



The Chinese Community in Dutch Indonesia: Population and Socio-economic Characteristics

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Abstract

The Chinese in Dutch Indonesia had evolved over the centuries into a largely settled community by the 1930s, with a distinct urban population and a high proportion of locally born *peranakans*, although they remained a small minority in the Indonesian population. The transition to a settled community was coupled with a process of gradual integration with the indigenous communities through the acquisition of local language, customs and culture. The immigrant/peranakan divide was continuously shifting as immigrant settlers became acculturated and brought forth a new generation of peranakans. As middlemen traders *par excellence* in the archipelago, the Chinese provided the vital links between the indigenous peasantry and the world market and contributed to the socio-economic transformation of Indonesian society. In their constant adaptation to the local environment, the Chinese community became firmly embedded in the Indonesian society as a vibrant element in its richly variegated sociocultural landscape.

Introduction

Chinese Indonesians today constitute a distinct ethnic group amongst the ethnically, linguistically and culturally diverse population of Indonesia. Their presence in Indonesia dates back to the seventh century, when Srivijaya on the east coast of Sumatra emerged as a thriving emporium and a renowned centre of Buddhism. Chinese residents in the city comprised not only traders in transit but also permanent residents, including a number of Buddhist scholars or monks. Their numbers increased significantly in the tenth century, when refugees from the failed Huang Cao peasant uprising fled to the kingdom. The thriving international trade of China along the maritime Silk Route up to the end of the twelfth century further augmented the Chinese population. Chinese presence in Java, which probably began in the tenth century, was enhanced by the Mongol invasion in 1293, which left a number of sailors and soldiers on the island. More extensive settlement of Chinese migrants in the Indonesian archipelago followed in the wake of Zheng He's voyages across the Indian Ocean to the east coast of Africa from 1405 to 1433. By the end of the sixteenth century there were already Chinese settlements in Palembang, Banten, Grisek, Tuban, Jayacatra, Semarang, Surabaya, Borneo and Bali.

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The massive increase of Chinese population in Southeast Asia, popularly known as Nanyang to the Chinese, including Dutch Indonesia, began from 1842, when the Qing Government of China signed the Nanking Treaty, which ceded Hong Kong to Britain and opened five coastal ports to international trade. This effectively removed the longstanding restrictions on Chinese emigration, opening a floodgate of Chinese migrant outflows which were very much driven by domestic tensions in China. It is estimated that the population of China increased from 100 million in 1685 to 300 million in 1787 and 420 million in 1840 (朱国宏/Zhu Guohong, 1994). Fujian and Guangdong Provinces, the main sources of Chinese overseas migration, experienced acute population pressure in the same period. In Fujian Province the population increased from around 7 million in 1661 to 18 million in 1880 whereas the average size of peasant land holdings was reduced from 7.11 *mu* to 0.9 *mu*. In Guangdong Province the population increased from 4.2 million in 1661 to 25 million in 1840 while the average peasant holding size diminished from 25 *mu* to 1.67 *mu* from 1661 to 1812 (陈翰笙/Chen Hansheng, 1985).¹ Population pressure on land created a hidden surplus population in search of a new living space. The Taiping Revolt (1851-1864), which started in Guangdong Province as a peasant uprising and eventually engulfed a large part of China, triggered an exodus of refugees and rebels to the Nanyang territories. Subsequent social upheavals, domestic wars and foreign invasions further drove the inexorable waves of overseas migration that effectively spanned a whole century from 1842.

This study analyses the population and socio-economic characteristics of the Chinese community in Dutch Indonesia, substantially on the basis of the *Volkstelling 1930 van Nederlandsch-Indië* (1930 Population Census of the Netherlands Indies), the only comprehensive official population census of Dutch Indonesia, and, where relevant, makes a comparison with the Chinese population of British Malaya, on the basis of the *Population Census of British Malaya, 1931*. It seeks to trace the origins of the Chinese community in Indonesia and the growth of Chinese population, delineate the salient features of Chinese marriage and family and the formation of local-born and immigrant Chinese, known respectively as *peranakan* and *totok*, and describe the different Chinese groups and the regional and urban spread of the Chinese population. It also attempts to explain the literacy rate of the Chinese community in relation to their endeavour to develop their own education system, and analyse the economic activities of the Chinese and their social stratification. Unless otherwise indicated, all statistics relating to the Chinese population of Dutch Indonesia in or around 1930 are based on the *Volkstelling 1930*.

Population Growth, Distribution and Structure

Growth of Chinese Population in Indonesia

The Indonesian archipelago, consisting of around 17,000 islands, with its fertile volcanic soil, verdant forest, rich natural resources and a sparse population, was one of the principal

destinations for this century-long Chinese migration. Great opportunities in the archipelago beckoned at the beginning of the nineteenth century, when the rule of the Dutch East India Company (VOC) had ended and an era of socio-economic structural transformation was ushered in, first under the French and the British interregnum (1808-1811, 1811-1816) and then under the Dutch colonial government. With the Landrent introduced in 1815, the Javanese peasants were encouraged to shift from rice to cash crop cultivation, which thus accelerated the transition to a money economy. The Culture System introduced in 1830 compelled the Javanese peasants to plant a cash crop on part of their land and deliver the product to the colonial authorities. This led to the sale of native produce such as sugar, coffee, indigo and tobacco on the world market and impressive growth of the non-agriculture sector (Boomgard, 1989). The Dutch colonial state was run almost like a state-owned enterprise in reorganizing the indigenous economy for the benefit of the metropolitan country, in contrast to the British administration in Malaya, which took a more *laissez-faire* approach to economic growth.

The Liberal Policy which began in 1870 ushered in an era of Dutch private investment that led to the rise of large-scale tobacco, sugar, coffee, tea and cinchona plantations and mining enterprises and the employment of huge numbers of native and Chinese labourers. In fact, it was in the nineteenth century that Indonesia became integrated with the global capitalist economy. It is for this reason that W.F. Wertheim (1959) described 1800 as the beginning of the fundamental changes in the traditional pattern of economic structure of Indonesia. The transformation process created new roles for the Chinese in the restructured economy that consisted of the European-controlled sector, the indigenous sector, and an intermediate sector that was largely controlled by the Chinese. The overall growth of the economy generated by the interaction of the three sectors was sustained well into the twentieth century. The population of Indonesia increased from 17,927,000 in 1820 to 28,922,000 in 1870, 42,746,000 in 1900, 52,823,000 in 1920, 60,727,000 in 1930, and 70,476,000 in 1940 (Lahmeyer, 1999/2003). The rapid growth of population in Indonesia was sustained by economic growth and the introduction of modern medicine that effectively reduced mortality. The Chinese community in Indonesia contributed to and was also sustained by the overall growth.

There was already a substantial Chinese population in Indonesia at the beginning of the nineteenth century. There were around 100,000 Chinese in Java and Madura, which was and still is the region with the greatest concentration of population in Indonesia. The demographics of the Chinese community in Dutch Indonesia show a steadily rising curve from 1860 to 1920: 221,438 in 1860, 343,793 in 1880, 461,089 in 1890, 537,316 in 1900, and 809,039 in 1920. This was followed by a steep ascent from 1921 to 1930, when the Chinese population reached 1,233,214 (including 582,431 in Java and Madura and 650,783 in the Outer Islands), which represented a 52 per cent increase in the decade, compared to a decennial increase of not more than 34 per cent in the previous decades (*Volkstelling 1930*) (Figure 1).

There were two components that drove the Chinese population growth in Dutch Indonesia: net immigration (surplus of immigrants over emigrants) and natural population growth (excess of

births over deaths). Net immigration was a vital component of Chinese population growth in the period from 1840 to 1930. From 1900 to 1930 a total of 1,097,597 Chinese immigrants entered into Dutch Indonesia. A substantial part of the immigrants came to settle down as permanent residents, although it is impossible to ascertain the number of net immigration due to the lack of statistics on annual departures. The years from 1900 to 1930 was a period of substantial growth in all major sectors of the economy, which afforded the Chinese immigrants ample opportunities to secure a living better than what they had experienced in their native places in China. Natural population growth became increasingly important as the settled population expanded in size, especially in Java and Madura, where a large Chinese population had settled for generations. For the Chinese population as a whole, the turning point occurred in 1931 when the full force of the Great Depression was felt throughout the territory. In 1930, the colonial government imposed a tax of 50 to 100 guilders on each Chinese immigrant, effectively putting a brake on Chinese immigration. The number of Chinese immigrants dropped to 7,069 in 1932 and 4,936 in 1933, and Chinese immigration never recovered its momentum for the remainder of the colonial period. Natural population growth after 1930 became the decisive component of Chinese population growth in Indonesia.

