand and after the authorities intervened, the situation quickly improved. The disturbances in Soerabaja were caused by a simple restriction on setting off fireworks on public roads. It seemed a small, routine matter, especially when considering that Peking applied even stricter rules on setting off fireworks during the Spring Festival. However, the consequences of this restriction turned out to be disastrous for the rest of the Chinese New Year festivities. For ten days people were brutally assaulted, robbed, houses of Chinese public figures were plundered and traders received death threats to prevent them from conducting business. It was not until the police used overwhelming force that order in the Chinese neighbourhoods was restored.⁵⁵⁹

That the situation in Batavia did not escalate can be explained in part by the fact that the majority of Batavia's Chinese community consisted of peranakans.⁵⁶⁰ Even though the influx of Chinese male and female immigrants had created a stable totok community that was sensitive to nationalist influences, most peranakans were not susceptible to such sentiments. Provocation by the totoks did not result in peranakan "brotherhood" participation in their nationalist activities. In fact, a group of peranakans planned the establishment of an Indo-Chinese Association to counter the totok

⁵⁵⁸ Letter of the Resident of Semarang to the Chinese Major of Semarang, 22 February 1912, no. 4284/43, in Certificates of the appointments of Khouw Kim An (Batavia) and Tan Siau Lip (Semarang), private collection Friends of the Kong Koan Archive Foundation, Leiden.

⁵⁵⁹ "De Minister over de Chineezten-woelingen in Nederl.-Indië", *De Indische Gids* 34:2 (1912): 926–28.

⁵⁶⁰ In 1912, there were approximately 16,000 peranakans, 7000 Hakka Chinese, 4000 Hokkien totok Chinese, and 1,200 Macao Chinese in Batavia. See confidential letter of the Assistant-Resident of Batavia to the Resident of Batavia, 11 October 1912, no. 199, in *Gouvernementsbesluit*, 4 January 1913, no. 27, ANRI, Jakarta.

Chinese who branded them as “slaves of the Dutch”.⁵⁶¹ The totoks were much more influential in Soerabaja, where Chinese nationalists had direct links to counterparts in China under the guidance of the Soe Po Sia and THHK, the latter increasingly having been taken over by the totoks.

Soerabajan sports clubs also showed their solidarity with China by organising special matches to raise money for Northern China, which had suffered from economic hardship during the period of warlordism.⁵⁶²

A significant difference can also be observed between the conduct of the Batavian Chinese officers and their colleagues in Soerabaja. When Hakka and Macao Chinese accused Major Khouw Kim An of deliberately tricking them into hoisting the Chinese republican flag, while in actual fact it was prohibited by the colonial government, he immediately sent a telegram to the governor-general in Buitenzorg in which he asked official confirmation of the ban. An official confirmation was then given out, translated into Chinese and Malay and subsequently distributed in the Chinese neighbourhoods.⁵⁶³ He also instructed his neighbourhood chiefs to be alert for these false accusations in the Chinese neighbourhoods and to inform community members that the ban was issued by the colonial government and not by the Chinese major.⁵⁶⁴ These arrangements taken by the major and the composure he displayed during the disturbance helped to ease the violent situation in Batavia.⁵⁶⁵ The Chinese major of Soerabaja simply sent the Cantonese complainants to the Chinese captain because he preferred hosting his party to responding to matters of urgent concern to his community. Only after the situation escalated did the major and captain leave together to look for the assistant-resident. It was the rumour that the major had advised the government not to grant permission to the Chinese to erect the Chinese republican flag that fuelled

⁵⁶¹ “Een Chinees over de Chineesche Beweging”, *Koloniaal Tijdschrift* 1:2 (1912): 671–72.

⁵⁶² R. N. Bayu Aji, *Tionghoa Surabaya dalam Sepak Bola 1915–1942* (Yogyakarta: Ombak, 2010), 125.

⁵⁶³ Lohanda, *The Kapitan Cina of Batavia*, 197.

⁵⁶⁴ Chinese minutes, no. 21024, 5 March 1912: p. 17. See also Malay minutes, no. NM2, 5 March 1912: pp. 60–61.

