

The Impossible Colonial Border:
Chinese migration and immigration policies
in the Netherlands East Indies, 1880-1912



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Introduction

It is the curious reversals of the flow southwards, periodically running evenly, occasionally gushing, sometimes tightly shut, more often dripping like a leaking tap, that provide the rhythm behind the historical interaction of China and Southeast Asia. Beneath that tap we might envisage the pool of water it feeds, which sometimes looks constant or expanding although in reality seepage is occurring from the pool into the surrounding terrain it helps to fertilize. Only when the tap is shut relatively tightly can one observe the seepage draining the pond altogether. (Anthony Reid, 1996)¹

Anthony Reid's metaphoric description of the Chinese migration to Southeast-Asia above brilliantly captures the importance of this event in the history of migration and the history of Southeast-Asia. Although he also refers to the earlier migrations of the Chinese to Southeast-Asia which already took place since the tenth century, the Chinese migration in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century are especially important when approached from a global scale. In this period, the world was on the move and millions of people sought fortune and happiness elsewhere. The focus of historian's analyzing this huge spike in migration have however been predominantly on the migrations across the Atlantic Ocean. This Eurocentric approach veils the high numbers of Chinese migrants that decided to emigrate to foreign countries and colonies. Between 1840 and 1940, an impressive amount of 20 million Chinese migrated, with close to 18 million leaving for the colonial states in Southeast-Asia.² To return to Reid's metaphor: in this period the tap of Chinese migration was certainly gushing.

The historiography of the Chinese migration has however been severely fragmented, either through historian's geographical specializations or their choices on temporal delineations, resulting in small-scale localized histories of specific Chinese migrant communities. Histories that hope to capture the Chinese migration in this period on a global scale are scarce. One example stands out. The impressive work *Melancholy Order: Asian Migration and the Globalization of Borders* by migration historian Adam McKeown attempts to approach the Chinese migration in this period through a focus on the emergence of international agreements and standards in migration control, that according to him are heavily influenced by the mass migration of Chinese and Indians.³ His focus is however also geographically limited, as it only discusses white-settler nations such as the United States, Australia, South-Africa and

¹ Quoted from: Anthony Reid, 'Flows and Seepages in the Long-term Chinese Interaction with Southeast Asia', in: Anthony Reid (ed.), *Sojourners and Settlers. Histories of Southeast Asia and the Chinese* (Honolulu, 1996/2001) 15.

² Adam McKeown, 'Chinese emigration in global context, 1850-1940', in: *Journal of Global History*, Vol.5, No.1 (March 2010), 98

³ Adam McKeown, *Melancholy Order. Asian Migration and the Globalization of Borders* (New York 2008)

Canada. Even though these states were crucial in developing modern immigration policies, the major destination of Chinese migration, the Southeast-Asian colonies that welcomed 90 percent of all Chinese migration in this period, are almost completely overlooked in his analysis. Furthermore, the estimates by McKeown also show that there is a major difference in time. Where the white-settler nations discussed by him managed to close off their borders for Chinese migrants around the turn of the century, the Southeast-Asian colonies remained open to the Chinese migration. The two peaks in migration statistics can be found in the periods 1880-1914 and 1920-1930 and following the 90 percent mentioned earlier, the majority of them were destined for Southeast-Asia. It therefore seems that this region is diverting from the global path taken by governments that in that period closed off their borders for unwanted migrants.

An historical analysis of the Chinese migration to this region is an important contribution to our understanding of both the Chinese migration in total and the global spread of immigration policies discussed by McKeown. Through a focus on the Chinese migration and immigration policies in the Netherlands East Indies, this study hopes to shed light on the nature of the Chinese migration to Southeast-Asia and the attempts of colonial governments to regulate and control the ongoing migration. Because of the major statistical differences in Chinese migrations between McKeown's white-settler nations and the Southeast-Asian colonies, the main research question of this study will therefore be why the Netherlands East Indies - and in a sense the other Southeast-Asian colonies - diverted from the global development of closing borders in face of the Chinese migration.

Although there are plenty of historians who discussed the Chinese in Southeast-Asia from a regional perspective, the majority of them tend to deal with the economic success of the elite merchant classes of the Southeast-Asian Chinese. The actual migration itself, as well as the immigration policies of colonial governments that were shaped by the incoming Chinese migrants, have only shortly been discussed by historians. When zooming in on the colonial states in this period, such as the Netherlands East Indies, one automatically approaches the field of colonial history. As with the regional histories on the Southeast-Asian Chinese, these colonial histories tend to be either very localized or are too focused on the internal affairs of the colonial state. Neither is there much attention for the topic of migration, which assumedly is connected to the often inward approaches in colonial histories.

This means that there is a gap in the Netherlands East Indies historiography. This gap obscures the importance of the Chinese migration and the immigration policies created by the Dutch. A focus on the Chinese migration to the Netherlands East Indies, especially in this period, explains the functioning of the Dutch colonial state in several ways. It reveals how the Dutch attempted to control their borders,

how they internationally negotiated with other states in the region, with China being a major example, and how they governed a non-indigenous population in a pluralist but legally unequal society. As this study hopes to make clear, the presence of the Chinese migrants, who often felt a strong cultural connection with their ancestral homeland, laid bare some of the complex and awkward principles of inequality in the Dutch colonial state. A focus on migration and the colony's borders therefore tells us a lot about the Netherlands East Indies and its internal policies. An overarching question in this research is thus how the immigration of the Chinese and the Dutch reaction to it influenced the Dutch colonial state and is partly answered by specific foci on the immigration policies themselves, the discussions taking place about introducing reliable identification techniques for migrants, and the problems caused by double-nationalities of newly arrived Chinese in the colony.

The focus on the Chinese migration and the Dutch immigration policies vis-à-vis the Chinese also functions to place the Netherlands East Indies more into its regional context. Immigration affairs often led to diplomatic contact with neighboring colonies or with the Qing Empire itself. As we will see, China became increasingly involved in Dutch policies concerning the Chinese in the colony. But also in securing a steady stream of Chinese labor migrants to work on plantations or in mines on the Outer Islands of the Indies, the Dutch were forced to tap into a European diplomatic network stretching from Batavia, to Singapore and to European settlements and diplomats in China. An analysis of the Chinese migration therefore places the Netherlands East Indies into its regional context, which is still an omission in Dutch historiography on the Indies. As this study will show, the Dutch, as a small European imperial power, could not operate on its own in international affairs. With Chinese migration being a regional and global phenomenon and thereby required international agreements between various states, a focus on this topic can help us widen our perspective on the connections between the Netherlands East Indies and the rest of the world.

As mentioned, the historiography on the Chinese migration in this period is geographically divided and severely localized. The first chapter of this study will therefore attempt to tie together the various historiographical interpretations of the Chinese migration in Southeast-Asia and bring them in relation with Dutch historiography on the Netherlands East Indies. How does the Chinese migration to the Netherlands East Indies relate to what is taking place on a global scale and how does this relate to McKeown's global perspective on the Chinese migration? And how does the Netherlands East Indies historiography relate to the regional histories focusing on the Southeast-Asian Chinese? And finally, what are the shortcomings of Netherlands East Indies historiography on the Chinese in the colony? However, besides shortcomings of historiography, this chapter will also make an analysis of the important concepts

and terminology offered by such global and regional histories and attempt to implement them on the case of the Netherlands East Indies.

The work of Adam McKeown is an important influence to this study. His critical reflection on both the emergence and dynamics of migration control - albeit in the context of the United States, Australia, Canada and South-Africa, but still in relation with the Chinese migration - is especially helpful in explaining the immigration policies of the Dutch. In the second chapter he therefore is an important influence for properly analyzing the various archival materials that deal with the Chinese migration to the Indies. In this chapter three questions will be asked, which together hope to show how the Dutch immigration policies were shaped and organized and how the Chinese migration impacted Dutch colonial society. What were the procedures when a migrant entered, stayed in, or was removed from the colony? How did the white-settler population of the colony react on the incoming Chinese migrants? And how was the labor migration to the plantations in the Outer Islands organized? These three topics help us to lay bare the influence of the various actors in the analysis, namely the Dutch colonial government, the private sector and the white-settler press.

In the third chapter a more in-depth case study will be provided on an issue that touched the overall problems caused by Chinese migration. In discussing the implementation of fingerprinting as a means of identification for Chinese labor migrants, some of the considerations and fears amongst government circles can be revealed. What were the arguments for the introduction of such an identification system? Who were the different parties involved in the introduction of this system? And why was the introduction of fingerprinting felt as a needed reform? As we will see in this chapter, even a small policy change that dealt with the Chinese, could have much bigger implications for the Dutch colonial state, due to a variety of factors.

Finally, in the fourth chapter the Chinese state is brought into the analysis. Starting from the mid-nineteenth century the Qing Empire became increasingly concerned with the well-being of its citizens in far away plantations and colonies. The Chinese homeland - either directly through government interference or indirectly through supporting proto-nationalist movements - started to become a worrisome factor for colonial governments in Southeast-Asia. In the early 1910s this led to a friction with the Dutch about the question whether Chinese in the Netherlands East Indies were considered as Chinese nationals or Dutch imperial subjects. Intertwined with these discussions, the Qing also hoped to install a consul in the Netherlands East Indies who could look after the interests of the Chinese in the colony. After first taking a wider perspective on the history of Chinese involvement in the lives of the Chinese in the Netherlands East Indies, this chapter, through the focus on the topics of nationality and

consular representation, hopes to show how the Chinese state could diplomatically influence Dutch colonial governance over the Chinese migrants. Through this focus, this chapter hopes to place the Netherlands East Indies more into relation with China, thus contributing to a more regional perspective on the Dutch colony.

That the migration of the Chinese to the Netherlands East Indies never has been fully analyzed by Dutch historians remains to be curious. The demographic statistics speak volumes. Estimates by two censuses show that the Chinese population in the Indies grew from 182.934 in 1850 to 1.233.214 in 1930.⁴ Other estimates originating from immigration records analyzed by McKeown mention 4-5 million entries of Chinese in the colony in the period 1840-1940.⁵ These statistics show both the rapid rise of the Chinese community in the Indies and their high mobility in returning to China eventually, which makes a focus on the colonial border all the more interesting. This analysis does not however include the full period of 1840-1940 analyzed by McKeown. Rather, it focuses on the moments when the Dutch became increasingly of the Chinese migration and the possible problems it could cause. As a starting point, this study will therefore take 1880, when the first discussions about labor migration and 'illegal' Chinese immigrants on Java started to take place. The closing year of the period under study has been set on 1914, when the outbreak of the First World War caused a rapid decline in Chinese migrations to the Netherlands East Indies. Although the amount of Chinese entering the colony again rapidly grew to unprecedented figures in the 1920s and early-1930s, this period has been excluded from the analysis, as some historiography on the Chinese migrants in the Indies already covers that era. Also the nature of Chinese nationalism that marked migration debates in these decades was relatively different when compared to the prewar decades. This does however not mean that there is no connection between the pre- and postwar decades. It were the immigration policies and discussions on Chinese migrations in 1880-1914 that are important in shaping the postwar development of the Chinese migration to the Netherlands East Indies. As a formative period for Dutch migration control on the Chinese, this focus is therefore complementary to research done on the 1920s and 1930s.

⁴ Patricia Tjiook-Liem, *De rechtspositie der Chinezen in Nederlands-Indië 1848-1942. Wetgevingsbeleid tussen Beginsel en Belang* (Dissertation, Leiden 2009) 19.

⁵ Adam McKeown, 'Chinese emigration in global context, 1850-1940', in: *Journal of Global History*, Vol.5, No.1 (March 2010), 98.

Chapter 1:

The Chinese Migrations to the Netherlands East Indies

from a Global, Regional, and Historiographical Perspective

The history of Chinese migration to overseas locations has been a thoroughly researched topic with a wide variety of interpretations, approaches and shifts of focus. This is mainly a result of the multisided nature of the migrations themselves. Because the Chinese migrations started as early as the tenth century and have an enormous geographical and temporal diversity, they are difficult to catch within one historical framework. Also the backgrounds and motivations of the Chinese who decided to settle abroad diverted greatly, which resulted into Chinese migrant communities distinguished by class, ethnicity, socio-lingual backgrounds, loyalty to the Chinese mainland and/or length of stay in the host country. As a transnational movement, with Chinese migrants still feeling attached to their places of origins and often sending remittances back to their families or eventually re-migrating to China, the ties running between China and the overseas locations were often still very strong. The same was the case with the Chinese migrations to the Netherlands East Indies, where even after generations of living in the colony, many Chinese still treasured their Chinese identities and therefore remained culturally or psychologically tied to China. In other cases, Chinese merchant families held strong economic ties with China, especially during and after the high numbers of new Chinese migrants entering the colony in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.

Such connections with China force the analysis of this study into a wider perspective. This includes a reflection on what is happening in China during the period under study, but also an analysis of what is happening with Chinese migrants in neighboring colonies in Southeast-Asia, as Chinese migrant communities often had strong ties with important families in other major colonial harbors besides those of the Netherlands East Indies. Because of the regional - and even global - scale of the Chinese migrations in the period of 1880-1914, the case of the Netherlands East Indies can therefore not be treated in complete isolation from its outer perimeter. Accordingly, this chapter will deal with the question to how Chinese migrations in general, and specifically to the Netherlands East Indies, have been analyzed in global, regional and local orientated historiography. In what manner have the Chinese migrations been discussed in the historiography on the Netherlands East Indies? And how does the Netherlands East Indies' historiography compare with other historical studies made about the Chinese migrations to neighboring colonies? In other words: how does the topic of the Netherlands East Indies

and its Chinese migrant community relate to the regional and global scholarly discussions on this major event of massive migration?

As the Chinese migrations spread globally, the reactions of host states on (re-)forming their immigration policies are also a global phenomenon in this period. Partly in reaction to the Chinese migrations themselves, but also to the migrations of Europeans and British-Indians in the same period, major host countries around the world started to modernize their immigration policies, specifically the white-settler nations in North-America and the British Empire. Faced by comparable challenges due to high rising numbers of migrants, such states influenced each other in forming new innovations in border control and identification techniques or solving questions of nationality for new migrants. Besides mapping the historical context of the global Chinese migrations in this period, this chapter will also discuss some of the scholarly literature on states besides the Netherlands East Indies that had to deal with the growing number of Chinese migrants crossing their borders. In short, what is the state of affairs in scholarly literature on the evolution of immigration policies concerning the Chinese migrations? And how does this relate to the historiography on the Chinese in the Netherlands East Indies?

Finally, this chapter will reflect on some of the discussions on terminology and conceptualization concerning the Chinese migrations. The wide variety of backgrounds, movements and communities of the Chinese migrants across the world have resulted in a wide use of historical concepts and terms, as well as historical interpretations of these communities. Which scholarly contributions to the conceptualization and terminology of Chinese migrants are relevant for the case of the Netherlands East Indies? And which are not? And how should the Chinese migration to the Netherlands East Indies be approached and conceptualized?

1.1: Chinese migration and anti-Chinese immigration laws from a global perspective

The Chinese presence in the Southeast-Asian region can be traced back to the tenth century when the first settlers migrated during the Sung-dynasty. Although there were some peaks of Chinese migration to the region in the fourteenth and seventeenth century, Chinese emigrants played a small role in shaping the general history of China, as the succeeding imperial dynasties paid little attention to the fate of the overseas Chinese. At some moments the Chinese imperial government even became hostile against emigrating Chinese, which can for example be seen in attempts by the Ming and Qing to completely prohibit overseas migration through monopolizing foreign trade and banning private overseas

enterprise.⁶ Chinese emigrants were often perceived as traitors that had abandoned their obligations to the empire, or collaborated with foreign 'barbarians', meaning the European colonialists in the Southeast-Asian region from the sixteenth century and onwards. This negative image of traitors persisted until the late-nineteenth century when the large-scale Chinese migration to far-away plantation colonies owned by Europeans started to develop.

A turning point in the history of Chinese migration was the First Opium War of 1839-1842 between the Qing and the British. The British won and the war was ended with the Treaty of Nanking in 1842. Amongst other sacrifices, the Qing Empire had to open up the ports of Shanghai, Canton, Ningpo, Fuchow and Amoy on the Southeastern Chinese coast for foreign trade and cede the island of Hong Kong to the British in order to pay for the loss of the war. Through these 'treaty ports' the Europeans broke the Qing Empire's control on foreign trade and forcibly opened up the Chinese market for European traders. In effect, these treaty ports also became crucial points of departure for Chinese laborers who migrated overseas. With an internationally declining slave trade halfway the nineteenth century and therefore a higher demand for cheap labor, more and more Chinese were recruited to fill up the loss of the previous slave laborers in the Americas. Therefore, an extensive migration of so-called 'coolies' to places such as the United States, Peru and even as far as Cuba, developed, and the treaty ports flourished due to the high amount of migrants and migrant ships passing through their harbors.

At the same time, Chinese labor migrants were shipped to the more sparsely populated but highly fertile areas of Southeast-Asia to work on the developing plantations owned by European colonial or private businesses. A steady stream of labor migrations started to grow between the Southeast Chinese coast and places such as East-Sumatra or the hinterlands of the Malayan peninsula. Amoy became the first hub for the trade of Chinese laborers in the late 1840s, but was eventually surpassed in the 1850s by Macao and Hong Kong, with Macao mainly serving the non-Anglo-Saxon colonial hemisphere and Hong Kong providing laborers for shipment to the Straits Settlements and the surrounding area.⁷ Hong Kong eventually grew out to be the major hub for Chinese emigration, functioning as a node in the circuits running from the inland of China to the coast and from the Chinese coast to the overseas destinations of the Chinese migrants.⁸ For the Netherlands East Indies, the laborers who worked on the plantations of East-Sumatra or the tin mines on Billiton or Banka - together a

⁶Yen Ching-Hwang, *Coolies and Mandarins: China's Protection of Overseas Chinese during the Late Ch'ing Period (1851-1911)* (Singapore 1985) 1-2, 8-9, 15-20.

⁷Yen Ching-Hwang, *Coolies and Mandarins*, 41-57.

⁸Adam McKeown, 'Conceptualizing Chinese Diasporas, 1842-1949', in: *The Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. 58, No.2 (May 1999), 319.

significant portion of the Chinese migrations to the Netherlands East Indies - came both indirectly through Singapore or other harbors of the Strait Settlements or directly by private boats from China, most frequently from Amoy.

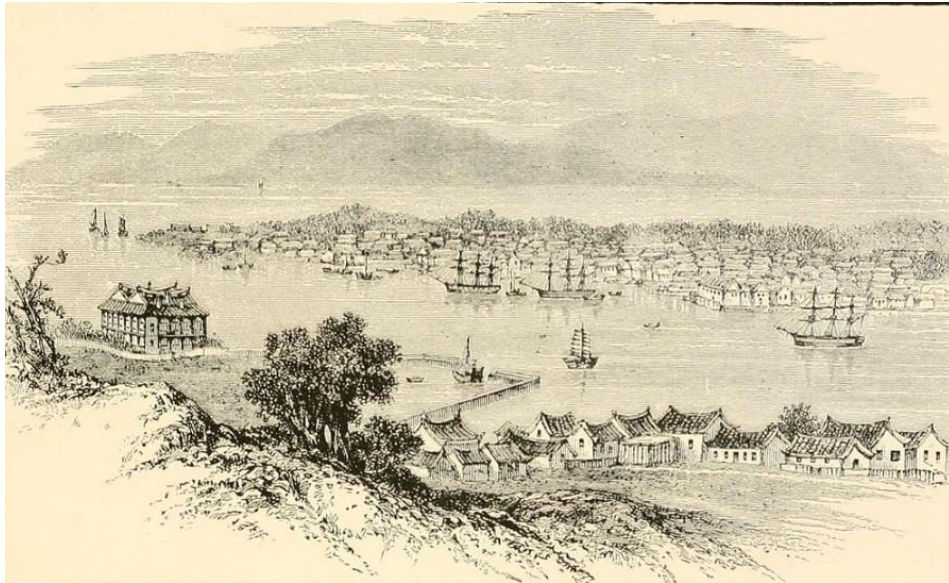


Fig. 1: Illustration of the port of Amoy in 1885, one of the main points of departures for overseas Chinese.

By Edwin Joshua Dukes. From: Wikimedia Commons.

It is in this context of enormous Chinese migration that several states around the world started to reform their immigration policies. A quick survey of the statistics of Chinese migration in this period shows how important this period is in the general history of migration and specifically in the history of migration to Southeast-Asia. From 1840 to 1940 an estimate of 20 million Chinese migrated overseas, with close to 18 million heading for Southeast-Asia. An estimated 6-7 million moved to the Straits Settlements and the Malay Peninsula, around 4-5 million to the Netherlands East Indies, around 3.5 to 4 million to Siam (present-day Thailand), 2-4 million to French Indochina, and 0.75 to 1 million to the Philippines. Another estimated 1.5 million migrated to the Americas, predominantly the US, Canada, Peru and Cuba and a final 750.000 Chinese moved to places such as Australia, the coasts around the Indian Ocean and the South Pacific islands.⁹ The amount of migrations taking place during the opening

⁹Adam McKeown, 'Chinese emigration in global context', 98. As noted by McKeown himself in the appendix of this article, these figures are of course estimates. Corresponding with customs reports of the main treaty ports, the various destinations of Chinese migrants in the Americas and Southeast-Asia can be confirmed through arrival statistics. However, in the case of French-Indochina and the Netherlands East Indies these figures are less reliable. The French did not count immigrants at the ports, forcing McKeown to base his estimate on a combination of custom reports of individual ports and demographic figures. In the case of the Netherlands East Indies, McKeown

up of the treaty ports in the 1840s and up to the end of indentured labor in 1874 was however only a small burst when compared to the whole period of 1840-1940. The number of Chinese traveling overseas rose steadily between 1880 and 1910 and peaked in the first half of the 1910s and during the economically booming years of the 1920s. It is notable that both peaks were mainly destined towards colonial Southeast-Asia, rather than towards other plantation colonies around the world. Sudden drops in Chinese migrations can only be found in times of international crises, such as during the First World War (1914-1918), the Great Depression in the early-1930s and the Second World War in the late-1930s and early-1940s.¹⁰

The second half of the nineteenth century and the first two decades of the twentieth century, during which the Chinese labor migrations started and climbed to unprecedented numbers, have often been described as a decisive period in the opening up of borders for free migrations across the world. Globalization, driven by the high velocity of exchanges in technology, ideas, cultures, and most importantly, people, has often been the catch-phrase of this specific period in world history. The rise of modern empires, in historiography named as the 'new imperialism', provides another example of this rapidly integrating world, as they brought a global dissemination of bulk and consumer goods through a more attached world market, as well as being hosts and emitters for migration. The high figures of Chinese migrations stated above seem to support this description of the period. But the rise of globalizing factors that tied the world closer together in the late-nineteenth century has also often been described in relation to its downfall between the two world wars in the twentieth century. The interwar period is generally seen as a retreat to the nation-state with hard borders cutting off many from the gains of the previous decades' globalization. Rather than celebrating the free movement of people, ideas and technologies, the post-World War I world was marked by a growing anxiety about the uncertainty and contingency these movements created. This also has affected the globalization of colonial Asia. As the historian T.N. Harper writes in an edited volume of historical essays on globalizations in world history:

could not find cohesive figures that correspond with statistics either from China or Singapore (where many Chinese first embarked before moving to the Netherlands East Indies). Furthermore, the statistics provided by official reports of the economic department or a 1930 census divide Chinese migrants in 'a variety of unclear and unexplained administrative categories', as McKeown notes. Eventually McKeown's estimate is based on Singapore immigration reports of transits to the Netherlands East Indies and the scattered figures provided by government reports. See pages 120-124 of this article for the above mentioned appendix.

¹⁰ Adam McKeown, 'Chinese emigration in global context', 99.

World War I, in many ways, marked the end of an era. During and after the war, the colonial powers moved swiftly to cut off many of the networks that had sustained the globalism of the turn of the century. The nascent public sphere they helped create was narrowed dramatically. What historians have long called 'the crisis of empire' might be better termed as crisis of globalism.¹¹

Even though Harper specialized in the imperial period of the Malay world, it is not clear whether he also refers to the Chinese migrations when naming the interwar period as a crisis of globalism. Although the estimates mentioned above do show a sudden drop of Chinese migration during the First World War and after the Great Depression in 1929, an unprecedented rise of Chinese migrations to Southeast-Asia took place in the 1920s. The colonial borders were apparently not as closed as Harper makes us believe from his global perspective. When confronted with the rich particulars of specific and more regional flows of migration, the limits of Harper's, or, for that matter, any, global approach to migration become apparent. How can the rise of Chinese migrations to Southeast-Asia in the interwar period be explained, while at the same time empires were closing off their borders, as Harper states?

A helpful insight in explaining the relationship between the Chinese migrations and the formation of borders is presented by the migration historian Adam McKeown, in his impressive book *Melancholy Order: Asian Migration and the Globalization of Borders*. In this work he criticizes histories of globalization that tend to focus on free flows and unhindered networks and as a result perceive the emergence of hard borders and migration regulations as an end of such flows. Rather, McKeown sees such flows, and the regulations designed to control them, as inseparable. Flows and borders mutually interacted because of their very existence:

Defined against the static past of borders, debates over globalization have often revolved around questions of whether flows of goods, information, and especially people are undermining the sovereign state. From a historical perspective, this is an odd question because migration and the consolidation of an international system of nation states have emerged symbiotically over the past two hundred years. They were and still are complementary processes. To be sure, flows and borders are often in tension, but it is precisely this tension that is the most important source of historical dynamism.¹²

An important global aspect of this analysis is that such border regulations rapidly spread amongst various nations across the world and even became a requisite for internationally respected

¹¹ T.N. Harper, 'Empire, Diaspora and the Languages of Globalism, 1850-1914', in: A.G. Hopkins (ed.), *Globalization in World History* (London 2002) 158-159.

¹² Adam M. McKeown, *Melancholy Order*, 3-4.

nation states. A system of international agreements on how to organize borders, immigration, passports and visas developed from the late-nineteenth century onwards, and the more a nation could conform to these standards, the more it could interact globally with other nations. The development of this international system was in some cases also forced. As McKeown notes on countries that had little control over their borders and people: 'If they not participated voluntarily, gunboats and colonial conquests made it mandatory.'¹³ International standards and protocols on border control and immigration policies rapidly spread around the world and new innovations in regulating free flows of migrants invented in once place were quickly copied by other states that faced similar immigration problems. Even though it sounds rather oxymoronic in the eyes of earlier academic observers studying globalization, the formation of borders could only develop through the very globalizing forces that these borders attempted to control.

Such an international standardization of borders and immigration policies was however built on strong principles of inequality, as the formation of borders was partly a reaction to the rapidly growing Asian migrations around the turn of the century, as McKeown claims. Feeling overwhelmed by Asian migrations from predominantly China and India, important white-settler nations, such as the United States, Canada, Australia and South-Africa sought ways to control this continuous flow of migrants. These nations found various ways to exclude Asians from their territories during the last decade of the nineteenth century and became increasingly successful in this during the first decade of the twentieth century. According to McKeown, it were these nations that were the most influential in the global spread of border and immigration policies, as they functioned as inspiration for other nations across the world who faced problems with migration. Especially the United States with its high rates of incoming migrants in this period was formative in the global dissemination of such new ideas, policies and innovations, either through forcing its own policies on other states through bilateral negotiations or through functioning as a point of reference for other nations. This can for example be seen in the Netherlands East Indies press, which often reported on migration issues in the US or in nearby Australia and sometimes directly compared the situations there with the Chinese migration to the Indies. Statements comparable to 'the Americans can do it [regulate Chinese migration], so therefore we can too' can be found in multiple press articles in the Indies during the period under study.¹⁴ In such examples we can

¹³ Adam M. McKeown, *Melancholy Order*, 6.

¹⁴ Throughout the period 1880-1914, many articles reported on the Chinese migration to the US and the attempt of American immigration officers to control, regulate and eventually limit these migrations. See for example: *Java-bode: nieuws, handels- en advertentieblad*, 02-07-1881, *De Locomotief: Semarangsch handels- en advertentieblad*,

already see some of the connections between the global dissemination of borders and migration policies, and the local colonial situation in the Indies, which will be a recurring theme within this study.

