
Dirk Aedsge Buiskool, *Prominent Chinese During the Rise of a Colonial City: Medan 1890-1942*. Dissertation, University of Utrecht, 2019, 376 pages, illus. ISBN: 978-94-6375-447-7

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code of Muslim ethics, the text launches a scathing cultural critique narrated in familiar religious, cultural and textual terms.

Finally, Ronit Ricci uncovers fragments and traces of Javanese writing from colonial Ceylon (modern Sri Lanka), which the Dutch authorities used as a place of exile for dissidents and rebels. Ricci discusses echoes of Javanese textuality that reflect Javanese religious life in a number of works, composed mainly in Malay by descendants of the exiles, soldiers and servants of the Dutch and later British colonial era. These texts include the *Kidung rumeksa ning wengi* (Song Guarding the night), incorporated into a Malay compendium compiled between 1803-1831 and attributed to Sunan Kalijaga, talismanic *doa* texts, the *Hikayat Tuan Gusti*, a biography of Sunan Giri, another Javanese *wali* and his role in the story of the conversion of Java to Islam. The discussion then turns to the *Babad Giyanti* and its depiction of the experience of exile, and the role of Islamic teachers in easing that burden. The question of religiosity in the Javanese diaspora is left open to further research.

In their brief Introduction, the editors lament the long-standing compartmentalization of Javanese textual studies into a focus on Old Javanese texts prior to the sixteenth century, on the one hand, and later Modern Javanese Islamic-flavoured traditions on the other. Although they call attention to the need for far greater comparative, interdisciplinary engagement, they pass up the opportunity to draw together the potentially enriching insights from the chapters that follow. Nor do the authors speak directly to each other in spite of commonalities of interest and, on occasion, even of individual texts. Broader thematic overlaps and intertextual conjunctions might fruitfully have been explored further, but must await further research. In the meantime, this volume presents a rich smorgasbord of fascinating case studies of religious transformations and continuities that are reflected in the Javanese textual record. It is hardly possible to do justice to the wide range of texts and detailed analyses in this volume within the space of a brief review, but dipping in and out of this volume will certainly reward interested readers.

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Dirk Aedsge Buiscool, *Prominent Chinese During the Rise of a Colonial City: Medan 1890-1942*. Dissertation, University of Utrecht, 2019, 376 pages, illus. ISBN: 978-94-6375-447-7

A welcome addition to the literature about the colonial period in East Sumatra (roughly equivalent to today's Indonesian province of North Sumatra), this study's emphasis on the Chinese society of Medan fills a gap in the history of its interethnic relations and the role of the Chinese leadership. Its

author, Dirk Aedsge Buiskool, a longtime resident of the city, has in previous publications illuminated the history of its plantation economy and of the city itself, and he brings a variety of sources and experiences to bear on his subject. Using Dutch and Indonesian archives, the local Dutch- and Malay-language press, and interviews with family members, among other sources, he provides an overview of the commercial and social life of the Chinese in a Dutch-managed colonial city from 1890 to the Second World War.

After 1870, commercial plantations, tobacco, rubber, tea and palm oil, quickly drew European investors and a labor force of (mostly indentured) Chinese coolies to eastern Sumatra. At the same time, other Chinese entered the area, servicing the plantations and the rapidly expanding city of Medan in trade and services. Both coolies and traders—like Chinese elsewhere in Southeast Asia—were nearly all immigrants from Guangdong and Fujian provinces in southern China; nearly all were, before the 1920s, males. Buiskool shows how Medan's Chinese businessmen differed from those in Java and elsewhere, naming nine prominent figures and their interests and activities. Although the predominant sub-ethnic group were Hokkian, and Hokkian was the lingua franca of the city's Chinese, the two Hakka immigrant brothers Tjong Yong Hian (Zhang Yunan or Zhang Yongxuan, 1850-1911) and Tjong A Fie (Zhang Hongnan or Yaoxuan, 1860-1921) left the greatest imprint on the city and they also dominate Buiskool's history.

The elder Tjong, having gotten a start on Onrust, an island in the harbor of Batavia, already understood the importance of alliance with the colonial power when he moved to Sumatra around 1880. Both brothers profited from that alliance as Chinese officers and revenue farmers.

The Tjong brothers' economic careers paralleled the rise of Medan as the center of East Sumatra's plantation economy. Beginning by delivering rice, sugar and other supplies to the plantations, they both climbed the ladder of Chinese officership from Lieutenant to Major (Majoor), taking responsibility for administering the rapidly growing Chinese population of the city and also representing its interests to the colonial authorities. The lucrative side of officership, however, was the opportunity to rent revenue farms for opium, alcohol, gambling, and others, including the lucrative salt monopoly, which serviced the salt fish and shrimp paste industry of the largely Chinese settlement of Bagan Si Apiapi. As these farms were gradually abolished or taken over by the government after 1912, unlike many Chinese revenue farmers on Java, the Tjongs could use their multiple economic interests to survive and expand their fortunes. These included retailing, extensive investments in urban real estate, plantation ownership and, finally, banking.

