



Archipel

Études interdisciplinaires sur le monde insulindien

100 | 2020

Varia

Of the Use of Calligraphy in Sino-Javanese Communities (18th-Early 21st Centuries)

De l'usage de la calligraphie dans les communautés Sino-Javanaises (XVIII^e – début XXI^e siècles)

Claudine Salmon



Electronic version

URL: <http://journals.openedition.org/archipel/2352>

DOI: 10.4000/archipel.2352

ISSN: 2104-3655

Publisher

Association Archipel

Printed version

Date of publication: 15 December 2020

Number of pages: 143-173

ISBN: 978-2-910513-84-9

ISSN: 0044-8613

Electronic reference

Claudine Salmon, « Of the Use of Calligraphy in Sino-Javanese Communities (18th-Early 21st Centuries) », *Archipel* [Online], 100 | 2020, Online since 29 November 2020, connection on 09 December 2020. URL : <http://journals.openedition.org/archipel/2352> ; DOI : <https://doi.org/10.4000/archipel.2352>

Association Archipel

CULTURES SINO-INDONÉSIENNES

CLAUDINE SALMON¹

Of the Use of Calligraphy in Sino-Javanese Communities (18th-Early 21st Centuries)

Calligraphic art was conceived by the Chinese as a technique allowing the acquisition of certain virtues, and the mastery of this art as a proof of eminent qualities. As stated by Yang Xiong 揚雄 (53 BC-18 CE), “Writing is the trace or the drawing of the mind” *shu, xinhua ye* 書, 心畫也.” We can say that calligraphy had among literati, at least until the Tang 唐 period (7th-10th centuries), the functions of a quasi-religious asceticism. The Buddhist monk Zhiyong 智永 (seventh generation after Wang Xizhi 王羲之, 303-361),² who lived around 581, was renowned for his diligence in calligraphy. He is famous for having locked himself up in a temple for 30 years, and practiced this art every day. It is said that the worn-out brushes he used filled up several huge bamboo buckets, that he buried them, and gave this place the name of *tui bi zhong* 退筆塚, “Tomb of worn out brushes.” He wrote out 800 copies of the *Qianzi wen* 千字文 or “Thousand

* My thanks to Li Xiuxian 李秀賢 and Hu Sudan 胡素丹 who invited me to visit their Calligraphy and Painting Institute in Jakarta, where I met several other calligraphers, among whom Ruan Yuanchun 阮淵椿, and Peng Tao 彭濤. I am also grateful to Li Huizhu 李惠珠 for allowing me to visit her two workshops in Bandung, at Maranatha Christian University, and at Yayasan Dana Sosial Priyangan. Last but not least, I also thank Lucie Rault and Song Ge 宋鵠 for having read a previous version of this article, Leo Suryadinata and Kuo Liying 郭麗英 for having helped me solve a few language issues.

1. CNRS, Paris.

2. Wang Xizhi was traditionally referred to as the Sage of calligraphy, *shusheng* 書聖; his master was Wei Shuo 衛鑠 (272-349), who belonged to a family of famous calligraphers, and was commonly addressed just as Lady Wei, or Wei furen 衛夫人.

Character Text” in verse, to teach children to write *caoshu* 草書 (cursive script), by giving both *caoshu* and *kaishu* 楷書 (standard characters) forms throughout,³ and many people came over to the temple to ask for his calligraphy.

The tireless copy of famous inscriptions and calligraphy was also intended as a means of assimilating the genius of the writer or of his time. Close to us, historian Wang Gungwu 王賡武 (b. 1930) who grew up in Insulindia wrote in his memoirs that his father encouraged him to practice calligraphy, something he loved to do himself.⁴ Speaking of his mother he says:⁵ “Her proudest achievement was to cultivate through much practice a beautiful hand in writing the standard *xiaokai* 小楷 calligraphy, a skill all the girls in her family were expected to have. She told me often how hard she had practised with an older female cousin and how she became as good as her cousin whose calligraphy everyone admired.” Archaeologist Fan Jinshi 樊錦詩 (b. 1938), who currently serves as Honorary Director of the Dunhuang Academy, wrote in her biography, co-authored with Gu Chunfang 顧春芳, that her father who owned an elegant calligraphy, taught her this art since the time she was a child, and also found models of calligraphy, *zitie* 字帖, by Ouyang Xun 歐陽詢 (557-641) and Yan Zhenqing 顏真卿 (708-785) to copy. She further states:⁶ “When I was a child, I also liked to imitate my father’s writing, and imperceptibly my characters were similar to his.”