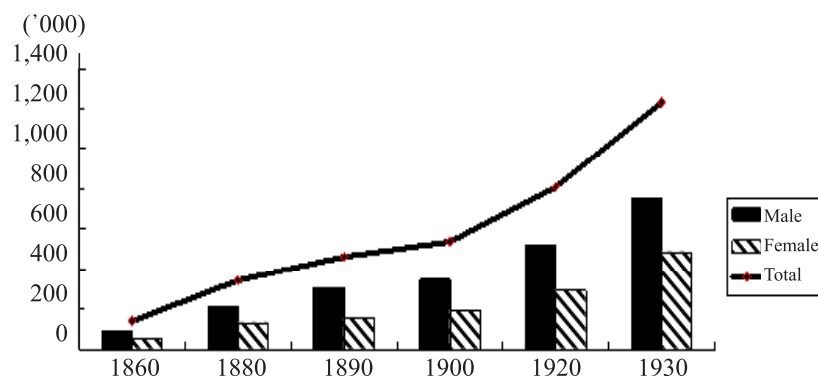


Figure 1. Chinese Population in Dutch Indonesia, 1860-1930

By 1930, the Chinese population accounted for only 2 per cent of the total population of Dutch Indonesia. By comparison, there were 1.7 million Chinese in British Malaya in 1931, or 39.2 per cent of the total population (Vlieland, 1932). While the Chinese were a major ethnic group in British Malaya, they were a small minority in Dutch Indonesia. This difference in relative size of the population had far-reaching socio-economic and political implications. The Chinese not only had a greater leverage in the economy of British Malaya but also played a more active role in its political movements. The Chinese in Dutch Indonesia were much more exposed to the tensions arising from the extensive interface with the indigenous people and also more vulnerable to social and political pressures as a result of their minority position.

All Chinese communities in Southeast Asia shared the same traits of extremely unbalanced sex ratios in the early phase of their formation. The early Chinese migrants came to Indonesia almost always as single males, either being bachelors or having left their wives and children at

their ancestral villages in China. Facing an entirely alien environment, they had to grapple with the basics of making a living before they could consider raising a local family of their own. Family formation was therefore a reflection as well as a result of their success in acquiring a secured means of living in the new environment. When a Chinese immigrant began to look around for a potential bride, he would find that there were scarcely any Chinese females available for his choice. He had to seek native women, mostly from Bali, Celebes and Java and preferably non-Muslims. These native women were obtained mostly from the slave market, which continued to exist in Indonesia up to the early nineteenth century.² The census of Java and Madura taken in 1815 under the British administration shows there were still 7,001 male slaves and 7,238 female slaves in Batavia (Raffles, 1817). In the last quarter of the eighteenth century, a female slave could be bought for 100 rixdollars.³ From 1717 up to 1919, the Chinese in Batavia were required to have their marriages approved and registered by the Chinese officers (kapitans and lieutenants). This was the first Chinese marriage registration system in the world. The records of the Chinese Council of Batavia (Kong Koan of Batavia/巴城公馆) show that many Chinese men took their native female servants as wives or concubines, with or without the required formalities (包乐史、吴凤斌/ Blussé and Wu, 2002; Blussé and Chen, 2003). The *Volkstelling 1930* shows that 10,791 indigenous women were married to Chinese men and were enumerated as Chinese. About half of these indigenous females were Javanese. However, the actual number may have been higher as many indigenous women did not reveal their ethnic origins to the census enumerators.

Interethnic marriages enabled the early Chinese settlers to increase their numbers. After several generations, a sufficient pool of locally born Chinese males and females, called *peranakans*, was built up, providing more choices for marriage partners. This was vitally important for the survival and growth of the Chinese as an ethnic group. However, this was achieved at a price: the loss of the Chinese language. This process of linguistic disinheritance began in the family formed by mixed marriage. The father, a trader or an artisan, was usually too busy in his own business to teach his children in his own dialect, leaving the upbringing of his children to his wife. The native mother conversed with her children only in bazaar Malay, which became the common language in the family. According to Kwee Tek Hoay (1969), when the girls grew up and married, they would bring up their own children in the same manner. The children had no knowledge of the Chinese language or dialect, unless the father made a special arrangement for them to receive private Chinese tuition. The *peranakans* would perpetuate such linguistic disinheritance unless and until the Chinese community made a concerted attempt to launch a Chinese cultural revival movement, which actually happened with the formation of the *Tiong Hoa Hwe Koan* in Batavia in 1900.

The acquisition of the Malay language, the *lingua franca* of the Malay world, was nevertheless a significant achievement by the Chinese *peranakans*. This enabled them to communicate and interact with the indigenous people on a daily basis. The Chinese peripatetic peddlers' penetration into the remote villages, the small Chinese *kedai* operating with a clientele

of indigenous customers, or the Chinese rubber traders' extensive networks of rubber collection from the native smallholders would not have been possible without proficiency in the language. Indeed, it was indispensable for the role of the Chinese traders as middlemen par excellence in the Indonesian archipelago. Furthermore, the use of Malay as the first language by the *peranakans* provided the foundation for the rise of a thriving Chinese-Malay literature and a flourishing Chinese-Malay press.

The *peranakans* developed a syncretic culture consisting of Chinese and native Indonesian elements. In costumes, *peranakan* women wore embroidered *sarongs* and *selendang* (shawls) very much like native women. While bazaar Malay was the common language in the family and in social communications, some Chinese traditions were steadfastly preserved. Chinese temples were erected wherever there were Chinese settlements. Traditional Chinese festivals, such as the *imlek* (Chinese New Year) and the *tsap-go-meh* (the fifteenth day of the lunar year), were celebrated by all Chinese in Indonesia. Nevertheless, even age-old Chinese customs, such as marriage ceremonies, were infused with Malay, Javanese, Balinese or Bugis influences, while "Chinese mourning customs and funeral ceremonies had been so greatly transformed that people weighed themselves down with the addition of all sorts of customs from various native sources" (Kwee, 1969). The odd complexities of the syncretic customs became one of the objectives of reform initiated by the *Tiong Hoa Hwe Koan* in 1900.

Polygamy was common among the upper-class elites of the Chinese community. Oei Tiong Ham, the "sugar king of Java", had four wives and 26 children. Khouw Tjeng Tjoan, Chinese lieutenant of Batavia, had 15 wives and 24 children. The elites exercised the privilege of having a number of wives and concubines as in traditional male-dominated Chinese society, not only because they had the wealth to do so but also because there was a rationale behind a large conjugal establishment. A large family provided the human resources that were necessary for the build-up of a business at its initial stage and for its expansion and diversification at a later stage. A large family would grow into a very large clan in two or three generations, enabling its members to spread to different parts of the archipelago and into new fields of business and professions. Moreover, with the Chinese emphasis on "equal thresholds and status in marriage", the Chinese elites were meticulous in entering into strategic marriage partnership with wealthy and influential families, thus cementing the ties among the Chinese upper class. Although polygamy might not contribute much to the overall Chinese population growth, it played a significant role in the consolidation of the power and influence of the Chinese elites.

In contrast to the multiple wives and prolific reproduction of children of the Chinese elites, the Chinese underclass was conspicuous for their inability or inadequate ability to form a family. A comparison of the percentage of married Chinese men in the age group of 20-49 years in different regions of Indonesia shows that the male immigrants in the following regions had the lowest percentages of marriage: East Coast of Sumatra (46.7%), Bangka (34.1%) and Billiton (48.5%), whereas the male immigrants in Java and Madura had the highest percentage (70.4%). The Chinese immigrants in Java and Madura were mostly engaged in business as

merchants, shopkeepers, peddlers, craftsmen or service providers. They were better able to secure sufficient financial means for marriage and a family. The large numbers of Chinese labourers employed in tin mining in Bangka and Billiton and in sugar and tobacco plantations in the East Coast of Sumatra belonged to the most unstable, transient part of the Chinese population. Chinese indentured labour continued to exist in Indonesia until 1942. From 1912 to 1933 altogether 224,607 indentured Chinese coolies entered into Indonesia. Only 35 per cent of these coolies were permitted to remain in the territory after the expiration of their indentures (*Volkstelling 1930*). Their human bondage and poor economic position rendered the single men in this group most ineligible for marriage. This is again evidence of the impact of class status on marriage and family formation.