But the white-settler nations discussed by McKeown were not only praised for their success in regulating migration. Various liberal advocates of free mobility and labor and protesting Asian governments, predominantly that of China, pressured these white-settler nations in keeping the regulation of migration as fair as possible. For example, exclusions on racial or socio-economic principles were increasingly frowned upon by contemporary observers, making the specific exclusion of Asian migrations increasingly problematic. New justifications for exclusion of Asian migrants thus had to be sought and were found in the very colonial discourse that marked this era. In his analysis of discussions amongst American immigration officers in the US and in the other white-settler nations, McKeown reveals that the biased perspective of the 'unfree' nature of Asian - more specifically Chinese - migration contributed to a new discourse on the necessity of border control. This image was built on stories of abuse by brokers and kidnappers on the Chinese coast, but was also linked to prejudices about Asian understandings of despotism, ancestry, caste, class, title, and ranks of nobility. In the eyes of Western observers, such socio-cultural practices and categories stood in stark contrast with the Western values of freedom, liberalism and civilization. Because of his socialization in such categories, a Chinese migrant could impossibly be acting out of its own free will. Questions about whether the migration was out of 'free will' became a decisive prerequisite for allowing Asian migrants to enter these white-settler nations. In doing this, immigration officers managed to exclude not on the basis of a racial background, which was a growing taboo in this period, but by excluding the migrant because of conflicting cultural values that hampered his 'personal freedom'.

This critique on the cultural background of a Chinese migrant was also projected on the whole Chinese state. An underlying idea behind such immigration policies was that the Chinese state was not developed enough to completely control its own population or to reform its despotic and 'unfree' society. The Chinese state could not follow the new standardizations in border controls and immigration policies in the civilized nations, as it allowed the human trafficking of 'unfree' migrants out of its own borders. This caused a strong sense of an East-West divide, framed in the dichotomy of civilized versus uncivilized nations and this distinction became increasingly used as a requisite for allowing entrance to a migrant.¹⁵ Only a civilized migrant who migrated in a civilized manner would be allowed entry to a white-settler nation. In other words, the use of racial categories for rejecting entry shifted to a more cultural

19-06-1883 or *De Sumatra Post*, 02-01-1907. The situation of the Chinese in South-Africa was also often mentioned, see for example: *De Sumatra Post*, 07-10-1905.

¹⁵ Adam M. McKeown, *Melancholy Order*, 9-11.

racist perspective, with 'being civilized' as the main requisite for entry. This made the system of selection also more flexible and subjective, a consequence of the vagueness of the term 'civilization', which generally remained undefined by immigration authorities. To some extent, this new way of selecting and rejecting immigrants countered the criticism of liberal advocates fighting for free mobility and labor. The rejected Asian migrant was simply not considered as 'free'.

Although McKeown gives an extensive account of the emergence of immigration policies and border controls in white-settler nations, his study hardly includes an analysis of the Chinese migration to colonial Southeast-Asia, where at least 90 percent of all Chinese migrations in the period 1840-1940 took place. This is especially surprising noting that this percentage is based on McKeown's own estimates. Although he convincingly explains how the doors to the United States, Canada, Australia and South-Africa were shut for Chinese migrants, he generally ignores the succeeding period when the great majority of Chinese migrants found alternative destinations in Southeast-Asia. It is understandable that McKeown did not include this area in his study, as the scale of his research already stretches out to an impressive geographical and temporal scale. However, the specific colonial context of Southeast-Asia makes an interesting alternative case for researching the problems caused by Chinese migration and the measures undertaken by colonial governments in regulating or controlling them, especially in relation to global developments. Notably, the differences in demographics and organization of society of Southeast-Asian colonial states as compared to that of the white-settler nations analyzed by McKeown make an analysis of Chinese migration to Southeast-Asia all the more interesting. Such differences can mainly be found in the small amounts of white-settlers that were greatly outnumbered by an enormous indigenous population in the respective colonies. Furthermore, the highly unequal and racially divided society that was kept under firm control by the colonial government make the Southeast-Asian colonies a completely different case. A recurring theme in this study is therefore the specific colonial context of the Netherlands East Indies and how this context influenced the decisions made on immigration policies aimed at incoming Chinese migrants. Another part of the analysis explores how the Chinese migration to the Netherlands East Indies influenced the colonial state and society, as the high amount of new Chinese migrants also increasingly pressured colonial stability and security.

The specific context of a colony with a minority white-settler population has only shortly been described by McKeown in a chapter about South-Africa's colony Natal and the challenges it faced by Indian migrants. Struggling with unequal acknowledgements of citizenship within the British Empire, Natal attempted to mask exclusions based on racist principles by subjecting all aliens, including white Britons, to a registration and pass system. This greatly angered white settlers in South-Africa who felt

degraded to the ranks of natives and Asian immigrants, but also angered Asian immigrants who experienced it as a failure of equal imperial citizenship. Both groups brought the issue to London, where colonial bureaucrats favored a free flow of people within the British Empire. Eventually the matter was resolved with an awkward consensus about a requisite language test, the so called 'Natal Formula', which again attempted to shift racial exclusions to exclusions based on 'being cultured' or 'being civilized'.¹⁶ What makes the case of South-Africa relevant to this study on Chinese migrants in the Netherlands East Indies is that inside the colonial context of unequal legal and citizenship statuses another layer of complexity to the question of migration is added. It also shows how the imperial metropole was dragged into the discussion. Often the local white-settler community clashed with the global visions of colonial bureaucrats and ministers of colonies in the metropole, something that also needs to be kept in mind when discussing the Netherlands East Indies.¹⁷ To what extent did The Hague and Batavia disagree with one another about immigration policies?

McKeown's contribution to the historiography of the Chinese migrations in this period is an important theoretical background for this research. It explains some of the global challenges caused by these migrations and shows how globally - first in the US and later in other white-settler nations - immigration policies were shaped in reaction to these challenges. As the following chapter will show, the colonial government of the Netherlands East Indies had to deal with similar problems as the white-settler nations who dealt with Chinese migrants. Even though yearly figures kept on rising from 1880 onwards, the Dutch colonial state sought to get a tighter grip on the Chinese migrants through closer monitoring, higher requirements for entry and reforming their measures for sufficient identification. In the meantime, the Dutch colonial state was continuously pressured by a strong public opinion amongst the white-settler population on Java, who felt threatened by the incoming Chinese migrants. A similar fear can be found in the work of McKeown, where whites in the US and other named nations had strong anti-Chinese or anti-Indian opinions concerning migration issues. The dichotomy of civilized versus uncivilized, discussed by McKeown, was also clearly present in the Netherlands East Indies, where the Chinese minority was not treated equally in relation to the European segment of colonial society. Finally, McKeown also discusses some of the difficulties faced in white-settler nations with the nationality of migrants. Giving full citizenship to Chinese migrants gave certain rights which could not be fulfilled, but letting Chinese migrants keep their Chinese nationality was also risky. Officials in China or Chinese consuls in the destination country would often speak out against maltreatment, discrimination or other

¹⁶ Adam M. McKeown, *Melancholy Order*, 189-194.

¹⁷ Ibidem, 186-189. Similar clashes between a visionary London and the local reality in the colony took place in Australia.

violations of the rights of their overseas subjects and letting Chinese migrants keep their Chinese nationality would spark even more diplomatic unrest with the Chinese state. Similar tensions can be seen in the Netherlands East Indies, where the social and legal hierarchy in society created an even more complicated discussion on nationality. An increasingly effective diplomatic effort from China started to pressure the Dutch colonial government on exactly this topic, which will be discussed in depth in the fourth chapter of this study.

Despite the many similarities in reactions to the Chinese migrations, the Netherlands East Indies, in contrast to the white-settler nations discussed by McKeown, did not manage to close off its borders for Chinese migrants. Contrarily, as we have seen in the figures above, the number of Chinese migrants in the Netherlands East Indies kept on rising, with an enormous peak of Chinese migrations to colonial Southeast-Asia in the 1920s, and therefore also to the Dutch colony. Either the immigration policies were not working properly in excluding a growing number of Chinese, or the 'open' imperial nature of the Dutch colony, as characterized by Harper when he explained the openness of the pre-World War 1, made a full exclusion of Chinese migrants impossible. The sudden rise in the 1920s makes the Netherlands East Indies stand out amongst the global perspective given by McKeown and suggests that the fluid networks caused by globalization, contested by McKeown in his wide analysis of the development of borders, were more open in the Netherlands East Indies than in the states he analyzed. Where the white-settler nations managed to bring Chinese migration to a near standstill around the turn of the century, Chinese migrants kept on seeping into the Dutch colony in the early-twentieth century. Despite these differences, the theoretical approach provided by McKeown is a useful backbone for this study, as it deeply examines the challenges caused by Chinese migration on a local scale but also sketches a global context wherein new immigration policies and border controls became increasingly standardized around the world.

1.2: Transnational and regional histories of the Chinese migration in Southeast-Asia

Regional histories of the Chinese in Southeast-Asia have predominantly been explored by historians interested in the commercial and financial traffic taking place between the overseas Chinese and the mainland of China. Often, such explorations were tied to a sense of amazement about the role of Chinese capitalists in the economic rise of the 'Asian tigers' in the 1990s.¹⁸ But a century earlier, the

¹⁸Such as Yen Ching-hwang in his own two published articles in the edited volume *Studies in Modern Overseas Chinese History* (Singapore 1995) named 'The Wing On Company in Hong Kong and Shanghai: A Case Study of Modern Overseas Chinese Enterprise, 1907-1949' and 'Modern Overseas Chinese Business Enterprise: A

Chinese also profited from a rapidly developing world economy driven by European industrialists who vigorously attempted to extract raw materials from the colonies which were needed for the industrial development of Europe. Following the economic globalization of the late-nineteenth century and early-twentieth century, the experienced distance between China and the overseas Chinese became significantly smaller. Contrary to the traditional image of the late-nineteenth century as a period of fierce imperial penetration in colonial societies and economies, for some Chinese groups in the colonial economy the new industrialized world market was an opportunity as well. While there was still a relatively low amount of Europeans present in colonial Southeast-Asia, the actual trading and porting of colonial commodities was often left to the Chinese. The liberal economic policies that were spearheaded by the British and followed by the Dutch, and that were implemented in colonial Southeast-Asia around the 1870s, made it easier for Chinese merchants to sail along in this global economic current, usually through intermediary posts of small businesses in trade and transport. Even when colonial governments started to curb the most profitable sectors for the Chinese in the colonies, like the opium trade and revenue- and tax-farming businesses, Chinese communities were flexible enough to quickly divert their businesses in different directions. This was especially true for the newer Chinese migrants who were not as entrenched in these businesses as the older Chinese communities of the colonies were. As a result, more and more Chinese sought ways to test their luck in the colonial economies of Southeast-Asia. There was sufficient opportunity in earning quick profits which became a major pull factor for Chinese migrants. A significant portion of the overall Chinese migration to this area was thus built on hopes and dreams of trade, commerce and personal enrichment.

Preliminary Study'. The Chinese economic networks even attracted the attention of scholars in business studies, such as: P.A. Mathew, 'In Search of El Dorado: Chinese Diaspora in Southeast Asia, in: *China Report*, Vol. 48, No. 3 (2012) pp. 351-364



Fig. 2: Chinese shop at Pasar Senen in Batavia c. 1890, collection G.H. von Faber.

From: Leiden University Collections KITLV Digital Image Library.

Historians focusing on Chinese businesses in this period especially point towards the flexibility of Chinese merchants in setting up businesses abroad and explain this by pointing towards strong transnational networks between the overseas Chinese, their ancestral homeland and amongst each other. In using a *longue durée* perspective, the historian Hui Kian Kwee finds the origins of this economic flexibility in the ages old socio-cultural aspects of Chinese overseas communities. Through shared ownership of small businesses or plantations - with sometimes up to ten different owners - sufficient capital was collected and risks were spread. Personal connections, kinship, family relationships and social organizations, such as temples or chambers of commerce, were central in the organization of Chinese businesses abroad. New migrants were taken in by temples or trade associations and were often helped by a temporary allowance and provision of a new first job, because of a shared origin from a particular Chinese province. Within the same system, merchants helped each other in trade activities, with profit-sharing as a reward for the assistance. Merchants also actively contributed in providing education to their own communities, through donations to schools or by acting in school boards. Together, these institutions formed closely knitted Chinese societies and merchant communities in most of the Southeast-Asian colonies. Such socio-cultural organizations were however not a new phenomenon. They

already existed among the overseas Chinese communities for generations and can therefore be traced as far back as the seventeenth century.¹⁹

Such personal relations and institutions not only knitted the Chinese together in an overseas Chinese market in Southeast-Asia, but also connected them with the important ports on the southeast Chinese coast. Through harbors such as Hong Kong, overseas migrants still had strong connections with their original villages, cities or provinces. An extensive circuit of family networks crossed the South China Sea and carried new labor or merchant recruits, market information or remittances back and forth between the overseas Chinese and the home front. Many families in China gathered money to send one of the sons overseas to help provide for the family. As McKeown points out, this was one of the many family strategies that helped to keep a family prosperous:

A prudent and fertile family might develop a safely diversified portfolio by assigning one son to work the family fields, one to hire out to the neighbors as a wage earner, one to study for an official position, one to take up some business opportunity in a nearby town, and others to seek fortunes in distant lands like Canada or Thailand. One of them was bound to bring success and fortune back to the family, or at least a steady stream of material support.²⁰

The location of where the son was sent would often depend on existing relationships with family or village members who already traveled abroad. As McKeown describes it, families and villages therefore became some sort of 'transnational entities'.²¹ A would-be migrant in the village would use family or village connections to come into contact with people in the major emigration ports of China, in the primary entry port of Southeast-Asia in Singapore or in the Southeast-Asian colonies themselves. These contacts or relatives could provide a migrant with safe passage and possibly temporal employment on arrival. Through these connections the journey of the migrant would be significantly easier. The existence of such networks caused the Chinese emigration to rapidly develop itself from the 1880s onwards. It was also a self-expanding process, with some of the networks becoming institutionalized into whole business sectors. One example is the 'Qiaopiju' overseas letter-sending sector that was specialized in shipping credit-based remittance letters from overseas Chinese workers back to their home villages. The credits gathered could then be used as investment money for Chinese merchants in Chinese and Southeast-Asian ports, building a whole financial trade sector created around the overseas Chinese'

¹⁹ Hui Kian Kwee, 'Chinese Economic Dominance', 8, 26-27.

²⁰ Adam McKeown, 'Conceptualizing Chinese Diasporas', pp.318.

²¹ Ibidem, 318.

connections with their homeland and bolstering Chinese merchant activities in the ports where these connections ran through.²²

For historians researching Chinese migration to the Netherlands East Indies, it is important to keep such transnational connections in mind, as they were important in sustaining the steady flow of migrants entering the colony. In order to let these networks function, at least some Chinese needed to travel back and forth between the Southeast China coast and the major harbors in the Southeast-Asian colonies. A focus on transnational Chinese networks serves to broaden historiography in two distinct ways. A focus on these networks offer historians a transnational perspective on the Chinese migrations and bring a regional historic approach into the narrative of the Chinese migrations to colonial Southeast-Asia. But focusing on the Chinese migration networks also brings a transnational approach to the field of colonial history, where the focus tends to be on separate colonies and their internal affairs. The transnational aspect of colonial history presently only comes to the fore in the meeting of indigenous and European cultures in the migration flows of Europeans to far away colonies. Within the historiography of colonies and empires there is a strong focus on the connection between the imperial metropole in Europe and the local practice in the colony, but the relations between colonies or Asian nations in the region is still a relatively new approach, usually only done through a comparative analysis, rather than a focus on interrelations.²³ A similar observation has been made by the Chinese historian Wu Xiao An, who studied Chinese businesses in the North-West Malaysian area of Kedah and Penang during the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century. Instead of isolating his object and place of study, he makes a great effort to tie the local Chinese histories of certain distinguished Chinese business families in Kedah and Penang to the wider region, including the British Straits Settlements, the Siamese State and the Chinese mainland. By using the 'region' - which he names a 'much-neglected historical reality' - as an analytical unit, he hopes to find the 'dynamics of intra-regional relationships, external impact, and internal adjustment' on his localized case-study.²⁴ Rather than focusing on the state, he uses various Chinese families in Kedah and Penang as a point of entry for his study, in order to lay bare the fluid transnational connections they often had with families and friends in China or in other harbors in

²² The specific operations of this business is extensively described in: Lane J. Harris, 'Overseas Chinese Remittance Firms, the Limits of State Sovereignty, and Transnational Capitalism in East and Southeast Asia, 1850s-1930s' in: *The Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. 74, No.1 (February 2015), 129-151.

²³ See for example Wim van den Doel's conclusion in: H.W. van den Doel, *De Stille Macht. Het Europees binnenlands bestuur op Java en Madoera, 1808-1942* (Dissertation, Leiden, 1994) 450-462. Although Van den Doel makes an interesting analysis of the history of the Netherlands East Indies state, he generally ignores any influence of the Chinese on Dutch political affairs.

²⁴ Wu Xiao An, *Chinese Business in the Making of a Malay State, 1882-1941. Kedah and Penang* (Singapore 2010) 2-3.

Southeast-Asia. In this way, he pulls the Chinese communities of Kedah and Penang out of their isolation and manages to replace them into a wider regional context, ultimately contributing to a new history of the Southeast-Asian region.

A similar perspective can achieve similar goals for the history of the colonial states in Southeast-Asia, which in current literature tends to be treated in isolation through a focus on the internal policies of the colonial state. Foreign policies and international connections of colonies are generally only analyzed in relation to the framework of the respective empire. Regional histories of colonial states are still rare. By focusing on the Chinese migration and the borders that attempted to contain them, this research hopes to lay bare some of the transnational, intercolonial and regional connections the Netherlands East Indies had with other nearby states, as the colony's transnational and international connections with the rest of Southeast-Asia and East-Asia are presently relatively unexplored.²⁵ Therefore, this study hopes to widen the field of research through a focus on how regional developments, specifically that relating to the Chinese migrations, influenced the Dutch colonial state. This approach also works in an opposite direction. By focusing on how the Netherlands East Indies dealt with this regional development, certain aspects of the history of the Southeast-Asia and the role of the Chinese migrations in it are also revealed. The transnational aspect of the Chinese migrations helps in widening the perspective, as many of the migrants still had a strong social, cultural, economic and - from the rise of Chinese nationalism in the early-twentieth century onwards - also a political connection with their ancestral homeland.

Many migrants that arrived in the Netherlands East Indies first traveled through Singapore or other major harbors in the Straits Settlements, which connects the Dutch colony with the British colonies in the region as well. Immigration policies therefore also became diplomatic matters that had to be dealt with, both with China and with the British. The transnationalism of the Chinese migrants also became a major challenge for the Dutch in the field of nationality issues and international diplomacy, as we will see in the fourth chapter. Finally, the global reaction in (re-)forming immigration policies aimed at stopping Chinese migrants and the global dissemination of a standardized international system for migration also pulled the Netherlands East Indies into the global arena. So not only were the Dutch tied to Southeast-Asia, but also to what was happening on a global scale.

²⁵ This has for example been suggested by Oiyen Liau and Eric Tagliacozzo, who wrote a short guide on the Dutch colonial state's archive in the National Archives of Jakarta (ANRI). In this guide they plea for the use of relatively unexplored archives on Chinese and Islamic transnationalism in the Netherlands East Indies. See: Oiyen Liu and Eric Tagliacozzo, 'The National Archives (Jakarta) and the Writing of Transnational Histories of Indonesia', in: *Itinerario*, Vol. 32, No.1 (March 2008) pp. 81-94.

Overall, this means that the historiography on the Netherlands East Indies needs a wider focus beyond the borders of the colonial state. However, for such a new perspective, one also needs to focus on where these borders were and how they functioned, which is a relatively unexplored topic in this historiography. The transnationalism of the Chinese migration exists in an inseparable relationship with the borders and immigration policies that tried to contain it. The focus on immigration policies for Chinese migrants in the second chapter of this study therefore hopes to contribute to a better understanding of these borders and opens new doors to placing the Netherlands East Indies in its regional and global context.

1.3: The Chinese migration in historiography on the Netherlands East Indies

The majority of historical studies that deal with the Netherlands East Indies in the late-nineteenth century and the early-twentieth century either take the Chinese presence for granted or ignore them in a focus on the general narrative of the emergence of the Indonesian nationalist movement. This gap in scholarly literature is both present in Dutch and Indonesian historiography, respectively emphasizing the end of Dutch colonial rule and the emergence of a new Indonesian nation. Studies that do analyze the Chinese presence as a main topic, tend to be very thematic and/or localized.²⁶ Such studies also tend to focus on the *peranakan* or *baba* Chinese who were the communities that had already lived in the colony for centuries as opposed to the *singkeh* or *totok* Chinese who were born in China and moved to the Indies during their lifespan. The *peranakan* tended to be more pro-Dutch and the wealthiest among them were often influential figures in Chinese local politics, as the Dutch favored appointing *peranakan* Chinese as leaders in the Chinese councils. Being an urbanized political elite, their presence is more visible in the colonial archives and thereby in the works written by historians who use these archives. The Chinese *singkeh*'s of the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century were predominantly merchants, shopkeepers or laborers, which means that their voices and experiences are less likely to be heard by historians as they left less written sources. Many of the historical studies therefore tend to focus on the political - and thereby economic - elite, while the lower classes of Chinese migrants are often neglected.

Geographically, there is a great emphasis on the Chinese in urban environments, especially in the political and economic centers on Java, while the rural Chinese are often forgotten. Still, the rural

²⁶ For example the following works: Monique Erkelens, *The Decline of the Chinese Council of Batavia: The Loss of Prestige and Authority of the Traditional Elite amongst the Chinese Community from the end of the nineteenth century until 1942* (Dissertation, Leiden 2013) & Mona Lohanda, *The Kapitan Cina of Batavia 1837-1942* (Jakarta 1996). Both works focus on the ages old Chinese council of Batavia, predominantly a *peranakan* institution.

Chinese made out an enormous portion of the Chinese population, especially on the Outer Islands of the archipelago. In 1930, only 25 percent of the Chinese population in the regency of East-Sumatra lived in the city. In the regency of Riau, the urban Chinese only counted 34 percent and in both Bangka-Belitung and West-Kalimantan only 14 percent was urbanized. This stands in contrast to Java and Madura, where the percentage of urbanized Chinese locally varied between 47 to 75 percent.²⁷ A more complete history of the Chinese in the Netherlands East Indies would thus greatly profit from a more outward view to the rural Chinese on the Outer Islands, as well as a more low- or middle-class based perspective that would integrate the Chinese laborers and small merchants of colonial society. However, a fully overarching book on the Chinese in the Netherlands East Indies is still to be written.

The most complete work on the Chinese in the Netherlands East Indies is the Indonesian historian Mona Lohanda's *Growing Pains. The Chinese and the Dutch in colonial Java, 1890-1942*, which again only focuses on one island of the Netherlands East Indies, albeit the political and economic centre of the colony. Although the influences of newly arriving Chinese in the colony is extensively described in this book, Lohanda's work tends to focus on the particular group of the *peranakan* Chinese, and geographically her work is limited to the island of Java. Furthermore, Mona Lohanda's work is very descriptive and often makes strong but subtle statements on the contribution of Chinese nationalism in the overall development of the Indonesian nationalist movement. This is done in such a way that it sometimes seems to suggest an historical justification for the presence of the Chinese in contemporary Indonesian society.²⁸ Although written in 2002, *Growing Pains* relies heavily on decades old secondary literature, which makes it miss out on various theoretical accomplishments made in colonial history in the last twenty years. This is a wider phenomenon in Indonesian historiography, which often suffers from some historiographical gaps by missing out on the extensive stream of scholarly contributions from studies made in Europe, Singapore, Australia or other places.

One example of such a missing field in Lohanda's work is the field of 'new imperial history' that puts colonial history in an empire-wide framework and opened up the field for comparisons amongst

²⁷ Based on the census of 1930 by the Dutch East Indies government. Found in: Mary Somers Heidhues, 'Chinese Settlements in Rural Southeast Asia: Unwritten Histories', in: Anthony Reid (ed.), *Sojourners and Settlers. Histories of Southeast Asia and the Chinese* (Honolulu 1996, 2001).

²⁸ For example, in the closing pages of *Growing Pains* Mona Lohanda claims that the *peranakan* Chinese made an enormous contribution to the decolonization process and mentions the foundation of the Tiong Hoa Hwee Koan school association as a decisive moment in this process, as it was the 'first modern association of its kind in the colony'. However, the direct links between the Chinese and the decolonization - which is also marked through dark periods for the Chinese during the Indonesian revolution itself - are not further explained in Lohanda's book. Therefore, this conclusion does not seem to be integrated in her overall analysis. See: Mona Lohanda, *Growing Pains*, 240.

colonial states around the world, connections between the imperial metropolises and the colonies, or new thematic approaches focusing on colonial culture, society, minorities or institutions.²⁹ In a way, this new imperial historic approach can be seen as a 'regional' history as well, in the sense that it discusses the whole empire in one conceptual framework instead of focusing on the colony itself. This widens the perspective of historians to include historical developments and events taking place in the homeland or in other colonies within the empire into the narrative. The empire itself can thus be seen as a 'region'. A completely localized history of the Chinese migrations to the Netherlands East Indies is therefore impossible, firstly because it deals with the transnational phenomenon of migration, and secondly because it includes decisions taken in the rest of the Dutch colonial empire as well. As we will see in the following chapters, the history of the Chinese migrations to the Netherlands East Indies, as well as the Dutch reaction to it, often switches to locations outside the colony, especially to the centre of colonial policy-making in The Hague but also to the major cities and harbors in China that dealt with the Chinese migrations, such as Peking, Hongkong, Amoy and Shanghai.

Only little attention has been given to the role of migration in the Netherlands East Indies, specifically that of the Chinese. Migration in general has been explored by Ulbe Bosma's book *Indiëgangsters*, but his contribution is limited to the migration of Dutch nationals to the Netherlands East Indies.³⁰ Other works on migration focus more on the Dutch '*Indische*' repatriates that forcibly moved back to the Netherlands after the Indonesian decolonization. With regard to the Chinese migration, only Patricia Tjiook-Liem's dissertation on the legal status of the Chinese in the Netherlands East Indies stands out.³¹ Writing the history of colonial laws on the Chinese minority in the Indies, she turns to some of the aspects of the Chinese immigration laws. While in one chapter she shortly describes the laws dealing with entry for immigrants and the restrictions on travel and residence, another chapter extensively deals with the discussions in the Dutch government on nationality and citizenship issues of the Chinese in the Indies. Also she extensively discusses the diplomatic and interdepartmental discussions on the entry of Chinese consuls in the Indies. Especially the questions on who they would represent and to which degree they could defend the interests of the Chinese population as diplomats have been thoroughly analyzed by Tjiook-Liem. However, her analysis misses a deeper focus on how the immigration laws of the Netherlands East Indies were actually carried out at the local level. Where her overall dissertation is a

²⁹ One of the impulses given for this new field was Frederick Cooper and Ann Laura Stoler's, *Tensions of Empire. Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London, 1997), especially its impressive theoretical introduction named 'Between Metropole and Colony. Rethinking a Research Agenda'.

³⁰ Ulbe Bosma, *Indiëgangsters. Verhalen van Nederlanders die naar Indië trokken* (Amsterdam 2010).

³¹ Patricia Tjiook-Liem, *De rechtspositie der Chinezen*.

more general legal history of the Indies-Chinese, this study, by using different source materials, will focus more on the actual implementation of the laws and policies explained by Tjiiook-Liem. Furthermore, this study will place the issue of migration in the centre of the discussion, rather than the legal position of the Chinese. Nevertheless, her extensive study and analysis in her dissertation is a valuable contribution to the field of the Chinese in the Indies and will especially be consulted in the fourth chapter on the role of the Chinese state in issues such as nationality and consular representation.

