

## The 1740 massacre of Chinese in Java: Curtain raiser for the Dutch plantation economy

A.R.T. Kemasang

To cite this article: A.R.T. Kemasang (1982) The 1740 massacre of Chinese in Java: Curtain raiser for the Dutch plantation economy, *Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars*, 14:1, 61-71, DOI: [10.1080/14672715.1982.10412638](https://doi.org/10.1080/14672715.1982.10412638)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/14672715.1982.10412638>



Published online: 05 Jul 2019.



Submit your article to this journal [↗](#)



Article views: 887



View related articles [↗](#)

# The 1740 Massacre of Chinese in Java: Curtain Raiser for the Dutch Plantation Economy

A.R.T. Kemasang

## Pre-colonial Period

History suggests that the pre-colonial Indonesian ruling class, particularly that of Java, knew how to take care of its well-being vis-à-vis the potential competition of a “bourgeoisie” rather better than its feudal counterparts in Europe. The rulers themselves, to begin with, took up trading.<sup>1</sup> They also deliberately prevented other social classes from this activity. Historians continually quote one Javanese prince’s remark that “if the natives had more than the necessities of life, they would use the surplus [gained from trading] to do some harm to their rulers”.<sup>2</sup>

It was to prevent the rise of an indigenous bourgeoisie that the Indonesian trading aristocrats generally preferred to use overseas Chinese, who were manipulable. Unlike the other two equally long established foreign groups (the Arabs and Indians), the Chinese had nothing in the way of ideology or religion for proselytising the indigenous ruling circles. Consequently, in Indonesia the Chinese never became associated with the representatives of state power but remained in the business realm. As they in effect had existed outside the protection of the local institutionalized customs and obligations, they had always been “marginal” in all other terms; hence, suitable to be made use of and discarded at will with little chance of repercussions dangerous to the ruling classes’ interests. In pre-colonial Indonesia, therefore, many key posts, such as that of the *shahbandar* (harbor master), were traditionally farmed out to Chinese.<sup>3</sup>

But even in the sole realm of trading, the Chinese did not acquire any influence beyond that tolerated by the local rulers. In order to preempt their becoming economically too powerful, the traditional methods of Chinese containment included the custom that when a Chinese died all his worldly possessions went to his local (i.e. indigenous) sire. Hence, although some Chinese apparently occupied high posts: “. . . the fact that the Chinese were afraid that upon their death their goods would revert to the king shows how insecure their social position was.”<sup>4</sup>

Should this for any reason have proved insufficient, the ruling class would resort to the more direct use of might. In the 1620s, when the Chinese traders of Banten—forced by the Dutch—began moving shop to the emergent Dutch trading center Batavia (now Jakarta), the Bantenese ruler not only confiscated the properties of the Chinese but also decreed capital punishment against their owners. One Sim Suan, said in most sources to be extremely rich and hence “influential”, was simply and unceremoniously:

*. . . taken prisoner by the authorities in Bantam and put in irons. His house, in which the United Company was storing a large parcel of goods, was seized, and his wife and children were also deprived of their liberty. To be sure, he was released again after a couple of months, but from that time on his position was very precarious.*<sup>5</sup>

Anakoda (skipper) Wating, a trader in rice and proprietor of *arak* (rum) distilling enterprises (who became a witness at the signing of the 1614 contract between the Dutch East India Company [hereafter VOC] and the ruler of Jakarta) fared even worse. For trading with the Dutch, Wating was executed by the Bantenese.<sup>6</sup> That in the event all this failed to prevent the exodus of the Chinese to Batavia is, of course, beside the point.

All the same, as in other pre-capitalist societies, in Indonesia at the time there was no conscious or concerted effort to keep the Chinese alienated. Resident Chinese were free to adopt the Indonesian cultural attributes or marry into the local indigenous society and become “Indonesian”. Once they did this, the former Chinese were

---

## Key to Citations

BTLV = *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land-en Volkenkunde*

TNI = *Tijdschrift voor Neerland's Indie*

VBGKW = *Verhandelingen van het Bataviaasch Genootschap van Kunsten en Wetenschappen*

VKITLV = *Verhandelingen van het Koninklijk Instituut van Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde*

1) J.C. van Van Leur, *Indonesian Trade and Society*, The Hague 1967: 66 *et passim*.

2) After Clive Day, *The Policy and Administration of the Dutch in Java*, London 1904 (facs. reprint 1972): 123fn.2

3) See i.a. F. De Haan, *Priangan: de Preanger Regentschappen onder het Nederlandsch Bestuurtot 1811*, Batavia 1912: iii/436; Kristof Glamann, *Dutch-Asiatic Trade 1620-1740*, Copenhagen 1958: 75; M.A.P. Meilink-Roelofs, *Asian Trade and European Influence in the Indonesian Archipelago between 1500 and about 1630*, The Hague 1962: 286; G.J. Resink, *Indonesia' History between the Myths*, the Hague 1968: 215; B. Schrieke, *Indonesian Sociological Studies*, the Hague 1966: i/28; also, for markets, Soemarsaid Moertono, *State and Statecraft in Old Java: a Study of the Later Mataram Period: 16th to 18th Century*, Ithaca N.Y. 1968: 90.

---

4) Meilink-Roelofs 1962: 247.

5) Meilink-Roelofs 1962: 251.

6) See i.a. J.K.J. De Jonge, *De Opkomst van nederlandsch Gezag over Java*, Amsterdam-The Hague 1869: iv/270; B. Hoetink, “So Big Kong: het Eerste Hoofdder Chineezzen to Batavia (1619-1639)”, BTLV The Hague 1917: 1xxii/348.

**The comprador tradition of the Chinese in the Indonesian economy suited the Dutch well, precisely because they were not part of the local (rural) institutions. The Chinese were highly mobile as well as vulnerable: a quality most suitable for compradorship in a society whose most dominant economic factor (the VOC) was promoting monopoly. As the nature of trading in this period (due to the fact that its most important commodity, spices, grew "wild") was accumulative/distributive, only the comprador type of service was in demand.**

treated by the local rulers in no way different from the latter's indigenous subjects. In other words, the Chinese were discriminated against only as long as they preferred to maintain their "Chinese" attributes and ways which distinguished them from the indigenes. This explains the widespread integration of the Chinese into the indigenous population, which took place at the highest stratum of the local society as well as the lowest. Examples of the former include *Puteri* (Princess) Ong Tien of the Court of Ceribon (West Java) and *Raden* (Prince) Patah, founder-ruler of Java's first Muslim kingdom Demak.<sup>7</sup> Like the graves of eminent indigenes, the resting places of these known Chinese to date are still considered "*kramat*" (sacred) according to the popular animism and visited by pilgrims.

### Colonial Spice Trading Era

The comprador tradition of the Chinese in the Indonesian economy suited the Dutch well, precisely because they were not part of the local (rural) institutions. The Chinese were highly mobile as well as vulnerable: a quality most suitable for compradorship in a society whose most dominant economic factor (the VOC) was promoting monopoly. As the nature of trading in this period (due to the fact that its most important commodity, spices, grew "wild") was accumulative/distributive, only the comprador type of service was in demand. This helps explain why Dutch policymakers virtually outdid each other in praising the "diligence," "law-abidingness," and other laudable qualities of the Chinese. The most famous Governor General of this period, Jan Coen, similarly making a virtue out of necessity, is continually quoted as having proclaimed that there were no other people on earth better than the Chinese and that there were never enough of them for the Dutch colony.