⁵⁶⁵ “Persoverzicht: De Chineesche Pers, februari 1912”, *Koloniaal Tijdschrift* 1:1 (1912): 356.

the anger of the totoks. The Chinese captain also made the grave mistake of calling the Cantonese “stinking immigrants”, which added more fuel to the flames.⁵⁶⁶ During the disturbances between the Chinese and Arabs in October and November 1912, the Chinese officers in Soerabaja also remained aloof. In fact, the *majoor der Chineezen* was on leave and even applied for an extension. The fact that a peace agreement was signed on 2 November 1912 between representatives of the Chinese and Arabs (the Chinese and Arab officers and the board members of the Siang Hwee, Soe Po Sia, THHK and the Arabic Society), could certainly not be attributed to the diligence and commitment of the Chinese officers.⁵⁶⁷

The weakness of the Chinese Council in Soerabaja lay in the fact that all the officers were peranakans. In Batavia, non-Hokkien and non-peranakan Chinese had been accommodated in the Chinese Council since 1878. The Batavia authorities were well aware of the growing non-peranakan element in the Chinese community and knew they could not disregard the wide diversities in language, dialect, customs, and origin. The advisor for Japanese and Chinese affairs, B. A. J. van Wettum, attributed the relative quiet ending of the disturbances in Batavia to the fact that no less than three Chinese officers were totoks of Hakka descent. In late 1912, there were plans to appoint three new lieutenants to the Batavia Council, all of whom were Hokkien peranakans. Fearing that the balance of peranakan-totok and Cantonese-Hakka-Macao-Hokkien Chinese representation in the Council would align to the Hokkien peranakan element, the advisor for Japanese and Chinese affairs urged the resident to replace one of the nominees for the post of lieutenant with a totok of Hokkien descent; the resident agreed with the advisor.⁵⁶⁸

⁵⁶⁶ “De Chineezen-opstootjes te Soerabaja”, *De Indische Gids* 34:1 (1912): 658–59; Liem, *Riwayat Semarang*, 238.

⁵⁶⁷ “Persoverzicht: De Chineesche Pers, oktober 1912”, *Koloniaal Tijdschrift* 2:1 (1913): 203–206.

⁵⁶⁸ Confidential letter of the Advisor of Japanese and Chinese Affairs to the Resident of Batavia, 1 August 1912, no. 248, in *Gouvernementsbesluit*, 4 January 1913, no. 27, ANRI, Jakarta. See also the confidential letter of the Resident of Batavia to the Governor-General and the Director of Internal Affairs, 18 October 1912, no. 319/C, in *Gouvernementsbesluit*, 4 January 1913, no. 27, ANRI, Jakarta.

The fact that Chinese officers of mixed descent represented the Chinese Council of Batavia ensured that matters concerning the totok element in the Chinese community were not neglected. The Chinese Council of Batavia frequently reserved money to aid needy totoks. In the meeting of 21 April 1909 it was decided to set aside an amount of 2,000 guilders to help newly arrived totok immigrants, Java-born totok Chinese and peranakans who were jobless.⁵⁶⁹ In the meeting of 6 September 1916, the major expressed his concerns about the totok Chinese who were denied residence in the Netherlands Indies. Awaiting their deportation, the totok Chinese were usually detained in a prison in Berok Pasar Ikan. Disapproving of this situation, the major proposed to rent a house in either Pendjaringan or Tanah Abang, where detainees could wait for their journey back to China. A doctor would first make sure that the house would meet the necessary health requirements. “After all”, the major said, “these people have not committed any crime and do not deserve to be kept in such dreadful circumstances”.⁵⁷⁰ A year later the Chinese Council received a letter from Major Tjiong A Fie of Medan, who proposed setting up a fund for totok Chinese without work or residence. The fund would cover their travel expenses back to China. The members of the Chinese Council approved the proposal and agreed to contribute to the fund once it had been set up.⁵⁷¹

A number of newspapers frequently accused the Chinese officers of being too much concerned with the prestige of their post. These accusations were quite unfounded if we look at the Chinese Council of Batavia. In the Council meeting of 10 January 1913, neighbourhood chief and interim-Lieutenant Tan Tjin Bok proposed renovating the building of the Chinese Council. He argued that the shabby and old-fashioned state of the building was unworthy of the Chinese Council’s status. The building of the Chinese Council should be as modern and classy as the

⁵⁶⁹ Chinese minutes, no. 21023, 21 April 1909: p. 142.