Calligraphy has also been practised by artists, either amateurs or professionals, who had practical and economic motivations behind their art. Instead of giving their calligraphies as mere gifts or in exchange of favors, some literati were constrained to rely on their art “for negotiating everyday life.” Bai Qianshen 白謙慎, from whom we borrow this phrasing,⁷ devoted a study to Fu Shan 傅山 (1607-1684), a Ming loyalist member of the cultural elite who, for having refused to serve the new dynasty was compelled to use his calligraphy in dealing with the problems of everyday life. In laying the emphasis on a more realistic view of this art, Bai Qianshen had in mind to investigate the dimensions of Chinese calligraphy beyond self-expression, and to study the relationship of Fu Shan with his socially diverse public.

3. The *Qianzi wen*, composed by Zhou Xingsi 周興嗣 (6th century), was used as a traditional reading primer. It contains 1000 unique characters from the calligraphy of Wang Xizhi.

4. Wang Gungwu, *Home is Not Here*, Singapore: Published under the Ridge Books imprint by NUS Press, National University of Singapore, 2018, p. 9.

5. Wang Gungwu, *Home is Not Here*, p. 7.

6. Fan Jinshi *koushu* 樊錦詩口述, Gu Chunfang 顧春芳 *xuanxie* 撰寫, *Woxin guichu shi Dunhuang* 我心歸處是敦煌 “Dunhuang is where my heart belongs,” Nanjing: Yilin chubanshe, 2019, p. 5.

7. See Qianshen Bai, “Calligraphy for Negotiating Everyday Life: The Case of Fu Shan (1607-1684),” *Asia Major*, Third Series, Vol. 12, No. 1 (1999), pp. 67-125.

In a similar way, here we intend to explore the part played by calligraphy in a diasporic milieu, and more especially in Java where Chinese communities have a rather long, but quite eventful history. In this context, calligraphy will not be considered as the “art of the elite” produced for self-amusement and expression, but rather as the product of “amateur” artists.⁸ This, in order to uncover the practical motivations of the latter, and the diverse use of their works to assist in establishing and maintaining social links within the diverse strata of Chinese communities, but also with the outside world, and the netherworld. In so doing, we will pay attention to the rather codified language of calligraphy that has been more or less understood by commoners. We will successively review the use of calligraphy during the Qing times, its ups and downs during the 20th century, and its revival during this century in relation with the new political conjuncture.

Calligraphers and Calligraphy in Java during Qing Times

Who were the calligraphers?

Information regarding calligraphers practising their art in Insulindia is scarce, but we know that literati, and merchant literati were among the Chinese migrants who happened to sojourn in Java. Indeed, the sovereigns of Srivijaya and later on of Banten used Chinese interpreters and translators who also acted as secretaries, as stated in Chinese sources.⁹ However, the oldest known records that allude to the practice of calligraphy in Java only date back to the 18th century. They mention literati who came as private preceptors, and occasionally wrote calligraphies in order to satisfy the demand of their compatriots. The latter, as in their homeland, liked to decorate their homes, offices, sanctuaries, with rather codified inscriptions engraved on wood that fulfill special functions, as we will see below. They were of two main types: pairs of scrolls, *duilian* 對聯, composed of rhymed antithesis couplets, and wooden horizontal panels, *hengbian* 橫匾 and *hengpi* 橫批, composed of four, three, or even two large characters. The *hengbian* stand on their own, while the *hengpi* accompany couplets.