The Dutch strategy in meeting the demand for Chinese labor was two-sided. In areas where Chinese were established, the basic strategy from the early days of the

VOC was to buy into the Chinese network.<sup>8</sup> So deceptive was this strategy that, in relation to sugar manufacturing, even scholars of today are duped into accepting at face value the colonial claim that the Chinese "dominated" this industry at least until the 19th century. A closer look reveals that the Dutch method of advancing capital to Chinese manufacturers makes complete nonsense of such a claim. To begin with, before the demand for sugar was created by the Dutch, the amount produced by the resident Chinese was so small that when the VOC began to purchase sugar on a regular basis it at first had to buy from other countries.<sup>9</sup> Then, for quite some time, whatever was available from Indonesia still had to be supplemented with sugar bought from China, Siam, Taiwan and other places.<sup>10</sup> It was only after the Dutch capital injection that the Java sugar production became commercially significant.<sup>11</sup>

From the 1700s, sugar as a commercial undertaking was well on its way to becoming a decidedly Dutch preserve. It was a "putting out" industry wherein the Dutch supplied the capital and land whilst the Chinese supplied the labor. Even in this limited role some Chinese doubtless managed to invest, but their position (as *client-capitalists*) was definitely subservient to that of the Dutch financiers who, in addition to controlling the capital in quantities that mattered, had the sole exercise over the most effective tools of coercion. Hence, the sugar industry was commercially significant only in areas under the direct rule of the VOC. Until 1740, the industry was concentrated particularly in Batavia's environs, although West Java's soil as a whole was the least suitable for sugar cane growing.<sup>12</sup>

In this arrangement the Dutch, both gamekeeper and poacher, were able to rip off the Chinese in multifarious ways. The VOC for example "maintained a monopoly of the sugar trade that enabled it any time to break the prices it paid to the producers". This accounts for the great disparity between the price the VOC paid the Chinese producers and the selling price: in c. 1710 they were 1 1/6 *stuiver* and 13 to 14 *stuivers* respectively. Before being able to produce sugar, the Chinese of course had to rent the land. Here, too, they were evidently preyed upon not only by the corporate VOC but also by its individual servants. In 1752, Governor General Mossel for example sublet the land he rented from an indigenous ruler at 100Rds/year to a Chinese sugar contractor for 1000Rds/year. Finally, the Chinese could only sell their sugar to, or through, the Dutch. The Dutch alone decided the price.<sup>13</sup>

7) See i.a. Thomas Stamford Raffles, *History of Java*, London 1830: ii/125, 127; Donald MacLaine Campbell, *Java: Past and Present*, London 1915: 77-8; Penanggung Djawab Sedjarah Tjirebon dan Staf Keprabonan Lemahwungkuk Tjirebon, *Purawaka Tjaruban Nagari*, Jakarta 1972: 19, 26, 28; H.J. De Graaf, & Th.G. Th. Pigeaud, *De Eerste Moslimse Vorstendommen op Java*, The Hague 1974: 37, 139; also *Tempo* Jakarta 10 Desember 1977: vii(41)/30.

8) See i.a. H.T. Colenbrander, *Jan Pietersz. Coen, Bescheiden omtrent zijn Bedrijf in Indië*, The Hague 1919: i/243 Meilink-Roelofs 1962: 250, 251, 259 W. Ph. Coolhaas, *Jan Pietersz. Coen, Bescheiden omtrent . . .*, The Hague 1953: vii(2)/966.

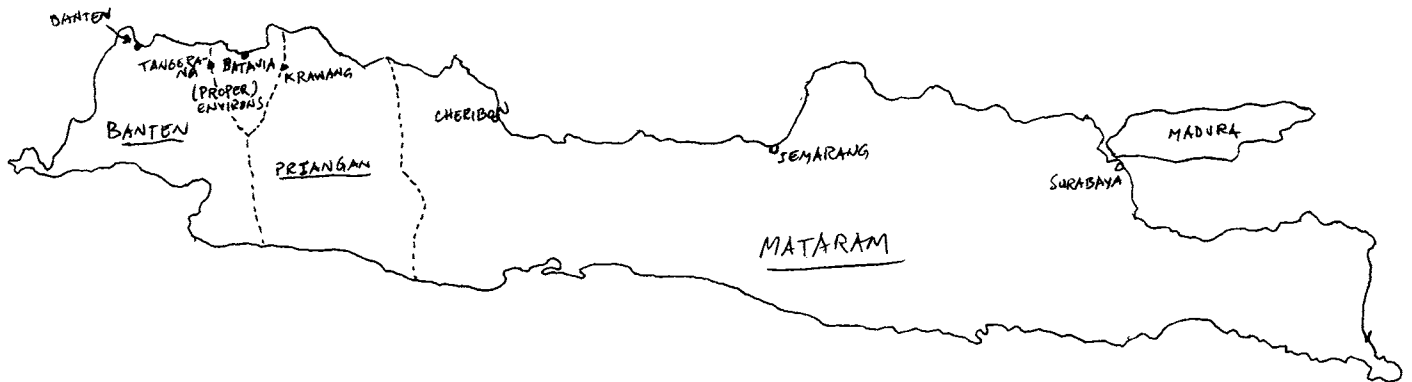
9) See i.a. Tio Poo Tjiang, *De Suikerhandel Van Java*, Amsterdam 1923: 5; E.G.J. Gimbrère, *Eenige Beschouwingen over de Financiering van de Suikerindustrie en den Suikerhandel op Java*, Tilburg 1928: 10, 11.

10) J.C. Prinsen Geerlig, *Handboek ten Dienste van de Suikerriet Cultuur en de Rietsuiker-Fabricage op Java . . .*, Amsterdam 1911: 118.

11) See also Philip Levert, *Inheemsche Arbeid in de Java Suikerindustrie*, Wageningen 1954: 55.

12) See also Tio 1923: 1,2; Gimbrère 1928: 5-6.

13) From i.a. De Jonge 1875: i/56; Day 1904: 70; De Haan 1912: iii/785; Tio 1923: 10; Gimbrère 1928: 12; Molsbergen, E.C. Godée, "De Nederlandshe Oostindische Compagnie in de Achtiende Eeuw", in Stapel (ed.),



Map by author after D.H. Burger, *Sociologisch-Economische Geschiedenis van Indonesia* The Hague 1975: i/160.

In places where the Chinese had not been entrenched, the Dutch simply bludgeoned in, using the Chinese merely as their “semi-servile” laborers. This was the case in Batavia, which the Dutch built on the ruins of Jakarta after they razed it in 1619. Here in acquiring their Chinese, the Dutch used all means fair and foul. Governor General Coen is on record as having forced visiting Chinese traders to settle in Batavia, and sending ships on kidnap missions to the southern coasts of China and many other Southeast Asian emporia for able-bodied Chinese. Beside kidnapping abroad, the Dutch also preyed upon the Chinese who resided in other parts of Java. Although in establishment literature this question is virtually ignored, Batavia’s great demand for Chinese labor subsequently occasioned a brisk trade in Chinese slaves that was known, among other epithets, as the “hog trade”.<sup>14</sup>

### **Eighteenth Century Economic Shift**

As the 18th century dawned, the decline in the spice trade accelerated. This was caused by a combination of factors, including the saturation of the European market

because too many Europeans were involved in the trade and an actual drop in the demand for spices.

On the first point, acute competition between various European powers meant that: “profits from the spice trade dropped, squeezed by . . . increasing costs of defending monopolistic control against rival nations.”<sup>15</sup> On the second, the drop in demand was brought about *inter alia* by the discovery of “winter fodder” for cattle which rendered obsolete the use of spices to season meat. As a commodity, spices were increasingly being replaced by the “three new stimulant drinks, coffee, tea and chocolate”;<sup>16</sup> and by 1720-30 tea consumption in Western Europe became “considerable.”

The technological advances that were changing the pattern of European trade also made themselves felt in Indonesia with a change in the requirement for raw materials. In Java the Dutch were accordingly willing to pay more for tobacco, cotton yarns and indigo; and they turned the most fertile region of West Java (Priangan) into a huge plantation—the better to meet the world demand for these cash crops.<sup>17</sup>

### **The Chinese Become Expendable**

Many of the crops now in demand, not being native, had to be transplanted in Indonesia. Crop transplantation meant the foisting of new socioeconomic conditions which only indigenous labor and resources could sustain. Coffee is a case in point. At every harvest, its transport alone

---

*Geschiedenis van nederlandsch Indië*, Amsterdam 1939: iv 43-4; D.H. Burger, *Sociologisch-Economische Geschiedenis van Indonesia*, Amsterdam-Leiden-Wageningen 1975: i/ 56, 57.