⁵⁷⁰ Chinese minutes, no. 21026, 6 September 1916: p. 113. See also Malay minutes, no. NM3, 6 September 1916: pp. 181–82.

⁵⁷¹ Chinese minutes, no. 21026, 3 March 1917: pp. 151–152. See also Malay minutes, no. NM3, 3 March 1917: pp. 248–49.

assistant-resident's office, so visitors would know they had set foot in a building of important officials. Most officers present at the meeting acknowledged the building needed to be repainted but rejected the neighbourhood chief's proposal. They deemed it more important to reserve the Council's finances to help the poor and needy. Major Khouw Kim An also brushed aside the comparison with the assistant-resident: "I am a person without any talent and knowledge, and I believe you can not compare the office of the Chinese Council with the office of the assistant-resident. Spending too much money on renovating our building does not correspond with our kind of people."⁵⁷²

The reaction of the Chinese officers

During a conference held on 28 July 1915 in the building of the Batavia Chinese Council, the advisor for Chinese affairs, J. L. J. F. Ezerman expressed his astonishment over the difficulty the Councils in Semarang and Soerabaja had attracting candidates for the post of officer, while Batavia seemingly had no trouble filling the vacancies.⁵⁷³ It was true that the Chinese Council of Batavia managed to fill the empty seats, although it was more difficult finding suitable candidates than it had been. Also present at the conference was Tan Kim San, one of the founding fathers of the THHK. He disapproved the common practice that officers were still appointed based on their wealth or family relations. "As a result", he argued, "young, inexperienced men are appointed, who on top of that also have no thorough knowledge of Chinese customs and traditions. Most of these men have been living a comfortable life in the confines of their rich family. How could these men identify themselves with the majority of the Chinese who are poor?" Major Khouw Kim An, also present at the conference, agreed that more experienced men should be recruited for the post, but these men could simply not be found. "Nonetheless", the major spoke proudly, "the Batavia Council

⁵⁷² Chinese minutes, no. 21024, 10 January 1913: pp. 128–30.

⁵⁷³ *Sin Po*, 29 July 1915.

is still running albeit most of its officers are young and inexperienced".⁵⁷⁴ Indeed, marching with the times the Chinese Council in Batavia had incorporated non-peranakan Chinese on its board, and took its tasks in the Chinese community very seriously. Board meetings continued and the Council still had an important role in the management of burial grounds. Major Khouw Kim An played a key role in running the Council and made sure his officers were not lax in carrying out their responsibilities.⁵⁷⁵

An important question is how the Chinese officers responded to the criticism levelled against them. Unfortunately the board meetings of the Batavian Chinese Council do not reveal enough information to answer this question. On 3 July 1914, the Council discussed a series of articles by Henri Borel that appeared in the *Bataviasch Nieuwsblad* of 13–15 June in which he severely criticised the institution of the Chinese officers. In his conclusion, Borel advised the government to either make the post of Chinese officer a paid position or to abolish the whole system. Major Khouw Kim An asked his officers whether they should make a statement after this public denouncement. One lieutenant advised waiting to see if the government would respond to Borel's articles. Everyone agreed. This shows a rather passive reaction. More action was shown when Mr Fromberg attended a meeting of the Chinese Council on 3 January 1914. Fromberg pointed out his deep appreciation for the Council's efforts in the Chinese community and proposed publishing a brochure to introduce the Chinese Council and its activities to the people of the Indies and the Netherlands. The officers agreed that a brochure might make the public more sympathetic, to their activities. A committee of officers, secretaries, and neighbourhood chiefs was then formed to work on the brochure.⁵⁷⁶ Whether it was actually published is unknown. All that can be found in further proceedings is that Major Khouw Kim An urged the committee to speed up publication of

⁵⁷⁴ *Sin Po*, 29 July 1915.