In total there are two historians that have discussed the phenomenon of Chinese migration to the Netherlands East Indies as a main topic, namely Nobuto Yamamoto and Oiyen Liu, who each wrote an article on the political and international threats posed by Chinese migrations to the Netherlands East Indies.³² In their articles they emphasize immigration policies and border controls in the early-1920s and onwards, when a radicalized version of overseas Chinese nationalism (and in some cases communism) spread throughout the colonies. This rise of internationalism and the spread of it amongst borders coincides with an enormous spike in the traffic of Chinese migrants to Southeast-Asia. Nobuto Yamamoto and Oiyen Liu show that the connections between the political situation in China and the overseas Chinese communities were vast and worked as vehicles for political ideas that threatened colonial security. The focus of both articles is therefore on the political challenges brought by the Chinese migrations and the need for revision in political issues such as education policies and collecting sufficient intelligence on the political activities of Chinese migrants. Where Oiyen Liu emphasizes the political developments in the Netherlands East Indies, Nobuto Yamamoto makes a comparison with the British Malay states.

However, both articles only shortly discuss the first two decades of the twentieth century, when the Qing government, the 1911 revolution and the succeeding Chinese republic were actively involved in the fate and well-being of Chinese emigrants and vice versa. In this period, the colonial states in the region were already challenged by an ongoing Chinese migrations and were forced to discuss on themes such as migration, borders, citizenship, consular representation and nationality. Where Oiyen Liu and Nobuto Yamamoto do (albeit shortly) mention the immigration policies that were designed to keep political ideas from flowing in and out the colony and how Chinese nationalism threatened colonial security in that manner, the general influence of the rising numbers of Chinese migrants - and their networks with their homeland - on the colonial state is left unexplained. With the migration of the Chinese already growing rapidly from the 1880s onwards, the formation of immigration policies and

³² These articles are: Yamamoto, Nobuto, 'Shaping the 'China Problem' of Colonial Southeast Asia' in: *Trans: Trans - Regional and -National Studies of Southeast Asia*, Vol. 2, No.1 (January 2014) 131-153 & Oiyen Liu, ' "Chinese Imperialism": Sinophobia and Border Protection in the Dutch East Indies', in: *Indonesia*, No. 97 (April 2014), 87-110.

border controls in the colonial states in Southeast-Asia must have already been changed, discussed or altered by colonial governments prior to the early-1920s. Furthermore, during the period 1880-1914 there was already extensive discussion on issues that touched a certain form of Chinese nationalism, namely one propagated by the Chinese state. With a more proactive stance of the Qing government before its downfall in 1911, the colonial states in Southeast-Asia already had to deal with questions about consular representations, nationality issues and thereby their own citizenship laws in general. The focus of this study on such discussions in the period prior to 1914 is therefore complementary to the work done by Nobuto Yamamoto and Oiyen Liu. Building on the analysis of both authors, this study also includes the role of the Chinese state in shaping the immigration policies of the Netherlands East Indies. As both authors convincingly show, China was closer to the colony than the geographic distance would suggest. A similar approach will be used in this study through an attempt to keep the Chinese state close to the narrative. This will be especially visible in the fourth chapter, where the Qing government is positioned as an important diplomatic player in giving shape to the Dutch reaction to problems about the nationality of Chinese migrants and the consular protection from China they increasingly felt entitled to. By involving the Chinese government in this study, another attempt to pull the Netherlands East Indies into its regional context is undertaken and thereby contributes to the existing historiography about the colony and its Chinese population.

1.4: Terminology and conceptualization

In the various studies written on Chinese migrations in Southeast-Asia, no standardized terminology can be found. The multisided backgrounds, reasons for migration and development of overseas communities of the Chinese migrants are among the main reasons for this. Another reason would be the large geographical scale of the migrations, which requires a combined effort from historians, sociologists and anthropologists specialized in different continents, nations, colonies and regions. For this reason, the following section will elaborate on some of the broader terms used in the historical literature that addresses the Chinese migrations. Like in the wide variety in using different terms for naming the overseas Chinese, historians on this topic also make use of a wide variety of conceptual approaches. The following section will mention some of the most applicable ones for this study of the Chinese migrations to the Netherlands East Indies, as they shed light on the difficulties that the fluent nature of the migration itself created. Furthermore, reflecting on the scholarly contributions made to the terminology and conceptualization of the overseas Chinese helps in finding a suitable approach to the specific case of the Chinese migration to the Netherlands East Indies.

Chinese Diaspora and the 'overseas Chinese'

One of the most important, and one of the first scholars that tried to make sense of the multisided and geographically stretched Chinese migrations, was the Netherlands East Indies-born historian Wang Gungwu, who during his academic career at Malayan and Australian universities spearheaded the subfield of studies on the overseas Chinese. The terminologies that Wang Gungwu discussed are spread amongst his impressive collection of articles and books written during his life, which generally focus on the Chinese communities in the English colonies of Southeast-Asia, but also encompass histories written on the Chinese empires in the past. One of the most frequently used terms for the mass movement of Chinese to overseas areas is the term 'Chinese diaspora'. Diaspora is a difficult term, which is often reserved for the dispersion of the Jews across the world, especially in the wake of the Second World War. This term explains the Chinese migrations as a single global phenomenon, which is also its major shortcoming. It tends to unify all different Chinese migrations in the world, leading to overgeneralization and obscurity about local differences.³³ The term 'overseas Chinese' has similar shortcomings. It also tends to generalize the variety in Chinese migrations. Wang Gungwu warns for the often 'sloppy and lazy way' in which the Chinese are generalized by the use of this term, yet he still persists in using it himself, although with the exception that he means it as a geographical denominator, rather than as a term describing a form of identity.³⁴ In this study, the term 'migrant' will be most frequently used, as it contains the movement from one country to another and thereby the crossing of a border. The moment of crossing a border is what is the most interesting for this study, as this is the moment where immigration policies started to come into effect and questions or difficulties posed by the entry of the migrant started to be raised. The overgeneralizing term of Chinese diaspora is avoided, while 'overseas Chinese' is - like how Wang Gungwu explains - only used as a geographical denominator, meaning the migrated Chinese as opposed to the Chinese still in their homeland.

The victimized coolie

Another difficult term in the field of Chinese migrations, as well as colonial history, is the word 'coolie'. The term coolie is often used in a colonial context to describe the plantation workers who were crucial in the exploitation of natural resources for colonial governments and industries. However, as a term it is inefficient in addressing the Chinese laborers in colonial Southeast-Asia, as the word is often used by

³³ Huang Jianli, 'Conceptualizing Chinese Migration and Chinese Overseas: The Contribution of Wang Gungwu', in: *Journal of Chinese Overseas*, vol. 6 (2010) 12-13.

³⁴ As from a quote by Wang Gungwu, quoted in: Huang Jianli, 'Conceptualizing Chinese Migration', 10, 15.

contemporaries to describe workers from indigenous descent as well. It is also not always clear whether a Chinese laborer would be considered a coolie according to his or her labor contract. Finally, the word coolie gives a strong and demeaning colonial insinuation. Therefore, this study will mainly use the term 'Chinese laborer' rather than coolie, although exceptions are made when contemporaries are directly quoted.

A use of the term 'coolie' also invokes a misunderstanding of the nature of Chinese labor migration in this period. As shortly mentioned before, a strong idea about the 'unfree' nature of the Chinese labor migrations existed amongst immigration officers around the world and the use of the word 'coolie' seems to further strengthen this misunderstanding. The emphasis on the suffering and involuntarily decisions made by Chinese laborers as explained by McKeown and the spread of this emphasis by contemporaries also had a strong influence on historical literature about Chinese labor migration. The victimization of the 'coolie' in foreign plantations has become a dominant perspective within histories of Chinese (labor) migration.

There are several historical reasons for the construction of this victimized image. One example is the high amount of excesses in kidnapping and brokering that took place in the Treaty Ports of Amoy and Macao during the 1840s up to the 1870s. Contemporaries were outraged by the stories of Chinese migrants who were kidnapped and/or tricked to sign false contracts with high debts that could not be repaid in a lifetime and therefore implicitly subdued them in slavery. This left many stories about such practices in the global press, which makes them clearly visible for historians.³⁵

Another reason is that historians point towards the motive for migration, being famines and political turmoil in Southeast-China during that period, which removes the voluntary aspect of a Chinese migrant's decision to move abroad. In reality, as we have seen earlier in this chapter, going abroad was often an economic strategy of Chinese families and was part of a wider pallet of options for securing the family's economic position. Migration often was a conscious strategic decision, rather than an unavoidable consequence of economic turmoil. Also, an extensive amount of literature deals with the Chinese labor migrations to the Americas in the 1840s-1870s. In that period, many Chinese laborers landed in planter colonies such as Peru or Cuba or found employment in the gold mines in California in the US. Maltreatment of Chinese laborers in these places, as well as the often terrible circumstances on the long overseas journey, raised a huge amount of discussion in the press and therefore also in diplomatic correspondence between China and the host country. These excesses completely altered the perception of the Qing Empire of the overseas Chinese. Rather than regarding them as traitors to the

³⁵ Adam McKeown, 'Chinese emigration in global context', 103.

motherland, the Qing Empire felt increasingly connected with the fate of its own subjects overseas, which sparked diplomatic traffic between China and foreign governments on the topic of 'poor maltreated coolies'. Studying official documents or newspapers led historians to make conclusions on the overstated coerciveness of Chinese labor migrations, as for example the Chinese historian Yen Ching-Hwang does on the relationship between the Chinese state and the Chinese labor migrants in his book *Coolies and Mandarins*, which is completely based on archival material gathered from Qing, US and British official archives. On the other hand, a widely shared problem amongst colonial historians is that they are often limited to using colonial archives, as these archives tend to be more complete and better organized than archival traces left by the colonized indigenous populations. Also in quantity the colonial archives form a tempting source in contrast to the limited amounts of written materials left by the colonized. The same problems can be found in the historiography about the Chinese labor migrations to colonial Southeast-Asia. Besides custom reports and labor contracts, the Chinese laborers left little paperwork to be analyzed by historians in the present. It is in such cases that the colonial archives may portray a misconceived image about a specific group of people, such as the Chinese laborers working on the colonial plantations.

It is again Adam McKeown who deconstructs this image of the victimized image of the 'poor coolie' and the dominant perception of the 'unfree' nature of Chinese migration in scholarly literature. As shown by his statistics of Chinese migration in 1840-1940, mentioned earlier in this chapter, only 2 million of the 20 million Chinese migrants in this period moved to the Americas, which was the main destination of labor migration in the period 1840-1870.³⁶ Noticing that the most discussed cases of maltreatment originated from problems with Chinese laborers in that region, while less in Southeast-Asia, McKeown concludes that the image of the coercive nature of Chinese labor migration is incorrect. Also the practice of signing indentured labor contracts, so dominant in the general narrative about the 'poor coolies', can be contested. Deriving from his collection of statistics, he concludes that direct indenture under long-term contracts to Europeans was less than four percent of the overall Chinese migration in the period 1840-1940, which accounts for an estimate of 750.000 laborers. However, these figures only count the official signed contracts that were recognized by European bureaucracies in the colonies and white-settler nations of Australia and the United States.

There are clear signs that many Chinese migrants were indentured to other Chinese recruiters, both in China and in the destination countries. However, from McKeown's global perspective that also globally compares the Chinese migrations with European migrations to North-America crossing the

³⁶ Adam McKeown, 'Chinese emigration in global context', 98.

Atlantic Ocean, he concludes that the signing of (un-)official labor contracts was not an exceptionally Chinese custom. In relation to the dominating image of the unofficial and illegal character of Chinese contract signing, he states that:

The same was true for European migrants, many of whom openly signed contracts with employers in the Americas both before and after departure, while others obtained employment through more informal and underground debt and personal obligations in places where contract migration was outlawed. In this sense, the organization of Chinese migration was little different from that of European migration- certainly not different enough to justify the juxtaposition of Chinese 'coolies' against 'free' Europeans.³⁷

In this way, McKeown's global perspective and his use of statistics in his research deconstructs a biased view within scholarly literature on Chinese migrations. This is actually one of his major points of critique on present-day migration history in general. According to McKeown, migration historians tend to focus on the Atlantic Ocean migrations to the United States or the African-American slave trade to eighteenth century plantation colonies in the Americas. Migration histories that deal with the 'East' are predominantly about the movement of Europeans to colonies far away, which shapes these histories as narratives of 'the rise of the West' and the expansion of Europe. But the impressive amount of 20 million Chinese migrants on the move between 1840 and 1940 shows that not only Europeans were inclined to migrate. A serious revision of non-Western migrations - and history in general - is therefore needed, as other colonial historians who stress the Eurocentric view of previous studies also note.³⁸

The sojourner

The image of the supposedly 'unfree' nature of the coolie who would be doomed to live his life wholly on the plantation is further eroded by the high return rates of many of the Chinese migrants that traveled abroad. The statistic offered by McKeown in his research on return rates shows that between 1870 and 1938 about 70 percent of the number of migrants who left China returned each year. This shows that many Chinese migrants who traveled to Southeast-Asia either as laborer or as merchant had eventually returned to China after several years. This partly had to do with the strong loyalty for the family, village and Chinese state, which was embedded in Chinese culture. For the conceptualization of this research, some reflection on the term 'migrant' is therefore also important. Again, Wang Gungwu has made an

³⁷ Adam McKeown, 'Chinese emigration in global context', 102-103.

³⁸ For example: A.G. Hopkins, 'Introduction: Globalization - An Agenda for Historians', in: A.G. Hopkins (ed.), *Globalization in World History* (London 2002) 2.

important contribution to our understanding of the temporal aspect of a significant portion of the Chinese migrants. In the edited volume *Sojourners and Settlers. Histories of Southeast Asia and the Chinese*, he makes a plea for the use of the concept of 'sojourning' in the study of the overseas Chinese, as opposed to that of migrant. Where 'sojourner' stresses the temporality of the traveling Chinese, 'migrant' emphasizes that the particular migrant is there to stay permanently. In a way, the sojourner would see his 'migration' to the Southeast-Asian colonies as a temporary foreign job. This term was also embedded in Chinese language, wherein the words for overseas Chinese gradually evolved from the negatively sounding words like 'rebels' or 'fugitives' of the Chinese empire to that of the sojourner, who was only abroad temporarily and therefore remained loyal to his social obligations.³⁹

The concept of sojourning is also legitimized by the figures on female Chinese migration, which only began to grow rapidly in the 1920s following the enormous spike in Chinese migration.⁴⁰ In general, the Chinese in Southeast-Asia favored not to marry with the indigenous population, although some divergences can be found in some Chinese communities. Neither was this promoted by colonial governments, who preferred to keep the different ethnicities of the colony separated; a policy that was vigorously pursued by the Dutch in the Netherlands East Indies. Many Chinese migrants therefore hoped to go abroad for some years and return after having earned enough money to make a living in China, with a Chinese wife and family.

Even though the sojourner-concept is very useful in pointing out the temporal aspect of Chinese migration to the Netherlands East Indies, it is not always known beforehand whether a Chinese arriving in its port of destination was there to stay temporarily or permanently. Rather, immigration officers in the Netherlands East Indies feared that the freshly arriving Chinese migrants moved to the colony permanently. This assumption included implementing the usual regulations for passports and setting in motion the applicable immigration laws. For this reason, the terms of 'migrant' and 'migrations' will kept on being used throughout this research as it is the term that was used by contemporaries, both in bureaucratic and public circles. However, this does not mean that the temporal aspect of the sojourner is forgotten. The vagueness of either temporal or permanent migration posed a major challenge for the Netherlands East Indies government, especially in the case of nationality issues and citizenship rights. Permanent migration would mean that some naturalization was in order, although this turned out to be difficult with the issue of dual-nationality, which will be further discussed in the fourth chapter.

³⁹ Wang Gungwu, 'Sojourning: The Chinese Experience in Southeast Asia', in: Anthony Reid (ed.), *Sojourners and Settlers. Histories of Southeast Asia and the Chinese* (Honolulu, 1996/2001) 3-4.

⁴⁰ For return rates, see figure 5 in: McKeown, 'Chinese Emigration in Global Context', 108. For female migration, see figure 8 in McKeown, 'Chinese Emigration in Global Context', 113.

Labor migration and trade migration

The repositioning of the Chinese labor migrant as an individual, self-conscious and 'free' decision-maker by McKeown and the reframing of the Chinese migrant as a sojourning temporal worker in a foreign country are both extremely important in how historians should approach the Chinese migration to Southeast-Asia in this period. Following different paths in historiography, the first on migration history and the second on the (colonial) history of states in Southeast-Asia, the Chinese migrations have overall been distinguished in two different ways. Where authors focusing on migration history tend to focus on Chinese labor migration and the often harsh circumstances on foreign plantations and therefore take a very localized point of view resulting in misconceived images of victimized labor workers, more traditional historians on the Chinese in Southeast-Asian history focus on their trading activities and thereby use an open view to the transnational networks that the Chinese created throughout the region. These two approaches lead to two different and conflicting images of the Chinese migration to Southeast-Asia in the respective period, firstly as the 'unfree coolies' that permanently worked on foreign plantations and could not escape their fates as plantation workers, and secondly as 'free traders' that knew no boundaries or borders and endlessly traveled back and forth between China and other colonies in the region. The problem with the focus on the labor migration has already been discussed in the section about the coolie laborers. The problem of a focus on the trade and commerce of the Chinese in Southeast-Asia can on the other hand lead to a too elite-centered focus on the Chinese migration communities. This can for example be seen in the work of Wu Xiao An on the Chinese business elite in Kedah and Penang. Through his focus on English archives and newspapers he encounters some of the major families in the business networks of the Chinese and chooses to follow them throughout time. The smaller traders and merchants in the Chinese community- in other words the lower-middle class - get less attention in his analysis. Nonetheless, it is understandable that Wu Xiao An decides to focus on these elites, as they left behind a considerable amount of historical sources that reveal the inner dynamics of the Chinese communities in these two places. In order to take into account both the lower-class labor migration and the higher class business elite, this study hopes to combine the two forms of migration, as a deeper analysis of the Chinese - from an angle of the actual migration itself - shows that these two forms of migration were more related than assumed by previous historians.

As McKeown has shown, the main motivation for a Chinese to migrate was to make quick profits in the economic vibrant Southeast-Asian colonies. For the poorer families in China, this meant that the migrating family member first had to work on plantation to pay off his shipping costs under an

indentured labor contract. However, such a fate as a plantation worker may have been a more temporary phase rather than the end-goal of the migration. After having earned sufficient money on the plantation, many Chinese would move to the colonial cities or harbors to start a small business and further expand from there. Another possibility was returning to China with the money earned on the plantation, but many Chinese sought alternative ways of enriching themselves after the labor contract ended and stayed for a little while longer to benefit from the economic activities of the colonial economies they found themselves in. In some places, such as West-Kalimantan, some Chinese would even start their own farms or plantations and recruit other Chinese plantation laborers.⁴¹ This means that many of the Chinese described in the historiography on trade migrations in Southeast-Asia could actually have been part of the labor migration in an earlier phase of their life. Having built up their (either local or transnational) trading network and once successful in commerce, these trading Chinese could start involving themselves in helping other Chinese, such as former plantation laborers or freshly arrived migrants. In effect, the two different perspectives of Chinese migrations are actually more intertwined than has generally been observed by historians. The 'poor coolies' were not as tied to the land as one would believe from archival material or contemporary newspaper articles from this period and the Chinese trading networks were not only limited to the business elite, but could also be accessible from the bottom-up through a start as a plantation laborer and moving upwards through starting small businesses with the saved wages. Combining these two interpretations of Chinese migration also explains the explosion of the number of Chinese migrants in the period of 1840-1940, the high return rates mentioned earlier by McKeown and above all the endless need for new Chinese laborers for the European plantations in the colony, which was crucial to the economic survival of some of the more sparsely populated areas in the Indies, as we will see in the next chapter.

1.5: Conclusion

As the analysis of the different perspectives and approaches to the history of Chinese migration in this chapter makes clear, this research positions itself between various dominant academic approaches stretching from local to global scales. From the global scale, this work follows and relates the history of Chinese migration to the Netherlands East Indies to the global development of immigration policies and border controls as analyzed by Adam McKeown. Through offering global statistics, contesting misconceived perceptions about Asian migration and by showing the difficulties certain white-settler nations faced with incoming Chinese migrants, his work forms an important backbone to this study.

⁴¹This has for example been observed by Mary Somers Heidhues, 'Chinese Settlements in Rural Southeast Asia'.

However, the specific local colonial context of the Netherlands East Indies greatly diverts from the nations discussed by McKeown which makes an analysis of this specific case all the more relevant.

Regionally, the focus of historians has been on the emergence of economic networks between the various Chinese communities of Southeast-Asia. This field offers much for this case study of the Netherlands East Indies, as it helps the history of the Indies Chinese to step out of its localized history that mainly focuses on the Dutch colonial state. This is also a shortcoming of the current historiography on the Chinese in the Netherlands East Indies, which tends to be very localized and thematically specialized. A focus on the borders that attempted to contain them, the history of Chinese migrations to the Netherlands East Indies both reveals regional and local colonial developments and opens doors to new approaches and perspectives that replace the Dutch colonial state into its regional context. However, both the regional and local colonial historiography on the Chinese remains to have certain misconceptions about the nature of Chinese migration to the Netherlands East Indies. Specifically the separation between labor migration and trade migration in many historical works on this topic is something to be dealt with by future historians. For this research, the two are taken together as two sides of the same coin. The seemingly separate flows have too many connections amongst them to ignore. The fluid and multisided Chinese migration to the Netherlands East Indies was however also confusing for the Dutch colonial government which attempted to regulate the incoming migrants. As we will see in the next chapter, a clear and distinctive categorization of the Chinese migrants - which as we have observed in this chapter is also a stumbling block for historians - was also an obstacle for the Dutch colonial government in forming a clear and overarching immigration policy.

Chapter 2: Chinese Migration to Java and Sumatra: labor shortage, public opinion and immigration policies.

In order to answer the main question of this research on why the Netherlands East Indies did not follow the global pattern of anti-Chinese immigration stops and closing borders, this chapter will provide some insights in how the immigration policies of the Indies were organized. The first section will deal with the how and where of the Chinese migrations. Where did the Chinese enter? In which ports did the Chinese migrants arrive? Which groups of colonial society welcomed them into the colony? And how was the Chinese migration - especially in the places where Chinese laborers were needed - organized? Furthermore, this section will shed some light on some of the feelings of dissent amongst the Dutch population against the influx of the Chinese. As in other nations across the world - amongst them those analyzed by McKeown - in this period, there were plenty of anti-Chinese sentiments in the Netherlands East Indies, especially amongst the Dutch white settlers on Java. Through the press they often asked the government for an immigration stop. Even though the Netherlands East Indies was not a democracy, the certain degree of freedom of press in Dutch newspapers did pressure the colonial government in some ways, making them a considerable force in the migration question. Even though there was opposition against Chinese migration to the Indies, the amount of Chinese migrants kept on growing in the early-twentieth century. What were the major arguments of the anti-Chinese public opinion in the newspapers? And how did the dissenting European population on Java wanted to shape the immigration policies in the Indies?

The second section of this chapter will deal with the immigration policies themselves and the discussions made in government circles on possible changes in relation to the Chinese migration. How were the immigration policies for Chinese migrations to the Netherlands East Indies actually shaped? And what was the institutional process handled by the immigration bureaus in the Netherlands East Indies? Crucial to any study of immigration policies is a focus on the needed requirements for residence- or travel permits. Therefore, this section will also analyze the contents of the residence permits, passports or travel passes that were needed for entry or travel of Chinese migrants or inhabitants. During the period 1880-1914 there were several discussions about such documents, which reveals some of the inner workings of the immigration policies in general. Finally, this section will reflect on the process of removal of unwanted immigrants. When were Chinese migrants send back? And how did this

process take place? The process of removal also shows some of the mechanics that shaped the overall immigration policies, as well as the difficulties the Dutch faced with the Chinese migration in general.

2.1: The Chinese migrations to East-Sumatra and Java

On 5 March 1901, the *Semarangsch Handelsblad* published the following advertisement:

We deliver: sturdy, young and healthy workers, both Madurese, Javanese or Chinese for agricultural or mining companies; risk of desertion on board on our costs. With our coolie-transports we have the greatest success and we are prepared to send copies of statements of contentment for consideration. We burden ourselves with realizing all possible orders, also for beautiful Madurese and Balinese cattle for pulling or slaughter. Emigration-Auction- and Commission Office: *Ed. T' Sas. Roode Brug Soerabaja*.⁴²

This advertisement gives an insight into some of the mechanics behind the Chinese labor migrations to the Netherlands East Indies. By offering an insurance policy for possible desertion on the ships carrying the laborers and through the offer of workers from three geographical location, this company seems to be well connected in the logistics of the Indies. As this advertisement shows, labor migrations had become a business. The possibility of also buying cattle at the same company only further exemplifies the commercial aspect of organizing labor migrations.

As we have seen in the previous chapter, the Chinese labor migrations to the Netherland East Indies are part of a larger pattern. Of the 18 million Chinese who traveled to Southeast-Asia in the period 1840-1940, around 4-5 million eventually ended up in the Netherlands East Indies, although not all of them were low-wage laborers.⁴³ One of the most important impetuses for the rapid growth of migrations to the Netherlands East Indies was the opening up of the colonial market for private entrepreneurs and plantation owners from the installation of the liberalizing Agrarian Law in 1870 onwards. New commodities that both bolstered or were results of the industrialization of Europe, such as rubber and tobacco, were increasingly cultivated. New plantations emerged on Java, but more specifically on the Outer Islands. Outside the densely populated island of Java it was difficult to find sufficient labor for these new plantations, which also needed new infrastructures and plenty of land reclamation from the vast tropical forests. With the emigration of Javanese workers to the Outer Islands still in an infant phase, the planters in the Outer Islands searched for cheaper alternatives and found these substitutes in

⁴² From an advertisement published in: *De locomotief: Semarangsch handels- en advertentieblad*, (De Groot, Kolff & Co., Semarang, 05-03-1901). Translated from Dutch by the author.

⁴³ Adam McKeown, 'Chinese emigration in global context', 98.

the rising 'coolie' trade in the Southeast-Chinese Treaty Ports. An unprecedented migration of Chinese laborers to the tobacco and rubber plantations of the residencies of East-Sumatra and Riau, the agricultural colonies of West-Kalimantan (West-Borneo) or the tin mines of the Billiton and Banka islands took place. In the mean time, more and more Chinese started to migrate to the island of Java as well. Drawn by the economic opportunities offered in Java's major cities, specifically Batavia, Surabaya and Semarang, freshly arrived migrants sought jobs as shopkeepers, merchants or porters. But as the advertisement above shows, the location of the Emigration Office in Surabaya also hints that some contracted laborers were occasionally shipped to Java to work on the plantations there, even though they had to share their jobs with Madurese and Javanese workers.

Although the Billiton and Banka islands and West-Kalimantan did experience a high degree of migration during the period under study, these areas were too remote for a significant traceable discussion in archives and press articles. The focus of this chapter will therefore be on East-Sumatra - where a significant migration of laborers from China took place - and the island of Java, where the commerce in the major cities of the Netherlands East Indies also attracted significant amounts of Chinese. These were the areas where most of the immigration policies were shaped, discussed and implemented. What is important to note, and what is also traceable in the advertisement above, is that the organization of Chinese labor migration had become a private concern. As we will see in the next section, private businesses played an enormous role in the Chinese migration, as they were the ones who profited from a steady supply of cheap unskilled workers who could clear the forests and open up the plantations in the Outer Islands. The Deli planters - later organized in the *Deli Planters Vereeniging* (Deli Planters Association) - were the major plantation and business owners at that time and had the highest demand for Chinese laborers. Therefore the focus of this chapter will be on the plantations in Deli, in the residency of East-Sumatra, and how they influenced the immigration policies of the Netherlands East Indies.