14) From i.a. De Jonge 1869: i/ CXV; 262-3, 280; Hoetink BTLV 1917: 1xxiii/ 351; Colenbrander 1919: i/475, 726, 768, 794; 1920: ii/ 566; 1921: iii/ 147, 306, 517; 1923: v/ 494; 1934: 271, 295, 302, 311, 328; Willem Boten-koe, *Memorable Descriptions of the East Indian Voyage 1618-25*, London (facs. reprint) 1929: 112-3. F. De Haan *OudBatavia*, Batavia 1922: i/74-5, 76; J.L. Vleming, *Het Chineesch Zakenleven in Nederlandsch-Indië*, Weltevreden 1926: 4; N. MacLeod, *De Oost-Indische Compagnie als Zeemogentheid in Azië-Rijswijk* (Z.H.) 1927: i/ 237; Pieter Van Dam, *Beschryvinge van de Oostindische Compagnie*, The Hague 1931: ii(1)/ 684, 684fn.4; W.J. Cator, *The Economic Position of the Chinese in the Netherlands Indies*, Oxford 1936: 10; J.Th. Vermeulen, *De Chineezente Batavia en de Troebelen van 1740*, Leiden 1938: 6-7, 7-9 Eng Die Ong, *Chineezen in Nederlandsch-Indië; Sociographie van een Indonesische Bevolkingsgroep*, Assen 1943: 58; Coolhaas 1952: vii(1)/ 659, 783-4; J.J. Van Klaveren, *The Dutch Colonial System in the East Indies*, Rotterdam 1953: 44; Meilink-Roelofs 1962: 254, 291; Victor Purcell, *The Chinese in Southeast Asia*, London 1966: 297; Ta Chen, *Chinese Migration, with Specific Reference to Labour Conditions*, Taipei 1967: 161½.

---

15) Harry Magdoff, *Imperialism: from the Colonial Age to the Present* New York-London 1978: 102.

16) C.R. Boxer, *The Dutch Seaborne Empire 1600-1800*, London 1973: 223: “The 18th century saw the phenomenal growth of the tea and coffee trades, these stimulants becoming [economically] more important . . . while the relative value of pepper and spices declined still further.” See also 198; J.S. Furnivall, *Netherlands India, a Study of Plural Economy*, Cambridge 1944: esp. 42; Glamann 1958: 13, 14-5, 183; Fernand Braudel, *Capitalism and Material Life 1400-1800* (trans. Miriam Kochan), London 1977: 178, 180; Malcolm Caldwell, *The Wealth of Some Nations*, London 1977: 62.

17) See *Realia, Register oip de Generale Resolutiën van het Kasteel Batavia 1632-1805*, Leiden 1882: i/ 222; 1885: 11/ 1, 134.

required hundreds, even thousands, of draught animals and the use and construction of a complex system of waterways in West Java.<sup>18</sup>

In the case of native or established crops, such as cotton and indigo, the method of production had to be altered drastically to make the yields remunerative. The changes in production, in turn, required the massive recruitment of a rural labor force, which, again, could only be supplied by the indigenous sector of the populace. As the colonial archivist, De Haan, with specific regard to cotton, puts it: “. . . indeed, only by winning the trust of the [indigenous] Regents can as many cotton yarns as possible be obtained”.<sup>19</sup>

All this necessitated the existence of a settled rural labor reserve. And for this the Dutch needed the collaboration of the indigenous (agrarian) ruling class. The need for the indigenes' collaboration became crucial particularly as the VOC, consistent with its monopoly policies, came to rely on forced deliveries.<sup>20</sup> One important reason for this was because only people bound by customs and obligations resulting from landed stakes could be coerced to cultivate little-known crops and be forced to deliver the products at prices fixed by the buyer (i.e. the Dutch). As one Dutch “Commissar” for Native Affairs put it late in the 18th century: “. . . no native could be made to cultivate coffee, unless he possesses significant amounts of rice fields.”<sup>21</sup>

The Chinese could scarcely be blamed for the conditions that had made them mobile as compradors, but in the altered economy of colonial Indonesia, they had become the wrong type of laborers. The Dutch no longer had any structural need for the Chinese. Hence when the VOC decided to cultivate coffee in Java, they distributed young plants to indigenous rulers, not to Chinese contractors as would presumably have been the case earlier. Likewise, it was an indigenous ruler (of Ceribon)—and not a Chinese—who in 1706 was made supervisor of the coffee plantations in Priangan. In indigo, too, the Dutch now made use of the indigenous regents' services. In his letter of November 25 1708, Governor General Van Hoorn mentioned that the cultivation of indigo in Batavia's environs (such as Krawang) had been put under the “reign” of the Javans.<sup>22</sup>

In cotton, the story was the same. One of the first Dutchmen to realize the importance of cotton production in Java (Tack) advised in a letter of November 30, 1685 the use of Javanese in the cultivation and spinning of cotton in Batavia's environs. In 1693, in response to spiralling demand in Europe, Batavia sent a committee comprised of two former followers of Baten's *Pangeran Purbaya* and two Dutch military personnel to urge West Java's regents from Cianjur to Nusakambangan to deliver all available cotton

to Batavia. The reason for the inclusion of the two indigenous dignitaries was for “tact” and also because “only by winning the trust of the Regents” could the products in demand be obtained. This committee was followed by numerous others. As a rule, the composition of their membership was “half white, half brown”.<sup>23</sup> We can say with Van Klaveren, although he was then referring to coffee: “only the moral authority of the [indigenous] regents, could induce the population to start work”.<sup>24</sup> Indeed, even for the occasional 200 bushels of cooking tamarind the Dutch now went to the indigenous princes,<sup>25</sup> and not the supposedly “indispensable” Chinese middlemen.

### Special Ban on Chinese in Priangan

The nature of the altered economy was reflected in the Dutch concept of Priangan, until c. 1920 Java's only plantation. In this region no foreigners, especially Chinese, were allowed to settle. It is true that from time to time certain other non-local indigenes (such as the Central and East Javanese, Balinese, Makasarese, etc.) were likewise not allowed to live there. But this was of temporary nature, a response to the disturbances which prevailed in the area at the time. That the ban was aimed specifically against Chinese is also highlighted by the VOC resolution of August 18, 1693 which mentions the banishment of a number of Chinese to the Cape for their “temerity” to enter the region. Numerous other laws, such as the 1711 and 1715 resolutions of the dyke-reeves of Batavia's environs, repeatedly reiterated the banning of Chinese from Priangan.<sup>26</sup>

Exceptions to this overall ban were made only in isolated cases, where the service of the Chinese was understood by the Dutch to be indispensable. In places of labor scarcity such as Ciasem and Pemanukan (whose laborers were absorbed by the lumbering business), “a strict exclusion of the enterprising Chinese was [therefore] impossible”. A degree of leniency over the ban was also exercised with regard to sugar, “because people were entirely dependent on the Chinese for the sugar industry”, and because it was impossible to prevent the geographical spread of the location of sugar mills concomitant with the irreversible diminution of wooded areas (for fueling the mills) around Batavia proper.<sup>27</sup>

Another seeming exception to the overall rule of excluding the Chinese from Priangan was that for the cultivation of pepper. Here, too, the reason was necessity. Batavia, at least until 1740, had nobody else but the Chinese to help it meet its pepper demands. Pepper is labor-intensive. Unlike many other cashcrops, therefore, it could not be cultivated as a sideline to the staple rice, which is why the indigenes were reluctant to take up the crop. The shabby record of the Dutch in arbitrarily lowering coffee prices did not help matters. Only the Chinese, at least until

---

18) See i.a. Raffles 1830: i/ 142; De Haan 1910: 1/ 165; 1912: iii/644, 649ff.

19) De Haan 1910: i/ 90.

20) See i.a. De Jonge 1875: v/ CXXXIV; De Haan 1910: i/ 99, 116; Levert 1934: esp. 54; Molsbergen 1939: iv/ 44.

21) After De Haan 1910: i/ 371; also 1912: iv/ 463.

22) See i.a. De Jonge 1875: v/ CXXXVI, 154; *Realia* 1885: 11/ 1; J.A. Vander Chijs, *Nederlandsch-Indisch Plakaatboek 1602-1811*. Batavia-The Hague 1886: iii/ 566; De Haan 1910: i/ 91, 119; 1912: iii/ 391, 393, 494; Molsbergen 1939: iv/ 45; Glamann 1958: 207.

---

23) See De Haan 1910: i/ 90, 91; 1912: iii/ 384.

24) Van Klaveren 1953: 60.

25) See *Realia* 1882: i/ 263.

26) From i.a. Raffles 1830: i/ 315; De Haan 1910: i/ 104, 105, 390; 1912: iii/ 436; 1912: iv/ 545, 548, 550.