⁵⁷⁵ Malay minutes, no. NM1, 3 August 1911: pp. 170–71.

⁵⁷⁶ Chinese minutes, no. 21025, 3 January 1914: pp. 76–77. See also Malay minutes, no. NM2, 3 January 1914: pp. 228–29.

the brochure in the board meeting of July 1914.⁵⁷⁷ In 1913 the Chinese officers decided to join hands and establish the *Nederlandsche Indische Chineesche Officieren Bond* (Association of Dutch Indies Chinese officers). Among its objectives were enhancing the institution of Chinese officers, encouraging cooperation between officers, and guarding the reputation of the office. The establishment of the *Officieren Bond* was the most apparent offensive of the Chinese officers against their imminent loss of prestige.⁵⁷⁸

The Chinese officers and the Pan-Chinese Movement

The Chinese Council of Batavia played an important role in the Pan-Chinese Movement as a number of its members were involved in Chinese organisations. Among the founders of the THHK were men who later held important positions in the Chinese Council of Batavia: Khouw Kim An (appointed major in 1908), Nio Hoey Oen (appointed captain in 1913), Khoe A Fan (appointed lieutenant in 1905), and Khoe Siauw Eng, the secretary of the Chinese Council. It was Khoe Siauw Eng who proposed to call the first modern Chinese organisation the *Tiong Hoa Hwee Koan*.⁵⁷⁹ The founders of the THHK were considered educated men: broad in perspective and liberal in thought, progressive, and bold enough to fight against anything false.⁵⁸⁰ Chinese officers and their family members held important positions in the executive board of the THHK. The first president of the organisation, Phoa Keng Hek (1900–23), was the son of a Chinese lieutenant in Meester-Cornelis and the major, Tio Tek Ho, became patron of the organisation. However, it seems his role in the organisation was negligible as no records can be found of his participation in committee meetings.⁵⁸¹ When Khouw Kim An, as the Chinese major of Batavia, became patron of the THHK,

⁵⁷⁷ Chinese minutes, no. 21025, 3 July 1914: pp. 116–117. See also Malay minutes, no. NM3, 3 July 1917: pp. 280–81.

⁵⁷⁸ *Pewarta Soerabaja*, 13 February 1915.

⁵⁷⁹ Nio, “Bij het 40-jarig Jubileum van de *Tiong Hoa Hwe Koan-Batavia*”, 288–89.

⁵⁸⁰ Kwee Tek Hoay, *The Origins of the Modern Chinese Movement in Indonesia*, 11.

⁵⁸¹ Lohanda, *The Kapitan Cina of Batavia*, 139–45.

he showed more interest in the organisation. Khouw, son-in-law of Phoa Keng Hek, understood the necessity of modern education, and in a tribute that was compiled by Nio Joe Lan to commemorate the fortieth anniversary of the THHK, he quoted Confucius: “The next generation should be respected, for who could say they will not be better than the current generation.”⁵⁸² Keeping in mind that Khouw was one of the founding fathers of the THHK and son-in-law of its first president, Lea Williams’s claim that Khouw was not only inactive as the patron of the THHK, but also hostile to the organisation is quite odd and unjustified.⁵⁸³ The Chinese Council gave the THHK a monthly subsidy of 275 guilders per month.⁵⁸⁴ Nevertheless, the close involvement of the Chinese officers in the THHK and its schools did not stop critics from questioning the officers’ sincerity regarding the Chinese movement: “There were those who gave a lot of money to the THHK schools, but their own children were sent to the secondary school (*hoogere burgerschool*, HBS), yes, even to European boarding schools. So for years and years their young offspring were denied training to become good patriots.”⁵⁸⁵

Chinese nationalists did not appreciate the fact that the Chinese Council and even the president of the THHK assisted the colonial government in recruiting Chinese pupils for the Hollandsch-Chineesche School.⁵⁸⁶ The nationalists feared that a Western education might cause Chinese children to lose their heritage, and they keenly promoted Chinese education in the Chinese community. Indeed, enrolling their children in European schools might have sent the message that the Chinese officers considered a European education more valuable than the Chinese education provided by the THHK schools, but there is no denying a certain narrow-mindedness on the part of Chinese nationalists in this matter. Helping Chinese children attend the Hollandsch-Chineesche

⁵⁸² Nio Joe Lan, *Riwajat 40 Taon dari Tiong Hoa Hwe Koan-Batavia (1900–1939)* (Batavia: Tiong Hoa Hwe Koan, 1940).