2.2: Recruiting Chinese plantation workers: labor migrations and the Deli Planters Society

It was not uncommon for private businesses to use a non-governmental migration office for obtaining Chinese laborers. Especially in the residency of East-Sumatra there was an enormous private interest in maintaining a steady flow of migrants for labor on the new tobacco plantations in the Deli-area. In order to realize this steady flow of Chinese laborers, the Deli planters had set up various strategies throughout the late-nineteenth century. They organized themselves as the Deli Planters Association (*Deli Planters*

Vereeniging) to discuss collective interests, threats and challenges. Being united in the Association, the planters were not afraid to make use of their relations with the government, both in Batavia and The Hague. As early as 1890, the Netherlands East Indies government obtained pleas from the planters to come to new regulations that stimulated the inflow of sufficient Chinese laborers for the plantations there. In July that year, the Dutch Consul-General of Amoy named P.J. Hamel was sent to Deli to discuss this with the planters themselves. After visiting various small and larger plantations, he learned that the planters previously recruited laborers through the major ports of the Straits Settlements, but were now working on a plan to realize a direct and steady flow of laborers from the Chinese ports themselves, specifically from the cities of Amoy (today Xiamen in the Fujian province) or Swatow (today Shantou in on the eastern coast of the Guangdong province). The immigration from the Straits Settlements was insufficient in numbers and too expensive as coolie brokers in Singapore were capitalizing on the limited amount of laborers and drove the prices for individual laborers up higher and higher. Furthermore, Hamel reported on the widespread wishes of the planters. They hoped that the Netherlands East Indies government could help with a steady flow of migrants from China, the security of low prices for each laborer, more migrants in general, agreement that Chinese laborers could be shipped under the Dutch flag, and that recruitment could be done by agents of the Deli Planters Association but under the protection and surveillance of the colonial state.⁴⁴ There was also some worry amongst government circles about the treatment of the Chinese laborers in Deli and the whole of East-Sumatra. In the same report Hamel concludes that the laborers were treated well and in a following letter in November 1890 to the Governor-General of the Netherlands East Indies Cornelis Pijnacker Hordijk he asked to allow a direct emigration from South-China to East-Sumatra.⁴⁵

The interference of a Dutch Consul-General also shows that the issue of migration was a heavily discussed topic in Dutch government circles, even reaching the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Colonies in The Hague. As a representative of the Dutch nation, Hamel also had to report his findings on the topic with the Minister of Foreign Affairs G. van Fienhoven. As the creation of a steady flow of migrants had to originate from the Treaty Ports in China, this also became an international diplomatic affair. In the two years after 1890, possibilities were discussed with both the German Consul-General in Amoy, who had a close relationship with the Chinese Governor of the Fujian province, and the

⁴⁴ P.J. Hamel, 'Verslag Reis naar Deli' (30 juli 1890), National Archives, The Hague, Ministry of Colonies, entry number 2.10.02, inventory number 4546.

⁴⁵ P.J. Hamel, 'Verslag Reis naar Deli' (30 juli 1890), NL-HaNA, Colonies, 1850-1900, 2.10.02, inv. nr. 4546

English Registral-Governor of Hong Kong, named Stewart Lockhart.⁴⁶ Again, the main requirement was that the Deli planters would treat the Chinese laborers well. Hamel assured that this was the case, with mentioning the high amount of remittances send back to China from Deli as an example of fair economic treatment. In late-1891 and early-1892 Hamel even traveled to Hong Kong, Swatow and Macao in order to secure more workers for the Deli planters. In Hong Kong, he approached Governor Lockhart for asking to shift the process of signing contracts to the harbor of Hong Kong, rather than Singapore where coolie brokers were driving up the prices. Lockhart agreed that both Hong Kong and the Deli planters would benefit from this and would see what he could do.⁴⁷ In Swatow he again approached the German Consul, who apparently had more contacts with Chinese officials there and the Governor of Macao was also enthusiastic about this initiative. Macao was going through economic difficulties at that time and the recruitment and shipment of Chinese laborers for Deli could bring more economic activity to the port-city.⁴⁸



Fig. 3: Chinese laborers from Swatow leaving the ship in Belawan, Sumatra for labor on the tobacco plantations, 1900-1915. Collection Stichting Nationaal Museum van Wereldculturen. From Wikimedia Commons.

⁴⁶ P.J. Hamel, 'Letter to the German Consul-General in Amoy and the Minister of Foreign Affairs in The Hague', 23 December 1891 and P.J. Hamel, 'Letter to the British Governor of Hong Kong Stewart Lockhart', date unknown, both in: NL-HaNA, Colonies, 1850-1900, 2.10.02, inv. nr. 4546.

⁴⁷ P.J. Hamel, 'Letter to Minister of Foreign Affairs G. van Fienhoven', 5 januari 1892, NL-HaNA, Colonies, 1850-1900, 2.10.02, inv. nr. 4549.

⁴⁸ P.J. Hamel, 'Verslag reis naar Swatow, Hongkong, Macao en terug', 5 december 1891', NL-HaNA, Colonies, 1850-1900, 2.10.02, inv. nr. 4549.

The travels of Hamel to the Treaty Ports reveal a tightly-knitted network between various European diplomats on the Southeast-China coast. Personal relations and diplomatic networks with local Chinese officials were shared for the need of cheap labor in the Southeast-Asian colonies. The organization of the Chinese migration flows were therefore also an international - or rather *intercolonial* - affair. This cooperation was generally needed in order to deal with the sometimes reluctant Chinese government. Chinese provincial governors and local bureaucrats could often be tough negotiation partners and good relationships with them were often scarce. Furthermore, many Qing officials - either on national or local levels - vigorously opposed the emigration of their subjects and at some times sought ways to prohibit the practice.

Around 1890, there was a growing concern amongst Europeans in the region to bring the rapidly expanding labor market under tighter legal control. The Chinese government was prohibiting the signing of contracts for labor migration, but had insufficient control over its population to prevent individual coolie brokers from recruiting - and in some cases kidnapping - Chinese around the treaty ports. This lack of control also resulted in maltreatment of Chinese on the crowded depots in the ports or transport ships on the seas. Fearing such 'illegal' activities by coolie brokers, who were also active in Singapore and other Straits cities, European diplomats, led by the British, sought ways to pressure the Chinese government in closer regulation of these practices. Following the ideas of the Dutch diplomat and Ambassador in China Jan Helenus Ferguson that were published in his book *The Philosophy of Civilization*, the Dutch government proposed to the Chinese government to open up official 'coolie'-depots in China's major harbors. The official prohibition of signing contracts for overseas labor pushed the laborer market into illegality and according to Ferguson the illegal labor markets closely resembled the slave markets of old. With having migrant depots that were officially organized and monitored by the Chinese governments, such problems could be avoided. The possibility of such depots was eventually negotiated between the Consul-General J. Rhein and Prince Ch'ing, an important Chinese diplomat and member of the imperial family - in 1889-1890 from a collective effort of the Ministry of Colonies and Ministry of Foreign Affairs.⁴⁹

This uneasiness amongst Dutch diplomats with the 'illegal' and 'unfree' nature of the unofficial laborer market falls into the same pattern described by Adam McKeown in his analysis of US, Australian, Canadian and South-African anti-Chinese immigration policies. According to Western observers it were the Chinese who made a mess out of the labor migration by not strictly enforcing regulations or

⁴⁹ J.H. Ferguson, 'Letter to the Minister of Foreign Affairs', 10 January 1890, and J. Rhein, 'Letter to Prince Ch'ing', 15 August 1889, in: NL-HaNA, Colonies, 1850-1900, 2.10.02, inv. nr. 4335.

sufficiently monitoring the activities of recruiters. But contrasting the immigration stops in these white-settler nations, the migration to the British and Dutch colonies were not stopped and neither did the colonial governments attempted to do so. Tighter regulation was needed, but the migration itself was not questioned. Instead, the Netherlands East Indies government, as well as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Colonies in The Hague actively contributed to creating a steady flow of migrants to - in most cases - East-Sumatra. This greatly contrasts the situation in the United States, Australia, Canada and South-Africa at that time, where governments were actively limiting the amount of incoming migrants from Asia. The development of the colonial economies was more important than the possible social tensions such migrations could create.

In the mean time, after having established various agents in the Chinese Treaty Ports, specifically the harbor of Swatow, the Deli Planters Association had set up their own immigration office which used the financial contributions of the planters for organizing a more frequent and steady stream of Chinese workers. At the immigration office the Deli planters could make a reservation of the certain amount of laborers they needed. The office would then secure steamboats - approximately ten boats on a monthly basis -, recruit workers through its agents in the Treaty Ports and take care of the temporary depots and quarantine regulations once the workers arrived. The laborers would then be distributed amongst the planters, corresponding with the numbers they had ordered for their plantations. Based on figures gathered from various Netherlands East Indies newspapers from 1894 to 1910 (though with gap years without reliable statistics), an estimated 8000 Chinese laborers were sent to Deli to work on the plantations on a yearly basis.⁵⁰

⁵⁰ There are no official figures on the precise amount of migrants that entered Deli. The figures for this estimate are gathered from various newspaper articles that reported on yearly immigration figures gathered by the Deli Planters Society. Neither is it clear whether these figures were the migrants imported by the Immigration Office of the Society, or whether these figures are totals of overall migration to Deli. The following figures were found: numbers from potentially the total migration to Deli: 5994 in 1894 (*De locomotief: Semarangsch handels- en advertentieblad*, 02-03-1895), 7868 in 1895 (*Bataviaasch Nieuwsblad*, 11-11-1896), 9809 in 1909 (*De Sumatra Post*, 22-04-1911), and 8654 in 1910 (*De Sumatra Post*, 22-04-1911). From the Immigration Office's figures, sometimes based on reports of general meetings of the Deli Planters Society: 8155 in 1896 (*De Sumatra Post*, 08-06-1899), 6756 in 1897 (*De Sumatra Post*, 08-06-1899), 7345 in 1905 (*De Sumatra Post*, 06-08-1907), 8554 in 1906 (*De Sumatra Post*, 06-08-1907),



Fig. 4: New-arrival Chinese workers waiting for contract signing at the terrain of the Deli Planters Vereeniging in Medan, 1920-1940. Collection Stichting Nationaal Museum van Wereldculturen. From: Wikimedia Commons.

Even though the Immigration Office of Deli took care of the lodgings and transport of Chinese laborers, rumors still reached the Chinese government that the Chinese in East-Sumatra were not treated well. In 1896 a Chinese official visited the Dutch Consul-General in Hong Kong Frederik Jan Haver Droeze and inquired about these rumors. In reaction to such rumors and diplomatic distrust, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs ordered Haver Droeze in 1899 to make a visit to Deli to research the treatment of the Chinese laborers. After visiting several firms, hospitals and asylums for Chinese laborers he reported back to the ministry that the Chinese were treated well and 'had far better lodges than the "registered lodging houses" in Singapore and Hong Kong' and that these residences were 'better than their own houses in the hinterlands of Swatow'.⁵¹ It is interesting to see that this inquiry was done by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and not the Netherlands East Indies government. Furthermore, the same report was copied and forwarded to the director of the Deli-Company in Amsterdam. Here we see some worry in the Netherlands about the treatment of the Chinese by the Deli planters and possibly some mistrust against the Netherlands East Indies government and the lobby of the Deli planters. But the real threat for the Netherlands was the possible damage to the international relations with the Chinese government. In the same report, Haver Droeze mentioned that the planters in Deli or the agents in the Treaty Ports

⁵¹ Frederik Jan Haver Droeze, *Reis naar Deli van Consul Haver Droeze met opdracht van het Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken Anno 1899*. (Hong Kong, 13 Januari 1900), 1. Found in Leiden University Special Collections.

preferred to avoid any communication with Chinese officials, unless absolutely necessary.⁵² This specific remark shows that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was concerned that the Deli planters would be mistaken as representatives of the Dutch government or that the planters consciously acted as such.

The report by Haver Droeze also gives some insight in some of the problems of the Immigration Office of the Deli Planters Association. Faced by a chronic shortage of new Chinese, the Deli planters ordered higher numbers of laborers at the Immigration Office than they actually needed. When a new ship of laborers would arrive, they hoped that the office would divide the numbers based on percentages of the overall order amongst all planters. In reality, Haver Droeze mentions, the need for labor is not as high as thought from the Immigration Office's figures.⁵³ On the other hand, many plantation owners also acted individually and send their own agents to the Treaty Ports. Often these agents were Chinese themselves and worked as recruiters and promoters (also named *tandils*) for the specific plantation whereon they were employed. By avoiding the immigration office, these *tandils* formed a considerable competition with the collective recruitment by the Immigration Office's agents in Swatow. The use of Chinese recruiters is however not rejected by Haver Droeze, as he also notes that he agreed to help the *tandils* of the Deli Planters Association during his stay in Amoy.⁵⁴ As with the help of Consul-General Hamel in 1891-1892, the report by Haver Droeze again shows that even though the Dutch Government in The Hague was sometimes skeptical about the Deli Planters and their use of Chinese labor migrants, they did not hesitate in helping the planters with their labor shortage. Securing a steady migration of Chinese laborers was both an official and private concern.

The Deli planters did not only turn to the Dutch government for help, but also hired trained sinologists for securing a steady stream of migrants to the plantations. Due to the high amount of Chinese in the Netherlands East Indies and the opening up of China for Western influences, the academic discipline of Sinology was rapidly expanding in the Netherlands. Being trained in Chinese language, history and culture, the early sinologists quickly found employment in the Dutch empire in the East. A recent dissertation by historian Pieter Nicolaas Kuiper tracks some of these early Sinologists and describes their careers after finishing their studies. The example of sinologist De Groot, trained at Leiden University, which was the birth ground of Dutch oriental studies in the second half of the nineteenth century, stands out. Through his employment as a Chinese interpreter and researcher for the Netherlands East Indies government, De Groot gradually came in contact with the Indies private sector and eventually took up small missions to China in 1886 for arranging a secure migration of Chinese

⁵² Haver Droeze, *Reis naar Deli*, 2.

⁵³ Ibidem, 3.

⁵⁴ Ibidem, 4.

laborers for the tin mines in Banka and the tobacco plantations in Deli. Officially, he was working for the Governor-General O. van Rees and was sent to China to study the language, geography and ethnography of China. But besides his academic preoccupations he was charged by the government to visit the several heads of local administrations and directors of major businesses in the Indies regions that relied on Chinese laborers. After having visited these stakeholders in the Chinese migration, he traveled to Singapore, Hong Kong and eventually to Amoy where he negotiated with Dutch consuls, German trade firms and other important players in the organization of the Chinese labor migration. As De Groot was not entitled to directly contact Chinese officials, he managed to negotiate through the German trade firms and managed to lay the basis for a steady stream of incoming migrants for Deli within only two years time. Although still officially in function near the end of 1888, De Groot gradually became less involved with emigration matters and was eventually replaced with Hoetink.⁵⁵

Kuiper's history of the public functions of sinologists is interesting. As it becomes clear from his research, De Groot was certainly not the only academically trained sinologist who worked on the case of Chinese migration. Both the Netherlands East Indies government and the business or plantation owners in the Indies were not afraid to mobilize as many specialists as possible. In the case of De Groot, the possibility of doing research in China was only offered by the Dutch colonial government if he also took up the responsibility of using his knowledge for the migration. It seems that besides the cooperation between the colonial state and the private sector, academics were also pulled into the organization of the migration. De Groot's involvement in the labor migration also reveals some of the interesting players involved in the business and how they were connected to each other. Most surprising is the heavy dependency of the Dutch on the German diplomatic and business networks in China. It shows that the organization of the Chinese migration was an international affair, heavily negotiated through various consulates and business firms of different nationalities working together. Contrary to the white-settler nations discussed by McKeown working together in closing their borders for Chinese migration, the European colonial powers in Southeast-Asia seemed to be working together to secure a Chinese migration to their colonies. The demands by private businesses apparently weighed heavier than the protests by those who felt threatened by the ongoing Chinese migration.

Finally, the Deli Planters, through the Immigration Office, were also active in providing safe passage for laborers who finished their contract period and wanted to return to China. From figures

⁵⁵ Pieter Nicolaas Kuiper, *The Early Dutch Sinologists. A Study of their Training in Holland and China and their Functions in the Netherlands East Indies (1854-1900) Part 1* (Dissertation, Leiden, 2016) 586-590.

known from 1894, 1905, 1906 and 1910, these numbers lay between 1350 and 2995 returnees.⁵⁶ In other words, of the number of incoming migrants each year, around 20 to 25 percent of that number would return in the same year. There are no reliable statistics on what happened to the other 75-80 percent of those migrants whose contracts ended. Either they would set up small businesses or sign a new contract with either a new plantation owner or a different one. This uncertainty about what happened to the plantation laborers after their contracts ended is interesting and possibly very important in understanding the Chinese labor migration to the Netherlands East Indies. What we do know is that the majority of them did not return to the plantation as the demand for new plantation laborers continued to rapidly rise in this period, which cannot be solely attributed to the expansion of tobacco plantations across Sumatra. Unless plantation laborers massively became ill and died on the plantations, which is not assumable as both the Dutch and Chinese government kept an eye on the living circumstances on the Deli plantations, those who had finished their contracts must have gone elsewhere. Judging from the low return rates of only 20 to 25 percent of the incoming migrant numbers, China was not the main destination of the ex-contract laborers. Presumably, the majority of them started their own small businesses or shops, using the money they saved during their work on the plantation, either in the Netherlands East Indies or in neighboring colonies. They may have also moved to the quickly developing city of Medan that had - and today still has - a significant Chinese population.

Another possibility is that they moved to Java seeking fortune as shopkeepers, porters or merchants in the colonial cities. Indeed, in an example of a registration list of an incoming ship carrying Chinese migrants on 25 January 1909, we see some Chinese stating that they previously had been 'coolies', even though they had traveled from Singapore rather than a plantation in the Netherlands East Indies or the Strait Settlements. Other incoming Chinese stated that their professions were middle-class jobs such as shopkeeper, merchants or apothecaries.⁵⁷ Since information took a long time to travel at that time and a high amount of Chinese was entering the colony, such statements were rarely back-tracked by the colonial authorities. Therefore it is not at all sure whether these incoming migrants told the truth about their vocational backgrounds, although some might have gotten some experience in shop keeping or trade while staying in the major cities around the plantation regions around the Strait of Malacca. Having sufficient money in possession during arrival was enough for the immigration officers to

⁵⁶ These figures are also from scattered newspapers articles reporting on the immigration to Deli. For 1894 see *De locomotief: Semarangsch handels- en advertentieblad*, 02-03-1895, for 1905 *De Sumatra Post*, 06-08-1907, for 1906 *De Sumatra Post*, 06-08-1907 and for 1910 *De Sumatra Post*, 22-04-1911.

⁵⁷ *Besluit met Staat* (Batavia 25 January 1909) in: Archive K99a Algemeene Secretarie No. 1572, Arsip Nasional Republik Indonesia (ANRI), Jakarta.

believe the incoming migrants and to allow them entry. Due to the lack of a background-check, it is possible that many of the incoming migrants had previously been plantation workers, either in East-Sumatra or in the Strait Settlements, and had traveled to Java to test their luck in the retailing or trade sector. However, as we will see in some of the newspaper articles mentioned in the next section, not all incoming Chinese in Java fared well after their arrival and were forced to take up unskilled labor jobs in order to obtain enough means of existence for survival. It were these Chinese who caused the anti-Chinese sentiment amongst the Dutch settler population, as they competed with the Indonesian population and caused more tensions in the colonial economy. The 'disappearing' ex-plantation workers may show that there is a bigger connection between the Chinese labor migration than suggested by the historians focusing on 'coolie' migrations and those who focus on the transnational trading migration of Chinese merchants in regional histories of Southeast-Asia. The labor migration of this period may have fluidly flown into the commercial networks of the trading overseas Chinese, with the ex-'coolies' becoming the lower-middle class of the Chinese communities in the Southeast-Asian colonies. Although the evidence for this connection between the plantation laborers and the - predominantly urban - trading Chinese is scarce, the possibility is not ruled out by the limited archival documents accessible and is further supported by the available statistics about returnees, rising demand for plantation laborers and the high amount of Chinese entering Java, where no major use was made of Chinese laborers for agricultural means.

2.3: Fortune seekers and vagrants: anti-Chinese sentiment in the Indies press

Parallel to the global Chinese migrations was the often violent reaction of other settler or indigenous populations in the country where the migrants arrived. For example, in 1886 a mob of white-settlers killed 28 Chinese workers in Wyoming as they felt threatened by their cheap labor. This event came to be known as the Rock Springs Massacre and had enormous international consequences. It sparked an outrage amongst Chinese diplomats and government officials, which made them realize the importance of protecting their subjects abroad through consular representation and protection. In the mean time, this also made the US government more aware of the need for more regulations on migrations, as the safety of Chinese migrants could not be guaranteed.⁵⁸ Although not as strong as in the US, there certainly was a strong anti-Chinese sentiment amongst the European population of Netherlands East Indies society. Even though the migration to the Outer Islands by private organizations such as the Deli Planters Association in East-Sumatra made the influx of Chinese migrants easier to regulate and monitor,

⁵⁸ Adam McKeown, *Melancholy Order*, 157.

the shipping lines with Singapore was still open for the 'illegal' migration of Chinese. Especially the migration to Java - the island that the Dutch experienced as being overpopulated - caused public dissent and outcries for a full immigration stop in the Indies press.

Around the turn of the century, various articles were written on the Chinese migrations. With a variety of arguments, the authors often took hard stances against the growing amounts of Chinese entering the colony. The strong language in these articles is not completely surprising; the Netherlands East Indies press was notorious for its direct and personal attacks, which is attributed to what became known as the 'tropical style' of the Indies press.⁵⁹ Although many of them wrote under a pseudonym, some journalists openly took on derogatory tones when discussing the topic of Chinese migration. As the notable journalist and later chief editor of the *Soerabaijasch Handelsblad* H.G. Bartelds writes in 1896:

'No Chinese boat arrives from Singapore, or it brings a number of shady guys with it, usually without a penny to spend and then get admitted here under the security deposit of Chinese officers or Chinese furniture makers, who then let the deposit be paid back through slavery for a couple of years and leave the newbie not richer, but more villainous than when he arrived, loose upon Java. Now that the [opium] control makes surveillance of the Chinese necessary, one truly sees the scale that the Chinese plague has taken up recently.'⁶⁰

Barteld's observation touches one of the two main - and seemingly contradicting - economic arguments against Chinese migrations to Java used in the dissenting press articles. Firstly, the Chinese were described as unemployed and unskilled fortune seekers, chanceless vagrants or deceiving paupers.⁶¹ To some observers the poverty of vagrant Chinese migrants on Java was even brought in direct relationship with the increasing amounts of theft cases, false money printing or murder.⁶² According to the press, Chinese migrants entered Java without any means of existence, no contacts for a job and could therefore not be a useful contribution to society. Eventually, after roaming the island they would be arrested by the police and sent back to Singapore, which usually happened on costs of the colonial state.⁶³

⁵⁹ Evert-Jan Hoogerwerf, *Persgeschiedenis van Indonesië tot 1942. Geannoteerde bibliografie* (Leiden 1990) 60, 103, 108.

⁶⁰ H.G. Bartelds, *Semarangsch handels- en advertentieblad*, 12-12-1896. Translation by author.

⁶¹ Such descriptions of Chinese migrants can for example be found in: *Semarangsch handels- en advertentieblad*, 15-12-1896 and 16-12-1896, and *Soerabaijasch Handelsblad*, 28-12-1895.

⁶² For an example on theft, see: *Bataviaasch Nieuwsblad*, 09-01-1896. On fabricating bank notes: *Bataviaasch Nieuwsblad*, 17-12-1895 & *Soerabaijasch Handelsblad*, 28-12-1895. On murder see: *De Locomotief: Semarangsch handels- en advertentieblad*, 18-01-1896.

⁶³ See for example: *Soerabaijasch Handelsblad*, 23-02-1900.

The second economic argument for stopping the Chinese migration to Java was the economic competition they posed to the poorer of the colonial society. Two articles from 1897 pose the Chinese migrants as a threat to the lower classes of the European population as well as the Indo-European (Eurasian) segment of society. With already enough Europeans from non-Dutch origins and Indo-European's looking for a means of existence in the colony, the Chinese could not be welcomed, as they would increase the overall numbers of paupers.⁶⁴ The contradicting element in these two economic arguments is that even though all the Chinese migrants were generally described as being unemployed and unskilled, they were still perceived by some as an economic threat by competing with lower-class Europeans and Indo-Europeans on the job market. The distinction between the vocational backgrounds of the incoming Chinese was often not made at all, as the majority of articles tended to focus on the whole migration rather than the specific group of unskilled 'coolies' or 'vagrants', as how they were often called in the press.

A more important threat the Chinese posed according to the press was towards the economic development of the indigenous population of Java. This was either framed as being a one-on-one competition with other unskilled laborers or fitted into the wider prejudice against the Chinese at that time as extorters of the indigenous population through money-lending and opium-dealing. Again, a Batavian phrases the latter in a rather insulting comparison:

'We judge the presence of the Chinese mainly because of their extortion against the indigenous population and deem their practices as a cancer for the indigenous prosperity.'⁶⁵

Or as how an ex-steamship operator explains:

'I have never asserted that the Chinese on the Outer Possessions, at the mines or the tobacco plantations did not perform excellent services, but I again advocate against the immigration on Java of that kind of people, that I have known on board of my ships, because those Chinese are immoral, nestle themselves on the major places in the Indies, intermingle with the indigenous population and with their offspring will be a curse to the indigenous population throughout the whole Indies.'⁶⁶

⁶⁴ *Java-bode: nieuws, handels- en advertentieblad voor Nederlandsch Indië*, 05-01-1897 & *De Locomotief: Semarangsch handels- en advertentieblad*, 09-01-1897.

⁶⁵ *Java-bode: nieuws, handels- en advertentieblad voor Nederlandsch Indië*, 05-01-1897. Translation by author.

⁶⁶ *De Locomotief: Semarangsch handels- en advertentieblad*, 04-03-1897.

The competition they posed against the development of the indigenous population was however mainly a concern amongst white-settlers, at least in the newspapers. Indigenous journalism - let alone indigenous newspapers - hardly existed in the period 1880-1914. The Indonesian press only really started to develop after the First World War. Therefore, it is not really known to which degree the indigenous population was really feeling threatened by the Chinese migration. The hatred against Chinese immigrants and the outrage against the too passive colonial government was thus mainly a 'Dutch' concern.

Besides such emotional reactions and sometimes insulting language used against the Chinese migrants, more nuanced articles can also be found in the Indies' newspapers. One example is the journalist W.P. Groeneveldt, who did see the necessity of limiting the migration of Chinese paupers into the colony, but did not think that a complete migration stop was necessary. In his opinion, the 'good elements' amongst the Chinese in the Indies would go to waste if it was not replenished from migration from China.⁶⁷ Another article written in the Dutch newspaper *Algemeen Handelsblad* reacts to Groeneveldt's opinion and discusses the economic necessity of allowing the Chinese to settle in the Outer Islands. The tin mines on Banka and Billiton could not prosper without Chinese laborers and, taking West-Kalimantan as an example, even when a full immigration stop was enforced, several Chinese would still find a way to enter and settle in the colony. But on the long term, it was better for the Indies to focus on the indigenous population and end the reliance on foreign laborers.⁶⁸ This distinction between Java, where the dense population was experienced as a problem, and the Outer Islands, where labor shortages stood in the way of economic development, is often made in the more nuanced newspaper articles.

In a similar way, a clear distinction can be seen between on the one hand the newspapers published in Java's major cities and the *Sumatra Post* newspaper published in the booming planters' capital of Medan. The *Sumatra Post* more frequently published sent-in articles by planters who felt insulted by the liberal newspapers on Java, which prejudiced about the maltreatment of Chinese migrants and the greedy characters of the Planters. Various articles emphasize the good things the Deli Planters Association did for the migrants, such as the construction of modern hospitals, asylums for the blind or quarantine stations. They also defended the necessity of the long contracts and principles of

⁶⁷ W.P. Groeneveldt, *Java-Bode: nieuws, handels- en advertentieblad voor Nederlandsch-Indië*, 12-04-1897.