27) From De Haan 1910: i/ 352, 389, 392; 1912: iv/ 545.

1740, could fill this vacuum.

Nonetheless, even when they had to be tolerated for exceptional reasons, the Chinese were monitored closely by the Dutch. They were subjected to a pass system which allowed them movement only in strictly limited areas. It was true that non-local indigenes also had to have passes to be allowed to settle in the region but, consistent with the altered politicoeconomics, passes for them were issued free of charge. Even in the case of the traditional Chinese speciality, sericulture, Batavia completely circumvented the Chinese. In Governor General Zwaarddecroon's reign (1718-25), the Dutch cajoled the reluctant Javanese to take up this activity to avoid using the Chinese.

In sum, from about 1700 onwards the Chinese became not only of no value to the emerging economy of the colony, but also awkwardly *in the way* of both the major parties now playing the leading roles. They were now an object of enmity of the indigenous privileged class which had now become the main comprador group and whose traditional place in the intermediary trade the Chinese had helped to undermine during the previous economic era, and a source of acute embarrassment to their former Dutch masters. All this was highlighted, incidentally, by the fact that whilst in the era of the spice trade the Governor Generals frequently befriended Chinese *towkays* (Coen's friendship with *Kapitan* So Bing Kong is well-known), in the new economic era the sole famous case was Governor General Zwaarddecroon's patronage of the Regent of Cianjur.<sup>28</sup>

### Some Specific Reasons for the Massacre

To begin with, a sizeable acreage of cultivated land which could be used for the newly adopted crops was in Chinese hands. This was of course the making of the Dutch themselves who, in their former economic policies, made the Chinese cultivate wild areas, particularly those surrounding Batavia. Initially this was done to offset the VOC's dependence on the supply of rice from Matarme, and subsequently (especially in case of the sugar industry and its subsidiaries) for their revenues. These Chinese lands became indispensable to the Dutch for two basic reasons.

First, they were under the direct rule of the VOC, aiding control and supervision over the cultivation of the new crops. Speaking of pepper, De Haan says:

*... pepper plantation . . . shall be started in the . . . lands which are under Batavia's jurisdiction, its proximity [to Batavia] is considered [good] to ensure a reliable "regular delivery of the product" more than in the regency of Ceribon, and the Natives are less able to exercise their aversion towards this crop [than they would have been in further away places] so that only "regular supervision" [as opposed to more costly coercive measures] is needed . . .*<sup>29</sup>

---

28) From i. a. De Jonge 1870: v/ 122; De Haan 1910: i/ 123ff, 168, 227, 238, 239; 1912: iv/ 376, 557; Hoetink BTLV 1917: 1xxiii/ 365; Hoetink, B., "So Bing Kong; het Eerste Hoofd . . . (Eene Nalezing)" BTLV The Hague 1923: 1xxix/ 19; Vermeulen 1938: 14; Furnivall 1944: esp. 40; Frederick Rosengarten, *The Book of Spices*, New York 1973: 343.

29) De Haan 1912: iii/ 847.

Moreover, the lack of security prevented the Dutch from operating too far afield.

Second, these were lands brought to a cultivable stage from a wilderness. In the wild stage, when the so-called waste lands were simply appropriated by the Dutch and leased out to Chinese farmers, they "legally" belonged to nobody. To "repossess" these lands was obviously far easier and much simpler for the Dutch to undertake than expropriating those belonging to indigenous socioeconomic groups with their deep-rooted customs and institutionalized obligations. Above all, to do the latter would have incurred the wrath of Banten in the west and Ceribon in the east (not to mention powerful Mataram) at a time when the Dutch did not feel strong enough to tackle any of them.

**The change in the nature of colonial acquisition in the 18th century created a situation wherein the Chinese became expendable, not only politically but also economically. In the monopoly economy then being promoted by the Dutch, there was no place for comparatively "free" traders such as the Chinese. Like the Bandanese in 1620, the Chinese too must now be exterminated.**

The need to confiscate the Chinese-farmed lands became crucial as the plantation system eventually became the pivot on which colonial extraction was based. Looking at it with coffee in mind, De Haan stated:

*It [the government] would not allow the Java coffee to fall into private trade, [because] that created harmful competition; everything must be in its hands and therefore the cultivation in other regions, [such as in] Batam or Mataram, was not tolerated.*<sup>30</sup>

In other words, only the lands under their direct rule, which had virtually all been farmed out to Chinese, were originally suitable for such adopted crops as coffee. Indeed, "the first experiments with the coffee plants had been undertaken in small gardens in the surroundings of Batavia." Groundnut, cocoa, tea, tobacco and many other crops beside coffee were initially planted in the environs of Batavia proper. All this created such a demand for space that, in the case of sericulture, even Chinese graveyards were expropriated by the Dutch for the growing of mulberry trees.<sup>31</sup>

Also, now that sugar was fast becoming a most important cashcrop, the Dutch understandably wanted to have greater control in that field. In the international market, the need for such control became increasingly urgent since the VOC had increasing difficulties in regulating the price of sugar due to the growing competition of sugar from Barbados, Brazil and the Caribbean. At the same time, in Indonesia's internal economy, sugar was important for the employ of the indigenous labor force. It

---

30) De Haan 1910: i/ 122.

31) From i. a. De haan 1910: i/ 150, 230, 240; 1912: iii/ 894.

created jobs at various stages of its production and one of its by-products, *arak* (rice wine), “was vital for Batavia’s trade with the interior”.

A further determinant necessitating the assumption of a significantly greater Dutch role in sugar production was their realization that, to stay competitive, sugar must be cultivated in a plantation system. This realization probably struck the Dutch with added force by the 16th century when Java’s sugar faced increasingly acute competition. In other sugar producing areas because of the use of slave labor and the proximity of these places to Holland, prices could be kept very low. By contrast, in Java up to 1740 the VOC acquired its sugar by advancing capital to Chinese contractors, on whom the Dutch could hardly exercise complete control.<sup>32</sup> Clearly, the increasing demand for the sugar “cake” could only be met by confiscating the whole bakery.

**It has generally been alleged that the massacre was an “accident” or an “excess” of the Dutch reaction to a Chinese “revolt.” The remarkable fit of Dutch interests with the extermination of the Chinese (not to mention that similar “accidents” were repeated all over Java) is too close for coincidence.**

To cap it all, the labor requirements of sugar manufacture could be fully met under the seasonal labor system. Unlike the case of the Chinese, the indigenous laborers could be “allowed” to return to their village to tend their rice, thus sparing the Dutch from the need to provide for them between planting and harvest/milling times. This was brazenly spelled out by the famous colonial sugar experts as follows:

*Java as contrasted with most other cane growing colonies is in the favourite [sic] position of disposing of a sufficient supply of good and cheap labourers. The greatest advantage moreover is that these people are entirely free, that they are available when they are wanted and that they need neither be paid nor provided for during the time when there is no work to be done.*<sup>33</sup>

However, in the manufacture of sugar the termination of the Chinese role was far from simple. The Dutch money-lenders of Java, who had sunk much capital into the industry, were naturally reluctant to make changes that might harm their immediate interests. There was a conflict of interests between these Dutch financiers and those who—either because they had not been committed to the industry as it was or because their ken encompassed broader perspectives—were promoting a longer-term economic policy which essentially demanded that the remaining Chinese be squeezed out. The massacre of the Chinese, of course,

settled this conflict.