A salient feature of Chinese marriages was early marriage of females and late marriage of males. The records of the Koan Koan of Batavia show that between 1775 and 1791 there were 1,768 registered Chinese marriages. Males of 31 years of age and above accounted for 54 per cent of all marriages, whereas females of 13 to 19 years of age accounted for nearly 61 per cent of the total. It was common for girls to marry at 13 years of age. About one-third of the couples had an age difference of 15 years and above, and in 21 per cent of all marriages the husband was twice as old as or much older than the wife. In some cases the age difference was up to 40 years (Blussé and Chen 2003; Blussé and Wu, 2002). Most males deferred marriage to an age when they had accumulated sufficient financial means for a family. This was particularly true of immigrants, who had to spend a much longer time than the *peranakans* to establish a business or a career. Early marriage of females was due mainly to the disparity in male and female population. The shortage of females, particularly in the early period, created a very competitive marriage market. The records of the Kong Koan of Batavia show that almost all Chinese marriages were arranged by match-makers in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and possibly many Chinese marriages were still so arranged in the 1930s. Competition among the match-makers for eligible females would tend to push down the marriage age of females. The old-fashioned view that daughters do not belong to productive members of the family also contributed to early female marriage. The indigenous tradition of child marriage, which took place between girls of 9 to 10 years old and boys of 14 to 15 years old, might also have an influence on Chinese marriage practices.

There was an unusually large number of widows in the Chinese community, much more than Chinese widowers. In Java and Madura, widows accounted for nearly 70 per cent of all females in the 60-69 age group and about 86 per cent of all females in the age group of 70 years and above. Similarly, in the Outer Islands widows accounted for about 63 per cent of all females in the 60-69 age group and about 81 per cent of all females in the age group of 70 years and above. These percentages were much higher than the corresponding percentages for widowers. This phenomenon was related to the marriage pattern. Early female marriage and the much older age of husbands meant that wives generally survived their husbands for many years. In addition, the life expectancy of females was longer than that of males. In the case of

polygamous marriage, the death of the husband would leave a number of widows behind. The man's propensity to remarry after the death of his wife or wives also help to reduce the number of widowers.

Sex ratio was a crucial factor affecting marriage, family and population growth. The sex ratio of the Chinese population gradually improved with the growth of peranakan population and increase of female Chinese immigrants. It is notable that in Java, the region with the oldest Chinese settlements, the sex ratio was gradually moving towards equilibrium by the early nineteenth century. By 1930, the peranakan Chinese population in Indonesia had already achieved equilibrium in sex ratio, with females slightly more than males: 1.029 females/1,000 males in Java and Madura, 1,013 females/1,000 males in Sumatra and its outlying islands, and 1,045 females per 1,000 males in other regions. As a whole the sex ratio of the Chinese population in Indonesia fluctuated from 589 females/1,000 males in 1860 to 620 females/1,000 males in 1880, 493 females/1,000 males in 1890, 548 females/1,000 males in 1900, 562 females/1,000 males in 1920, and 646 females/1,000 males in 1930 (*Vokstelling 1930*). The decline in the sex ratio from 1880 to 1890 was due to large numbers of Chinese male immigrants during this period.

The obvious improvement in sex ratio between 1920 and 1930 was caused by increasing numbers of Chinese female immigrants. During the 1920s, with political turmoil and civil wars in China, many Chinese residents in Indonesia brought their wives and children left behind in China to Indonesia. There was, however, a disparity in the sex ratio between Java and the Outer Islands. In 1930 there were 820 Chinese females to 1,000 Chinese males in Java and Madura whereas the ratio was 516 females/1,000 males in the Outer Islands. Compared to British Malaya, which had 513 Chinese females/1,000 Chinese males in 1931, Indonesia had a higher female sex ratio. However, Malaya recorded a net migration gain of 190,000 Chinese females between 1933 and 1938 (Vlieland, 1932; Del Tufo, 1949). As a result, the female/male ratio of the Chinese population in Malaya was probably close to that in Indonesia by 1942.

Sojourners and Settlers

The peranakan/totok dichotomy has often been used to describe the socio-cultural and political divide among the Chinese community in Indonesia. While “peranakan” refers to local-born Chinese, especially those of mixed Chinese and indigenous descent, “totok” refers to Chinese born outside Indonesia and generally Chinese-speaking. It is noticeable that the meaning of “peranakan” has shifted over time, from an emphasis on birth to focus on the degree of cultural affinity with the indigenous population. In fact, there was an intermediate range where the peranakan/totok divide was blurred. Chinese immigrants who had settled down in Indonesia for a long time came to acquire the ability to speak Malay or another local language and became acculturated with the local environment to a considerable extent, although they might still retain their Chinese-speaking capability. When an immigrant settler married a local bride and formed a family, he would bring up his children as peranakans. From a cultural

point of view, there was no yawning gap between *peranakan* Chinese and this group of settled immigrants.

The continuous influx of Chinese immigrants into Indonesia created problems of accommodation with the settled Chinese community. In times of economic difficulties, in particular, the competition for opportunities and scarce resources inevitably led to tensions and jealousies. Nevertheless, from the *longue durée* perspective, there was no fundamental cleavage between the immigrants and the *peranakans*. Their common interest in carving out a niche in the colonial society would eventually bring them together in the economic and social fields. The Kong Koan of Batavia, formed in 1742 as an officially appointed body to manage the affairs of the Chinese community, catered to the needs of the *peranakans* and *totoks* alike (Lohanda, 1996; Chen, 2011; Erkelens, 2013). Some major groupings in Indonesian Chinese politics were formed across, not along, the *peranakan/totok* divide. For example, the Chinese-Malay newspaper *Sin Po*, the standard-bearer of anti-colonial, pro-China sentiments in Indonesia, was owned and operated by Chinese *peranakans* but enjoyed substantial support among the *totoks* (Leo, 2005). The Tiong Hoa Hwe Koan was formed in 1900 by a group of *peranakan* and *totok* leaders to unite the whole Chinese community in Indonesia irrespective of their real or perceived differences. It contributed substantially to the social and educational improvement of the Indonesian Chinese community during the Dutch colonial period and beyond (Kwee, 1969; Nio, 1940; Williams, 1960; Jusuf, 2014).

In 1930, there were 450,000 Chinese immigrants and 756,000 local-born Chinese in Indonesia. The local-born Chinese accounted for 63.5 per cent of the whole Chinese population (Figure 2). They included 513,000 Chinese whose fathers were also born in Indonesia and 243,000 Chinese whose fathers were born outside Indonesia. The fact that 243,000 Chinese were born into the families of immigrants shows that a substantial part of the Chinese immigrants had settled down in Indonesia. If this group of settled immigrants is added to the 756,000 local-born Chinese, it seems probable that the total number of Chinese settlers would be not less than 70 per cent of the total Chinese population. This meant that by 1930 the Chinese in Indonesia had already become a largely settled community.

There were, however, great variations in the regional patterns. In Java and Madura, with a long-settled Chinese community, the local-born Chinese accounted for 79 per cent of the Chinese population. In West Borneo, where the Chinese had been carrying out economic activities since the eighteenth century, local-born Chinese represented about 75 per cent of the Chinese population. In contrast, in Sumatra and its outlying islands, where there was a large Chinese immigrant population, the local-born Chinese constituted only 42 per cent of the Chinese population. The Chinese coolies in the tin mines on Bangka and Billiton islands and in the plantations of the East Coast of Sumatra were mostly sojourners, who might stay for a shorter or longer period but would eventually return to China.