⁵⁸³ Williams, *Overseas Chinese Nationalism*, 133.

⁵⁸⁴ Kwee Tek Hoay, *The Origins of the Modern Chinese Movement in Indonesia*, 23.

⁵⁸⁵ “Persoverzicht: De Chineesche Pers, maart 1917”, *Koloniaal Tijdschrift* 6:1 (1917): 548. (Text modified).

⁵⁸⁶ Chinese minutes, no. 21025, 3 July 1914: pp. 111–112. See also Malay minutes, no. NM2, 3 July 1914: pp. 272–73.

School did not mean that the Chinese officers were aloof from the nationalist movement. It merely showed concern for the future of the Chinese community in the Netherlands Indies, for they were well aware that Chinese education alone was not sufficient in a country of such diversity in race and language.

Lieutenant Khoe A Fan was involved in the Soe Po Sia. He was the only officer who was accepted by the organisation to participate in the festivities accompanying the foundation of the Chinese Republic. He was also the lieutenant in question who had stirred up disorder by hoisting the Chinese republican flag on top of his shop.⁵⁸⁷ But the Batavian officers were not the only ones active in the movement. Throughout the Indies Chinese officers were involved in modern associations. For instance, Major Oei Tiong Ham of Semarang (also the owner of the largest Chinese conglomerate of the Dutch East Indies at the time), was a leading member of the Siang Hwee.⁵⁸⁸ Despite what their critics then and now have said, the Chinese officers were not only part of the modern movement, they helped start it with the establishment of the THHK.

The institution of Arab officers and *priyayi*

There were parallel developments in the Arab community, in which the leadership passed almost completely into the hands of the leaders of sociopolitical and economic organisations and businessmen who set up modern education and sponsored the Arab press. Like the Chinese officers, Arab headmen lost their authority among the Arabs. This was confirmed by *Volksraad* member Sajid Ismail bin Abdoellah Al Atas, who visited the most important Arab settlements on Java. According to the people's complaints, the Arab officers and their followers showed improper behaviour by manipulating government rules and retaliating against people who disagreed with

⁵⁸⁷ Williams, *Overseas Chinese Nationalism*, 142.

⁵⁸⁸ Ong Hok Ham, "Chinese Capitalism in Dutch Java", 66.

their decisions and work performance. Therefore, Al Atas concluded that the institute of Arab officers was outdated and in conflict with the interests of the Arab community.⁵⁸⁹

A power struggle also evidently developed between the traditional indigenous rulers and the modern indigenous elite, who had taken advantage of the educational opportunities provided by the colonial government from the late nineteenth century onwards. The upper social stratum in the indigenous world was referred to as the *priyayi*, a term that in general defines an aristocrat or official, a member of the governing elite of Java.⁵⁹⁰ Within the *priyayi* group there were various divisions that differed in administrative power, economic position, social status, and origin. The term upper *priyayi* specified the traditional indigenous administrators and nobility. The lower *priyayi* consisted for the most part of younger sons and close relatives of the upper *priyayi*,⁵⁹¹ and it was this group that came into prominence around the turn of the twentieth century.⁵⁹²

The upper *priyayi* were able to maintain their authority and hierarchical position thanks to their feudal heritage and their role as political middlemen in the colonial bureaucratic structure.⁵⁹³ To uphold their status as members of a bureaucratic elite, the *priyayi* preserved a life-style that set them apart from the common people: marriages were kept within their status circles and they displayed status symbols to show their privileged position and dignity, such as certain patterns of *esprit de corps*, luxurious households, and a large number of domestic servants. But the practice of upholding their status frequently came at a heavy price. Regents for example, were expected to

⁵⁸⁹ Letter of the Resident of Batavia to the Director of Internal Affairs, 25 September 1918, no. 18327/1, in Agenda, 1918, no. 31028, ANRI, Jakarta.