Another difficulty besetting the Dutch was the threat to the VOC’s monopoly posed by the Chinese client-capitalists. Not allowed to participate in the altered economy, the unused capital of these Chinese became a sort of “floating capital”, rearing to jump at the slightest opportunity. The “frustrated” Chinese capitalists, so to speak, posed a corporate threat to the new monopoly economy. These left-out capitalists posed difficulties for the Dutch effort to monopolize coffee, so much so that De Haan concluded that “in the Chinese we have inborn[!] blacklegs”.<sup>\*</sup> To prevent these “interlopers” from “smuggling”, therefore:

*Henceforth the Chinese . . . who had no passes ran into the grave danger of being arrested and put in chains . . . In 1723 the transactions in coffee were made punishable and the crop was placed under the Company’s monopoly . . . Since 1730 [in order to maintain the aforesaid] the Chinese needed to have a pass to be tolerated beyond the outer posts.*<sup>34</sup>

Similarly, it was in order to safeguard the monopoly of coffee and to allay “fears that the Chinese will buy up this article” that the Priangan region, as outlined, was made off-limit to Chinese. Although economic exigencies often necessitated temporary exemptions such as mentioned above, it is notable that; “. . . for the Chinese, the closure [of Priangan] was hermetic . . . [and the Dutch] held fast to the rule that there the Chinese could not be tolerated.”<sup>35</sup>

The pressure to curtail drastically (if not ban completely) the Chinese participation in all important sectors of the economy hemmed in the Chinese, even in the sugar industry. This can be gauged from the fact that from the 1650s an increasing number of Chinese capitalists opened new mills in areas under the official suzerainty of indigenous rulers such as Banten, Ceribon and the littoral of Central and East Java. On this, the economic historian Furnivall proposed an incredibly uneconomic explanation, namely that because the Chinese inherently “had keener economic sense and greater powers of resistance [than the indigenous and European counterparts combined] . . . the Cultivation of sugar therefore tended to expand [into indigenous managed regions] . . .”<sup>36</sup>

It was undoubtedly to plug this loophole that in 1677 Batavia made an agreement with the *Susuhunan* (Javanese prince) of Mataram wherein it was stipulated that all the sugar produced in his jurisdiction should be sold only to the VOC. The result must have been disappointing for the Dutch complained that the Chinese, in league with the local indigenes (if not the *Susuhunan*), sold their sugar to buyers other than the niggardly VOC.<sup>37</sup>

Finally, in line with their *volte face*, the Dutch increasingly resented the fact that the Chinese occupied the “best

---

<sup>\*</sup> De Haan’s original word is “*onderkruipers*”, which also carries the meaning of scabs, ratebusters, “cheats.”

34) De Haan 1910: i/ 104, also 121-2, 290; 1912: iii/499, 500; 1922: ii/ 35.

35) De Haan 1910: i/ 392, also 390.

36) From i.a. De Jonge 1875: v/ CXXIX; 1877: vi/XVI; P.J. Veth, *Java: Geographisch, Ethnologisch, Historisch*, Haarlem 1898: ii/ 134; Molsbergen 1939: iv/ 43; Furnivall 1944: 41, 411.

37) See i.a. De Jonge 1875: v/ CXXIX; Molsbergen 1939: iv/ 43.

---

32) See i.a. De Haan 1910: i/ 263; Gimbere 1928: 28; G. Gonggrijp, *Schets Ener Economische Geschiedenis van Nederlandsche-Indie*, Haarlem 1928: 74; Furnivall 1944: 41.

33) P.H. Geerligs & R.J. Geerligs, *The Java Cane Sugar Industry*, London 1937.

parts” of Batavia. It is remarkable that the currency of such resentment overlapped in time with the 18th century economic shift. When the influential chronicler-preacher Valentijn voiced his resentment in the mid-1720s, he was only voicing a sentiment which was fast gaining popularity among Batavia’s Europeans. He contended that the Chinese posed a threat to the security of the Dutch, an argument later used to justify the massacre of the Chinese.<sup>38</sup>

### The Dutch Move to Exterminate the Chinese

The change in the nature of colonial acquisition in the 18th century created a situation wherein the Chinese became expendable, not only politically but also economically. In the monopoly economy then being promoted by the Dutch, there was no place for comparatively “free” traders such as the Chinese. Like the Bandanese in 1620\*, the Chinese too must now be exterminated.

#### Extortionate Taxation

The evidence suggests that the extermination of the Chinese was executed in two stages. Firstly, the Dutch taxed them to ruination. The “head” and “hair” taxes imposed on the Chinese are a case in point. Rising and falling according to economic exigencies, from the last quarter of the 17th century the head tax was payable by the Chinese on average at 1 Rd per head per month. The average fine for failure to pay was 20 Rds. The VOC edict of May 21-29, 1690 ordered that Chinese must wear the Chinese coiffure, with the penalty of 6 months in chains at hard labor for non-compliance. Having by these statutory means forced the Chinese to wear nothing else but “Chinese hairstyle”, the Dutch then taxed them for the “privilege”. On average, at least from 1710, the monthly hair tax was 1 Rd.<sup>39</sup> The compound head and hair taxes, then, meant that a Chinese had to pay over 3 *stuivers* each day. In actual terms, for the privilege of keeping his head, a Chinese had to produce—*every day*—the equivalent of approximately three chickens or four-and-two-thirds lbs. of rice.<sup>40</sup> Such quantity of chicken would have meant a daily feast for a family of 10 to 14, while the rice could have lasted a man from four to six days. Compare this to De Haan who (describing the condition of prison food for the indigenes in 1772) remarks in a footnote that “the usual ration of rice for the troops etc. is 40 lbs. per month”<sup>41</sup> That is to say, the defenders of the Dutch state power were living on one-quarter the amount of rice the Chinese had to produce in order to keep their head.

---

\*It was to achieve and maintain monopoly in the spice trade that the Bandenese were exterminated by the Dutch in 1620.

38) From Francois Valentijn, *Oud en Nieuw Oost-Indien*, Dordrecht-Amsterdam 1726: iv(1)/ 250; Van Hoevell, W.R. “Batavia in 1740” TNI Batavia 1840: iii(1)/ 462fn.1.

39) William Rogers, (letter) in John Harris, *A Complete Collection of Voyages and Travels*. London 1744: xvi/ 179; De Jonge 1869: iv/ 236; Van der Chijs 1885: i/ 76, 437, 537; 1886: iii/171; 1887: iv/ 30, 517; *Realia* 1886: iii/ 144, 235; Campbell 1915: ii/ 768.

40) From i.a. *Beschryving van Batavia, met des Zelfs Kasteel in Publyke Gebouwen . . . Dagverhaal*, Amsterdam 1741: 10; *Baravia, de Hoofdstaad van Neerlands Oost-Indien . . .* Amsterdam-Harlingen 1782: i/19.

41) De Haan 1912: iv/ 695fn(1).

When a Chinese died his next of kin was to pay for his burial in a graveyard already paid for by the Chinese community. If he left the colony altogether, he had to pay even bigger “mulct” of 30 guilders or approximately 720 *stuivers*.<sup>42</sup>

In the process of earning the money for these basic taxes, the Chinese had to pay further for a multiplicity of passes, such as the pass to keep a *warung* (stall at the market). Priced initially at 2 Rds per month, the *warung* permit was officially sold at 6 Rds per month by 1739, with the penalty of 20 Rds for nonpayment. Other impositions on the Chinese included the fee for getting married, imposed on them from c. 1706.

#### Segregation

As if these were not crippling enough, the Dutch subjected the Chinese to further impediments.

*In 1727, the nomad habit of a section of the Chinese [read: the itinerant practice of Chinese peddlars] was forbidden, and even further residence in Java was denied to many who had been settled there for a long time. Thereupon the keeping of warungs, i.e. little shops, was no longer allowed in the interior, and the means of communication with the towns were impeded.*<sup>43</sup>

The ideology of the various institutionalized extortions was that all Chinese were “rich” thanks to Dutch generous patronage, and these taxes were to enable the Chinese express their corporate gratitude to the Dutch. No other ethnic community was ever subjected to impositions quite to the same extent.

Unless we are to take it that the Dutch policy-makers to a man were peculiarly bereft of common sense, it seems that the aim of these extortionate exactions was to reduce drastically, if not destroy completely, the role of the Chinese in the colony’s economy. At the same time, these extortions eventually tipped the balance favorably for the proponents of the long-term policies of the Dutch ruling class vis-à-vis the myopic money-lenders as outlined before. The resulting bankruptcies meant that fewer and fewer of the Chinese debtors could meet their obligations towards their Dutch creditors. As they became liabilities to even the Dutch financiers, the Chinese were being irreversibly maneuvered into a corner from which there was only one alternative to being annihilated without resistance: being annihilated for attempting to defend themselves. In either case the Dutch, with their overwhelming superiority, were confident of prevailing.\*

---

\*The volume of evidence I have been able to gather—described in a forthcoming book, *The 1740 Massacre of the Chinese in Batavia*—convince me that there could hardly be any question on the Dutch foreknowledge of their *overwhelming* politicoeconomic and military superiority over the Chinese who opted to “revolt.”