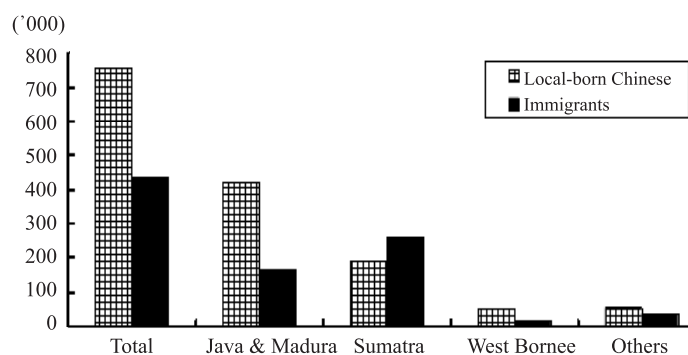


Figure 2. Local-born and Immigrant Chinese in Dutch Indonesia, 1930

A distinct characteristic of the sojourners was their active role in the economy and minimal contribution to population growth. A huge proportion of Chinese immigrants were in the active working age of 20 to 49. In Sumatra, with its large labour population, the immigrants constituted 79 per cent of the total in the 20-49 age group. In the East Coast of Sumatra and on Bangka and the Riouw islands, the majority of Chinese men in the 20-49 age group were unmarried (53% in the East Coast of Sumatra, 66% in Bangka, and 50.8% on the Riouw islands). The large numbers of Chinese bachelors or single men who had left their families at their native places in China constituted an invaluable labour force for the vital industries in these regions.

The existence of a large sojourning Chinese population had significant sociocultural implications. The sojourning labourers were the least acculturated of the Chinese population in Indonesia. Their precarious living conditions did not allow them to make a long-term commitment to Indonesia. Those labourers living in coolies' quarters on the plantations or the tin mines had little daily contact with the wider community or the indigenous people. They remained Chinese-speaking among themselves, without the opportunity to learn the native language. Their inability to get married and to form a family of their own also meant that they were unable to beget the next generation that would merge into the *peranakan* community. If we may perceive the settler/sojourner or *peranakan/totok* community in Indonesia as a spectrum with a range of intermediate shades, these labour sojourners may be regarded as standing at one end of the spectrum, in contrast to the totally assimilated Chinese Muslims at the other end of the spectrum.

Regional and Urban Presence

The growth of Chinese urban population was part of the urbanization process in Indonesia. Many towns in Indonesia had their origins as the sites of the courts of native rulers, but their emergence as modern urban centres was due to the socio-economic transformations engendered by Dutch colonial rule. The presence of a colonial bureaucracy and Dutch garrisons required a substantial complement of supporting services. With the introduction of the Culture System in 1830, towns became the centres for the transfer of the agricultural surplus of the indigenous

population to the metropolitan country. After 1870, the cities in Indonesia became the sites for the increasing presence of Dutch and other European trading companies and financial institutions. The rapid increase of import and export trade, the growth of international and coastal shipping and the construction of railways boosted the expansion of port cities such as Batavia, Surabaya and Semarang. Furthermore, the socio-economic transformations of rural areas, compounded by population pressures and growing land scarcity in Java, created a more mobile rural population that tended to flow into the urban centres (The, 1959). All these forces conspired to drive the Indonesian urbanization process in modern times.

The Chinese were at once a component and a driver of this urbanization process. They took part in the physical and economic growth of a number of modern cities from the very beginning. Batavia was built up largely by Chinese residents, who participated in the construction of roads, bridges, city walls and houses. They cleared the forest outside the city and turned the wasteland into fertile fields. The Molenvliet Canal in Batavia was built by Chinese labourers under Kapitan Phoa Bingam in the seventeenth century. Chinese junks brought foodstuffs and provisions to the city. Numerous Chinese-owned sugar mills in the city's environs underscored the city's prosperity. A disproportionately high share of the city's taxation was borne by the Chinese residents. Batavia became essentially "a Chinese colonial town under Dutch protection" (Blussé, 1986). B. Hoetink (1923) stated, "The Dutch East India Company had a lot to thank the Chinese for their labour, spirit, and sense of order in the rise of Batavia as the capital city."

Chinese population registered spectacular growth in major urban centres during the 1920s: by 100-150 per cent in Malang and Bandung, and by 50-84 per cent in Cheribon, Jogjakarta, Medan, Surabaya, and Batavia. The period saw a 81 per cent increase of the Chinese in major urban centres in West Java, 44 per cent in Middle Java, and 63 per cent in East Java. This process was caused by the influx of Chinese immigrants, natural growth of the settled Chinese community, the general economic upswing, and the accelerated pace of urbanization in Indonesia as a whole.

Although Chinese residents were spread out over the greater part of Indonesia, Chinese population was concentrated in three major regions: Java and Madura, Sumatra, and Borneo. In 1930, there were 582,431 Chinese in Java and Madura, 448,552 in Sumatra, and 134,287 in Borneo, accounting for a total of 94 per cent of the Chinese population in Indonesia.

The Chinese were mainly concentrated in urban centres. In Java and Madura 31 per cent of the Chinese lived in six cities each with 100,000 or more residents (Batavia, Surabaya, Semarang, Surakarta, Bandung, and Jogjakarta). Smaller urban centres accounted for another 160,140 Chinese. In all, 58 per cent of the total Chinese in Java and Madura were found in urban centres. Yet they were a minority in the total urban population, ranging from 6.5 per cent in Jogjakarta to 16 per cent in Batavia (Table 1). They comprised only 13.5 per cent of the population in the municipalities and 6.6 per cent of that in the smaller towns of West Java, 10.5 and 8 per cent respectively in Middle Java, and 9 and 7 per cent in East Java.

Table 1. Proportion of Chinese in the Population of Major Towns of Java/Madura, Sumatra and Borneo, 1930

Java/Madura	% Chinese	Sumatra	% Chinese	Borneo	% Chinese
Batavia	16.0	Bindjai	42.0	Pemangkat	53.0
Bandung	10.0	Medan	35.6	Pontianak	33.8
Jogjakarta	6.5	Permatang-Siantar	32.0	Singkawang	59.0
Semarang	12.6	Tanjung Balai	46.0		
Surabaya	9.6	Tebing-Tinggi	34.0		
Surakarta	6.8	Bagan Si Api Api	78.0		
		Bengkalis	59.0		
		Pangkal Pinang	60.0		
		Tanjung Pandan	68.0		
		Tanjung Pinang	62.0		

Sumatra and its outlying islands had 131,925 Chinese urban residents, including 68,323 in nine municipalities and 63,602 in smaller towns, representing 42 per cent of the total Chinese population in these regions. Their urban presence was relatively higher than that in Java and Madura, being 21.9 per cent in nine municipalities and 29 per cent in the smaller towns. They made up substantial proportions of the urban populations in five out of the nine municipalities in Sumatra, varying from 32 per cent in Permatang-Siantar to 46 per cent in Tanjung Balai. The percentage in some smaller towns was even higher, reaching 78 per cent in Bagan Si Api Api (Table 1). The high proportion of Chinese in these small towns was due to the presence of a particular Chinese business: a Chinese fishing community in Bagan Si Api Api, a thriving timber and sawmilling industry in Bengkalis, Tanjung Pinang as the commercial centre of the Riouw islands, where there were many Chinese gambier and pepper planters.

In Dutch West Borneo, the Chinese made up 33.8 per cent of the population of Pontianak, 53 per cent of Pemangkat, and 59 per cent of Singkawang. These towns were developed during the gold rush era from around 1740 to 1880, either as the centres of the Chinese gold mining activities or for the supply of provisions to the goldfields. After the demise of the Chinese gold mining industry, the erstwhile miners turned to vegetable gardening, cash crop planting and petty trade for survival. These towns remained not merely as a legacy of the glorious days of the Chinese gold mining kongsis but also as the trading and service centres for the surviving, agricultural Chinese community in West Borneo.

Despite their substantial urban presence, the Chinese in Indonesia never managed to establish a predominant presence in the major urban centres except in some small towns such as those in Sumatra, the Riouw islands and West Borneo. In contrast, two-thirds of the urban population of British Malaya in 1931 were Chinese. They comprised 76.4 per cent of the population of Singapore, 64 per cent of Penang, 67.3 per cent of Malacca, 61.3 per cent of Kuala Lumpur, 65.6 per cent of Ipoh, 62.7 per cent of Seremban, and 56.7 per cent of

Johore Bahru (Vlieland, 1932). This dominance was due above all to the high proportion of the Chinese in the total population and the much greater role of the Chinese in the economy of British Malaya than in Indonesia.

Chinese Groups by Places of Origin

In 1930, 84 per cent of the Chinese in Indonesia were composed of Hokkiens, Hakkas, Cantonese and Teochius from the provinces of Fujian and Guangdong. By far the largest were the Hokkiens, who made up 47.5 per cent of the Chinese. Much smaller in number were the Hakkas (17.2%), Cantonese (11.7%), and Teochius (7.5%). These four groups also represented the overwhelming majority of the Chinese population in British Malaya (Vlieland, 1931). The Malayan Census referred to them as “dialect groups” because each group actually spoke their own dialect. In the *Volkstelling 1930* these groups were classified according to their places of origin in China. This was because many peranakans spoke only Malay and were no longer able to communicate in their native dialect.