The Tjong brothers' uncle, Thio Tiauw Siat (in the Straits Settlements usually called Cheong Fat Tze, Zhang Yunxun or Bishi, 1841-1916) had paved the way for their move to Medan, including the subsequent immigration

of Tjong A Fie to the city, in about 1890. Partly in alliance with him, they expanded their interests to Penang and the Straits Settlements. In China, they invested in the Shantou-Chaozhou railway in their home province of Guangdong, as well as other activities in the homeland.

As befitted successful businessmen, the Tjongs also engaged in philanthropy, in no way limiting their donations to projects within the Chinese community. These included hospitals, schools, temples, and even mosques and Christian churches. Finally, they lobbied (to use a modern expression) the colonial government to improve the position of all Medan's Chinese under Dutch rule. Apart from the railroad, they donated to relief in China and elsewhere and laid great emphasis on education taking an interest in political developments and nationalism in China. The composition of the Chinese community in Medan, almost all recent immigrants, and their linguistic preferences meant that there was little interest in Dutch or Indonesian affairs. Similarly, education was in Mandarin Chinese and (because of the proximity to the Straits Settlements) English. Although their interests were cosmopolitan, and they supported schools for girls, when it came to marriage, arranged matches still prevailed.

Buiskool discusses seven other Chinese leaders, one of them also a Majoor, and others who limited their activities to business (perhaps partly for their inability to speak Dutch or even Malay well). Compared to Tjong A Fie, however, they pale: on the list of the incomes of the largest Chinese taxpayers in 1920 (Appendix 3.4, pp. 299ff.), Tjong A Fie's income is nearly equivalent to that of all the other 65 Chinese taxpayers together—and some of the others were his own sons.

The copious appendices, listing in addition to taxpayers, the major investments of Tjong A Fie, his philanthropic projects, Chinese organizations, Medan's newspapers, and much more, underline the amount of work that has gone into this study and its usefulness for anyone interested in Medan and East Sumatra, but also in histories of overseas Chinese capitalism. Buiskool emphasizes the interethnic harmony of the colonial city of Medan, as the good relations of the Tjongs not only with the Dutch, but also with the Sultan of Deli and other "Indigenous" (as he calls them) Indonesians evidence. In his final pages, he briefly contrasts this with the outbreaks of extreme interethnic violence in Medan during the Indonesian Revolution, violence that returned in the 1960s and 1990s.

There are some weaknesses in the book. Kuangtung/Guangdong is often misspelled; Hoklo did not originate in northern China but in Fujian. The English is sometimes eccentric. The two historical maps are too small to decipher. Some orthographic problems and inconsistencies simply result from the way colonial administrators and authors transliterated Chinese names from the variety of southern Chinese languages they confronted, as the

multiple names of the Tjong show. Where possible, Mandarin equivalents for persons, places, and organizations might have helped. On the other hand, it is as the Tjong brothers, and not the Zhangs, that Medan, where Jalan Bogor has recently been renamed Jalan Tjong Yong Hian, remembers them.

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Josh Stenberg, *Minority Stages: Sino-Indonesian Performance and Public Display*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2019, xvi-257 pp. ISBN: 9780824876715

In recent years, we have seen a number of studies that attempt to examine the historical and contemporary developments of the Chinese community in Indonesia. These works have contributed to the burgeoning literature and investigated a wide range of topics, including Dutch-Chinese commercial relations, the Chinese Muslim community, visual culture and representations, as well as the ethnic Chinese dimension in China-Indonesia relations.⁵ Josh Stenberg's *Minority Stages: Sino-Indonesian Performance and Public Display* is a welcome addition to the field of Chinese Indonesian studies in particular and that of Chinese diaspora studies in general. Broadly, *Minority Stages* explores various forms of Sino-Indonesian public performance and display that serve as a platform for "Chineseness" to be shaped locally and nationally in Indonesia. The book has two primary goals: The first is to demonstrate how "Chineseness" is manifested in Sino-Indonesian performance, and the second, to "recover the cultural history of the Chinese-Indonesian subject" (p. 6). Drawing on archival research and fieldwork in various parts of the Indonesian archipelago, Stenberg organizes the book by genre of Sino-Indonesian performance, with chapters exploring *xiqu* (戲曲), *wayang*, Chinese-language spoken theater (*huaju* 話劇), commercial theater, voluntary associations, and religious performance. Each genre of performance is featured in turn.

Chapter 1 presents a broad historical overview of *xiqu* from the Dutch colonial period to the present. Chinese migration to Southeast Asia contributed to the spread of *xiqu* from southeast China to the Indies as early as the seventeenth century. According to casual reports by Europeans, *xiqu* was a dominant form of Chinese entertainment and could often be seen at Chinese

5. See, for instance, Alexander Claver, *Dutch Commerce and Chinese Merchants in Java: Colonial Relationships in Trade and Finance, 1800-1942* (Leiden: Brill, 2014); Hew Wai Weng, *Chinese Ways of being Muslim: Negotiating Ethnicity and Religiosity in Indonesia* (Copenhagen: NIAS Press, 2018); Abidin Kusno, *Visual Cultures of the Ethnic Chinese in Indonesia* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield International, 2016); Taomo Zhou, *Migration in the Time of Revolution: China, Indonesia, and the Cold War* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2019).