42) From i.a. “Verhandeling der Munten, Maaten en Gewichten van Nederlandsch Indië,” VBGKW Batavia 1786: iv/ 411; John Crawford, *A Descriptive Dictionary of the Indian Islands & Adjacent Countries*. London 1856 (facs. reprint 1971): 97; Van der Chijs 1885 i/ 437; *Realia* 1886: iii/ 144, 235; De Haan 1922: i/ 504, 505.

43) E.S. De Klerck, *History of the Netherlands East Indies*. Rotterdam 1938: 364; also Valentijn 1726: iv(1)/ 246; *Realia* 1882: i/ 178, 277, 280, 500; 1886: iv/ 368; Van der Chijs 1887: iv/ 470.



Still, the Dutch would have been cheated if the victims were allowed to assimilate freely with the indigenous population. It was to preempt the “disappearance” of the Chinese in this way that the Dutch implemented segregative laws. The VOC resolution of July 18, 1713 charged Chinese who so disappeared with “disorderly conduct” punishable by imprisonment. The January 26, 1717 resolution decreed that no Chinese was permitted to marry outside his community and the VOC arrogated the powers to nullify exogamous unions. The November 11, 1721 resolution decreed that the correspondence of Chinese with the indigenous sovereigns was forbidden under penalty of being put in chains.<sup>44</sup>

For similar purposes, the Dutch in their treaties with various indigenous potentates insisted on claiming suzerainty over the Chinese residents of the officially autonomous states. Hence, in the 1677 treaty with Mataram, the Dutch stipulated that Mataram’s Chinese subjects must be placed under the jurisdiction and “discipline” of the VOC. The Dutch also made agreements on extradition of Chinese who tried to disappear into Mataram’s realm, and in the contract with Banten of August 21, 1731 the VOC likewise stipulated that the Bantenese should not interfere, “directly or indirectly,” with the head tax of the Chinese.<sup>45</sup>

### The Massacre

It is beyond the scope of this article to describe fully the second stage, the physical extermination of the Chinese. Suffice it to say that the Dutch orchestrated the extermination by first confining them inside the walls of Batavia, stripping them of the smallest kitchen knife and putting them under a dusk-to-dawn curfew. The Dutch then distributed arms to what they themselves called “the low-class masses” and gave these “mobs” a free hand to massacre the helpless Chinese. The rapine inside Batavia was allowed to go on from the 9th to the 22nd of October, 1740. While the “mobs” were despatching Chinese lives inside Batavia, VOC troops killed those who had fled from the city before the curfew and roamed in Batavia’s environs.

At the end of the “*Grand Guignol*” inside Batavia, most sources agree, 10,000 city-Chinese lost their lives, but little is said about the many more who must have perished outside the city’s walls. Of the 80,000-odd Chinese in Batavia’s environs prior to the extermination only around 3,000 survived.<sup>46</sup> Even less is mentioned in the existing literature of the far greater number who must have had what remained of their bargaining power vis-a-vis their corporate Dutch exploiters eroded yet further.

---

44) From *Realia* 1882: i/ 279, 500, 502; 1885: ii/ 16; 1886: iii/ 65.

45) From J.F. Meinsma, *Geschiedenis van de Nederlandsche Oost-Indische Bezittingen*. Delft 1872: i/ 96; *Realia* 1885: ii/ 53; Cator 1936: 16; Stapel, F.W., “Corpus Diplomaticum Neerlandico-Indicum . . .” BTLV 1938: xcvi(5)/ 114.

46) See i.a. Raffles 1830: ii/ 234-5; “Chronologische Geschiedenis van Batavia, Geschreven door een Chinees” TNI Batavia 1840: iii(2)/ 61; Van Hoëvell 1840: iii(1)/ 478; Meinsma 1872: i/ 132; J.J. de Hollander, *Handleiding bij de beoefening der Land- en Volkenkunde van Nederlandsch Oost-Indië*. Breda 1882: i/ 27; B. Hoetink, “Ni Hoekong; Kapitein der Chinezen te Batavia in 1740”, BTLV The Hague 1918: lxxiv/ 459fn.3; De Haan 1922: i/ 500; Vleming 1926: 6; Cator 1936: 18; Vermeulen 1938: 64.

Finally, it is notable that the Dutch declared an open season on the Chinese all over Java. Governor General Valckenier mentioned that in June 1741 the Council of the Indies voted for a “general massacre of the Chinese over the whole of Java.” Thus, 6 months after the first slaughter, a rerun took place in Semarang (Central Java). Likewise, “in other parts of Java the violence continued . . . where i.a. the Chinese of Soerabaia and Grisee [East Java] were also massacred.”<sup>47</sup>

### Some Direct Results

It has generally been alleged that the massacre was an “accident” or an “excess” of the Dutch reaction to a Chinese “revolt.” The remarkable fit of Dutch interests with the extermination of the Chinese (not to mention that similar “accidents” were repeated all over Java) is too close for coincidence. We have seen the politic-economic factors which preceded the killing. We will now see some examples of the gains which were accrued to the Dutch as a direct result of the pogroms.

As mentioned above, the economic shift after 1700 led the Dutch to confine the Chinese in towns. By flushing them out of their rural niches, the Dutch made the Chinese position even more precarious and their bargaining power even weaker. Prohibited from investing in real estate, the Chinese had to invest in liquid assets such as cash, jewelry and (about the only form of fixed property allowed them) houses. One of Batavia’s richest Chinese, head of the community “*Kapitan*” Ni Hoekong, is said to have “. . . lived in a very large house [filled] with expensive household contents and in which he had stored a considerable amount of cash.”<sup>48</sup>

Even those who were engaged in agriculture were actually “urban-oriented,” if not urban-based. Implanted artificially in the colony, they were essentially “displaced” people. Having no social or political “roots” in the Dutch-ruled locality, the Chinese (in contrast to the indigenous peasantry) had no base on which they could fall back in times of crisis.

Two things characterize urban-based wealth. First, it is more conspicuous and perishable than rural, landed wealth. As the best place to keep one’s chattels was to carry them with oneself, a Chinese would rarely disappoint robbers, thieves and bullies of all kinds. Despite being repeatedly robbed, most Chinese in the Dutch colony had no other access to livelihood but to continue their peripatetic peddling or hawking practices. A robber did not bother to think that the retail goods and cash “float” of a Chinese he had robbed twice or thrice before were most probably lent to the Chinese on credit. What interested him, and others engaged in similar pursuits, was that every time a Chinese was rattled hard enough, coins and other forms of wealth would invariably fall out of his pockets. This must have been another reason (beside Dutch propaganda) for the

---

47) Twan Djie Liem, *De Distribueerende Tussenhandel der Chineezzen op Java*. The Hague 1952: 30; also Adriaan Valckenier, en Rade van Indie aan Bewindhebbers der Generale Oost-Indische Comp. (Heeren XVII). (Uittreksel). Batavia dd.6 November 1741”, in *De Jonge* 1877: ix/ 376, 378; Raffles 1830: i/ 83; ii/ 236; *Realia* 1882: i/ 289.

48) Hoetink BTLV 1918: lxxiv/ 448; also Ong 1943: 147fn.3.

myth that all Chinese were “rich,” as reflected in the Javanese ditty: “*Cino, kringing-kringing ono*” (roughly: “Chinaman, chink-chink [sound of coins], he’s always loaded”).