Among the literati who sojourned in Java, was Cheng Rijie 程日炆 (1709-1747, Zhangpu 漳浦, prefecture of Zhangzhou 漳州, Fujian), who

8. This focus on pragmatic and political calligraphy does not mean that we deny its aesthetic aspect.

9. *Songshi* 宋史 “History of the Song Dynasty,” 248, *Waiguo* 外國 5, “*Sanfoqi guo* 三佛齊國,” Ed. Beijing, Zhonghua shuju, 1997, Vol. 40, p. 14.088; Chau Ju-Kua, *On the Chinese and Arab Trade*, Edited and translated by Fr. Hirth dan W.W. Rockhill (First ed. 1914), Reprint, Amsterdam: Oriental Press, 1966, p. 60; Zhang Xie 張燮, *Dong xi yang kao* 東西洋考, “Investigations on the Eastern and Western Oceans” (preface dated 1617), Ed. Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1981, p. 48.

spent several years in Batavia before 1740, in order to earn enough money to repay the debts of his family. Impressed by Cheng's calligraphic talents, a rich Chinese merchant of the place proposed to marry his daughter to him, but Cheng declined, because he wanted to return to China, and the merchant became infuriated.¹⁰ Other literati even resided in Batavia. Such was the case of a certain Lian Musheng 連木生 who is said to have employed his time copying books. Towards the end of the 18th century, he resided in a country house in the district of Luar Batang on the banks of the Holy grave Canal, Shengmu gang 聖墓港, where he separated himself from common pursuits. He also composed poems and was fond of flute and violin.¹¹ Unfortunately, none of these calligraphic works has come to us.

As regards the calligraphic talents of literati merchants, an evidence is given by Xu Guozhong (Khouw Kok Tiong) 許國忠, a merchant selling products from China who was based in Semarang.¹² Before returning to the motherland for good in 1782, he left behind a legacy of self-effacement: an undated wooden tablet that is still hung above the entrance of a small temple, the Dongbi miao 東壁廟, that was founded at his initiative.¹³ There are two seal imprints, in the inferior left corner, that provide his complete name, and penname Feiren 飛人; a third imprint, in the upper right corner, reads Ebin 峨濱 that may be his place of origin. The text reads:

Liuqian 流謙 With Modesty (P. 1)



10. *Zhangzhou fuzhi* 漳州府志, Ed. of 1878, *juan* 49, 31ab.

11. Wang Dahai 王大海, *Haidao yizhi* 海島逸志, Yao Nan 姚楠, Wu Langxuan 吳琅璿 *jiaozhu* 校注, Xianggang: Xuejin shudian, 1992, p. 42.

12. A short biography of Khouw Kok Tiong is to be found in Liem Thian Joe, *Riwajat Semarang 1416-1931*, Semarang-Batavia: Boekhandel Ho Kim Yo, [1933], pp. 47-48.

13. W. Franke, in collaboration with C. Salmon & Anthony Siu 蕭國健, with the assistance of Hu Chün-yin 胡雋吟 and Teo Lee Kheng 張麗卿, *Chinese Epigraphic Materials in Indonesia* 印度尼西亞華文銘刻彙編, Singapore: South Seas Society, 1988-1997, II (1), p. 400. The translations of the inscriptions reproduced here are ours.

Until the last decades of the 19th century, more often than not, the heads of the various Chinese communities in Java were good hands at calligraphy. One evidence is given by an undated wooden tablet from the late 18th century written by Wang Zhusheng (Ong Soe Seeng) 王珠生, *hui* 諱 Zhiqian 志謙, style Ximing 希明, that provides a motto for his fellow administrators at the Baguo gongtang 吧國公堂, “Council of the Chinese at Batavia”, a direct administrative body in charge of the civil affairs of the community.¹⁴ Wang was successively appointed lieutenant in 1775, captain in 1790, and he remained in office until his death in 1791.¹⁵ His two seal imprints are engraved in the inferior left corner of the tablet.¹⁶ The text reads:

Zheng gui you heng 政貴有恆¹⁷ (P. 2)

In terms of government, the most valuable thing is to ensure stability.