The Hokkiens were the earliest group of Chinese to settle down in Indonesia. In 1930 their number was 554,981 or nearly half of all Chinese in Dutch Indonesia. Many Hokkien families could trace their settlement in Indonesia for seven or eight generations. In 1930, 77 per cent of all Hokkiens were local-born peranakans. They were strongly represented in Java and Madura where they accounted for 65 per cent of the Chinese population. They were also the largest Chinese group in the East Coast (34%) and West Coast (81%) of Sumatra, South and East Borneo (49%), Celebes (60%), and Bali and Lombok (66%). They were the dominant Chinese group in major urban centres: Batavia (41%), Semarang (71%), Jogjakarta (62%), Surabaya (50%), Malang (73%), Bandung (62%), Buitenzorg (74%), Cheribon (75%), Surakarta (64%), Padang (80%), Palembang (75%), Banjarmasin (83%), and Makassar (62%). Owing to their long settlement in Indonesia, the Hokkiens had a sex ratio of 794 females per 1,000 males and Hokkien peranakans had a sex ratio of 1,012 females per 1,000 males, which were higher than the other three groups.

The Hokkiens were the economically most powerful Chinese group in Indonesia. Owing to their numerical strength, long history of settlement and high proportion of peranakans, most Chinese officers (majors, kapitans and lieutenants) appointed by the colonial government were Hokkiens. With their access to the authorities, many Hokkiens were appointed as revenue farmers of opium, gambling, markets and pawnbroking, which enabled them to amass wealth through participation in the colonial taxation system. They were instrumental in the rise of the sugar industry in Indonesia, with their sugar planting skills and processing technology introduced from their villages in Fujian Province. As middlemen traders the Hokkiens penetrated into the rural areas, collecting copra, pepper, tobacco and rubber from native producers and distributing imported goods to the rural consumers. Some large Hokkien merchant houses were engaged in the wholesale imports of rice and China-made products and exports of native produce. About half of all Hokkiens in Indonesia were businessmen. The Hokkien group had some of

the most renowned Chinese business families in Indonesia, such those of Oei Tiong Ham, The Ing Tjiang, and Tjoa Sui Tjao in Semarang, the Han Bwee Kong and The Boen Keh families in Surabaya, and the Khauw Tian Seck family in Batavia. The Hokchia traders, who were enumerated as Hokkiens in the census but actually spoke a different dialect from Hokkien, provided extensive credit facilities to indigenous producers in Java through their extensive peddling trade networks.

With a population of 200,736, the Hakkas were the second largest group of Chinese in Indonesia in 1930. Close to two-thirds of them were distributed in the Outer Islands where they accounted for 57 per cent of the Chinese population in West Borneo. They were also the largest Chinese group in Aceh (40%), Bangka and Billiton (36%) and the Bencoolen and Lampong districts (34%) of Sumatra. In Batavia, they were as numerous (40%) as the Hokkiens in number. By virtue of their long presence in West Borneo, 60 per cent of the Hakkas were local-born *peranakans*.

Coming from the poorer districts of Guangdong and Fujian provinces, the Hakkas were known for their hardiness and frugality. Many worked as labourers and farmers and provided the bulk of the labour in the tin mines in Billiton and the tobacco plantations in the East Coast of Sumatra. In West Borneo they were engaged mainly in cash crop planting and market gardening. Many Hakka merchants succeeded in carving out a niche in the commercial world through adroit use of their networks not only within Indonesia but also across British Malaya and China. Thio Thiau Siat, also known as Zhang Bi Shi, one of the foremost Chinese businessmen in Indonesia in the early twentieth century, began his commercial apprenticeship in Batavia as a Hakka immigrant. After building up a successful business in Chinese herbal medicine in Java, he expanded his business to the East Coast of Sumatra, Aceh and British Malaya, with interests in revenue farming, army contract, shipping, trading, banking and tin mining. Eventually he became the foremost “Overseas Chinese” investor in China. Tjong A Fie and his brother, both leading Hakka businessmen in Sumatra, also had substantial business interests in Indonesia and significant investment projects in China.

The Cantonese, the third largest group, were dispersed over various parts of the archipelago. In Java and Madura they were mainly found in urban centres, though a significant number lived outside the towns in Malang and Besuki residencies. They were the largest Chinese group in Medan (37%) and had a substantial presence in the southern and eastern parts of Borneo (32%), Aceh (27%) and Celebes (29%). About a fifth of the Chinese population in South and West Sumatra and about a quarter in the eastern parts of the Outer Islands were Cantonese. Compared with the Hokkiens and the Hakkas, the Cantonese had a much lower proportion of locally born population (33.5%) and a much lower sex ratio of 392 females to 1,000 males compared to 794 females for the Hokkiens and 607 females for the Hakkas. This shows that the Cantonese were still a predominantly immigrant group. The Cantonese were conspicuous in skill-based industries, such as carpentry and iron foundry, which accounted for 42 per cent of all gainfully employed Cantonese in Indonesia.

The Teochius lived mainly in a circle of islands and regions with Singapore as its centre: Riouw islands, where they constituted about 40 per cent of the Chinese population, the East Coast of Sumatra except Bengkalis (21%), Jambi and Indragiri (39%), and West Borneo (32%). They were the largest Chinese group in Pontianak (55%). Similar to the Cantonese, they were also a predominantly immigrant group, with the local-born constituting only 37.4 per cent of their population and a low sex ratio of 384 females per 1,000 males. Many Teochius were pepper and gambir planters, who maintained close ties with their counterparts in Singapore and Johore. Primary production accounted for 48 per cent of all gainfully employed Teochius in Indonesia.

The four major groups of Chinese shared a common characteristic of having a young age structure. The age group of 0-19 accounted for the majority of their population: 51 per cent of the Hokkiens, 60 per cent of the Hakkas, 79 per cent of the Cantonese, and 65 per cent of the Teochius. In contrast, the age group of 50 years and above was remarkably small: 11 per cent of the Hokkiens, 8 per cent of the Hakkas, 2 per cent of the Cantonese, and 7 per cent of the Teochius. This meant that the Chinese in Indonesia as a whole were a young population.

A significant number of Chinese, especially in Batavia and Cheribon, were classified in the 1930 Census as “unknown” (*onbekend*) with respect to their places of origin. It is apparent that many peranakans had lost their own language and any knowledge of their origins in China after several generations of settlement in Indonesia. In the Tangerang district of Jakarta, there is today a community of peranakans called *Cina benteng*, who have lived in Indonesia for so many generations that they mix very well with the indigenous residents such as the Betawi and the Sundanese (Santosa, 2012). The “onbekend” in the *Volkstelling 1930* may well have included some members of this group. This again demonstrates the different shades in the spectrum of peranakans and the shifting identity of “Chineseness” as it evolved over time in the Indonesian sociocultural milieu.

Literacy and Education

The Chinese of Indonesia showed a high illiteracy rate of 71 per cent in 1930, especially among the females (87.5%) as against the males (60.4%). The illiteracy rate was highest in Sumatra (77.5%), where there was a very large Chinese labour population. The Chinese in British Malaya also fared badly in literacy, as 69 per cent of the Chinese were illiterate in 1930, 58 per cent for males and 90 per cent for females (Vlieland, 1932).

The low literacy rate may be attributed to a number of factors. An important one is that a substantial proportion of the Chinese immigrant population was of rural and working class origin with little or no educational background. Another is that, after generations of permanent settlement, many peranakans had lost any knowledge of the Chinese language or dialect. Although they spoke bazaar Malay, they might not be well conversant with the written language. The Chinese literacy rate of 29 per cent most probably included those literate in either one or both languages. Deducting the number who were literate only in Malay, the proportion

of people literate in the Chinese language would be much smaller.

High illiteracy among the Chinese was partly the result of official omission in the provision of education for the Chinese up to the early years of the twentieth century. Before 1908 there were European primary schools (*Europeesche Lagere Scholen*) and European secondary schools (*Hogere Burger Scholen*) for the European and Indo-European population and Holland-Indigenous schools (*Hollandsch-Inlandsch Scholen*) for the indigenous population, but no government-sponsored schools were ever provided for the Chinese community (Naga, 2007).