Second, the wealth of the Chinese was more “perishable” than the landed wealth. Whilst even the poorest rural laborers (if only because the greater part of his wages was in kind) was cushioned from the effects of inflation, the Chinese were fully exposed to its ravages. In the pogrom of 1740, the entire savings of the urban Chinese undoubtedly vanished. Most Chinese had no choice but simply to abandon their possessions because of the 1740 anti-Chinese campaign. Consequently, after the 1740 liquidation, there was an abundance of “fallow” land in Batavia’s environs. As Krom puts it, there was “plenty of free land.” The resolution of June 7 1751 also spoke of stretches of land in the region of Bogor “lying fallow,” since the former tillers had either fled or died during the 1740 liquidation.<sup>49</sup>

### Settlement of European Colonists

All that the Dutch had to do was simply to “repossess” the lands thus “vacated” by the Chinese. The formerly Chinese-tenanted lands were transferred either to the European burgher-farmers that the post-liquidation regime in Batavia was again keen on importing, or to favored indigenous rulers. Hence, “. . . agriculture, which was exclusively undertaken by the Chinese up to the time they revolted [i.e. were massacred] thereafter passed into European hands.”<sup>50</sup> Families of European farmers are known to have been located in Bogor, Ciampea, Cipanas, Cisarua, Depok, Gadok, Jombang, Krawang and Tangerang. As for the distribution of this largesse to the indigenes:

*R[esolution of the GG & members of the Indies Council]. 17 Jan. 1741 appoints a Wangsawidjaja, Lieutenant of the Javanese, for the ownership, with whatever mortgage that applies thereupon, of a land . . . used to belong to the Chinese Litsiangko . . .*<sup>51</sup>

This was why, incidentally, many indigenous partners of the altered economy (such as this Wangsawidjaja) became coffee suppliers to the VOC only after the killing of the Chinese.

No less remarkable is the evidence that, after the murders, there was an outburst of propertied European citizens wanting to get out of Batavia and live in the more salubrious “up country.”<sup>52</sup> The Chinese extermination, so to speak, prepared the environs to accommodate more favorably these non-Chinese Batavian colonists.

### Coffee

The massacre of the Chinese tenant-farmers in Batavia’s environs also solved the various problems which were

besetting the VOC. Until then, due to the recurrent glut in the European market, the Dutch in Indonesia had been having repeated problems with coffee. As the saying went at the time, the plantations in Batavia and Ceribon regions alone surpassed the demand of the whole Europe. On top of this must be added the substantial amount of coffee produced in such places as Mauritius and the West Indies, which had strong lobbies in Holland. Batavia repeatedly had to resort to drastic measures, such as in 1726 halving the purchasing price. In 1733 the VOC forced Mataram’s *Susuhunan* to pledge the “total extirpation” of coffee plantations in his domain. In 1735, coffee plants were rooted out in many places under the VOC’s jurisdiction.<sup>53</sup>

Despite all this, the position of the VOC with regard to coffee was by 1738 quite desperate. Its “coffer was empty, its credit exhausted, and its warehouses were chock-full” with unsaleable coffee. As a resolution of October 30 1738 shows, Batavia had to borrow 4.8 million guilders. This continuing problem came partly from the fact that the VOC had no complete monopoly of coffee production. The Chinese planters in 1738 produced over half a million kilograms of coffee, nearly 29 percent of the total production of Priangan. It was only after the massacre of 1740, in which many Chinese coffee planters contractors perished, that the Dutch problem of overproduction was solved.<sup>54</sup>

### Sugar

For the same reasons, a substantial portion of the sugar industry and its subsidiaries (particularly the distilling and trading of *arak*) also passed from Chinese to European hands and “most [sugar] mills changed hands and became the property of Europeans . . .”<sup>55</sup> Or, as Lauts somewhat flippantly puts it, the “good that came out from the bad” was a shift of ownership from the Chinese to the Europeans.<sup>56</sup>

There were undoubtedly expropriations of less tangible nature. Take the case of the Dutch method of expropriation by means of capital penetration in the sugar industry. The following example of Van Riemsdijk (Commissar of Native Affairs, 1776-84), *mutatis mutandis*, illustrates the multifarious ways whereby the Dutch ensured the subservience of the Chinese “partners”:

*. . . he [van Riemsdijk] was a big sugar manufacturer, or . . . rather, he owned sugar mills, which he hired out to the Chinese. The resolution of 5 and 19 Aug. 1800 elucidate the meaning of this: the Chinese manufacturers worked with the capital provided [by the Dutch] for the anticipated delivery of sugar; however the [Dutch] money-lenders practiced usury to such an extent that the whole industry was threatened with disaster. And the greatest usurer was v.R. [van Riemsdijk] who, as it appears from the R[esolutions] 27 June and 5*

49) See i.a. “Chronologische” TNI 1840: iii(2)/ 55, 56; De Haan 1912: iii/ 146; N.J. Krom, *Gouverneur-Generaal Gustaaf Willem van Imhoff*. Amsterdam 1941: 92.

50) De Klerck 1938: i/ 377; also De Haan 1910: i/ *Personalia* 42.

51) De Haan 1911: ii/ 478, 479fn.2; also M.L. Van Deventer, *Geschiedenis der Nederlanders op Java*. Haarlem n.d.: ii/ 141-2; De Haan 1910: i/ 266ff, 274; 1912: iv/ 95, 99ff; Krom 1941: 120.

52) See i.a. J.S. Stavorinus, *Voyages to the East Indies* (trans. Wilcocke). London 1798 (facs. reprint 1969): 402-3.

53) See i.a. De Jonge 1877: ix/ XXII, 237; De Haan 1910: i/ 124, 127; 1912: iii/ 504, 510, 511, 539, 607; H.R.C. Wright, *East-Indian Economic Problems of the Age of Cornwallis and Raffles*, London 1961: 4.

54) See De Haan 1910: i/ 128, 129; 1911: ii/ 477, 478-9; 1912: iii/ 510, 512, 513, 517-8.

55) Van Klaveren 1953: 51; see also i.a. Van Deventer n.d.: ii/ 103, 153-4; Veth 1898: ii/ 13; De Haan 1922: i/ 519; Vermeulen 1938: 111.

56) G. Lauts, *Geschiedenis van de Vestiging, Uitbreiding, Bloei en Verval van de Magt der Nederlanders in Indië*, Groningen 1857: iii/ 51.

Aug. 1800, had a claim over a certain Chinese [in the sum of] 140,734 Rds.<sup>57</sup>

### Property Inside Batavia

Similar benefits also accrued to the Dutch directly from the abandoned properties of the Chinese which were found inside the city of Batavia. In its session of October 21st (one day before the massacre was officially ended) the Council of the Indies decided that the destroyed estates formerly owned or leased by the Chinese were to be sequestered or compulsorily purchased. The VOC edict of December 13, 1740 in effect legitimized the European burghers who, during the rapine, staked their claims over Chinese properties as the new owners of the properties so seized.<sup>58</sup> All this was, of course, in keeping with the ruling ideology of colonialism, the basis of which was none other than property grabbing.

In 1740 the requisitioning of Chinese properties served both mercenary and military purposes. On the first count, properties formerly belonging to the Chinese were put on the mortgage market for sale. In this way the Dutch separated the Chinese from their properties without actually having to decree any special law or revoking contracts they themselves made. These properties had after all been either mortgaged, sold or farmed out to the Chinese by the state. With their Chinese tenants dead or incapacitated, it was cynical of the Dutch to have professed to "buy up" the former Chinese properties at, as De Haan puts it, "dirt cheap" prices.<sup>59</sup>

As for the military benefit of the Chinese liquidation, two advisers of the VOC on November 11, 1740 recommended that the clearing created by the depredations (especially in the south of the city and in areas immediately outside the southern walls) be preserved so as to give an unobstructed view from the gun emplacements and "a better aim and manoeuvrability of the cannon."<sup>60</sup>

### Ghettoisation of the Chinese

To ensure that the Chinese would never again be a politico-economic power as they nearly did in the previous economic era, the Dutch from 1740 onwards placed the Chinese in a ghetto — the ultimate form of containment next to physical liquidation. In Batavia this ghetto was sited at a place which as well within the range of the city's guns. As the VOC edict of March 5, 1741 put it, if need be, the Chinese ghetto could be razed to the ground in no time from the surrounding bulwarks. From ghettos such as this all over Java the Chinese emerged in the morning and to them they had to return at nightfall. Non-compliance with this permanent dusk-to-dawn curfew was under pain of heavy forfeiture.<sup>61</sup> Throughout the Dutch colonial rule in

Indonesia only the Chinese, be it noted, were ever ghettoised in this way.