⁵⁹⁰ H. Sutherland, *The Making of a Bureaucratic Elite: The Colonial Transforming of the Javanese Priyayi* (Singapore: Heinemann, 1979), p. xix.

⁵⁹¹ Van Niel, *The Emergence of the Modern Indonesian Elite*, 28.

⁵⁹² Sutherland, "The Priyayi", 76.

⁵⁹³ S. Kartodirdjo, "The Regents in Java as Middlemen: A Symbolic Action Approach", in *Papers of the Dutch-Indonesian Historical Conference held at Lage Vuursche, the Netherlands, 23–27 June 1980*, edited by G. J. Schutte and H. A. Sutherland (Leiden: Bureau of Indonesian Studies, 1982), 173.

organise and host festivities during indigenous and Dutch holidays. They also had a moral obligation towards kinsmen who often were in need of financial assistance. Many regents tended to overspend to preserve their status and lived far beyond their means. To cover their debts, regents frequently resorted to corrupt practices like excessive taxation and extortion. Accordingly, the common people were forced to sustain the extravagant life-style of the *priyayi*, and paid for their lavish feasts and conspicuous consumption. As a result, resentment against the *priyayi* intensified from the late nineteenth century onwards.⁵⁹⁴

The introduction of free capitalist enterprise in the Indies was accompanied by the expansion of Dutch control and the rationalisation of colonial administration. At the same time, the colonial government began to develop an interest in indigenous education. As officialdom expanded and new government agencies were created, there was a growing need for a Western-educated indigenous bureaucracy to which end schools for the natives were established. The upper *priyayi* were quite apathetic to modern education and most considered Western schooling unnecessary and feared it might lead to cultural alienation.⁵⁹⁵ The lower *priyayi* had fewer reservations, and emergence of indigenous civil servants, government technicians and intellectuals brought more diversity in the *priyayi* class, which around the turn of the century comprised mainly aristocrats and administrators.⁵⁹⁶ The new Western-educated elite organised itself in modern associations and was able to reach the masses. Modern concepts that evolved within indigenous society came into conflict with the old, feudal values of the *priyayi*. Hereditary principles ran against the demand for education, special treatment for kinsmen conflicted with impartiality and disinterested treatment, and status symbols were inconsistent with modern bureaucratic rules.⁵⁹⁷ The new elite felt that the old-guard upper *priyayi* were not changing with the times, and their criticism of the traditional

⁵⁹⁴ Kartodirdjo, "The Regents in Java as Middlemen", 175–82.

⁵⁹⁵ Adam, *The Vernacular Press*, 83; Sutherland, *The Making of a Bureaucratic Elite*, 46.

⁵⁹⁶ Van Niel, *The Emergence of the Modern Indonesian Elite*, 50–51.

⁵⁹⁷ Kartodirdjo, "The Regents in Java as Middlemen", 189.

feudal structure grew. Social inequality in particular met with increasing resentment, as did the humiliating *hormat* practices.⁵⁹⁸ The loss of prestige of the upper *priyayi* also motivated their children to decline traditional *priyayi* employment and to develop a growing interest in specialised professions like medicine and the law.⁵⁹⁹ In response to their declining position in colonial society, voices emerged from among the upper *priyayi* urging the government to provide education for their children.⁶⁰⁰ This outcry found response among the progressive Dutch politicians.