⁶⁸ *Algemeen Handelsblad*, 22-09-1900. Although written in the Netherlands, this specific article was reprinted several times in Indies' newspapers and heavily discussed by commentators.

forced labor. Without such measures, monitoring and regulating the Chinese laborers was impossible.⁶⁹ Another article questions the general assumption that the Chinese migrants were taking over numerically. Using statistics of Java between 1895 and 1900, this article in *De Sumatra Post* notes that the indigenous population was growing with 12.25% and the European population with 21.12% each 5 years. The growth of the Chinese population on Java was only 7.5% in the same period, which made the assumption of a Chinese invasion made by other authors questionable.⁷⁰

Yet the majority of the newspapers in the Netherlands East Indies openly called for a full immigration stop for at least Java. Multiple pleas were made to the government and this dissent in the press must have had some considerations amongst government circles. However, the voices within the government that did allow the free migration of Chinese to the Netherlands East Indies were stronger. This is especially clear in an article in the Batavian newspaper *Het nieuws van den dag voor Nederlandsch-Indië* from 25 January 1907. After hearing that several residencies in the Indies were taking measures in their own hands and started asking Chinese migrants for a safety deposit as a requirement for entry, the Director of the Justice Department sent a circular letter to all residencies stating that this was not allowed. The official ordinance of *Staatsblad* (State Gazette) 1872 no. 40 on migration to the Netherlands East Indies was still in place and allowed free entrance to any foreigner, including the Chinese. The author of the article questioned this decision of the government. Noting that conditions in the colony had changed considerably in the past 35 years, he stated the following question: 'wouldn't it be time to lift or revoke the official regulations of *Staatsblad* 1872?'⁷¹

2.4 Policies for entry, travel and removal

The ordinance of the *Staatsblad* 1872 No. 40 on entry of Foreign Orientals into the colony was instigated during the period of liberalization of the colonial economy from 1870 onwards. Following the British doctrine of free trade policies, the colonial economy was opening up not only for Dutch private interest, but also that from other European nations. It settled the requirements for the entry of those who fell under the legal category of Foreign Orientals, which predominantly consisted of the Chinese, but also Arabs and before 1895 the Japanese. The various articles in the *Staatsblad* 1872 deal with the rites of entry, the ways in which a residence permit was obtained or extended and when a Foreign Oriental could be legally removed from the country. Before discussing the various articles of this legal document

⁶⁹ For example: *De Sumatra Post*, 03-04-1902, *De Sumatra Post*, 30-09-1903 and an article defending the Deli planters in *Soerabaijasch Handelsblad*, 18-05-1901.

⁷⁰ *De Sumatra Post*, 24-08-1903.

⁷¹ *Het nieuws van den dag voor Nederlandsch-Indië*, 25-01-1907.

in depth, it is important to note that this regulation only counted for Foreign Orientals who were not considered as inhabitants of the Netherlands East Indies Archipelago'.⁷² This terminology sounds rather confusing, as 'Foreign Orientals' was also a legal category that addressed the Chinese, Arab or Japanese citizens of the Netherlands East Indies. This ordinance is thus focused on the temporary visitors with foreign Asian or Middle-Eastern nationalities. However, it curiously uses the same categorical term used for the non-indigenous and non-European population of the colony. As we will see in the fourth chapter, the questions about Chinese migrants' nationality would remain to be a category that was difficult to define.

So what were the official regulations for the Chinese migration? As stated in Article 1 of *Staatsblad 1872*, Foreign Orientals were required to register themselves at the head of the local administration - the *residentie* - within three days after arrival. After having stated their identity and their purpose in the colony, they would obtain an entry permit (*toelatingskaart*) for a period of six months, which could be extended after an official request. Failure to register within the three days would lead to a fine of five guilders (*gulden*) a day, leading up to a maximum of a hundred guilders. According to Article 2, these entry permits were only valid in the harbors opened for free trade and other specific areas mentioned in the document. In other areas it was up to the local administration to handle the application procedure. When the Chinese migrant was found outside the designated areas in his entry permit, his right to stay in the Indies would be revoked.

More permanent residence permits for Chinese migrants were either granted by the Governor-General in the case of Java or Madura or by the heads of the local administrations when in the Outer Islands. This regulation can be found in Article 3. The main requirement for such a permit was that the Chinese migrants needed sufficient means of existence or a job to obtain one. The heads of local administration did have the freedom to reject applications for residence permits, but always had to report to the Governor-General on the reasons for this decision. This however did not mean that the Chinese could settle anywhere in the colony. According to the *Staatsblad 1866 No. 57* that implemented the *Wijkenstelsel* (quarter system), the Foreign Orientals were forced to live in their own quarters, physically separated from Asians of other ethnicities (*Landaarden*).⁷³ This follows the old policy of ethnical segregation in the Netherlands East Indies that had existed since the eighteenth century and was still officially implemented well up into the twentieth century.

⁷² Extract of *N.I. Staatsblad 1872 No.40*, republished in: *Een woord over en voor de Chineezzen, in verband met de bepalingen hunne toelating in Nederlandsch-Indië (Staatsblad 1872 No.40) door Een oud-Ambtenaar van Binnenlandsch Bestuur*. (Surabaya 1893). This booklet can be found in UB Leiden Special Collections.

⁷³ Extract of *N.I. Staatsblad 1872 No.40*, republished in: *Een woord over en voor de Chineezzen*.

The bureaucratic procedure of entry permits

As stated in the *Staatsblad* 1872, newly arriving Chinese migrants had to register at the Immigration Office in the town of arrival within three days. The Department of Justice would then process the application, which was usually written in Malay and shaped into a standardized format. The high uniformity of such application forms as found in the archives suggests that they were probably written down by an Immigration Office agent and then signed by the Chinese migrant. Research on whether the identity of the Chinese was correct and if he had the required means of existence to reside in the colony was then taken over by the local (city) administration, for example the Regency of Batavia. The Department would also check upon a possible criminal record and only provided the entry permit if the migrant proved to be 'a quiet inhabitant'. It is however unknown how extensive this research was. The name of the migrant was probably cross-checked with local police records, although it is unknown to which degree this was actually feasible considering the high amount of incoming migrants and the many small criminal offences in the colony. During the background checks by the Department of Justice, the local administration registered the incoming migrants by making immigration lists containing names, places of birth, age, occupation, last place of residence, date of entry in the colony, and the name of the ship and its captain. These lists were then archived on date along with the race of the incoming migrants mentioned in its description. Many of these records still exist in the National Archives in Jakarta and can be found in the archive of the *Algemeene Secretarie*. The high amount of these immigration files suggest that the Dutch carefully kept track of the incoming Chinese and also forwarded these lists to the central colonial government in Batavia or Buitenzorg (Bogor).

The same procedure was used for extensions of residence permits after the first six months term had ended. Again a short research was made on the means of existence and criminal record of the Chinese migrant and in most cases the extension was granted without much hassle. An example from the register of 25 January 1909 shows that the colonial state could be flexible when a Chinese migrant had not followed the standard procedure of entry. When encountering one migrant who had traveled to and from China during the period of his first residence permit was granted another extension without much trouble, as research had shown that he was a quiet citizen with sufficient means of existence. The same register also shows how multiple procedures were often taken in as one. Five applications for residence permits of Chinese in Batavia were dealt with in one procedure, without any special references.⁷⁴ This seems to suggest that the immigration officers were often not as precise as the stated bureaucratic rules

⁷⁴ *Besluit met Staat* (Batavia 25 January 1909) in: ANRI K99a Algemeene Secretarie No. 1572.

insinuate. Once granted, the Chinese would obtain an official residence permit that referred to the *Staatsblad* 1872 regulation on free entry for Foreign Orientals into the colony. Such documents held all the information that was also in the register and therefore also functioned as some sort of passport. The document had several boxes for each extension of six months. It also stated the places where the holder of the document was allowed to travel, which was usually his place of residence and major harbors on Java which opened for free trade. In some cases, but not all, a photograph was added. There seems to be no specific reason for including a photograph, as the residence permits including one show no major differences with those without. Also a translation in Chinese was added on the left side of the permit, which hints that most of the Chinese migrants did not know the Dutch or Malay language when entering the colony.⁷⁵

The bureaucratic procedure was often experienced as a difficult and time-consuming process. Sometimes Chinese applicants did not completely understand the process, which was acknowledged by some colonial bureaucrats as well. Some cases of flexibility can be found in the archives. For example in 1908, a Chinese woman named Li A Yok from Pacitan in East-Java requested an extension of her entry permit at the residency of Madiun. However, she was already six months late with her application. Originally living in Palembang in South-Sumatra, she married the Chinese Tio Bie en moved with him to Pacitan. At first she lied about her entry permit, as she claimed that her husband had lost it. When she eventually did show her entry permit, the officials noticed that the permit was already invalid for six months. According to the *Staatsblad* 1872, the officials had enough reason to remove her from the Netherland East Indies, but judging on her misunderstanding of the bureaucratic process, her wishes to correct the bureaucratic procedure and because her husband had sufficient means of existence to support her, the officials pleaded for an extension of her permit.⁷⁶ This specific case shows that the immigration laws of the Netherlands East Indies were not as tightly complied with as initially thought. The local bureaucracy seems to have had some autonomy in deciding the fate of an applicant and their personal judgments could influence the process.

Travel and market passes

This local autonomy of regulations could also be caused by lack of guidance and a coherent policy from the central government. A collection of correspondence between local administrations and the central

⁷⁵ For an example of one of these residence permits (toelatingskaarten), see: 'Toelatingskaart Ouw Wi King' in ANRI K99a Algemeene Secretarie No. 1572

⁷⁶ Brief van Residentie Madioen, 17 December 1908, in: Archive K99a Algemeene Secretarie No. 1572, Arsip Nasional Republik Indonesia (ANRI), Jakarta.

government in Batavia/Buitenzorg in 1897 discussing the travel passes needed by the Chinese for traveling to places outside their town of residence is an example of such a tension. According to the *Wijkenstelsel*, the Chinese were not allowed to freely roam through the colony without approval from the government as they were feared for negatively impacting the local economy of the indigenous population in the colony's hinterlands. Nonetheless, some Chinese - especially merchants - could get exceptions for business purposes. They often needed to visit markets, harbors or business partners in other towns and were therefore often granted so-called *reispassen* (travel passes), *passarkarten* (market passes) or *reedekaarten* (harbor passes), which generally were valid for one year. The implementation of this system led to various questions by the local residencies, aimed at the Governor-General. Uncertainties existed about whether a pass should be granted when a Chinese would visit a local market for only a very short period, if he needed a pass if he had already traveled back and forth to another region while arriving in the one mentioned on the travel pass, or when a Chinese would take up residency and refuse to leave while still in the duration of the travel pass.⁷⁷ The distinction between a market pass and travel pass was also considered vague. It was up to the local administration to decide upon the distinction. When this question was raised by the local administrations of both Bantam and Cheribon, the Government Secretary responded with the message that the distinction between the *passarkart* and *reiskart* was not important and it was up to the local government to decide.⁷⁸ In the mean time, the applications for a market pass by Chinese merchants were widening the cracks in this system. The high mobility of some Chinese in the colony - who for economic reasons needed entry in other cities and regions - sparked a debate between the local and central governments, with the latter seeming indifferent about the local implementation of the travel regulations.

There were also voices for an overall revision of the travel passes system. On 20 April 1896, the Resident of Surakarta shared his doubts about the system in a letter to the Governor-General, explaining that the frequency of economic visits by the Chinese in his region was difficult to process bureaucratically. The time-consuming procedure may even result in hampering the local economy, as Chinese merchants might stop their visits to his residency altogether.⁷⁹ Here we see two contesting

⁷⁷ 'Missieve van Gouvernements Secretaris aan Resident van Soerakarta, Buitenzorg 11 April 1897', 'Missive Gouvernements Secretaris aan Resident van Japara, Buitenzorg 11 April 1897', 'Circulaire van de Gouvernements Secretaris aan alle residenten 16/5-95-988', all three in: Archive K99a Algemeene Secretarie No. 493, Arsip Nasional Republik Indonesia (ANRI), Jakarta.

⁷⁸ 'Missieve van Gouvernements Secretaris aan Resident van Bantam, Buitenzorg 11 April 1897' and 'Missieve van Gouvernements Secretaris aan Resident van Cheribon, Buitenzorg 11 April 1897' in: Archive K99a Algemeene Secretarie No. 493, Arsip Nasional Republik Indonesia (ANRI), Jakarta.

⁷⁹ 'Brief Resident Surakarta aan de Gouverneur-Generaal, 20 April 1896' in: Archive K99a Algemeene Secretarie No. 493, Arsip Nasional Republik Indonesia (ANRI), Jakarta.

arguments about the travel pass system. On one hand the central government wanted to regulate the mobility of the Chinese, while local economic interests contested these restrictions. Another difficulty of the system was formulated in 1893 by an anonymous ex-official of the *Binnenlandsch Bestuur* (the department for internal affairs of the Netherlands East Indies) writing on the effectiveness of the *Staatsblad 1872*. According to him, the travel restrictions for the Chinese on Java made it more difficult for the lower class Chinese to find a job outside their designated city, as they literally would be stuck in the city by the travel pass system.⁸⁰ In other words, the very regulations that attempted to keep the impoverished immigrants outside the colony's hinterlands - or at least away from Java's countryside - could also contribute to the problem of pauperism amongst the urban Chinese, which in turn sparked frustration in the Indies' press on Java. With the low-class Chinese in the cities not being able to find a job and thereby not having a sufficient means of existence, they would eventually be expelled and sent back to China on costs of the Netherlands East Indies government.

The arbitrariness of entry requirements

In the *Staatsblad 1872* several requirements are given before a Chinese migrant could obtain an entry permit for the Netherlands East Indies. While the first requirement of 'being a quiet citizen' can be explained quite clearly as it is most likely based on the existence of a criminal record, the second requirement of having sufficient means of existence is not specified at all. What was considered as sufficient? Noticing the local autonomy in providing travel passes and deciding upon extensions for residence permits stated above, the local officials burdened with these matters probably had a lot to say in deciding whether a Chinese had sufficient means of existence. The verdict would thus be highly subjective and influenced by local politics.

Such local autonomy is also demonstrated in the local implementation of required deposits for Chinese migrants as mentioned in the *Nieuws van den Dag voor Nederlandsch Indië* from 25 January 1907 discussed above.⁸¹ The ambiguous way in which the *Staatsblad 1872* was written left some room for maneuver for local administrators to interpret it in their own ways. This caused the Governor-General to issue a warning that the 1872 ordinance did not mean to implement required deposits and free entry for Chinese should be maintained. Again we see some tension between the local and central level, as the Residencies attempted to bar lower-class Chinese from their regions, while the central government did not see such a necessity of hindering entry for the Chinese. It is the very ambiguity of the *Staatsblad*

⁸⁰ Een woord over en voor de Chineezzen, in verband met de bepalingen hunne toelating in Nederlandsch-Indië (*Staatsblad 1872* No.40) door Een oud-Ambtenaar van Binnenlandsch Bestuur. (Surabaya 1893) 8-9.

⁸¹ Het nieuws van den dag voor Nederlandsch-Indië, 25-01-1907.

1872 that causes this tension, as more specifications of this regulation would lead to a more uniform and centralized immigration policy. On the other hand, a tighter standardization of the immigration policies could become more problematic when looking at the different necessities and attitudes in the various regions of the colony. For example, the plantation-based regencies of Sumatra would be more open to the immigration of unskilled laborers, while the major cities of Java might hope to bar such migrants. The alternative was a wide interpretable regulation on entry for Chinese migrants, as the *Staatsblad 1872* indeed stated. Local administrations could then decide themselves on how to shape this policy. However, the whistling back of local heads who implemented deposits is a curious move by the central government which apparently favored free movement and migration for the Chinese throughout the whole colony.

Another illogical element of the *Staatsblad 1872* is mentioned by the anonymous ex-official of the *Binnenlandsch Bestuur* who wrote his article in 1896 and who has already been referred to earlier on this chapter. When a Chinese migrant arrived in the colony, he had three days to visit the immigration office and state his purposes, identity and sufficiency of his means of existence. However, as the author questions, how is it possible for a Chinese migrant to find employment within only three days? He specifically aims this question at the local administrators as they were the ones who could decide upon the granting of the *toelatingskaart*. Rather than the three day period, the ex-official proposes some sort of trial period, namely the six months of the original entry permit. If the migrant would not be able to find employment within this six month period, his permit would not be extended when re-applying. Again we see that an official from the central government was questioning the restriction of Chinese migrants by local administrations in the colony. Judging from its various actions, the central government seemed to favor less restrictions for the movement of the Chinese.

The process of removal

The local administration in the Netherlands East Indies was also burdened with the processes of removal of migrants from the colony. In *Staatsblad 1872* this process can be found in Articles 4 and 5. According to Article 4 those who were present in the colony without a valid entry permit or extension of the entry permit were to be removed from the colony by the head of the local administration. The same counted for those who were rejected when applying for a residence permit or those who got their entry permit revoked. The latter usually meant that the migrant had violated the terms for an entry permit, either by involving himself in criminal activities or ignoring the designated areas described in his document. Another reason for removal could be that the Chinese in question did not have any means of existence

and would thereby form a threat to colonial society. In either of these cases, the migrant would obtain an official order from the local head of administration stating that he was to be removed from the colony. The process of removal itself would be fulfilled as cheaply as possible and the removed migrant would be responsible for the made costs. Finally, the bureaucratic correspondence about the specific removal of one person was copied and forwarded to the Governor-General.⁸² Article 5 describes the process of what occurs when a migrant did not agree with the decision of removal. Counting from the day when the migrant was informed about that he was to be removed, he had one month to appeal to the Governor-General. This could however not be done directly, since the appeal had to be sent through the head of the local administration. The removal process would then be stopped until the Governor-General had made a final decision.

As stated earlier, Chinese migrants would only be removed when either lacking sufficient means of existence or involving in criminal activities. The former situation was the common reason for the colonial government to remove migrants. This however also led to high costs for the government, as the impoverished Chinese could not pay for their own return ticket and thus left the trip back up to the costs of the government. The amount of removed Chinese from the island of Java between 1889 and 1901 has been counted in a newspaper article from 1903 and varies between 45 and 546 on a yearly basis, with an average around 234 Chinese a year compared to an average 846 entry permits granted in the same period (see figure 4).⁸³

Fig. 4: Granted entry permits and removed Chinese on Java, 1889-1901

Year	Amount of entry permits	Amount of removed Chinese
1889	176	93
1890	378	120
1891	392	108
1892	325	253
1893	633	546
1894	1247	274
1895	1879	256
1896	1560	486
1897	1089	283
1898	1209	242
1899	752	203
1900	834	145
1901	524	45

From: *Soerabaijasch Handelsblad*, 23-05-1903

⁸² Extract of *N.I. Staatsblad 1872 No.40*, republished in: *Een woord over en voor de Chineezzen*.

⁸³ *Soerabaijasch Handelsblad*, 23-05-1903. This article does not specify where these numbers come from, but the specific numbers seem to suggest they were gathered from immigration records.

But how was the removal itself organized? The majority of these Chinese migrants who entered Java came from the harbor of Singapore, where they boarded on steamships heading for Java. However, to the frustration of the colonial government, not all of the migrants could be sent directly back to Singapore. Only those who had obtained a pass from the Protector of the Chinese would be allowed into Singapore. The only alternative for sending back the Chinese would be a direct line back to the major harbors of China. In 1902, the Indies government official for Chinese Affairs B. Hoetink was sent to Singapore and Deli to deal with this problem. He discussed various options on how to send back the Chinese from Java. The first option was using the steamships of the Dutch oil company *Koninklijke Maatschappij tot Exploitaite van Petroleumbronnen in Nederlandsch-Indië*, who could ship the Chinese from Java to East-Sumatra, to the Deli harbor of Belawan. However, the freight tankers of this company did not have sufficient space for passengers and keeping the Chinese on the upper deck was considered to be too dangerous.⁸⁴ Also, this option would still leave the question open on how to get the removed Chinese from Belawan back to China. In that case, the planters of Deli were asked to let the government use the private - and mostly empty - ships on their return from shipping Chinese laborers from Swatow to Deli. However, the planters contested this idea. They were afraid that the sight of impoverished Chinese on their ships would harm the image of labor conditions on their plantations once the ship entered a Chinese harbor. The most the planters could offer was only transporting small amounts of removed Chinese on their ships, with a maximum of 3 to 4 persons per ship.⁸⁵

With ships only departing almost once a month, this concession by the planters was not enough to solve the problem. Another solution was sought in collaboration with the British in Singapore. Rather than sending the Chinese back to Singapore, one of the inhabited islands of the Riau Archipelago - within eyesight of Singapore but still part of the Netherlands East Indies - could be used as a temporal docking station where passing ships on their way to China could be approached for sending Chinese back to Hong Kong, Amoy, Swatow or Macao. This option was brought up by the Dutch royal oil company and was approved as a serious option by the British in Singapore. The possibility of Chinese migrants attempting to reach nearby Singapore from this docking station was taken for granted as a necessary evil.⁸⁶ Finally, private shipping companies operating between Java and China were approached for a direct transport

⁸⁴ B. Hoetink, *Verslag van eene reis naar Deli en Singapore, in voldoening aan de opdracht bedoeld bij het Gouvernementsbesluit van 12 januari 1902* (1902) 1-2.

⁸⁵ B. Hoetink, *Verslag van eene reis naar Deli en Singapore*, 3-4.

⁸⁶ *Ibidem*, 10-13.

between Semarang and Hong Kong. However, negotiations were still to be held and this was only held as an option.⁸⁷

In general, the question on how to send the removed Chinese back remained unanswered and was perceived, by both the government and the Indies press, as a problem. The hassle of the actual removal itself could partially explain the passive attitude of the colonial government in relation to the heads of local governments who were more remove Chinese migrants. What else is noticeable from Hoetink's report is the strong dependency of the colonial government on private enterprises in taking care of government issues. Without the help of shipping companies and the planters in Deli, the Chinese migrants could not be removed. Ironically, these were the same shipping companies who often transferred these Chinese from Singapore to Java in the first place. As with securing as a steady stream of incoming Chinese laborers, the removal of unwanted Chinese from the colony was also a diplomatic matter. The sending back of unwanted Chinese could not be handled by just putting them on a boat back to Singapore, as it would endanger the international relations with the British.

The case of removing unwanted immigrants shows some of the aspects in which the colonial private sector and the colonial state were intertwined and interdependent or where they conflicted amongst each other. As with the migration to the colony, the removal of Chinese from the colony was also a diplomatic affair, with private enterprise intervening in, and in some cases undermining, diplomatic relationships. The Dutch, the British in Singapore and the private enterprises eventually had to cooperate in finding suitable solutions to the problems of Chinese migration. A similar tension between official and private forces can be found in the following chapter, when the need for identification of Chinese migrants was discussed by various voices in the Netherlands East Indies.

2.5: Conclusion

As this analysis of the immigration policies for the Chinese in the Netherlands East Indies shows, many different parties influenced the Chinese migration. The *Staatsblad 1872* regulation was close to an open-door policy to incoming Chinese migrants and remained unaltered in the period under study. The only requirements were that the Chinese closely followed the bureaucratic procedure, had sufficient means of existence and had no criminal record. However, these requirements were vaguely formulated in the original regulation, leaving much room for wide interpretations and diverting policies by local administrations. Because the immigration policy of the Dutch was so ambiguous, Chinese migrants could easily avoid some of the regulations and still enter the colony. We can for example see this in the public

⁸⁷ B. Hoetink, *Verslag van eene reis naar Deli en Singapore*, 14-17.

dissent expressed in Java's newspapers, as they portray a widespread problem of poor Chinese landing on the shores of Java. According to the press, pauperized Chinese vagrants roamed the island of Java and were to easily allowed entrance into the colony. Several voices even called for a complete overhaul of the *Staatsblad* 1872. On the other hand, the private sector - especially the coffee planters in Deli - were pressuring the colonial government in creating a steady migration stream for their plantations. As Javanese were seen as unsuitable for coffee planting in East-Sumatra, the Chinese migration became the most important lifeline for the economic activities of Sumatra - maybe even for the development of the Outer Islands in general.

The short connections between the planters, the central government and the Dutch consulates in China (who in turn used their international connections with other European nations) in discussing this steady flow of labor migration, reveal the importance of this issue in overall colonial politics. Compared to the white-settler nations analyzed by McKeown, the Netherlands East Indies perceived the Chinese as essential to its economic survival in a rapidly developing world market demanding colonial commodities. Where for example, in the United States the Chinese labor migrants directly competed with the white-settler workers, the racially-based hierarchy of the Dutch colonial state protected the Chinese migrants from too much frustration amongst the white-settlers in the colony. The anger amongst the white-settler was at least limited to such an extent that no violence against Chinese migrants broke out, as had happened in the United States. The colonial government therefore had little reason to respond to the dissenting opinions in the Indies press, as it did not directly threaten the interests and security of the colonial state. Most of the government's concern about the Chinese migration seemed to be about securing a steady stream of migrants to the colony, rather than limiting it. The side-effect of poor Chinese roaming the streets in Java's major cities seems to have been taken for granted, even when the colonial government had to pay for the costs of shipping illegal immigrants back to China. The influence of the private sector, as for example the Deli Planters Vereeniging, was also significant in shaping the immigration policies of the Dutch colonial state.

In face of the economic benefits enjoyed from the Chinese migration, local administrations who were under pressure by the dissenting press and outrage amongst the white-settler population sought ways to regulate and/or limit the migration in their own ways. A certain degree of autonomy existed and only occasionally were they whistled back by the central government, for example when local administrations started to ask for financial deposits from incoming Chinese. The local administrations were in charge of providing the entry permits, residence permits and could remove Chinese migrants from the colony. Their decisions however had to be forwarded to the central government in Batavia-

Buitenzorg, which had to safeguard its international relationship with both China and the British. In such ways, the decentralized nature of the immigration policies of the colonial state could pose a problem to the Dutch colonial state. Measures taken against Chinese migrants and their relative freedom of mobility in the colony were not supposed to be too severe, as they might influence the international position of the Dutch and thereby endanger the flow of labor migrants from China to the Outer Islands.

The focus of the Netherlands East Indies immigration policies was therefore on regulation and manageability, rather than limitation. This falls into the same historical development that McKeown described when he mentioned the interrelation of globalization and the formation of borders, that together led to a global diffusion and consensus about migration control.⁸⁸ Through entry permits, residence permits and removing illegal immigrants, the Dutch were creating a manageable border against the Chinese migration, but at the same time they held the same border open to Chinese labor migration. In effect, the immigration policies were formulated vaguely and prone to differing interpretations by local administrations inside the colony.

The impossibility of directly sending back the unwanted Chinese immigrants from Java back to their place of departure in Singapore also shows how the Netherlands East Indies had to conform to international standards on migration. The British had their own immigration policies in the Strait Settlements and the Dutch were forced to respect them. The responsibility of a state to keep control over its incoming migrants had shifted to the place of arrival, rather than the place of departure, forcing the Dutch to rationalize their immigration policies. Directly sending back the Chinese migrants would have severely damaged the international relation with the British, forcing the Dutch to find different ways for sending back unwanted immigrants, in which they had huge difficulties. Diplomatic considerations were thus important in the decision-making process on Chinese migration in the Netherlands East Indies. The same counts for following the rapidly developing international standards on migration during this period. In the following two chapters, similar tensions between local interests and diplomatic concerns will be further analyzed.

⁸⁸ Adam McKeown, *Melancholy Order*, 3-4, 318-322.

Chapter 3: Knowing the Migrant.

Identification, Fingerprinting and the Chinese

As Adam McKeown has shown in his book *Melancholy Order: Asian Migration and the Globalization of Borders*, the categorization of identities and the regulation of migration are two inseparable and mutually supporting developments. As we have seen in the first chapter, in the case of Chinese migrants at the turn of the nineteenth century, the old identities based on 'unofficial' constructions such as ancestry, caste, class, title or ranks became unusable and suspect of fraud to immigration officers around the world. New markers for identity and ways of measuring and controlling such knowledge about identities had to be invented. By creating internationally acknowledged systems and tools like passports, entry permits, visas and residence permits, the individual was increasingly isolated into a single bureaucratic identity, which could fit into a standardized system of cross-referenced categories.⁸⁹ This was especially important for regulating Chinese migrations. In order to exclude the Chinese, they first had to be given an identity based on new Western - and thus 'civilized' - categories such as name, occupation, age and body features. It is no coincidence that the passport system and the granting of visas at overseas consulates had a specific Chinese historical context. Such systems were first tested on Chinese migrants, rather than on Europeans.⁹⁰ The suddenness and velocity of Chinese migration around 1900 only accelerated the development of such internationally acknowledged tools, systems and categories.