In the absence of official support, the Chinese community made their own efforts to provide education for their children. There were private schools and community schools (*Ghi Oh* 义学) maintained by public support to provide elementary education for children. The Chinese Council of Batavia maintained a school called Bin Cheng School in Batavia. In 1899 there were 217 Chinese schools in Java and Madura and 152 Chinese schools in the Outer Islands (Adam, 1995). These schools were, however, not much different from the old-fashioned private schools in China, where the pupils learned only elementary classics by rote and dialects were used as the media of instruction.

The formation of the Tiong Hoa Hwe Koan (THHK or 中华会馆) of Batavia in 1900 was a historic event for the Chinese community of Indonesia. Its aim was to unite the entire Chinese community for the purpose of disseminating Confucian teachings, reforming the existing Chinese customs, and promoting Chinese education. In 1901, the first Tiong Hoa School (中华学堂) was established in Batavia, with its curriculum based on that used by modern Chinese schools in Japan and with Mandarin as the medium of instruction. Its first principal, Louw Koei Hong, was recommended by Dr. Lim Boon Keng, a Straits Chinese born in Malacca and residing in Singapore. Dr. Lim was the leader of a Confucian movement in British Malaya and an ardent advocate for the use of Mandarin among the Chinese. The education initiatives of the THHK received a significant boost with the visit of Kang You Wei, leader of the reformist movement in China, in 1903. Kang You Wei's support for the Tiong Hoa School raised the profile of the THHK among the Chinese community and encouraged the Chinese in other urban centres to emulate the efforts of the THHK of Batavia.

The Tiong Hoa School of Batavia was the first modern Chinese school established by the Chinese in Southeast Asia, three years ahead of the Tiong Hoa Primary School that was established in Penang as the first modern Chinese school in British Malaya. It was a co-educational school from the very beginning. Besides teaching mathematics, geography, general knowledge, letter writing and sports, the curriculum was special in its emphasis on the use of Mandarin and the teaching of English. The THHK leaders recognized the value of the English language in the commercial world. In 1905, the English teaching programme was consolidated when the school merged with the Yale Institute of Batavia that was established by Lee Teng Hwee, a Yale University graduate. In 1923, Dutch language was introduced as a subject, and a secondary school division was formed. Some of its graduates went on for further studies at the University of Hong Kong, Yenching University, and other universities in China,

Europe and the United States. Some of them returned to Indonesia to become the backbone of the Chinese education system or professionals in other walks of life. The Tiong Hoa School of Batavia was to acquire a reputation as one of the best Chinese schools in Southeast Asia (*Pahoa Centennial*, 2001).

The THHK of Batavia unleashed what P.H. Fromberg and Henri Borel described as the “Chinese Movement” (*Chineesche beweging*) in Indonesia (Fromberg, 1911; Borel, 1913). Shortly after the formation of the THHK of Batavia, similar associations bearing the same name mushroomed in Java and the Outer Islands, primarily for the advancement of education of the Chinese community. By 1914, about 32 additional Chinese associations had been established in Semarang, Surabaya, Malang, Bandung and other towns, either independent associations or as affiliates of the THHK of Batavia (Nio, 1940). By 1914, no less than 86 modern Chinese schools had been established in various urban centres in Indonesia. Most of the schools were known as Tiong Hoa School, testifying to the leadership of THHK in the education campaign. These schools eventually replaced the old-style private or community schools. According to a survey by the Holland-Indigenous Education Commission, there were 45,000 students in the Chinese schools in 1928 (*Volkstelling 1930*). By 1940, there were altogether 465 Chinese schools with 52,995 students in Indonesia (see Yayasan Pancaran Hidup, 2001 and 2011). These Chinese schools were supported and financed by the Chinese community, without the benefit of any subsidy from the government.

The Chinese schools entered into a difficult phase with the onset of the Great Depression in the early 1930s. Many Chinese schools, especially those in the smaller towns, struggled to maintain their existing classes. The local Chinese attempted to tide over the hard times by garnering community support through various ways and means, such as holding *pasar malam* (night market), fancy fairs, or levying a percentage of the Chinese traders’ income from the sale of native produce. The Chinese schools were also sustained by large numbers of Chinese migrants to Indonesia in the 1920s. Many Chinese schools were established by the new immigrants, especially in the Outer Islands. These Chinese schools operating outside the jurisdiction of the THHK became an additional anchor for Chinese education. Despite the inadequacies of an education system without official support, the Chinese schools succeeded in providing basic education to large numbers of Chinese students over several decades, contributing significantly to the literacy of the Chinese population. For the peranakan Chinese community, the Chinese education system enabled them to reclaim their language and cultural heritage and to rediscover their ancestral roots.

Language and education was a contested ground in colonial societies, including Dutch Indonesia. The colonial government was surprised by the speed and momentum with which the “Chinese movement” spread all over Indonesia. In particular, the support rendered by the Qing Government of China, such as setting up a special school in Nanjing for graduates of the Chinese schools in Indonesia and sending high officials to survey these schools, became a matter of consternation for the colonial officials. The THHK of Batavia requested the

government to provide Dutch language teachers to the Tiong Hoa schools with the cost to be borne by the government. After weighing various alternatives, the government decided to set up Holland-Chinese schools (*Hollandsch-Chineesche Scholen*) with Dutch as the medium of instruction, specifically for the Chinese population. The first of such schools was established in Batavia in 1908. Subsequently, privately sponsored Holland-Chinese schools subsidized by the government were also established. In 1931, there were 30,000 students in these Dutch-language schools. In the meantime, the Holland-Indigenous schools were opened to Chinese pupils. In 1929-1930, there were 8,000 Chinese students in these schools (*Volkstelling 1930*). The Holland-Chinese schools and the Holland-Indigenous schools provided additional tracks for the education needs of the Chinese community.

The Holland-Chinese schools enabled their graduates to enter Dutch-language secondary schools, vocational schools, and universities in Amsterdam and Leiden. Most well-to-do Chinese families preferred to send their children to these schools in view of the more promising higher education and employment prospects. The 1930 Census recorded 40,095 Chinese literate in the Dutch language. Although they represented only 11.6 per cent of all literate Chinese, they were the privileged elite in the Chinese community, constituting the core of prestigious professions such as lawyers and doctors and an important part of the Chinese leadership in Dutch Indonesia.

Socio-economic Characteristics

Economic Activities

The *Volkstelling 1930* shows that 469,935 Chinese or about 39 per cent of the Chinese population were gainfully employed. The immigrants accounted for more than two-thirds of the number although they represented only a little more than one-third of the Chinese population. The employment rate of Chinese immigrants was 73.3 per cent compared with 20.5 per cent for locally born Chinese. This difference was due mainly to the fact that the immigrants were mostly male adults and single, while the locally born Chinese included a large number of females and children. In fact, women constituted only 6.2 per cent of all gainfully employed Chinese.

The employment structure of the Chinese in 1930 was heavily dominated by commerce, primary production and industry, which accounted for 87.4 per cent of all gainfully employed Chinese. Although transportation, the professions, government service and various other sectors added to the occupational diversity of the Chinese, they were of much lesser consequence (Figure 3).