14. Franke, Salmon & Siu, *Chinese Epigraphic Materials in Indonesia*, II (1), p. 123. The panel used to hang in the Council Hall. It is presently kept in the Department of Chinese Studies, at Leiden University.

15. B. Hoetink, “Chineesche Officiëren te Batavia onder de Compagnie”, *Bijdragen tot de Taal- Land- en Volkenkunde van Nederlandsch-Indië*, dl. 78 (1922), pp. 81-82, 121. According to Hoetink, pp. 90, 114-115, Ong Soeseeng’s father had also been appointed lieutenant, and he remained in office from 1750 to 1751; Franke, Salmon & Siu, *Chinese Epigraphic Materials in Indonesia*, II (1), p. 116.

16. They read: Wang Zhiqian 王志謙, Ximing 希明. A third seal imprint, in the upper right corner, reads Longchuan 龍川, a Chinese name of Semarang, but also a place name in Guangdong province that may possibly be interpreted as the place of origin of Wang Zhusheng.

17. This quote is taken from the *Shujing* 書經, “Book of Documents” (also called *Shangshu* 尚書), “*Biming* 畢命,” attributed to Confucius.

Uses of Calligraphic Works within Chinese Communities

It is difficult to appraise the real importance of calligraphy in the daily life during the 18th-19th centuries, because privately owned calligraphic works have not been well preserved and those still existing are not easily accessible.¹⁸ However, one can get an insight into the taste of the Chinese living in Java for calligraphy, just by looking at the numerous exquisite inscriptions on wood, emanating from local donors, that are or were displayed in public spaces, especially in various sanctuaries and in the defunct Council of the Chinese at Batavia.¹⁹ The interior of the richest ones is so decorated with calligraphies that the visitor feels as if he has an open book in front of him. As a matter of fact, up to the present day, Chinese visitors do not fail to read these inscriptions and even to copy them.²⁰

The donor's name is usually engraved, but not necessarily that of the calligrapher. This may possibly be explained, either by the fact that the initiator of the inscription hired the service of a professional calligrapher, or because the donor and the calligrapher are one and the same person.

The three oldest engraved calligraphies still *in situ* in the Chaojue si (Tiao Kak Sie) 潮覺寺, "Flow of Enlightenment Temple," of Cirebon (mainly dedicated to Guanyin 觀音) have Buddhist meanings and date back to the two first decades of the 18th century. The first, dated from winter 1714-15, was donated by Chen Bingyuan 陳秉元 and his brother or cousin (Chen) Bingren 秉仁. It bears the name of one of the 33 forms (*nirmanakāya* or *huashen* 化身) assumed by Bodhisattva Guanyin to propagate Buddhism. The name of the calligrapher, possibly one of the monks attached to the sanctuary, is not stated.²¹ It reads:

18. We have not yet encountered in Java an artist-collector of Chinese calligraphies, books and works such as Zhou Mingguang in Malaysia, <http://malaysiawriting.blogspot.com/2014/02/Calligraphy-Collection.html> 百"畫"齊放的書法收藏者——周民光 (retrieved on 05/12/2019).

19. Reproductions in Franke, Salmon & Siu, *Chinese Epigraphic Materials in Indonesia*. Cemeteries were also the receptacle of elegant calligraphies, that were engraved on rich tomb stones, the contents of which meet specific rules, and will not be considered in this article.

20. There are even corpora of the most famous couplets, classified thematically, which contain a section for couplets outside of China; such as Cheng Yuzhen 程裕禎 & Jie Bo 解波 *bian* 編, *Zhongguo mingsheng yinglian daguan* 中國名勝楹聯大觀, Beijing: Zhongguo luyou chubanshe, 1985, that reproduces four *duilian* from Indonesia, pp. 468-469.