4.5 Conclusion

The late colonial state was highly stratified. The Dutch policy of discouraging assimilation between ethnic groups had resulted in a racially segmented society and left a big mark on social relations. When the Javanese aristocracy still occupied the upper stratum in society, some Chinese were willing to convert to Islam; being Muslim meant easier access to court circles and prominent positions among the Javanese elite. But when Dutch rule over Java expanded and a system of social stratification was enforced, the Dutch became the ruling class, the Chinese occupied the middle class, and the Javanese fell to the lowest level of society. Assimilation into the Javanese world now meant moving into the lower stratum of colonial society, an option that was far less attractive to the Chinese.⁶⁰¹ The boundaries between the rulers and the ruled were reinforced by the wave of Europeanisation that took place in the late nineteenth century. The development of a European

⁵⁹⁸ D. H. Burger, “Structuurveranderingen in de Javaanse Samenleving”, *Indonesië* 2 (1948–1949): 1. The *hormat* referred to forms of respect or honour, usually pejorative in character, which were used in the civil service by subordinates to superiors. For more details on *hormat* practices see Sutherland, *The Making of a Bureaucratic Elite*.

⁵⁹⁹ Sutherland, *The Making of a Bureaucratic Elite*, 54.

⁶⁰⁰ Adam, *The Vernacular Press*, 86; Burger, “Structuurveranderingen in de Javaanse Samenleving”, *Indonesië* 3 (1949-1950): 102.

⁶⁰¹ The Siauw Giap, “Religion and Overseas Chinese Assimilation in Southeast Asian Countries”, 82.

culture confined to the ruling class widened the social and cultural distance between the Dutch “rulers” and their Asian “subjects”.⁶⁰²

Thus, when these ruled groups began to manifest their “awakening” in nationalistic organisations, in the press, and even in literature, folk music and theatres, the colonial administration had difficulty justifying its alleged civilising mission on them. At the same time, each ethnic group became more self-reliant and confined, resulting in a certain attitude of aloofness vis-à-vis other population groups. Identity or the search for identity played an important role in the awakening. Feeling abandoned by the colonial government, the Chinese sought to renew cultural and political ties with their ancestral country. The natives became even more aware of their status as *Inlander* in colonial society, although sub-ethnic disparities still prevented group cohesion from extending beyond local or familial boundaries. The Arabs sought connection to the Ottoman Empire and the Middle East. These changes in attitude toward one another erupted into racially based violence from the 1910s onwards. As Van Doorn has remarked, “late-colonial Indonesia became a collection of self-aware population groups, guided by group nationalism.”⁶⁰³ The Chinese especially suffered from the profound structural changes taking place in Java as a surge of anti-Chinese feelings were directed at them.⁶⁰⁴

Within this process of self-awareness and ethnic confinement, another development took place that shook power relations between traditional leadership institutions and their dependents. Although they kept themselves in ethnic confinement and displayed an increased antagonism toward one another, it was a development the Chinese, natives, and Arabs shared. Modern concepts such as democracy that found a warm response among the “awakened” population groups ran counter to the older feudal leadership systems. For a long time the Javanese *priyayi* and the Chinese and Arab officers were able to sustain their elite status as community leaders because they had a

⁶⁰² Tichelman, “Early Emancipation and Inter-ethnic Relations on Java”, 216.

⁶⁰³ Van Doorn, *A Divided Society*, 15–16.

⁶⁰⁴ Shiraishi, “Anti-Sinicism in Java’s New Order”, 189.

mediating role to play. But now that the people they represented began to turn away from the colonial government, and started to regard them as collaborators of the colonial regime, their position became untenable.⁶⁰⁵ Moreover, gifted speakers of the indigenous emancipation movement who sent out the message that the time had come for the *wong cilik* (common man) to take over, were able to stir up people at public mass meetings. The legitimacy of the Chinese officers was directly challenged by the Chinese-Malay press in particular. It appears that the newspapers were deliberately starting a witch hunt against the officers, as *Pewarta Soerabaja* was proud to announce that the attacks on the officers by the press was the main reason why the post of Chinese officer was no longer in demand.⁶⁰⁶ There were however differences to be considered between the Batavian Council and the Councils in Semarang and especially Soerabaja. While protests against the officers escalated, especially in Soerabaja, Batavia managed to limit the damage. But it was obvious that it was now time for the colonial government to intervene and reconsider the whole system of leadership in ethnic communities.

⁶⁰⁵ Van Doorn, *A Divided Society*, 26.

⁶⁰⁶ "Persoverzicht: De Chineesche Pers, maart-april 1914", *Koloniaal Tijdschrift* 3:2 (1914): 957–58.