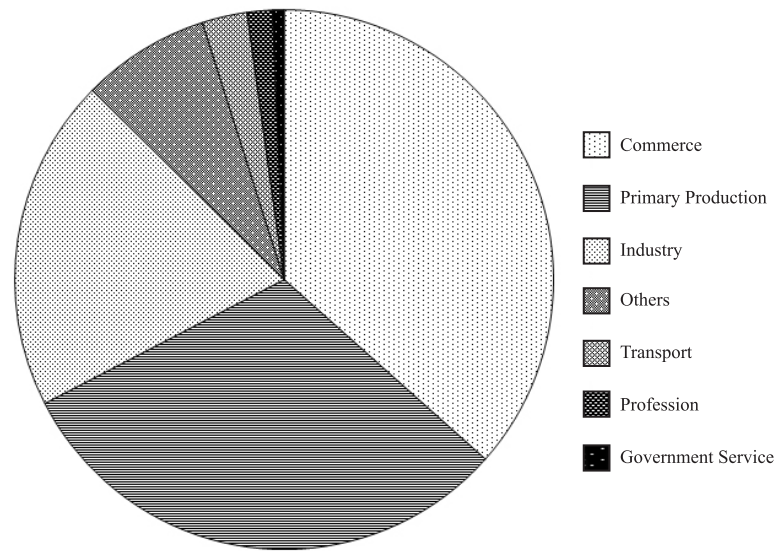


Figure 3. Chinese Occupation Groups in Dutch Indonesia, 1930

Commerce was the most important economic activity of the Chinese, accounting for 36.6 per cent of all gainfully employed Chinese in 1930. In Java and Madura, 57.7 per cent were so engaged. Commerce involved an array of business people ranging from the major trading merchants to street hawkers. The major trading merchants engaged in the wholesale imports of rice and China products and exports of native produce such as sugar, rubber, copra, pepper, tobacco and cotton. The middlemen traders specialized in the collection of native produce from indigenous peasants and the distribution of imported or manufactured goods to the consumers. They controlled the bulk of the intermediary trade in the archipelago (Vleming, 1926). The commission agents were traders who received a 2 per cent commission for orders from other traders for the import or export of native produce. The majority of those in the trading category were employed in retail trade, which included shops and stalls selling food and drinks, tobacco, textiles, garments, ceramics, salt, edible oil, herbal medicine, furniture, household articles, and other necessities. Pawnshops, money-lending, banking and insurance were also included in this category. Drum-rattling peddlers selling their miscellaneous wares (*dagang kelontong*) and hawkers of junk and rags (*tukang loa*) occupied the lowest rung of this trading hierarchy.

Chinese middlemen were the indispensable links between the indigenous peasantry on the one hand and the urban centres and world market on the other hand. Providing conduits for the sale of native products within and outside the domestic market, the Chinese middlemen contributed to the growth of the native peasant economy. The development of pig farming in Bali and Lombok, for example, would not be possible without the extensive Chinese middlemen networks. From the 1860s a thriving pig export business was built up with Chinese middlemen controlling the exports to major urban centres in Indonesia and to Singapore. A scheduled Chinese shipping service based in Singapore operated specially for the export of pigs

and native produce from Bali to Singapore, which imported 118,000 pigs from Bali in 1930 (Cator, 1936; Tai, 2013). In the rubber industry, Chinese middlemen not only collected native smallholding rubber for export to the world market but also actively encouraged the natives to plant rubber with the provision of credits, seeds and know-how. In West Borneo, for example, Chinese traders entered into contracts with the Dayak tribes to establish rubber smallholdings by making available rubber seeds and seedlings (杨建成/Yang Jiancheng, 1985). The Chinese traders contributed significantly to the commercialization of native agriculture, uplifting of the standards of living of the peasantry, and the socio-economic transformation of the Indonesian society.

Next to commerce as a source of employment was primary production, which absorbed 30.8 per cent of the total gainfully employed Chinese population. Many Chinese were engaged in “native agriculture”, which was the cultivation of rice, pepper, gambier, sugar, rubber, coconuts and tobacco in smallholdings, especially in West Borneo, West Java, Riouw Islands, Bangka, Billiton, and other regions. They also engaged in market gardening and the growing of fruits and flowers. Some worked as cattle, pig and poultry breeders, fishermen, lumbermen, forest product collectors, and salt makers. In the East Coast of Sumatra, over 5,000 Chinese, mostly Hokkiens, were engaged in fishery, with Bagan Si Api Api as a world-renowned fishing base. Tin mining on Bangka and Billiton islands provided employment for substantial numbers of Hakkas. Primary production was especially important in Sumatra in which half of the gainfully employed Chinese was found. In contrast, this sector accounted for only 23 per cent of the gainfully employed Chinese in other parts of the Outer Islands and a mere 9 per cent in Java and Madura.

A fifth of the gainfully employed Chinese worked in the sector known as Industry. This sector included the processing of raw materials, light manufacturing or craft-based industries operating on a small or medium scale. The Chinese operated 727 batik factories in Java in 1931. They hired indigenous wage labour to produce native garments, shawls and sarongs with colour patterns printed on white cotton cloth. Chinese businessmen also controlled a substantial part of the native batik industry through credit arrangements and contract-out works (Cator, 1936). Craft-based workshops involved large numbers of Chinese artisans, especially the Cantonese, such as the blacksmiths, goldsmiths, silversmiths, tinsmiths, carpenters, builders, tailors, furniture makers, and cobblers. Other light industries covered food and drinks, soy sauce, bricks and tiles, ceramics and pottery, foundries, textiles and garments, fireworks, bicycle and carriage assembling, and printing presses (*Volkstelling 1930*; Vleming, 1926). Relatively large-scale establishments were found in the rice milling, sugar refinery, and sawmilling sectors. By virtue of their control of the rice import trade and their abundant sources of supplies from the indigenous peasantry and Chinese private estates, the Chinese were able to control the rice milling industry of Indonesia. In sugar refining, the Kian Guan refineries owned by the Oei Tiong Ham family were modern industrial enterprises employing European expertise and technology. Bengkalis was an important centre of the saw milling industry, which was largely

controlled by Chinese businessmen in Singapore. Other industries involving the processing of agricultural raw materials included cassava factories, edible oil factories, cigar and cigarette makers, coffee mills, leather factories, cotton works, and arak distilleries.

The transport industry was relatively minor as a source of employment for the Chinese, involving only 2.7 per cent of the gainfully employed in 1930. This sector included all manners of transport by land and water, post, telegraph and telegram services, and hospitality services along transport arteries such as hotels and guesthouses. Chinese businessmen played a significant role in the transport industry of Batavia and its environs. There were over 20 Chinese land transport companies in the city, mostly operated by the Hakkas, providing both passenger and freight transport services. The Kian Guan group of Semarang operated an ocean steamship service to Singapore and China ports, primarily for the export of sugar and other native produce. This service was consolidated with the formation of the Hiap Eng Moh Steamship Company based in Singapore in 1912, but it was taken over by the Netherlands Trading Society in 1930. An earlier steamship enterprise owned by Thio Thiau Siat provided scheduled services between Penang, Aceh and Padang and attempts were made for an ocean transport service linking Sumatra and China ports. By the late 1930s only a few small Chinese steamship companies, including Ek Loon Hin Steamship Company based in Banjarmasin and Tong Ek Steamship Company based in Pontianak, survived. Chinese business interests in inland river transport, however, remained strong. Chinese-owned steamboats regularly plied the Kapuas River and other rivers in West Borneo, providing the vital economic links between Chinese merchants in the port towns and the Dayak tribes in the interiors. Similarly, Chinese businessmen controlled the steamboat transport services in major rivers in the East Coast of Sumatra, primarily to serve their own trading purposes (杨建成/Yang Jiancheng, 1985; Tai, 2004).

In banking and finance, the Chinese presence was represented by the Oei Tiong Ham Bank owned by the Oei Tiong Ham family, the Deli Bank founded by Tjong A Fie and Thio Thiau Siat, the Be Biau Tjwan Bank owned by the Be family of Surabaya, the Batavia Bank founded by Tjong A Fie and Khouw Kim An, and the Fah Tong Chinese Bank in Pontianak. A few Chinese non-financial trading companies were also engaged in banking and finance business. In Java, many Hokchia merchants specialized in providing loans to the natives, in small amounts not exceeding 50 guilders and at high interest rates. For the remittance of money to China, there were about 160 Chinese remittance firms in various urban centres to serve the needs of the Chinese immigrant population (杨建成/Yang Jiancheng, 1984). Pawnshops, which provided loans against pledges of pawned articles, were also present in urban centres in Java and the Outer Islands.

The professions, including lawyers, doctors, teachers, journalists, writers and artists, accounted for 1.5 per cent of the gainfully employed Chinese population. About 3,000 Chinese worked in the government, but accounting for a mere 0.7 per cent of the gainfully employed Chinese. There was a numerically small but economically significant group of Chinese rentiers who depended on rents collected from their landed properties or private estates.

Social Stratification

As in other Southeast Asian territories, the Chinese community in Dutch Indonesia was a socially stratified society. The social stratification was formed in the course of evolution of the Chinese community in Indonesia, through a process of differentiation at different stages of their adaptation to the local environment. The early immigrants had better chances of rising to the upper echelon of the social hierarchy as there were more opportunities to co-operate with the native rulers or Dutch colonial officials. Access to the authorities often opened up channels of trading or rent-seeking opportunities. The Chinese officer system, in particular, enabled the Chinese officers to acquire rights of farming of opium, gambling and other revenues. This was one of the most important sources of capital accumulation for leading Chinese businessmen up to the end of the nineteenth century. With this initial success from participation in the colonial taxation system, these Chinese elites then diversified into other lines of business.