The Chinese were then surrounded with layer upon layer of other forms of barriers, including close and continuous monitoring. The resolutions of September 14 and 19, 1742 ordered that all Chinese must register their names, addresses, occupations and so forth. Those who failed to register within four days after the announcement of the laws, according to the edict of October 9, 1741 stated, were subject to the death penalty.<sup>62</sup>

The Chinese were also forced to carry passes or, rather, the imposition to carry passes (already applied to the Batavian Chinese in preparation for the liquidation) was systematized and expanded. The resolutions of September 14 and 19, 1742 mentioned above imply the issuance of passes for all those who had been registered. These Chinese, including those who had become Muslim and "Parnacken" (half-breed), could enter Batavia only with further passes. However, as the edict of September 14, 1742 made clear, these passes did not exempt them from being flogged in public, branded and put in hard labor for 25 years if they overstayed the curfew. To earn the money to pay these passes, the Chinese still had to pay yet another multiplicity of passes, including a pass to use a stall in the market inside Batavia, which cost 3¼ Rds.<sup>63</sup>

In order to prevent the integration of the Chinese into the indigenous community, the Dutch ordered in an October 22, 1742 edict that Chinese who claimed to have become Muslim and had placed themselves under the sovereignty of indigenous vassal-rulers during the 1740 massacre must be inspected by VOC "surgeons" to see whether or not they had actually been circumcised. On December 21, 1745 Batavia followed with a decree stating that by this notice the mixing [= social intercourse] between the Chinese and the Mohammedans are [declared] forbidden."<sup>64</sup>

A resolution of December 11, 1759 classified half-breeds as "fullblooded" Chinese. This had the dual purpose of maintaining the segregation policy and ensuring that, as "fullblooded" Chinese, the *Peranakans* too could be taxed. In 1766 the Dutch reiterated the ban on intermarriage between Chinese and indigenes, first promulgated in 1717, and their arrogation to nullify such exogamous unions. Another resolution in December 21, 1745 set up measures to prevent integration between Chinese and the Muslim population generally.<sup>65</sup>

Even when already dead, the Chinese were segregated and confined in a burial ground especially set aside for them. Of course, they were made to pay for the "privilege" of having their exclusive graveyards. Meanwhile, a resolution of August 24, 1755 stipulated that for every dead Chinese returned to China an *official* tax of 50 to 100 Rds must be paid. This necrophagous tax was restated by the

57) De Haan 1910: i/ *Personalia* 70.

58) See i.a. Van der Chijs 1887: iv/ 517-8; De Haan 1922: i/ 494.

59) See De Haan 1922: i/ 362, also Adriaan Valckenier, "De Gouverneur-Generaal Adriaan Valckenier en de Rade van Indië aan Bewindhebbers der Gen. Oost-Ind. Comp. (Heeren XVII); Batavia dd.31 October 1740" in De Jonge 1877: 310; Van der Chijs 1887: iv/ 521; Vermeulen 1938: 120.

60) Vermeulen 1938: 112, 113; also De Jonge 1887: ix/ LXX.

61) See i.a. an der Chijs 1887: iv/ 522; De Han 1922: i/ 494-5; Amry

Vandenbosch, *The Dutch East Indies; Its Government, Problems and Politics*, Berkeley 1942: 24.

62) See i.a. *Realia* 1882: 1/ 280; Van der Chijs 1887: iv/ 577, 579-580.

63) See i.a. *Realia* 1882: 1/ 280, 289, 306; Van der Chijs 1887: iv/ 534, 586-7.

64) *Realia* 1882: i/ 281, 468; also Van der Chijs 1887: iv/ 580.

65) *Realia* 1882; i/ 279, 282, 283, 468; 1885: 11/ 30; 1886: iii/ 65.

VOC resolution of 1771.<sup>66</sup> In sum, the Dutch saw to it that even dead Chinese parted with their money, no matter where they were buried.

## Conclusions

There seems little doubt that within the altered economy of the 18th century the Chinese were made to serve as the colony's corporate scapegoat-cum-bogeyman. Behind the Chinese "screen" the Dutch hid their own much more substantial role in the exploitation of the Indonesian people. By parading the Chinese bogeyman (the special taxes and impositions set them apart as if being imbued with "special" qualities) and posing as the "protector" of the indigenes\* the Dutch justified their rule in Indonesia.

For the dual role of scapegoat-bogeyman the Chinese had to be kept segregated from the rest of the population, for only when separated did they remain manipulable. And only when manipulable in this way could the Chinese labor reserve be used by the Dutch as a "threat" in dealings with the indigenous labor force. By 1740 the Dutch ruling elite

evidently felt not only that the Chinese had become expendable but also numerically "unmanageable" and a potential threat. This was why they had to be physically "pruned".

That this was not merely an "accident" but a logical and predictable follow-up of a policy—a curtain-raiser, so to speak, for the newly adopted plantation economy—is corroborated further the number of Chinese residents by specifying the maximum total in each business field. Batavia's Board of Alderman specified for 800 kitchen gardeners, 40 plumbers, 30 cobblers, 30 tailors 120 barbers, 20 umbrella makers and so on.<sup>68</sup> To sum up, the Chinese who remained economically active after 1740 existed marginally on the fringes of the colony's distributive system.

In sum, given the above history of repression, to say as colonial apologists do that the overseas Chinese "controlled Indonesia's economy" is to regurgitate the colonial propaganda which has created the Chinese bogeyman. To accuse the Chinese furthermore of being "privileged" is to add insult to their centuries-long injury. ★

\*Governor General Fock (1921-25) was among the latest of a long list of self-appointed "champions" of the indigenes when, in a booklet published in 1904, he professed his distaste for the "Chinese exploitation" of the indigenes.<sup>67</sup>

66) *Realia* 1882: i/ 122, 123, 277, 279, 282, 283.

67) D. Fock, *Beschouwingen en Voorstellen ter Verbetering van den Economischen Toestand der Inlandechte Bevolking van Java en Madoera*, The Hague 1904: 3-4.

68) Vermeulen 1930: 133-4.

# zerowork

DECADES OF CRISIS PETER BELL & HARRY CLEAVER

SPECIAL SECTION ON IMMIGRATION

MULTINATIONAL MEXICAN WORKERS ESTAVAN FLORES

IMMIGRATION, CLASS COMPOSITION & THE CRISIS OF THE LABOR MARKET IN CANADA BRUNO RAMIREZ

IMMIGRATION: THE BLOCKAGE OF IMMIGRATION IN THE MEDITERRANEAN BASIN YANN MOULIER & PETER EWENCZYK

ROCK AGAINST THE POLICE: THE SECOND GENERATION PROBLEM HARRY CLEAVER

MEDITATIONS OF YOUNG IMMIGRANT WORKERS MOGNIS

REPRODUCTION AND EMIGRATION MARIAROSA DALLA COSTA

THE GERMAN MODEL OF REPRESSION AGAINST MASS AUTONOMY KARL HEINZ ROTH

STATEMENT ON THE APRIL 7 ARRESTS AND REPRESSION IN ITALY

## zerowork

Center for the Study of Economic Crisis  
Social Science Division  
SUNY  
Purchase, NY 10577

To Order:  
Send Check or Money Order  
\$4 per issue \$5.50 postage

Bookstores: Bulk orders invited;  
prepayment requested; commission  
terms arranged

Among articles to appear in the

## JOURNAL of CONTEMPORARY ASIA

in 1982

*Sheila Smith*, Class Analysis Versus World Systems: Critique of Samir Amin's Typology of Underdevelopment

*Nancy Wieggersma*, Vietnam and the Asiatic Mode of Production

*Ernest Feder*, The World Bank and the Expansion of Industrial Monopoly Capital into Underdeveloped Agriculture

*Peter Bell*, Western Conceptions of Thai Society: The Politics of American Scholarship

*P. Kaplan & N. Shrestha*, The Sukumbasi Movement in Nepal: The fire from Below

*John Browett*, Out of the Dependency Perspective

*Alec Gordon*, Indonesia and the Post Colonial Mode of Production

*A. Wei Djao*, Industrialism and Education in Hong Kong

*Martin Brennan*, Class, Politics and Race in Modern Malaysia

*Vera Butler*, The Impact on Asia of the World Monetary Crisis

*H. Thompson*, The Brandt Commission

*Fatimah Halim*, Capital, Labour, and the State: The West Malaysian Case

*Clive Hamilton*, Capitalist Industrialization in East Asia

*Ferenc Tökei*, Marx and the Asiatic Mode of Production

*David Kho*, The Political Economy of the DPRK in the Post-1958 Period

Subscription Rate:

US\$ 18.00 or £9.00 (pre-payment required)

JOURNAL OF CONTEMPORARY ASIA  
P. O. Box 49010, Stockholm 49, Sweden