Although McKeown mainly focuses on the white-settler nations of the United States, Australia, South-Africa and Canada, the same preoccupation can be found in the Southeast-Asian colonial states of this period as well. With the increasing involvement of the colonial state in the daily life of its subjects and the waning power of traditional rulers amongst various colonies, new modes for identification and constructing identities were also increasingly felt as much needed innovations for maintaining control. The expanding bureaucracy of colonial states and the high amount of new regulatory laws implemented in these states made it increasingly important to have certainty on people's identity, especially when facing the large 'faceless' masses of an indigenous population. In a way, the story of discussions around identities and identification techniques is for a part a bureaucratic history of the colonial state, as it is

⁸⁹ Adam McKeown, *Melancholy Order*, 10-11.

⁹⁰ John Torpey, *The Invention of the Passport. Surveillance, Citizenship and the State* (Cambridge 2000) 96-101.

intrinsically tied to the rationalization and standardization of state bureaucracies around the world during the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century.⁹¹

Because of the intrinsically connected issues of migration, identity and identification, this chapter will focus on some discussions in Dutch government circles about the possible introduction of fingerprinting - also called the science of 'dactyloscopy' - for monitoring incoming migrants and Chinese contract laborers. What were the arguments for the introduction of such an identification system? Who were the different parties involved in the introduction of this system? And why was the introduction of fingerprinting felt as a needed reform? As we will see, this discussion about a new identification system gives some insight in the different voices and groups that had interest in shaping the immigration policies of the Netherlands East Indies, as well as the different arguments they brought to the table during the discussion.

3.1: Information, identification and empire.

The construction of manageable identities is tied to the importance of 'information' in colonial rule. Standardizing indigenous identities through passports and identification cards and the isolation of the individual in such an identity would greatly ease the trouble of distinguishing potential troublemakers who threatened colonial security. Fixing identities and creating identification systems could therefore greatly help the effectiveness of political and military intelligence. This topic of information and intelligence in colonial societies has already been extensively discussed by some historians, predominantly by the colonial historian C.A. Bayly in her extensive study of information and intelligence in nineteenth century colonial India. In her work she points to the indigenous social networks of information that were successfully tapped by the British intelligence systems. Through using various informants such as translators, spies, Eurasians, traders or local indigenous heads, the colonial state obtained sufficient knowledge about what kind of political opinions lived within the lower levels of society. She concludes that the symbiosis of these two - the indigenous social communication networks and the colonial state's intelligence system - were the key to success of the British colonial state in

⁹¹ This global development has for example been noticed by Wim van den Doel in his study on the Dutch colonial state, wherein he uses the theory of Stein Rokkan for the state formation process of Western states. For the period in this study, 1880-1914, he describes the Netherlands East Indies as being in the second phase of this theory, meaning that the colonial state was modernizing, mainly for the purpose of new modern economic activities. Overall, the control of the state over its subjects became more direct. See: H.W van den Doel, *De Stille Macht* 445-450 and chapter 5 on pages 215-267.

India.⁹² Her conclusion is however also applicable for any other colonial state, including that of the Netherlands East Indies.

The *Kantoor voor Chineesche Zaken*

A similar preoccupation with gathering intelligence can be seen in the Netherlands East Indies, although an extensive study on the importance of it, like the work of Bayly, is still missing. Gathering information and intelligence was however very important, also in controlling the Chinese population of the Indies. At first, the Chinese council was used as the main circle of informants on what played amongst the Chinese. The *Kapitan China* and other ranks of majors, captains or lieutenants worked together with the local heads of colonial administration in the cities with large Chinese communities. This follows the same conclusions but forward in the analysis by Bayly, as the main circle of informants in the Chinese officer system was chosen out of the community itself. Through creating a circle of privileged community leaders, the Dutch managed to reach deep into the Chinese community.

However, around the turn of the nineteenth century there was a shift towards a more direct control by the colonial government of the Chinese communities, especially when the Chinese councils became suspected of political activities in the wake of rising organized Chinese nationalism from 1900 and onwards, diminishing their usefulness as informants. At the same time, the predominantly *peranakan* leaders of the Chinese council increasingly lost influence amongst the growing section of *singkeh* Chinese. A more trustful circle of informants on Chinese affairs was found in the use of Dutch translators specialized in the Chinese language and who had already occasionally been active in the second half of the nineteenth century as advisors for the colonial government. Although originally purposed to also serve as intelligence gatherers and policy advisors about Chinese affairs, it took until 1895 - when the translators were placed under the department of justice - that they officially started to function as such. Because of this new policy, they were renamed as 'officials for Chinese affairs' and were placed under the guidance of the head 'advisor of Chinese affairs'.⁹³ With a certain degree of autonomy, they actively traveled around the colony in order to build strong relationships with the Chinese councils and heads of various Chinese organizations.

However, the cooperation between the centrally guided Chinese officials and the local administrations remained disorganized and often led to tensions between the Residents and the officials

⁹² C.A. Bayly, *Empire and Information. Intelligence gathering and social communication in India, 1780-1870* (Cambridge 1996) 3-6.

⁹³ 'Staatsblad 1895 No. 135' found in: Archive K99a Algemeene Secretarie No. 431, Arsip Nasional Republik Indonesia (ANRI), Jakarta.

for Chinese affairs.⁹⁴ Following an intelligence failure during various Chinese riots in February 1912 (further discussed in the fourth chapter), the officials for Chinese affairs were transferred to the Department of Home Affairs (*Binnenlands Bestuur*) and stationed under the Office for Chinese Affairs (*Kantoor voor Chinese Zaken*) in 1913. This meant an enormous loss of autonomy for the service, causing them to become too isolated from the Chinese communities they previously penetrated. The centralization of intelligence gathering thus worked counterproductive and cut off an important link of intelligence networks for the Dutch colonial state vis-à-vis the Chinese.⁹⁵ Nonetheless, the Office for Chinese Affairs remained active until the end of Dutch colonial rule in 1942, increasingly focusing on Japanese affairs as well. Its full archives were eventually destroyed in face of the looming Japanese invasion. Many letters and reports can however still be found in the various Dutch colonial archives, both in The Hague and Jakarta.⁹⁶

Fingerprinting and empire

This centralization and bureaucratization of the major intelligence service on the Netherlands East Indies Chinese follows a similar pattern as with the need for fixing Chinese identities and modernizing identification systems. Registration of incoming migrants, the creation of databases on who was who in the Chinese community and the possibility of isolating individual identities is an important prerequisite for obtaining reliable intelligence on possible threats to colonial security. But in order to take such measures, the identities of the Chinese also had to be fixed, measured and monitored. Without being certain on a person's identity, the whole immigration policy could potentially be jeopardized. How could Dutch officials be certain that a Chinese person in front of him was indeed the person he claimed to be? And how was this need for identification and the double-checking of someone's identity connected to the issue of Chinese migration to the Netherlands East Indies? In order to answer these questions, this section hopes to explore some of the discussions around the issue of identity measurements taken in the Netherlands East Indies in 1909-1911. Such discussions were for example held during the introduction of a new method of identification, namely that of fingerprinting, as opposed to methods such as signatures, photography and body measurement. Focusing on one archive that discussed this new method -

⁹⁴ For example a small conflict between the official for Chinese affairs Henri Borel and the Resident of Riau, found in: 'Brief Borel aan Gouverneur-Generaal, 10 September 1895' in: Archive K99a Algemeene Secretarie No. 493, Arsip Nasional Republik Indonesia (ANRI), Jakarta. This tension is also discussed in: 'De Chineesche Kwestie en de Ambtenaren van 't Binnenlandsch Bestuur' in: *Koloniaal Tijdschrift* (1913-1) 41-53. Discussed as a general development by Patricia Tjiook-Liem, 'De Rechtspositie der Chinezen', 61.

⁹⁵ Patricia Tjiook-Liem, *De rechtspositie der Chinezen*, 60-63.

⁹⁶ Francien van Anrooij, *De Koloniale Staat, 1854-1942: gids voor het archief van het ministerie van Koloniën: de Indonesische archipel*. (Den Haag 2009) 47.

amongst technical descriptions and discussions on fingerprinting - one can find many interpretations on the usefulness of this new method and such interpretations in turn shed light on some on the identification problems that existed in the colony.

The history of fingerprinting is dominated by the fields of the history of science and the history of criminology. This mostly has to do with the scientific origins of fingerprinting in the nineteenth century. Fingerprinting was a scientific invention. Measuring and recognizing, together with the classification of 'types of fingerprints' in spreadsheets and tables, was researched in an academic context of an increasing awareness of the diversity of bodily features of mankind, and closely related to the new fields of eugenics and (social) Darwinism. The historical implementation of fingerprinting, however, has mainly been approached by historians in the field of European criminal history. Criminal investigations and the recognition of criminals or recidivists are inherently searches for identities, which makes it no surprise that the first worldwide implementation of fingerprinting was in crime-fighting. However, one of the first 'modern' implementations of taking fingerprints was not done in European or American police stations, but in colonial India. In 1858, William J. Herschel, chief administrator of the Hooghly-district in Bengal, supposedly discovered fingerprinting by asking a Bengali road contractor to print the palm of his hand on a contract in order to make sure he was not a fraud. Building on this idea, Herschel started to work on an organized system for fingerprinting as a means to identify the indigenous population.

Although the scale of his research, which contained numerous categorizations of finger- and handprints (see for an example figure 6), was huge, Herschel's claim that he invented fingerprinting is contested by historians. Taking fingerprints was already an ages old Chinese custom and it most likely spread from China to India centuries earlier. Some historians therefore conclude that he most likely learned it from the Bengalis themselves.⁹⁷ Nonetheless, in 1888 he sent his findings to the famous eugenics scholar Francis Galton, who in his turn took up the subject, together with contributions of other scholars around the world, resulting in a worldwide dissemination of the idea of taking fingerprints to distinguish human bodies, fix identities and possibly classify races.⁹⁸

⁹⁷ Simon Ablon Cole, *Manufacturing Identity: A History of Criminal Identification Techniques from Photography through Fingerprinting* (Dissertation, Ann Arbor 1998) 126-128.

⁹⁸ Mira Rai Waits, 'The Indexical Trace: A Visual Interpretation of the History of Fingerprinting in Colonial India', in: *Visual Culture in Britain*, Vol. 17, No.1 (March 2016) 18.



Fig. 6: Study of Fingerprints by William J. Herschel in 1859-1860. From: Wikimedia Commons.

This racial aspect to the global dissemination of fingerprinting is important. Confronted with the 'faceless' masses of an indigenous population that lacked a European-style registration system, reliable means of measuring identities was extremely important for colonial bureaucrats. As historian Simon Ablon Cole notes in his study of the history of fingerprinting:

I argue that these colonial and racist origins were in fact fundamental to the development of fingerprinting and that the utility of fingerprint identification was conceived, tested, and proven in racially-charged colonial contexts. Fingerprinting emerged as a solution to the problem of identification when faces and bodies would no longer do. The origins of fingerprinting should be sought not just in criminal identification but in a broader trend toward the control of marginalized individuals in increasingly anonymous, mobile, urban societies.⁹⁹

Colonial bureaucrats had huge difficulties with distinguishing people from different races and answers for this problem were partially sought in racial classification through the science of dactyloscopy. Keeping indigenous populations apart and identifying individuals helped sustaining colonial rule. But not only scientifically, also administratively the colonial aspect of fingerprinting is present in the history of dactyloscopy. The whole bureaucratic procedure of subjecting people to official identities and

⁹⁹ Simon Ablon Cole, *Manufacturing Identity*, 35.

consolidating these identities in files and identification cards was also a sign of an unequal power balance. Inspired by the invisible power discourse-theory offered by Michel Foucault, McKeown describes the immigration policies and the forced construction of new identities based on Western categories as an exercise of coerciveness and intimidation.¹⁰⁰ Re-creating someone's identity and integrating that identity in a bureaucratic system - such as taking and storing someone's fingerprints - was a form of extending the state's power over the individuals it ruled. The discussion on dactyloscopy in the Netherlands East Indies was therefore also an exchange of minds about the degree of control the colonial state should or would take over its indigenous population or the Chinese migrants entering the colony.

3.2: Discussing dactyloscopy in the Netherlands East Indies

Beginning in 1909, the Dutch colonial government started to explore and discuss the possibilities of introducing the system of dactyloscopy for better identification in the Netherlands East Indies. In the correspondence on this possible policy, three main discussions can be found. The different opinions came from the Governor-General Idenburg, multiple heads of local administrations, the director of the department of Justice Nederburgh and several government advisors. The first discussion was on whether the dactyloscopy-system was more favorable than that of the anthropometry, which was the use of body measurements as a means of identification. A second discussion revolved around the possible implementations of the system, with highlights about why dactyloscopy would be especially useful in the colonial context of the Netherlands East Indies. Finally, a local implementation of fingerprinting for Chinese migrant laborers in the province of East-Sumatra was considered and discussed and this is the most important discussion for this study.

Before 1909 the identification of strangers in the Netherlands East Indies was either done by identification cards which only stated name and place of residence and birth, or by the anthropometric Bertillonage-system, or 'Bertillonage' - named after its founder Alphonse Bertillon - which precisely measured some of the lengths of the body that would not be altered by changes in weight or age. However, Bertillonage (introduced in the Indies in 1898) was considered a difficult and time-consuming process. Also the storage and classification was made difficult by the lack of a standardized system and personnel trained in using any of the existing standardized measurements. This made the Bertillonage-

¹⁰⁰ Adam McKeown, *Melancholy Order*, 270-272, 285-287.

system prone to human error as local implementation could divert greatly.¹⁰¹ By contrast, taking fingerprints would have been a more easy and trustful way of confirming identities. However, a complete overhaul from the old system of identification cards and the relatively new use of Bertillonage by implementing dactyloscopy could potentially be too costly for the government.¹⁰² A full implementation of dactyloscopy would mean that a database of all persons in the colony would be the eventual aim of the system. The storage and filing of the identity papers for all the millions of people in the colony would make the creation of such a database an incredible burden on the state's budget. This however did not mean that the possibility of such a system was not discussed. For example, a proposed plan by the director of the department of Justice Nederburgh designs a system for creating a register that was alphabetically ordered and divided in race. People who frequently needed to validate their identities - for example traders when signing contracts or frequent travelers when proving their identity in an unknown location- could then let their fingerprints be taken and send to the local bureaucracies for a validity check.¹⁰³ This proposed register would in this way be based on voluntary decisions on registration rather than a forced state measure. Despite the details of the plan, it never left the drawing table. Rather than a wide implementation of fingerprinting, discussions centered on possible local and group specific implementations of dactyloscopy. Three fields of implementations can be distinguished: for criminal investigations and justice, economic purposes and/or migration and travel.

First and foremost, the implementation of dactyloscopy was seen as incredibly useful for criminal investigations. Although other implementations are extensively discussed in the correspondence between the various actors mentioned above, the use of fingerprinting for juridical and police cases is the only one that eventually made it into the Royal Decree of 16 January 1911 that introduced dactyloscopy in the Netherlands East Indies.¹⁰⁴ It is not clear whether the law for fingerprinting was altered later on, but two scientific articles from 1919 and 1925 still discuss the possible implementation of it as a substitute for a civil registration system for the indigenous population, which means that a

¹⁰¹ 'Departement van Justitie (Nederburgh) aan de Gouverneur-Generaal, Batavia 15 Maart 1910' and 'Rapport omtrent de mogelijkheid eener invoering van het stelsel van identificeering van misdadigers door middel van vingerafdrukken al dan niet ter vervanging van de identificatie volgens het stelsel Bertillon' in: Archive K99a Algemeene Secretarie No. 1767, Arsip Nasional Republik Indonesia (ANRI), Jakarta.

¹⁰² 'Advies van de Raad van Indië, vergadering 15 april 1910 in: Archive K99a Algemeene Secretarie No. 1767, Arsip Nasional Republik Indonesia (ANRI), Jakarta.

¹⁰³ 'Directeur van Justitie aan de Gouverneur-Generaal, Batavia 8 Augustus 1910', in: Archive K99a Algemeene Secretarie No. 1767, Arsip Nasional Republik Indonesia (ANRI), Jakarta.

¹⁰⁴ 'Staatsblad van Nederlandsch-Indië 1911, No. 234. Departement van Justitie. Daktyloscopie.', in: Archive K99a Algemeene Secretarie No. 1767, Arsip Nasional Republik Indonesia (ANRI), Jakarta.

general implementation was still experienced as too costly for the colonial state.¹⁰⁵ The introduction of dactyloscopy was thus limited to the field of criminal investigations and juridical cases. If a fingerprint had been found on the crime scene, the prosecuted individual could be checked whether he committed the crime. But this system could also be useful for checking the backgrounds of possible criminals. In case of a recidivist, the legal punishment would be more severe. This identification system could also identify foreign criminals or criminal inhabitants of the Indies that fled abroad. Finally, dactyloscopy offered opportunities for keeping the military in check. If a possible criminal had a military background, he would be punished more severely. In relation to the military however, the usage of fingerprinting was found to be more useful in finding and identifying deserters, which apparently was a recurring problem in the Royal Dutch East Indies Army (KNIL).¹⁰⁶

Secondly, economic motivations for introducing fingerprinting were proposed by various officials consulted in the government discussion. Dactyloscopy would contribute to fixing the problems in state pension frauds and other allowances or deposits granted by the state. By replacing fingerprints with autographs, written contracts between individuals - either traders or officials - would be more valid and less prone to falsification and identity fraud. Lies about identities were also known amongst the various notaries in the Netherlands East Indies. As found in a report of the *Algemeene Secretarie* on fingerprinting, the main problem for notaries was that: '... the most natives and Foreign Orientals, either through white lies or laziness, do not look up to or do not have any understanding of the importance of identity'.¹⁰⁷ This is also the motivation for Nederburgh's proposed plan for an economic register, more or less working as a present-day Chamber of Commerce register. Traders and merchants who had nothing to hide would register themselves by fingerprints voluntarily, thereby consolidating their reputations of doing fair business. Possibilities for such a register also reached outwards. By placing such registers at Dutch consulates in foreign countries, traveling traders from the Netherlands East Indies could always be back-checked before important signing trade deals.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁵ A. van den Bovenkamp, 'Gedachtenwisseling - Het dactyloscopeeren, als algemeene Regeeringsmaatregel der tijdelijke vervanging van een Burgelijken Stand voor de Inlandsche bevolking.', in: *Koloniale Studiën* (1919-2) 421-425 & D.H. Meijer, 'Dactyloscopie voor Nederlandsch-Indië', in: *Koloniale Studiën* (1926-2) 908-947. Interestingly, D.H. Meijer compares the situation in the Netherlands East Indies with the successful implementation of dactyloscopy in British India.

¹⁰⁶ 'Rapport Algemeene Secretarie Afdeling II, bijlage Mailrapport No6.', in: Archive K99a Algemeene Secretarie No. 1767, Arsip Nasional Republik Indonesia (ANRI), Jakarta.

¹⁰⁷ 'Rapport Algemeene Secretarie Afdeling II, bijlage Mailrapport No6.', in: Archive K99a Algemeene Secretarie No. 1767, Arsip Nasional Republik Indonesia (ANRI), Jakarta.

¹⁰⁸ 'Rapport Algemeene Secretarie Afdeling II', ANRI K99a 1767.

Thirdly, the use of fingerprints was brought in relation with the need of clear and trustworthy identification measures in monitoring travelers and migrants roaming around the colony. One of the main problems was that the population of the Netherlands East Indies was extremely mobile. As a government official states: 'whole towns could be unrecognizably renewed in only a period of 5 years'.¹⁰⁹ Someone's fingerprints would therefore be more reliable than the previously defining category of 'place of residence'. Fingerprints would also be able to solve the problems with entry and residence permits that were provided to the 'strangers' entering the colony. Problems of falsification, identity theft and loss of important documents would then be more easily solved. Also would the fingerprinting of Muslims who traveled to Mecca for the holy pilgrimage ease the whole procedure of them leaving and re-entering the colony. Furthermore, also the inhabitants of the Indies that frequently traveled to other countries would profit from the fingerprinting system. Apparently, it occasionally happened that foreign governments did not trust the identity claims of Dutch subjects overseas. Dactyloscopy would therefore guarantee more rights for the traveler.

Fingerprinting Chinese contract laborers

The implementation of dactyloscopy for Chinese contract laborers in East-Sumatra was the most heavily discussed and escalated into a long discussion about the migration of Chinese laborers, the role of China and the 'Young Chinese' political movement in relation to the Netherlands East Indies Chinese. In 1909, the Governor-General was approached by several planters in Deli to introduce fingerprinting for the Chinese contract laborers in East-Sumatra. Occasionally, plantation laborers would break their contract and run away from their debts by simply disappearing. In some cases, they would start working at a different plantation, without any debts, as they did not have to be shipped from China to Deli. The planters were therefore afraid that they might hire a laborer who had previously broken a contract and for this reason they wished some sort of reliable registration system that could monitor these contract-breakers and prevent planters from accidentally hiring them. In 1909-1910, the Governor-General - following an advice by the council of the Indies - consulted several specialists about the possibility of registering contract laborers through dactyloscopy. Amongst them were the local head of administration in Medan, the director of the department of justice Nederburgh, the temporary advisor for Chinese and Japanese affairs Van Wettum and a local official (*controleur*) referred to as Mr. Johan.

¹⁰⁹Rapport Algemeene Secretarie Afdeling II', ANRI K99a 1767.

The Governor-General, Director of Justice Nederburgh and the local official Johan were all to some degree enthusiastic about the introduction of fingerprinting for Chinese contract laborers. However, this enthusiasm was met by hard criticism of the wider implications of introducing this system, especially by the Resident of East-Sumatra and the Chinese and Japanese affairs advisor Van Wettum. Their arguments were that the Chinese laborers understood fingerprinting as an insulting method that traditionally is only done in China with the most severe criminals. Rather than 'impoverished coolies and laborers', Van Wettum explains that the Chinese labor migrants in East-Sumatra were from the high esteemed agricultural caste of Chinese society and that registration through fingerprinting would insult their honor.¹¹⁰ Where Van Wettum refers to the individual laborers, the Resident of East-Sumatra explains that the danger comes not so much from the laborers themselves, but from the Young-Chinese activists present in East-Sumatra and who could easily influence the public opinion amongst the Chinese laborers. Introducing dactyloscopy would not lead to problems with the first ship of immigrants arriving in Belawan after its implementation, but Chinese immigrants in a second ship might be influenced by anti-Western sentiments in China and Young-Chinese opinions in Medan and therefore resist to the taking of fingerprints once arriving in East-Sumatra.¹¹¹ The introduction of dactyloscopy could thus lead to social unrest, as feared by the Resident and Advisor for Chinese and Japanese Affairs. This argument is contested by *Controleur* Johan. Claiming he spoke with several Chinese laborers, he concluded that there was no objection at all against the registration of fingerprints; they just wanted to enter the colony and make a living.¹¹² In general, Johan was very enthusiastic in introducing the system, preferably as wide as possible.

Not regarding Johan's objections, the Resident of East-Sumatra and Van Wettum went on and enlarged the issue to include the local political situation of the Chinese in the region. In a letter to the Governor-General, the Resident of East-Sumatra showed his concern about the loyalty of the Chinese council in Medan. The Major Tjon Yong Hian and the Captain Tjong A Fie both originated from China and were loyal to the Chinese dynasty, but as long as a conflict between the Dutch and Chinese government was avoided, they would also stay loyal to the Dutch colonial state. They were partly influenced by the new political nationalism of the Young Chinese in the region, although only to the degree of that they did

¹¹⁰ 'Missive Gouvernements Secretaris, Buitenzorg 30 Juni 1910'. Also from the separate report: *Rapport van Wettum. Chineesche toestanden in Deli. Daktyloscopie* in: 'Missive van Directeur Justitie Nederburgh, 22 Juli No 843 aan de Raad van Nederlands-Indië en de Gouverneur-Generaal' in: Archive K99a Algemeene Secretarie No. 1767, Arsip Nasional Republik Indonesia (ANRI), Jakarta.

¹¹¹ 'Geheime Brief Resident Oost-Sumatra aan de Gouverneur-Generaal, Medan 23 October 1909', in: Archive K99a Algemeene Secretarie No. 1767, Arsip Nasional Republik Indonesia (ANRI), Jakarta.

¹¹² 'Missive Gouvernements Secretaris, Buitenzorg 30 Juni 1910', in: Archive K99a Algemeene Secretarie No. 1767, Arsip Nasional Republik Indonesia (ANRI), Jakarta.

not lag behind public opinion and were still connected to the common Chinese in the area.¹¹³ Nonetheless, the Resident briefly mentioned that the influence of the Chinese Council should be curbed by more tactical placements of people who can influence Chinese society, as he apparently stopped trusting them. Also Van Wettum mentioned a new initiative to pull away the granting of entry permits, which somehow was fallen in the hands of the Chinese council in East-Sumatra and he wanted to bring it back under firm government control. Other measures would be the forced contribution of the Chinese council to the transport costs of the Chinese who returned to China or the prohibition of opium farming, which was a main source of income for the Chinese officers. Mentioning that a lot is going to change in Chinese society - both in China and in East-Sumatra - the coming decades, Van Wettum predicted a steady growth of the Young Chinese movement and overall political consciousness amongst the Chinese. Eventually this would lead to an unavoidable equality of rights between the Chinese and European classes in the Indies, especially because the Chinese in East-Sumatra were very focused on Singapore and the Strait Settlements, where Chinese had the same legal rights as the British.¹¹⁴ This was however a summarization of future political concerns, in the mean time Van Wettum and the Resident of East-Sumatra advised the Governor-General that the colonial government should wait and see what happens and not intervene too drastically in Chinese society in East-Sumatra.

A similar strategy was advised by the Resident in relation to governance of the Chinese. Noting that the Chinese council in East-Sumatra had very strong ties to the Chinese Consul in Singapore and the Chinese state itself, he advised a moderate policy in governing the Chinese. Sudden measures that could violate labor or citizenship rights could suddenly turn into a diplomatic crisis with China. Assuming that the Chinese consul in Singapore and Chinese Ambassador in The Hague would not agree with the taking of fingerprints with Chinese migrants, he concluded that the introduction of the system is unnecessary, possibly counter-productive and, as he framed it, 'something that is bestowed on us by Europeans theorists'.¹¹⁵ A diplomatic crisis with China was widely feared, although not in a military sense. A major fear amongst the colonial government and the planters in Deli was that China would not negotiate about an emigration treaty between both countries. Recruitment of Chinese laborers was officially prohibited in China and only after signing a contract with the local nobility or government officials in China, a

¹¹³ 'Geheime Brief Resident Oost-Sumatra aan de Gouverneur-Generaal, Medan 23 October 1909', in: Archive K99a Algemeene Secretarie No. 1767, Arsip Nasional Republik Indonesia (ANRI), Jakarta.

¹¹⁴ *Rapport van Wettum. Chineesche toestanden in Deli. Daktyloscopie* in: 'Missive van Directeur Justitie Nederburgh, 22 Juli No 843 aan de Raad van Nederlands-Indië en de Gouverneur-Generaal' in: Archive K99a Algemeene Secretarie No. 1767, Arsip Nasional Republik Indonesia (ANRI), Jakarta.

¹¹⁵ 'Geheime Brief Resident Oost-Sumatra aan de Gouverneur-Generaal, Medan 23 October 1909', in: Archive K99a Algemeene Secretarie No. 1767, Arsip Nasional Republik Indonesia (ANRI), Jakarta.

European nation could legally recruit Chinese laborers outside the Treaty Ports. The only alternative was using the contacts of German consulates on the Chinese coast for labor migration to East-Sumatra. Through the possibility of a diplomatic crisis and a possible drop in labor migration, the security of obtaining sufficient Chinese laborers for East-Sumatra became intrinsically connected with the introduction of dactyloscopy for Chinese contract laborers.