The lease and sale of land under the Dutch East India Company and especially during the administration of Governor-General Daendels (1808-1811) enabled Chinese businessmen to acquire substantial amounts of private landed property. Some of these estates were very extensive and contained a considerable number of indigenous peasants. The Chinese leaseholders or landowners either collected rents from the native peasants or otherwise introduced new cash crops for them to cultivate. Properties located in urban centres or their environs appreciated in value over time to augment the fortunes of major Chinese landowners. Despite the government's attempt to repurchase these lands, 488,945 hectares in Java still remained in Chinese hands by 1935 (Cator, 1936). The wealthiest Chinese families in major urban centres in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were typically families of Chinese officers, revenue farmers and landowners. Nearly all of them were *peranakan* families and perched at the top of the Chinese social hierarchy.

The preeminent position of rich *peranakans* came under pressure from Chinese immigrant businessmen by the beginning of the twentieth century. The elimination of the revenue farming system and the subsequent abolition of the Chinese officer system except in Batavia removed two major props of power and wealth for the traditional rich Chinese families. Chinese immigrant businessmen came to the fore in the commercial world with their trading networks covering China, Hong Kong and other territories in Southeast Asia. In particular, their advantage in China trade enabled them to establish a solid position in the imports and distribution of China-made products, which were crucial for retail sales to the Chinese and indigenous population. Thio Thiau Siat, for example, became one of the top Chinese businessmen in Southeast Asia, on a par with Oei Tiong Ham of Semarang and Loke Yew of British Malaya. The fact that Chinese immigrant businessmen were in control of the Chinese Chamber of Commerce of Batavia was a testimony to their economic ascendancy.

Chinese businessmen were present in the whole spectrum of trade, industries and services. They may be classified into big, medium-sized and small businessmen according to their

capital or assets. According to unofficial estimates made by Japanese investigators in the late 1930s, there were about 60 Chinese businessmen in the top bracket with assets not less than one million guilders in the major towns of Java and the Outer Island.⁴ There were about 140 Chinese businessmen with assets under one million guilders but not less than 500,000 guilders, over 3,300 Chinese businessmen with assets under 500,000 guilders but not less than 50,000 guilders, and about 28,000 Chinese businessmen with assets under 50,000 guilders but not less than 10,000 guilders (杨建成/Yang Jiancheng, 1983, 1984). The small businessmen included numerous small traders, shopkeepers and peddlers.

The Chinese community in Indonesia, particularly in Java and Madura and to a large extent in the Outer Islands, was essentially a commercial society. Class division within the community was not clear-cut. The big businessmen and the small traders operated in mutual dependence within closely knit communal and economic networks. The artisans included owners of small workshops, wage workers, self-employed craftsmen, apprentices, or those working in partnership. In the absence of accurate statistics, it is impossible to determine the class status of members of this group. Similarly, the Chinese employed in the agriculture sector covered a great range of people of different class status. The cash crop planters in West Borneo included plantation owners, sharecroppers, smallholders or tenants. Moreover, there was still the possibility of upward social mobility to enable members of the lower classes to ascend the social ladder through their own effort and ingenuity.

The working class as wage labourers in modern capitalist enterprises was an important but numerically dwindling component of the Chinese community. The Chinese working class was employed mainly in European-owned tin mines on Bangka and Billiton islands and in European-owned plantations in the East Coast of Sumatra. In 1930, there were about 76,000 Chinese workers including 62,000 indentured labourers in this sector. The Great Depression drastically reduced the number to 22,000 by 1935 (Cator, 1936). The ascendance of European capital and mechanization of tin mining led to the reduction of Chinese labour force. The number of Chinese coolies in Bangka and Billiton declined from about 40,000 in 1920 to about 8,000 in 1933. In the East Coast of Sumatra, with the increasing employment of Javanese instead of Chinese labour, the latter fell in number from about 22,400 in 1920 to 12,900 in 1933. Chinese workers were also employed in many small or medium-sized Chinese enterprises, although their numbers cannot be ascertained. It is estimated that at least 40,000 to 50,000 sojourning Chinese workers departed from Indonesia during the Great Depression (*Volkstelling 1930*). While the Chinese working class in Indonesia was drastically shrinking in the 1930s, a different situation was seen in British Malaya where a large Chinese working class remained because of the strong presence of Chinese capital in the rubber planting, tin mining and secondary industries (Tai, 2013).

Although the professions represented only 1.5 per cent of the gainfully employed Chinese population, this was a very important group. The educated elites from the Dutch and the Chinese education streams were politically conscious and intellectually sensitive. They provided the

forerunners of new ideas, pioneers of reforms, and leaders of social and political movements. One of their permanent contributions to Indonesia was the creation of a unique Chinese-Malay literature and the Chinese-Malay press. From around 1870 to 1942, the *peranakan* intellectuals produced a total of 3,005 literary works in the Malay language, including 1,398 novels and 992 translated works. Coming into being 40 years before the appearance of the first native Indonesian novel, these literary works influenced the growth of modern Indonesian literature (Salmon, 1981; Kwee, 1977). The Malay newspapers owned and operated by Chinese *peranakans*, including *Sin Po*, *Warta Pertiagaan* and *Keng Po* in Batavia, *Pewarta Soerabaja* in Surabaya, and *Mata Hari* in Semarang, constituted an important part of modern Indonesian journalism. Such creative intellectual production contributed not only to the cultural enrichment of the Chinese community but also to the rise of modern Indonesian consciousness (Adam, 1995).

Conclusion

The Chinese in Dutch Indonesia and in British Malaya were colonial subjects who settled down in different colonial environments and managed to grow and flourish. In terms of their economic position, James Puthuchear's description (1960) of the Malayan economy applies equally to the Dutch Indonesian economy, namely, that the Europeans controlled the commanding heights of the economy, the Chinese occupied an intermediate position, while the indigenous population remained at the base. What differentiated the Chinese in colonial Indonesia from the Chinese in British Malaya was their embeddedness as a small ethnic minority in a world of indigenous people, and the extent of their acculturation as shown in the large Chinese *peranakan* population and a vibrant Chinese-Malay culture. In their continuous interaction with the environment, they were constantly moulding and remoulding themselves as part of the process of growth of modern Indonesia.

Notes

- 1 One *mu* is equal to 666.7 square metres or 0.0667 hectares.
- 2 The official formalities required that a female slave should be manumitted with the payment of a sum of money and adopted by someone before she could marry a Chinese man.
- 3 Rixdollar (*Rijksdaalder*) was a silver coinage currency used in Europe and in Dutch colonies.
- 4 The group of wealthy Chinese with assets of one million guilders or more included Khauw Kim An in Batavia, Oei Tjong Hauw (Oei Tiong Ham's son), Liem Siong-lieng, Thio Thiam-tjong, Liem Tiauw-hoen, The Tjai Yan, Sih Tiauw Hien and Sih Tiauw Yan in Semarang, Kwee Bok Ai and Kwee Tjin Gwan in Solo, Han Ing Hwie, Han Sing Kien, Tjoa Tjwan Bo, Tjoa Sie Lian, Tjoa Sie Liem, The Ing Bian, Njoo Sek Liang, Kho Sien Tjing, Liem Seng Tee, Yauw Boen Lien and Tsan Tak Gwan in Surabaya, Shek Khing Kie. Goei Tjing Sioe and Lim Kok Kai in Jogjakarta, Oei Bing Boen and his brother Oei Bing Tjiang in Djombang, Tan Tjie Siang in Madiun, Tjoe Gie Kwie in Kediri, The Mau Tjoan in Malang, Han Tio

Hien and Han Tiauw Ling in Pasuruan, Tan Kong Sing in Probolinggo, Tan Fang-hoeij and Tan Hong-kie in Buitenzorg, Tjioe Tien-tjong and Wie Boyang in Ambarawa, Thing Tjan, Oei Soang Goan, Tjoa Sek Tie, Lie Tjeng Sioe, Thoeng Tiang Pie and Oei Sioe Tjoan in Makassar, On Kin Hoat in Medan, and Kwee Liang Tiap and his brothers in Pontianak.

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