The Dutch also feared that the Chinese government would use a possible emigration stop for blackmailing the Netherlands East Indies into allowing the introduction of Chinese consuls in the colony.¹¹⁶ In the same years, negotiations were taking place between the Dutch and Chinese on a consular convention. The issue of Chinese consuls and whether they would represent the Chinese migrants in the Netherlands East Indies is a question to be answered in the following chapter. What is important here is that an important measure in controlling and regulating Chinese migrants, namely fingerprinting, was tied into a diplomatic negotiation between the two states. Any negative news about the conditions of Chinese laborers in East-Sumatra, would endanger the negotiations with the Chinese. For the Dutch it did not matter whether the registration of fingerprints for Chinese contract laborers was indeed offensive. The very possibility of sparking unrest amongst Chinese laborers already made the Dutch reconsider introducing the dactyloscopic system. The influence of an outside nation, China, in the internal affairs of the Dutch colonial state shows us that the issue of Chinese migration to the Netherlands East Indies cannot be approached in isolation. Because of the Chinese migrants inside the borders of the colonial state, colonial governance had become an international affair and needed careful diplomatic considerations when changed. This also meant that the Netherlands East Indies had to further cooperate with other ministries of the Dutch empire, for example the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for the diplomatic correspondence with China and the Ministry of Justice when Dutch laws needed to be changed in order to settle disputes about migrations to the Netherlands East Indies. In this sense, the colony became closer connected to the imperial metropole in Europe and added another layer to the already extensive amount of parties involved in resolving and controlling the Chinese migrations to the Netherlands East Indies.

3.3: Conclusion

As seen in the historiography of fingerprinting, this modern identification system had a very colonial background in its invention and development. In a colonial state that needed reliable information on its

¹¹⁶ 'Missive Gouvernements Secretaris, Buitenzorg, 30 Juni 1910' in: Archive K99a Algemeene Secretarie No. 1767, Arsip Nasional Republik Indonesia (ANRI), Jakarta.

subjects to maintain full control, a full introduction of dactyloscopy would be a logical historical event. However, it was also a very costly measure to undertake. Registering the millions of the indigenous population would be an enormous endeavor for the Dutch colonial state. But also a local and specific implementation limited to Chinese contract laborers in East-Sumatra was reconsidered, although for different reasons. The possibility of a diplomatic crisis with China was too much of a risk for the Dutch, as it might endanger the stream of contract laborers to East-Sumatra or influence the negotiations with the Chinese about the entry of consuls in the Indies. This meant that the - initially - internal affair of the Dutch colonial state had turned into a bigger international and diplomatic concern. This fear of diplomatic unrest pulled the Chinese state into the discussions on immigration policies for the Chinese and thereby helped to shape these policies. In the following chapter we will return on this subject: a more sophisticated Chinese state that intervened in questions on nationality and consular representation of Chinese migrants in the Netherlands East Indies.

Chapter 4: Between Dutch and Chinese: nationalism, nationality and consular representation.

In the previous chapters we have seen that the Chinese state had a significant influence on the immigration and identification policies of the Netherlands East Indies. Rather than focusing on the Dutch-made policies, this chapter further deepens the analysis of China's influence on the Chinese migrants in the Netherlands East Indies. Like with any story of migration, the country of origin - either culturally or politically - stays to some degree in the hearts and minds of the migrant minority in the host country. This is in part a reaction to the often hostile stance taken by the host country. The common heritage of a migrant community can therefore function as a cultural or political point of reference for the community when the host state fails to open the doors to a full integration and assimilation with the indigenous population. A similar development can be seen in the Chinese migration to the Southeast-Asian colonies. Through often still open cultural and economic ties with the Chinese homeland and/or by a reluctance of the colonial state to let the Chinese integrate into the indigenous population, the Chinese in Southeast-Asia treasured their ancestral background. Although this was not necessarily a new development in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century, the novelty in this period is that the Qing increasingly started to intervene into the daily lives of - in their own eyes - *their* overseas nationals. Through the connection with China, the Chinese migrants became a transnational and international force that the Dutch had to deal with. What were the consequences of a proactive Chinese state in relation to the Chinese migrants in the Netherlands East Indies? And how did the transnational connection with China influence the colonial state and its need to protect its unequal rule? And how did the involvement of the Chinese state influence Dutch immigration policies against the Chinese?

In order to lay bare the trilateral connection between China, the Dutch colonial state and the Chinese migrants this chapter will focus on the following aspects. Firstly this chapter will discuss the Chinese interference in the Indies-Chinese communities in the period 1900-1912, which is part of the birth of a more sophisticated Chinese nationalist movement in the 1920s. Partly homegrown and partly initiated by interference of the Qing Empire, the Chinese in the Indies gradually became more aware of their Chinese background. Inherent to this growing consciousness was a growing distrust with the Dutch over discriminatory measures against the Chinese. In which ways did the Chinese state intervene in internal colonial affairs related to the Chinese? And how did the Dutch react to this? Secondly, the Chinese state became more concerned with issues on nationality and consular representation. Being

forced to clear out its emigration policies on a global scale by demands made by Western powers, the Qing Empire became more aware of the extraterritorial economic potential of the overseas Chinese. As a result, the Qing started to modernize citizenship laws and diplomatically negotiate nationalities issues in order to incorporate the overseas Chinese into the Chinese state. The second section of this chapter will therefore deal with the diplomatic discussions between the Dutch and the Chinese about to which nationality Chinese migrants in the Indies belonged, which international rights they had and whether they could be protected by a Chinese consul. As we will see, in an unequal colonial society, such issues could have enormous consequences for colonial governance. Finally, this chapter will focus on one specific case-study which touches the issues of nationality and nationalism in relation to migration. The riots during Chinese New Year in the wake of the birth of the Chinese Republic in 1912 made the Dutch increasingly aware of the future difficulties this segment of society could cause. It was also the first major case of unrest amongst Chinese migrants since the increasing intervention of the Chinese state in Indies-Chinese affairs, which makes it interesting for the overall theme in this study.

4.1: Connections between the Chinese State and the overseas Chinese

At the beginning of the twentieth century, the overseas Chinese in Southeast-Asia became increasingly focused on their ancestral homeland. Although this partly has to do with demographics - many Chinese in the colonies were born in China and only recently migrated - also culturally and politically the Chinese communities became more attached to China. This development coincides with the difficulties China was going through in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century. Under constant pressure by Western colonial powers that took small bites out of Chinese international autonomy, the Qing Empire went through various periods of internal unrest, eventually leading to the downfall of the empire in 1911. Even though attempts were made to reform and modernize the sluggish imperial bureaucracy, several civil and international wars took place in this period, with the Boxer-rebellion of 1900 being the largest. This period also bred an anti-Qing nationalist and revolutionary movement, which later was led by Sun Yat-Sen, who himself had travelled through many overseas Chinese settlements for fundraising and propaganda activities. With the Qing Empire threatening to fall, the fate of China became a growing concern amongst the overseas Chinese. It was therefore not uncommon to find frequent political discussions in the newspapers of the Chinese migrant communities in Southeast-Asia. Instead of a bottom-up growing concern about China, the Chinese state also reached out to its overseas subjects. As the majority of overseas Chinese, either as merchant or laborer, migrated abroad to make money for the family at home the Chinese state hoped to capitalize on such monetary flows. Gradually, the overseas

Chinese were seen as an integral part of the economic survival of the empire, or in the case of the nationalist movement led by Sun Yat-Sen, the survival of the anti-Qing resistance.¹¹⁷ In order to secure the ties between the overseas Chinese and their homeland, both the Chinese state and the anti-Qing movement actively promoted a form of cultural nationalism in the Southeast-Asian colonies, which greatly worried the related colonial governments.

Overseas Chinese nationalism in other colonies

With the overseas Chinese being an important financial factor in either the survival of the Qing Empire or the success of a revolution against it, an internal Chinese political crisis had migrated to colonial Southeast-Asia. In various colonies, the Chinese started to become more conscious about their lack of rights in a colonial state and occasionally turned to China for help. With the major harbor for Chinese migration in Singapore, the British in the Strait Settlements also had to deal with the growth of Chinese nationalism in overseas communities. In Singapore the political, economic and cultural elite of the Chinese community also had an increased interest in what was taking place in China. Compared to the Dutch, the British had less restrictions imposed on the Chinese, which made them overall less vulnerable to the anti-colonial or anti-western sentiment that spread in other colonies and within China. In effect, the Chinese elite in the Strait Settlements did safeguard their Chinese heritage and sometimes became active in pro- or anti-Qing political matters, but hardly passed outside the framework of British imperial citizenship and colonial security. Rather than feeling separated from the British as a minority community, the Straits Chinese tended to combine the British and Chinese identities, using them as pleased depending on certain circumstances.¹¹⁸ Within the lower classes of the Singaporean Chinese there was also a strong focus towards China. In what Chang-hui Chi calls 'diasporic identities', they maintained very diverse and complex social and business networks which were mainly defined by the region where these lower class Chinese came from and the relatives or friends they had in other colonies.¹¹⁹ Where the political elite in Singapore tended to be more British empire-minded, the success of overseas nationalism was especially established in such lower classes and their networks. It is through such networks in Singapore that Chinese nationalism in the Netherlands East Indies also spread, as many of the Chinese

¹¹⁷ For the Qing, see: Yen Ching-hwang, *Coolies and Mandarins*, 249-253. For the nationalist movement see: Yen Ching-hwang, 'Sun Yat-Sen and the Overseas Chinese', in: Yen Ching-hwang, *Studies in Modern Overseas Chinese History* (Singapore 1995) 74-89.

¹¹⁸ Tzu-hui Celina Hung, ' "There Are No Chinamen in Singapore": Creolization and Self-Fashioning of the Straits Chinese in the Colonial Contact Zone, in: *Journal of Chinese Overseas*, vol. 5 (2009) 282-287.

¹¹⁹ Chang-hui Chi, 'Networks and Emplacement: Jinmen Migrants in Singapore, 1850s-1942, in: *Journal of Chinese Overseas*, Vol. 6 (2010), 36-40.

who came to the Indies first traveled through Singapore and often resided there for some time before they would board a new ship. In comparison to Singapore, the Chinese elite in Penang more actively supported the anti-Qing cause. While tracing the backgrounds and affiliations of the Chinese intelligentsia in Penang, Tan Soon Cheng notes that several of the intellectual and economic elite of Penang actively contributed to the revolutionary cause and often held fundraising activities or public speeches about the fate of China.¹²⁰

In face of revolutionary activities, the French in Indochina had to deal with a porous land border with China. Even though revolutionaries committing crimes were officially transferred to the Qing, many Chinese nationalists fled back and forth over Indochina's border.¹²¹ Migration was therefore a significant problem in Indo-China, forcing the French to actively control the borders, which was close to impossible. However, judging from this study's analysis of newspapers and archival material, the Dutch did not seem to compare the situation in the Indies that much with the situation in the French colony.

The Americans in the Philippines, a colony they forcibly obtained from the Spanish in 1898, had a significantly smaller problem with overseas Chinese nationalism. The main reason for this is that Chinese migration was almost directly prohibited once the colony was taken over. The driving factor in this was the general American idea that the Philippines would have to become independent as fast as possible. In other words, this meant that the Filipinos themselves had to get ready for independence. Chinese intervention would hamper their push to civilization.¹²² Only in very special circumstances could some Chinese traders enter the colony, but the Philippines did not have the high amount of labor migration that can be seen in the other Southeast-Asian colonies.

The closing off of the Philippines by the Americans isolated them from the problems of Chinese nationalism that roamed through Southeast-Asia in the early-twentieth century. The Dutch, British and French however did experience the rising Chinese nationalism in their colonies, especially after the fall of the Qing Empire in 1911 and the birth of the Chinese Republic in 1912. As Nobuto Yamamoto shows, the regional cooperation in containing the spread of nationalist ideas and activists through bilateral agreements on immigration control and closing borders only emerged in the 1920s. At first the British were reluctant in acknowledging the problems of Chinese nationalism, probably because the Chinese in the Straits Settlements seemed to be a well integrated and wealthy middle-class. It took however until

¹²⁰ Tan Soon Cheng, 'Activists on the Fringe: Chinese Intelligentsia in Penang in the Early 20th Century', in: *Journal of Chinese Overseas*, Vol.3, No.1 (May 2007) 43-44.

¹²¹ Tracy C. Barret, *The Chinese Diaspora in South-East Asia. The Overseas Chinese in Indo-China* (New York 2012) 165-173

¹²² Adam McKeown, *Melancholy Order*, 213-214.

the spread of communism and the merging of two major Chinese communist parties in the Straits until the British started cooperating with its neighbors. The common interests with the French were too small to create an enduring cooperation, but from 1924 onwards, the British actively - but informally - started cooperating with the Dutch in the fields of migration and intelligence-sharing.¹²³ However, as we have seen earlier on in this study, the involvement of the Qing in colonial affairs in Southeast-Asia already originated from earlier decades. The regional cooperation between the colonial powers who faced the what Nobuto Yamamoto calls 'the China problem' is therefore something that falls outside the analytical framework of this study.

Chinese state intervention and Chinese nationalism in the Netherlands East Indies

Interference of the Chinese state in the wellbeing of the Chinese in the Netherlands East Indies already started with the first labor migrations to East-Sumatra in the 1860s, with Deli having a notorious reputation in China for maltreatment of Chinese plantation laborers. This hampered the negotiations with China on securing a steady stream of labor migration to the area and made the Chinese realize they wanted a consular representation for their subjects in East-Sumatra.¹²⁴ The development of a nationalist movement of the Chinese in the Indies took a longer time to develop. The first major movement was the neo-Confucian *Tiong Hoa Hwe Koan* association, founded in 1900 in Batavia, and organized Chinese-centered education and promoted 'Chineseness' as a common identity.¹²⁵ The success of this movement was significant and Chinese schools of this association quickly spread around Java. It also caught the attention of the Qing, which started meddling in education affairs up until the Second World War. Through sending teachers and education officials, the Chinese state attempted a 'resinicization' of the Netherlands East Indies Chinese. But more importantly, the Chinese homeland functioned as a moral support in an education movement that had bitter feelings about the legal restrictions for the Chinese in the Indies and the lack of education and opportunities offered by the colonial state. In order to accommodate the Indies-Chinese, to counter the influence of the Chinese state and to prevent the Indies-Chinese from becoming too China-centered, the Dutch quickly worked to set up their own government-sponsored Dutch-Chinese Schools.¹²⁶ Due to high costs and limited space for all Chinese, the *Tiong Hoa Hwe Koan* schools remained to be a popular alternative for many Chinese.

¹²³ Nobuto Yamamoto, 'Shaping the 'China Problem' of Colonial Southeast Asia', 145-150.

¹²⁴ Patricia Tjiook-Liem, *De Rechtspositie der Chinezen*, 444-448.

¹²⁵ Mona Lohanda, *Growing Pains*, 50-54.

¹²⁶ Ming Govaars, *Dutch Colonial Education. The Chinese Experience in Indonesia, 1900-1942* (Singapore 2005) 74-83.

This fracture between the Dutch and the Chinese on education affairs was partly caused by the growing amount of *singkeh* Chinese in the colony. However, this private schooling movement was partially founded by *peranakan* Chinese in the urban area of Batavia. In general, the *peranakan* Chinese were fairly Dutch minded, but this did not mean that they did not suffer from the same restrictive anti-Chinese policies of the colonial state. Bending with the more China-centered tides was a strategy of survival for the Chinese who considered themselves as *peranakan*. Through the migration of - especially lower class and middle-class - *singkeh* Chinese, the traditional political and cultural elite of the Chinese councils was rapidly losing influence and came under increasing attacks by the more activist and revolutionary Chinese nationalists in the colony during the twentieth century.¹²⁷ In the previous chapter on the discussion in fingerprinting we have already seen a similar tension where the Chinese council in East-Sumatra had to bend along with the Young Chinese movement in order to protect the little influence they still had in the Chinese community. Step by step the Chinese in East-Sumatra were turning to the Chinese consul in Singapore as a political leader of the community rather than the Chinese officers. A similar development took place on Java, with Chinese-centered associations capitalizing on the vacuum left by the losing influence of the Chinese officers. The Chinese council system therefore became less functional for the Dutch as an active system of rule. Even though the last Chinese captain was arrested by the Japanese in 1942 and died in a prisoner of war camp in 1945, the system was more or less gradually abandoned in the 1930s due to lack of finance and support from the Chinese population.¹²⁸

The gradual waning of the Chinese council was also caused by several private initiatives by the *singkeh* Chinese in the Indies. Lacking a serious representation of their community in economic issues and the press, various new organizations were founded as early as the first decade of the twentieth century. For example, the first Chinese chambers of commerce, the *Siang Hwee*, were opened in 1907. Although officially functioning as mediators in trade between China and the Netherlands East Indies, the chambers of commerce also operated as unofficial consulates and representatives of the Qing Empire. In the case of the non-governmental revolutionary movement, several reading clubs were established. These so called *Soe Po Sia* had a significant influence amongst various Chinese communities in the Indies and became a vehicle for the spread of Chinese nationalism amongst - especially the lower classes - of the Chinese community. Finally, there was also a significant China-centered turn in the Sino-Malay press, which published newspapers that increasingly reported on political and economic affairs in China and

¹²⁷ Mona Lohanda, *The Kapitan China of Batavia*, 232-236.

¹²⁸ Monique Erkelens, *The Decline of the Chinese Council in Batavia*, 44-45, 363-367.

often protested the maltreatment of the Chinese in the colony.¹²⁹ The majority of these organizations were however still in an infant phase during the first decade of the twentieth century. The main burst of opposition against the colonial state from Chinese nationalists took place in the 1920s and 1930s and have been extensively discussed by historians such as Mona Lohanda, Nobuto Yamamoto, Oiyen Liu and others. In contrast, the period 1900-1911 - the focus of this study - should be marked for its rise of a cultural nationalism in the neo-Confucian education movement and by a growing intervention of the Qing Empire in the daily lives of the Indies-Chinese. More than the spread of dangerous activists which marked the following decades, the transnationalism of the Chinese that worried the Dutch colonial state was of a more intellectual, cultural, institutional and diplomatic nature.

4.2: Delaying the inevitable: consular representation and migrant nationality.

With the growing attachment of the Qing Empire that ran parallel with the emigration of Chinese laborers to faraway places, the Qing also started to place government representatives in the overseas Chinese communities. In the late-nineteenth century the Qing rapidly expanded their diplomatic system by placing ambassadors and consuls across the world. The first foreign consul in such an overseas community was placed in Singapore in 1877 and was ordered to protect the commercial interests of the Chinese there. Between 1878 and 1883 the diplomatic network expanded to include Japan, the United States, Hawaii and Cuba. These places were mainly chosen for three reasons, namely places with high amounts of Chinese plantation laborers who needed consular protection (Cuba), places with a wealthy Chinese trading society (the US and Singapore) and places that were military and politically strategic for the Chinese state (Japan).¹³⁰ The second period of consular expansion was between 1893 and 1912 and included - amongst other countries - the major cities in the British colonies, the Philippines, Australia and eventually in 1911 the Netherlands East Indies.¹³¹ Unlike with the British, the negotiations about a consular convention for a consulate in the Indies was a long and painful process taking several decades since the first request made by the Chinese. This delay was intrinsically connected to the difficulties the Dutch faced with their form of colonial rule, the legal inequality of the colonial state, the need to clear out the nationality of Chinese migrants and the overall fears and problems the Dutch had over the issues of immigration.

¹²⁹ Alexander Claver, *Dutch Commerce and Chinese Merchants in Java. Colonial Relationships in Trade and Finance, 1800-1942* (Leiden, Boston 2014) 197-198.

¹³⁰ Yen Ching-Hwang, *Coolies and Mandarins*, 140-153.

¹³¹ *Ibidem* 154-161, 168-177.

The question of nationality

Unlike the British, the Dutch did not have an imperial citizenship. Before the introduction of a law of 1911 on 'Dutch subjecthood' in the Netherlands East Indies, Dutch nationality was considered the same legal status as that of the category 'European'. Although equalized with Europeans in some aspects of colonial law and placed in the vague 'Foreign Orientals' category, the Chinese were subjected to the same criminal law as the indigenous population (the third legal category: *Inlander*). This meant that the Chinese had to appear in the same courts as the indigenous population, which greatly angered the Chinese population who considered themselves as belonging to a modern nation rather than an uncivilized 'native'. However, before 1892 the issue of nationality for newly-arrived migrants and visiting foreigners was unaddressed in colonial law. This lack became problematic for the first time when a non-European inhabitant of the Indies traveled abroad. In 1876 the Dutch stumbled on some difficulties of the lack of a legal category for the Chinese when a Dutch consul in Siam asked the Governor-General of the Netherlands East Indies J.W. Van Lansberge whether he should give consular protection to Indies-Chinese who travelled to Bangkok. This issue was temporarily solved by making the traveling Dutch subject show a birth certificate showing the Chinese was born in the Indies or a certificate showing he was allowed to settle in the colony.¹³² The first major law that dealt with the issue of whether someone was a 'Netherlands subject' was the Article 12 Law of 1892 that basically defined both the indigenous population and the Chinese minority in the colony as being strangers, as they were 'not-Dutch' and were only bound to the colonial state on territorial claims.¹³³ In this sense, they were practically stateless, while only the Dutch residing in the Indies having an official form of nationality that tied them to the Dutch state.

Legally equalizing the Chinese with Europeans was however no realistic option for the Dutch. Such a legal measure would cause court cases about the unequal treatment of the Chinese through the divide-and-rule policies of the colonial state. The Dutch relied on the restrictive measures imposed on the Chinese in order to keep this segment of the population in check. Furthermore, an equalization with Europeans would cause resentment amongst the indigenous population, who already felt that the Chinese were a privileged group in colonial society. In order to keep unequal rule in place but at the same time hoping to fix the nationality issue of the Chinese, the Dutch worked on a solution in the form of a new 'non-European Dutch subject' legal category. The negotiation about this category was predominantly interdepartmental, with the Ministry of Colonies and the Governor-General of the Indies

¹³² Patricia Tjiook-Liem, *De Rechtspositie der Chinezen*, 437-440.

¹³³ *Ibidem*, 436-437.

on one side, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on the other, and the Ministry of Justice trapped in the middle and burdened with implementing the possible new law. For the Ministry of Colonies and the Dutch colonial state the unequal legal distinctions in the Indies made it impossible to place the Chinese under the same category as Dutch nationals (European). The Ministry of Foreign Affairs on the other hand felt a strong diplomatic pressure from the Chinese and hoped to solve this matter as soon as possible in order to save the international relationship with China.¹³⁴ This led to a long and frustrating stalemate between the ministries involved.

The interdepartmental stalemate about the introduction of a Dutch subjecthood that could include non-Dutch inhabitants of the Indies eventually took close to a fourteen years. In 1906 however, a growing feeling of haste developed, when Chinese diplomats such as the Chinese ambassador in The Hague became openly frustrated with the endless delays and uncertainty caused by the Dutch in the negotiations about a consular convention. Having a consular representation meant that the Chinese laid a claim on the nationality of the Indies Chinese, which caused a feeling of panic amongst the Dutch officials. In the meantime, by legally interpreting the 1892 law, the Chinese state increasingly considered the Chinese in the Indies as their own subjects and intervened more and more in their daily lives. Pressure from the Qing was building up in the period 1906-1911. In 1906 a secretary of the Chinese embassy in The Hague wanted to make a visit to the Indies on his way to his post in The Hague. Although the Dutch previously contested official visits of the Chinese, from 1906 onwards they were willing to allow such visits more often, although under strict circumstances. Any political intermingling with the position of the Chinese in the Indies was prohibited. Furthermore, in 1907 the Chinese ambassador in The Hague reported that a Chinese Chamber of Commerce had been founded in Batavia. This institution functioned as a representative of the Chinese state in trade issues, which *de facto* meant that it was a Chinese consulate. In the same year, a Chinese viceroy and part of the royal family visited the Indies for a study on Chinese education. Similar visits became more frequent in the following years and made the Dutch realize that the Chinese had very different ideas about to which state the Indies-Chinese belonged.¹³⁵

When looking closer at the Dutch interdepartmental discussions in the wake of one of these visits we see the difficulties the Dutch faced in the question of Chinese nationality. In June 1910 the Dutch colonial state found a disturbing article in the Chinese press that the Vice-Minister of Trade, Agriculture and Industry was preparing a visit to the Indies in order to research the economic position of

¹³⁴ Patricia Tjiook-Liem, *De Rechtspositie der Chinezen*, 468.

¹³⁵ *Ibidem*, 475-477.

the 'Chinese colonists' and whether they were being ruled by tyrannical principles. The official for Chinese Affairs Van Wettum mentioned that the main reason for this visit was to inspect the fundraiser for the Chinese fleet and the redemption of the Chinese national debt.¹³⁶ Being forwarded through the Ministry of Colonies and Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the letter eventually reached Beelaerts van Blokland, who was the Dutch ambassador in Peking. After having confirmed these rumors in July 1910, he approved the provision of a visa for the Vice-Minister in 21 February 1911, but warns for any attempts of him for making it an official political visit.¹³⁷ In the seven months in between, the Dutch ambassador researched the intentions of the visit and discussed the problem with the British ambassador in Peking, asking on how the Straits Settlements dealt with the encroaching Chinese state on the colonies. The British ambassador's advice followed the same principles the Dutch had implemented earlier. The Chinese official was to be friendly received but closely watched.¹³⁸ As a diplomat, Beelaerts van Blokland, like his colleagues in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, favored a soft and diplomatic approach. This contrasts with the Dutch officials in the Netherlands East Indies. As the correspondence to The Hague shows, the Dutch colonial state was more hostile against the meddling of the Chinese state in Dutch colonial affairs. In July 1910 the government secretary send a circular to all heads of the local administration asking to prohibit entry of this vice-minister without a diplomatic notification unless contact had been made with the colonial government in Buitenzorg.¹³⁹ The Dutch colonial government perceived these visits as political intervention in internal colonial affairs and intermingling in the daily life of the Chinese population. By forcing the Chinese to first diplomatically notify and negotiate a possible visit, the Dutch colonial state gave a strong message to the Chinese. There would be no political visits to the Indies and any visit of a Chinese government official had to be discussed with the Dutch government beforehand.

Again, the differing interests of one the one hand the colonial state and the Ministry of Colonies and on the other the Ministry of Foreign Affairs collided. Nonetheless, the latter usually won, as the archives show that no major diplomatic crisis took place between the Netherlands and China on this issue. In most cases, the Chinese official was not stopped at the border or removed from the colony. If the Dutch found out that a traveling Chinese official had engaged himself in political activities, the most

¹³⁶ 'Van Wettum aan de directeur van Justitie, Batavia, 8 juni 1910' in: Geheim Verbaal 21 February 1911 Q4, NL-HaNA, Colonies, 1850-1900, 2.10.36.51, inv. nr. 129.

¹³⁷ 'Brief Ministerie voor Buitenlandse Zaken aan Ministerie van Koloniën, 21 Februari 1911' in: Geheim Verbaal 21 February 1911 Q4, NL-HaNA, Colonies, 1850-1900, 2.10.36.51, inv. nr. 129.

¹³⁸ 'Afschrift Koninklijk Gezantschap der Nederlanden No.1045/268, Beelaerts van Blokland, Peking 21 Juli 1910' in: Geheim Verbaal 21 February 1911 Q4, NL-HaNA, Colonies, 1850-1900, 2.10.36.51, inv. nr. 129.

¹³⁹ 'Eerste gouvernementssecretaris De Graeff aan de Residenten van Batavia, Semarang en Soerabaja, Buitenzorg 25 Juli 1910' in: Geheim Verbaal 21 February 1911 Q4, NL-HaNA, Colonies, 1850-1900, 2.10.36.51, inv. nr. 129.

aggressive response of the Dutch was a friendly formulated diplomatic protest. Unsurprisingly, this did not do much to stop the political intermingling of Chinese officials with the Chinese community. Quite the contrary, especially in 1909-1911 the Chinese state build up pressure, which for example became visible through a small diplomatic crisis after it was revealed that the Chinese ambassador in The Hague was heavily communicating with a trader's society in Surabaya on political affairs in the colony.¹⁴⁰ In the same period, an Indies-Chinese officer of the Chinese council was found to be involved in recruiting nominees for a provincial election in China, which he was ordered to do by the Chinese state.¹⁴¹ From 1906 to 1911 it therefore became all the more clearer that the Chinese were not stepping down on the issue of the nationality of the Chinese migrants in the Indies.

The biggest shock for the Dutch came when on 1 April 1909 China declared its new law on nationality, stating that everyone whose father was Chinese was considered a Chinese national, regardless where they lived at the time. This meant that in one stroke the Qing had laid a legal claim on the citizenship of the majority of Chinese in the Indies. With the segregated society in colonial society which actively discouraged racial intermingling this even meant that a significant section of the *peranakan* Chinese was also considered as a Chinese national. The Dutch were one step behind as they did not have any legal claims on the nationality of the Chinese. The law on Dutch subjecthood was still stuck in the interdepartmental stalemate. However, the Dutch still had some time to deal with the issue. The overseas Chinese who wanted to change their nationality to Chinese first had to apply at an embassy or consulate, which did not exist yet in the Netherlands East Indies.¹⁴² The closest consulate of the Chinese state could be found in Singapore, which meant that applicants had to make a long and costly travel to obtain their Chinese nationality. This however did not mean that the Dutch could further delay developing a new law on Dutch subjecthood. The Chinese claim on the Indies-Chinese would mean that China could diplomatically interfere with the unequal rights of the Chinese in the colony and could in the future endanger the stability of the colony. This was a strong motivation to break the stalemate between the different ministries, which together finally passed the new law on Dutch subjecthood on 10 February 1910.

Between the categories of 'Dutch' and 'Stranger', a third category was introduced that included non-Dutch residents of the Netherlands East Indies. Rather than the *jus sanguinis* principle based on

¹⁴⁰ 'Gouverneur-Generaal aan Minister van Koloniën, Buitenzorg, 7 maart 1911' in: Geheim Verbaal 6 april 1911 Y7, NL-HaNA, Colonies, 1850-1900, 2.10.36.51, inv. nr. 131.

¹⁴¹ 'Gouverneur-Generaal aan Minister van Koloniën, Buitenzorg, 6 Juni 1911' in: Geheim Verbaal 6 april 1911 Y17, NL-HaNA, Colonies, 1850-1900, 2.10.36.51, inv. nr. 134.

¹⁴² Patricia Tjiook-Liem, *De Rechtspositie der Chinezen*, 493-494.

blood, the law was based on the legal *jus soli* definition: everyone living in the geographical territory of the Netherlands East Indies was considered a 'Dutch subject'.¹⁴³ However, this meant that the Chinese had a double nationality according to international law and that the Chinese state could still diplomatically intervene on issues such as unequal rights and maltreatment of the Indies-Chinese. Such interference was unacceptable for the Netherlands East Indies. The issues of consular representation and protection for the Chinese in the Indies had to be dealt with in a second diplomatic round of negotiations with the Chinese.

The question of consular representation

As mentioned earlier, the Qing started to modernize their diplomatic institutions from the 1870s onwards. One of the main reasons for the Qing to install consulates across the world was to protect the maltreated Chinese plantation laborers in faraway places. In this context, the Dutch were already afraid of a possible Chinese request for a consular post in the Indies, as the plantations on Deli had a bad reputation for mistreating Chinese laborers. Already in the 1870s, a Dutch consul in China named Ferguson obtained diplomatic complaints about the wellbeing of the Chinese in the Indies. However, it took until 1890 until the Chinese state for the first time requested the entry of consuls.¹⁴⁴ We have already seen that Qing government officials increasingly intervened in political affairs and daily lives of the Chinese in the Indies through semi-official visits, chambers of commerce and trading societies and that the question of consular representation was intrinsically tied to the question of nationality. From 1890 until the 1911 the Dutch have constantly been delaying the negotiations about a consular convention, all the time realizing it was an inevitable development but buying time to fix the law of Dutch subjecthood that could counter the Chinese claim on the Chinese in the Indies.

The 1909 Chinese law on nationality forcibly pulled the Dutch back to the negotiation table for a consular convention between China and the Netherlands East Indies. The Dutch however publicly denied any connection between the two issues, even when the Chinese state and the public opinion in China made accusations about the connection between the two.¹⁴⁵ Admitting that the two were connected - which they logically were - would mean that the Dutch had to admit that the Chinese in the Indies were unequally treated with the Europeans and that this was the reason why the Chinese were not allowed to have a consul and/or a Chinese nationality. Such a statement would spark a public outrage in the Chinese press and endanger the diplomatic negotiations with China about the consular convention. The Chinese

¹⁴³ Patricia Tjiook-Liem, *De Rechtspositie der Chinezen*, 498-502.

¹⁴⁴ Ibidem, 457.

¹⁴⁵ Ibidem, 504-506.

on the other hand also had to deal with their own reputations. For them it was impossible to accept a full naturalization of all the Chinese in the Netherlands East Indies to Dutch subjecthood. This would destroy all the credibility the Qing government had with Chinese public opinion and the local administration in the main emigration provinces in Southeast-China. To a certain degree, the Chinese in the Indies had to remain Chinese, while for the Dutch they could in any sense become Chinese nationals.

Another two years of negotiation passed by until finally a consular convention was signed in 1911 which allowed Chinese consuls into the colony. The issue of conflicting nationalities was however unresolved. Both parties still laid a claim to the Indies-Chinese. However, with the consular convention three separate bills were written and attached to the legal document of the consular convention. These bills, at least for the Dutch, resolved some of the main problems of the Chinese nationality question. These bills stated that when a Chinese national was inside the geographical area of the Netherlands East Indies, the Dutch law would apply for the Chinese, who would be considered as a Dutch subject. Outside the colony however, the Chinese were considered as Chinese nationals. This solution safeguarded Chinese nationality in principle, but made it invalid once the border of the Netherlands East Indies was crossed, applying Dutch subjecthood instead.¹⁴⁶ In effect, the Chinese consuls that were now allowed into the colony could not make any cases about the legal inequality or maltreatment of Chinese residents of the Indies, but could still represent them as state officials in other ways. In other words, the legal principles of *jus sanguinis* and *jus soli* were combined in one treaty, making the crossing of the Netherlands East Indies the moment where the first stopped and the second started.

When looking at the global context of the Chinese migration, the case of the nationality of the Chinese in the Indies is an interesting case. When compared to the relations between the US and China on Chinese migrants, where the Americans treated China on an unequal basis in the diplomatic relations and through its bolt exclusion of Chinese migrants, the Dutch had a far less strong position in discussing matters about migration. The US and the other white-settler nations discussed by McKeown managed to frame their new migration policies which effectively excluded the Chinese in such a way that the unequal power balance with China was maintained but that in the same time the legal terms for exclusion of Chinese migrants followed the international laws that safeguarded the equality between nations.¹⁴⁷ Framing Chinese migrants as 'unfree' was one of such strategies that diminished the chances of international court cases between China and the respective host country for migration. Such a form of diplomatic arrogance is noticeable in the case of the Dutch, for example in the endless delays in the

¹⁴⁶ Patricia Tjiook-Liem, *De Rechtspositie der Chinezen*, 515-517, 524-525.

¹⁴⁷ Adam McKeown, *Melancholy Order*, 152-156.

negotiations between China and the Netherlands on a consular convention for the Netherlands East Indies. It was not until the Chinese nationality law of 1909 that the Dutch were reluctantly pulled to the negotiation table. On the other hand, the Chinese had a significant influence on the immigration policies of the Dutch, as the sudden panic amongst the Dutch in 1909-1911 reveals. The Dutch feared that the endless intermingling of the Chinese state in Indies-Chinese affairs would escalate and eventually threaten the colonial order which was based on social inequality. Other reasons were that the Dutch needed the Chinese labor migrants in the Outer Islands and therefore had to maintain a healthy diplomatic relationship with China. China was a force to be reckoned with and could influence migration policies, as well as the rule over the migrants once they had entered the colony. The decision to not implement fingerprinting on the Chinese labor migrants is an example of how far the Chinese state could penetrate. As a smaller player in the imperial game in Southeast-Asia and the Pacific, the Dutch could only to a certain degree weaken the relationship with China once it changed anything concerning the rule over the Chinese in the Indies or the entry of migrants into the colony. As we have seen in the negotiations about nationality, the Dutch sometimes had to accept demands made by China and worked hard to limit the negative consequences of the diplomatic outcome. In this particular case, the threat had been curbed by maintaining complete rule over the Chinese once they were in Dutch territory.

However, this did not mean that the Chinese state stopped interfering in the life of the Indies-Chinese and internal colonial affairs concerning the Chinese. Like in the previous decade, the new Chinese republic in the 1910s and 1920s also intervened in political affairs in the Indies through similar tactics. School inspections, trade visits and political gatherings by Chinese officials kept on taking place and the Chinese consuls were not afraid to influence the Chinese politically. Several of these cases took place in 1916-1918 where multiple Chinese officials and consuls violated the treaty rights of the consular convention. However, the Dutch could not make a strong diplomatic case out of this. As the *Kantoor van Chinese Zaken* wrote in a letter to the director of Home Affairs on 19 June 1917, it was advisable to sit out this issue and to not provide 'the newspapers writers the text to give to their uneuphonious audience'.¹⁴⁸ Chinese nationalism, Chinese state intervention and political intermingling by consuls would remain to be a problem in the following decades. The strong connection the Indies-Chinese had with their (ancestral) homeland remained to be a political fact.

¹⁴⁸ 'Advies Kantoor voor Chineesche Zaken aan Directeur Binnenlandsch Bestuur, Batavia 19 juni 1917', in: Archive K77a Binnenlands Bestuur, Inv. 2192, Arsip Nasional Republik Indonesia (ANRI), Jakarta.

4.3: The Chinese New Year Riots of 1912

The consular convention with China only lasted a year until the Qing Empire fell to the nationalist revolutionaries. On 5 January 1912 the Chinese Republic was proclaimed, while the Qing officially abdicated on 12 February 1912. Within the overseas Chinese communities, the fall of the Qing Empire was applauded by the many *singkeh* Chinese who either were anti-Qing minded or politically indifferent about the fate of the Qing dynasty. With the first Chinese new year of the Chinese Republic coming up on 18 February 1912, the Netherlands East Indies prepared for euphoric festivities amongst the Chinese communities. Because the Chinese Republic had not been officially recognized yet by the Netherlands and because the Governor-General did not want to embarrass the Qing dynasty, he prohibited the hoisting of the new five-colored republican flag. This prohibition completely backfired. In the night of 18 February 1912 on New Year's Eve, a riot started in Batavia when the police forcibly removed republican flags, greatly angering some parts of the Chinese community. Crowds gathered and small clashes with the police took place. Twenty-four persons were arrested. The following day more small riots broke out around the building of the Chinese chamber of commerce, where people were waving the republican flag. Eventually the police forces dispersed the crowd and took back control.¹⁴⁹

The situation in Surabaya was more anarchistic than in Batavia. Riots lasted for a week and resulted in close to 900 Chinese being arrested by the police. Although the initial spark for the riots was a government prohibition of the traditional Chinese fireworks at New Year, the riot quickly turned into a small nationalist uprising on 19 February. During the following week hundreds of *singkeh* Chinese protested outside the building of the *Soe Po Sia* and the house of the Captain of the Chinese was raided by a large violent mob. The army and the police were called to disperse the crowd and it took several shots into the crowd until the mob fled. Although generally quite on the streets, the unrest went underground with the protesters now threatening Chinese shopkeepers to close their shops and instigate an economic boycott. This went on until the 24th of February when the local head of administration decided to detain all Canton-Chinese over the weekend. The Chinese from the Canton region were identified as the main instigators of the riots and were therefore the main suspects in causing the unrest. In total, counting the earlier arrests in the week, around 850 Chinese were taken into custody. Eventually it turned out that 189 of the detainees were involved in the riots. The majority

¹⁴⁹ Mona Lohanda, *Growing Pains*, 126-128.

of them did not have an entry permit for the colony and were quickly removed from the archipelago, which also shows how porous the borders of the Indies had been in previous years.¹⁵⁰

For the Dutch government this sudden uprising of the Chinese came as a surprise. It was the first time that feelings of nationalist pride combined with a frustration about colonial rule and the Chinese council system had burst into a riot. Especially that the two major cities of Java had been a target of the riots was a shock. With the interventions of the Chinese state in mind, the Dutch now stumbled upon a new form of Chinese nationalism with a more activist and potentially dangerous character. Noticing how the revolution against the Qing could spark up so much emotion, the riots revealed how 'close' China still was with the majority of Chinese migrants in the colony. Apparently this nationalist feeling amongst the Chinese was completely overlooked, as the Dutch persistence in keeping down the republican flags demonstrates. With the riots of 1912, the Dutch and the Chinese in the Netherlands East Indies opened up a new chapter in the nationalist awakening of the Indies-Chinese. This chapter was also connected to the issue of migration. Besides checks on criminal records and requirements on sufficient means of existence, the migrants now had to be checked politically as well as they possibly could spread dangerous anti-colonial or anti-Dutch ideas. It is this form of political activism through the networks build by migration that Nobuto Yamamoto and Oiyen Liu analyze in their articles on the 'yellow peril' in Southeast-Asia of the late-1910s, 1920s and 1930s.

This however did not mean that the old problem of intermingling by the Chinese state disappeared. In the wake of the riots international protests emerged against the maltreatment of the Chinese by the Dutch during their detainment in Surabaya. Especially in the newspapers in China the fate of the Surabaya rioters was heavily addressed. Responding on the Surabaya riots as a last straw in the seemingly worsening position of overseas Chinese in the colonies, one newspaper even promised to give out rewards to those who could share information about the maltreatment of the Chinese in the Netherlands East Indies, while another revolutionary newspaper on the Southeast Chinese coast even threatened to send warships and bomb Batavia.¹⁵¹ Also diplomatically the Dutch had discredited themselves in the eyes of the new Chinese Republic. Reporting from the recently conquered capital of Peking, the ambassador Beelaerts van Blokland recommended that the detainees should not be punished too severely in order to save what was left of the diplomatic relationship with China. He also

¹⁵⁰ 'Afschrift Minister van Koloniën: Officieel relaas van de Chineesche opstootjes te Batavia en Soerabaja' in: *Koloniaal Tijdschrift* (1912-1) 601-606.

¹⁵¹ 'Beelaerts Blokland aan Minister van Buitenlandse Zaken, 22 april 1912', in: Geheim Verbaal 21 Mei 1912 N8, NL-HaNA, Colonies, 1850-1900, 2.10.36.51, inv. nr. 141. The threat of bombing Batavia comes from three copied articles of the New York Sun (27 February 1912) and the Washington Post (27 & 28 February 1912), found in: Geheim Verbaal 29 February 1912 D4, NL-HaNA, Colonies, 1850-1900, 2.10.36.51, inv. nr. 140.

warned for a rising anti-Dutch public opinion in the Chinese press, which he illustrated with several examples from Chinese newspapers.¹⁵² Again, colonial rule over the Chinese migrant community was tied to a growing influence of the diplomatic relationship with China. The Chinese New Year riots demonstrate that the Netherlands East Indies had been pulled into the international arena and could not deal with its internal affairs - at least those relating to the Chinese - in complete isolation any longer. This opened a new chapter to growing problems with Chinese nationalism in the Netherlands East Indies which marked the 1920s and 1930s.

4.4: Conclusion

During the late-nineteenth century and especially the early-twentieth century the Dutch colonial state was placed under increasing pressure from China. This happened in two ways. First of all a new form of cultural - and later political - nationalism directly brought many of the overseas Chinese in the Southeast-Asia closer to China. Of course this was partly caused by a growing amount of China-born Chinese that entered the colony in the major waves of migration in the period. Culturally these *singkeh* Chinese identified themselves more with China and even managed to spark a more China-centered perspective in the *peranakan* communities. Through the transnational networks stretching back to China, news about their homeland reached the overseas communities more quickly than before and further strengthened the cultural and political bond with China. Through such connections - especially the financial ones - the Qing Empire also became more aware of the potential of the overseas Chinese. Increasingly they started intervening in internal colonial affairs in the Netherlands East Indies by sending officials, founding chambers of commerce and trading societies or by pressuring the Dutch to allow the entry of a Chinese consul.

However, the Dutch remained to consider the Chinese as subjected to their rule and would not allow Chinese officials to lay claims on the nationality of the Indies Chinese. After delaying the matter of allowing Chinese consuls into the colony for approximately two decades, the Dutch were forced to quickly figure out the complex legal status of the Chinese in the Indies, without losing control of the highly unequal colonial hierarchy. It took until the Chinese nationality law of 1909 until the Dutch seriously made haste in fixing the case of 'Dutch subjecthood' as opposed to Dutch nationality. Equally, it took until 1911 before the consular convention was completed in a favorable manner for the Dutch. According to the new law on Dutch subjecthood of 1910 and the consular convention of 1911 those who

¹⁵² 'Beelaerts van Blokland aan Minister van Buitenlandse Zaken', in: Geheim Verbaal 28 maart 1912 K6, NL-HaNA, Colonies, 1850-1900, 2.10.36.51, inv. nr. 140.

were inside the borders of the colonial state were considered as Dutch subjects, while Chinese nationality would come in effect when the border was crossed outwards. In this way, the border of the Netherlands East Indies finally became a legal demarcation for the people belonging to the category of Foreign Orientals and helped the Dutch colonial state in further modernizing its statehood.

The difficulty of giving a suitable legal status to Chinese migrants was the key issue in the long delay of solving these two problems. Contrasting the perspective of the Chinese state, the Dutch generally saw the migrants as a more permanent population of the Indies, at least on political, bureaucratic and legal grounds. The Chinese state on the other hand saw the Chinese migrants more as what Wang Gungwu (see chapter 1) has mentioned as the 'sojourner'. The Qing always considered the possibility that the overseas Chinese would at one point return to China, either physically or psychologically. It is exactly the fluidity of this sojourning that greatly troubled the Dutch and that in the same movement pulled China closer to the Netherlands East Indies. The transnationalism of the Chinese migration which was marked by its double nationality that could not be completely avoided in the diplomatic negotiations with the Chinese was exactly what put the unequal rule of the colonial state in danger.

Regardless of the fall of the Qing in 1911, the political and cultural connection between the Chinese migrants and their homeland was there to stay. This can be seen in the Chinese New Year riots in 1912, which was the first moment when the Dutch realized how much emotion the revolution in China could create amongst the Chinese in the Indies. The political movement of the Chinese had deeply rooted itself in the Chinese community and was now potentially dangerous to the colonial order. Although not as powerful as before due to the remaining unrest in China, the new Chinese Republic remained to be feared by the Dutch and was seen as dangerous when provoked too often. Saving the diplomatic relationship with China could therefore be placed above the direct interests of the colonial state in dealing with its own internal affairs - and specifically with its Chinese migrant population.

Conclusion

With close to 18 million Chinese migrants flowing into colonial Southeast-Asia in the period 1840-1940 one can conclude that the borders of the colonies in this region were significantly more open to Chinese migration than their counterparts surrounding the white-settler nations discussed by Adam McKeown. As we have seen from the chapters and case-studies in this study this was especially true in the Netherlands East Indies. With the amount of entry's by Chinese migrants between 1840 and 1940 counting up to 4-5 million and noticing the population growth of the Indies-Chinese with over a million between 1850 and 1930 it is clear that the Dutch colony did not follow the global path of closing borders against Asian migrations. Through an analysis of the different groups and actors involved in the discussion on Chinese migration in the Indies, this research has attempted to explain why the Netherlands East Indies took this different path.

Reasons for an open door policy

With the *Staatsblad 1872* the Dutch created an immigration law that was close to an open door policy. With no criminal record and sufficient means of existence as the only prerequisites for allowing entry to the Chinese, it was not difficult for Chinese migrants to enter the colony. Unlike the United States and other white-settler nations that attempted to completely bar Chinese migrants through creative use of prerequisite 'civilization' tests, the Dutch did not even attempt to create an overall restriction. Instead of sharpening the prerequisites of entry, the *Staatsblad 1872* only vaguely stated them. The ambiguity of this law created some space for local administrations in the colony to interpret it into their own way. As we have seen, the local administrations, that had to deal with the actual problems of Chinese migrants on the streets of their cities, had a greater tendency than the central government to expel the Chinese from the colony. They were however whistled back by the central government when they went too far in rejecting or removing Chinese migrants, even considering the practical and financial problems created for the central government when 'illegal' immigrants had to be send back to China.

The passive stance of the central government in the migration issue is also noteworthy in face of the heavy criticism of white-settlers in the Indies press. The dissenting press often described almost apocalyptic scenarios of stealing, murdering and starving Chinese roaming the streets of Java's major cities and called for the government to completely close the border for the Chinese. The reaction of the white-settlers in the colony follows a global pattern wherein Chinese migrants were frequently targeted by angry whites fearing the economic competition caused by their cheap labor. For nations such as the

United States, this was one of the reasons to eventually close the border for Chinese migrants. In the Netherlands East Indies another fear existed in the press. The economic competition by Chinese unskilled laborers on Java could also spark social unrest amongst the indigenous population and thereby endanger colonial security. Nevertheless, besides some minor measures in organizing the removal of some Chinese without entry permits, the central government remained apathetic in the migration debates.

The explanation for the passiveness of the Dutch colonial government consists of two interrelated reasons. Firstly, the economic interests of the colony were an important motivation for keeping the border open. The economic value of plantations and mines in the Outer Islands - in this study the region of Deli on East-Sumatra - was too important to expose to a possible labor shortage. With the Chinese being more skilled in tobacco agriculture than the Javanese, the Deli planters - who organized themselves in the Deli Planters Association - relied on a steady stream of incoming Chinese labor migrants. Without the cheap but skilled labor provided by the Chinese, the coffee plantations in Deli would collapse and thereby negatively influence the economy of the Dutch Empire. Both the planters and the colonial government attempted to reach out to China in several ways to secure Chinese labor migrants, with the government using its diplomatic channels with other European powers and the planters in Deli setting up their own migration offices, recruiters in China and shipping lines for transports. The lobby of the Deli planters seems to be strong within the government circles, as the Dutch state - either through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs or through the colonial government of the Netherlands East Indies - was heavily involved in the labor migration by negotiating with foreign diplomats and companies. The Chinese labor migration seems to have been a very international - and even intercolonial - affair.

The second reason for the passiveness of the Dutch colonial government in migration issues is the proximity of China in Dutch discussions on Chinese migration and governance. The Dutch were afraid to provoke an official protest from the Qing Empire. This can for example be seen in the third chapter on the possible introduction of fingerprinting Chinese labor migrants in East-Sumatra. A seemingly small, but in a colonial context very logical, measure of introducing such an identification system was heavily influenced by the bigger politics regarding China. This even led to government officials deciding not to implement fingerprinting out of fear for a diplomatic crisis. Such a crisis could in its turn endanger the labor migration either through angering the Qing Empire or the local provincial lords in the southeast coast of China.

The possibility of a diplomatic crisis with China was most severely felt in the period 1906-1912, between the introduction of the Chinese Law on Nationality of 1906 and the birth of the Chinese Republic and the Chinese New Year Riots in 1912. With the 1906 law, the Chinese laid a claim on almost the whole Chinese population in the Indies, which forced the Dutch to come with an alternative law that would give a legal status to these Chinese 'strangers' inside the colony. But also in other ways the Qing were constantly politically interfering with Chinese affairs in the Netherlands East Indies. The endless delay of the Dutch in the diplomatic discussions on allowing Chinese consuls into the colony was partly to blame for this growing intervention. The Chinese state simply attempted to reach out to the Indies-Chinese in different ways. Internal colonial affairs dealing with the Chinese population increasingly became an international issue and hindered the Dutch from effectively ruling the Chinese in the colony, especially the newly arrived Chinese migrants who generally had less trust in the traditional hierarchy around the Chinese officers and council. Diplomacy and migration control had become too attached to treat in isolation of one another.

The problems of migration and unequal colonial rule

What is present in all chapters is the difficulty the Netherlands East Indies had with the high mobility and temporal character of the Chinese migration. As we have seen, many labor migrants either started businesses after finishing their contracts or went back to China with the money earned. The concept of 'the sojourner' that Wang Gungwu discussed in the first chapter makes a lot of sense in the context of the Netherlands East Indies, as it opposed to the more permanent term of 'migrant'. The generation of Chinese migrants that entered the colony during the period under study was very China-minded, either culturally as we have seen in the fourth chapter or economically as seen in the first and second chapter. Also the distinction between the labor migration and trade migration of the Chinese that are discussed in different historiographies on the overseas Chinese, makes less sense when focusing on the case of the Netherlands East Indies. A Chinese 'coolie' could easily turn into a small trader after his time on the plantation, even though in some cases they failed, as the articles in the Indies press have shown us.

This misunderstanding about the Chinese migrant's motivation for entering the colony is important, as it also influenced Dutch perceptions on how to shape the immigration policies. Up until the period 1906-1914, the Chinese migrants were placed into the legal category of 'Foreign Orientals', which meant that they were ruled in the same manner as the indigenous population, even though at heart they remained Chinese. Dutch reluctance to legally equalize the Chinese with the Europeans - something that had been no problem for the Japanese who were equalized in 1895 - was the very reason why China kept

on intervening in Dutch colonial affairs. However, the Dutch feared that equalizing the Chinese population with the European segment of society could possibly result in the indigenous population of the Indies making the same demands. This was a nightmare for the colonial state and legal equalization was therefore out of the question. For the Dutch it was easier to treat the Chinese as 'foreigners' and this is why they were so reluctant in fixing the legal status for Chinese migrants and/or sojourners inside the colony.

It is this very system of unequal rule that was pressured and undermined by the Chinese migration and interference by the Chinese state. Abolishing unequal rule of the Chinese population could endanger the whole colony by an indigenous uprising, while further delay of the demands made by the Chinese state could also potentially become dangerous for the colony on a longer term. In other words, the Chinese migration issue was one of the tightropes that the Dutch colonial state balanced on in the early-twentieth century, with on both sides of the rope a dangerous abyss of uncertainty. The only option for the Dutch was not to move at all or at least only make small adjustments to maintain balance between the two unfavorable options. This awkward position defined Dutch policy-making on migration issues: postponing and avoiding the inevitable where possible. In the meantime, the number of Chinese migrants in the colony started to rise and further pressured the Dutch colonial state.

The Dutch also underestimated the strong connection between the Chinese migrants and their homeland. From 1900 to 1914, the cultural nationalism awakened by a renewed focus on China within overseas Chinese communities gradually became political. The New Year Riots of 1912 therefore came as a shock for the Dutch. Where it previously had been the Chinese state interfering with Chinese affairs in the Indies, it were now the Indies-Chinese themselves that started to become involved with what was taking place in China and threatened colonial security in the meantime. The riots of 1912 therefore opened up a new chapter in the relationship between the Netherlands East Indies, China and the Indies-Chinese, with China increasingly being perceived as a political problem. Migration control was now also about containing political ideas, activists and the overall spread of nationalism and (later) communism. This is where the gap in the historical literature on Chinese migration to the Netherlands East Indies closes and where the articles by Nobuto Yamamoto and Oiyan Liu take over.

Towards a regional and global contextualization

What becomes visible from the focus on Chinese migration is that the Netherlands East Indies became increasingly tied to the surrounding region and to global developments. The influence of the Chinese state is one example of this and shows us that the Dutch could not decide on its migration policies

without diplomatic consequences. Even though no attempts were made to close the border like in other nations across the world, we do see that the Netherlands East Indies were increasingly conforming to global standards for migration control. This either happened voluntarily, for example through the bureaucratization of immigration dossiers and entry permits, or was forced by China in for example the fixing the nationalities and legal status of Chinese migrants in the colony. But also the recruitment of labor migrants and the removal of unwanted poor Chinese migrants from Java had become an international affair that needed careful negotiation with other European powers in Southeast- and East-Asia. This is an important lesson for future historians focusing on the Netherlands East Indies. Some internal affairs were connected to those of other colonial powers or were related to global developments. The field of colonial history therefore needs to widen up and include more comparisons or foci on interrelations between different colonial states, as well as open up to a wider contextualization of the colonial state into its regional and global contexts.

It are exactly these contexts that are important in distinguishing the differences between the colonial states in Southeast-Asia and the white-settler nations discussed by McKeown. Because the modernized world economy demanded cheap Chinese labor in the Outer Islands and because China either directly or indirectly pressured the Dutch on the fair treatment of Chinese migrants, the border of the Netherlands East Indies was impossible to completely close.

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