21. Franke, Salmon & Siu, *Chinese Epigraphic Materials in Indonesia*, II (1), p. 313.

Zizaitian shen 自在天身 Body of the Supreme God²² (P. 3)



They are followed by a fourth one, dated Yongzheng *ernian* 雍正二年 (1724), that was written and donated by a certain Lin Ze 林澤, whose three seal imprints are hardly decipherable. It is located to the west of Semarang, close to the former Chinese quarter (Pecinan Lama), and engraved on a stone tablet fixed above the entrance of the Sanbao dong 三寶洞 (Indonesian name: Gedung Batu). The cave, where Admiral Zheng He 鄭和 (1371-1433, also named Sanbao, or Sam Po 三寶), is said to have rested, is known to be a place where miracles take place.²³ It reads:

Xun xi liufang 尋璽流芳 (P. 4) He is Famous for his Quest of the Imperial Seal



22. *Zizaitian* is the transliteration of Is'varadêva, literally Sovereign Dêva, a name of S'iva, and a few other Indian deities. We thank Kuo Liying for this interpretation.

23. Franke, Salmon & Siu, *Chinese Epigraphic Materials in Indonesia*, II (1), p. 192. For more details about the memory of Zheng He and his follower Wang Jinghong 王景宏 in Java, see C.S., "Sanbao taijian en Indonésie et les traductions du *Xiyang ji*," in C. Salmon / Roderich Ptak Ed., *Zheng He. Images & Perceptions Bilder & Wahrnehmungen*, Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2005, pp. 113-135.

The text alludes to the tale according to which Zheng He had been sent on a mission to the Western Seas to search for the imperial seal, *chuanguo xi* 傳國璽, by which emperors received instructions from heaven; but this seal had been taken away by the last Mongol ruler.²⁴ For the visitors who may not have fully understood the allusion to Zheng He, an undated *duilian* written by another hand, and engraved on each side of the entrance, provides further clarifications, saying:

受命皇朝臨海國

留蹤石洞庇人家

By the [Ming] dynasty he was ordered to visit our maritime countries

And left behind this cave which protects the people

Generally speaking, these engraved calligraphies provide an insight into the cultural, religious, and social life of merchants, craftsmen, and notables, especially those living in Jakarta, Cirebon, Semarang, and Surabaya. Some couplets were borrowed from temples in China, or copied from various thematic compendia of *duilian*, which nowadays are reprinted, and occasionally reproduced online. Such as the couplet in praise of Wenchang 文昌, the God of Literature, which was found in numerous sanctuaries dedicated to him, and was displayed in Surabaya in the Wenchang ci 文昌祠, founded in 1884, and converted into a Wenmiao (Boen Bio) 文廟 or Temple of Literature (dedicated to Confucius) at least in 1899, as a wooden panel indicates.²⁵ Again the couplet donated in 1866 by members of a guild of carpenters of Batavia to advise their fellow members not to enter the sanctuary dedicated to their patron saint Lu Ban 魯班 if their heart is filled with evil thoughts.²⁶ Some other couplets emanate from the donator himself. The donator may express the gratitude of the whole community toward a deity;²⁷ he may dialogue with ancestors, and

24. See the novel by Luo Maodeng 羅懋登, *Sanbao taijian Xiyang ji* 三寶太監西洋記 “The Voyage of the eunuch Sanbao to the Western Ocean,” Ed. Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1985, *shang, juan*. 9-10.

25. It reads :

位秉圖書開泰運 He holds the books and opens the supreme way,

德輝翰墨燦文章 His virtue illuminates calligraphy and casts light on essays.

Franke, Salmon & Siu, *Chinese Epigraphic Materials in Indonesia*, II (2), p. 687.

26. It reads: 惡念未除登斯堂何必拈香叩首; 善心常在入此地不妨淨手躬身 or No need to enter this sanctuary, to burn incense, and to knock the head in reverence if you have not removed your evil thoughts; if your heart is filled with kindness, you may enter, provided your hands are clean, and you bend the body in obedience. Franke, Salmon & Siu, *Chinese Epigraphic Materials in Indonesia*, II (1), p. 76.

27. Such as this *duilian* of 1867 that alludes to the mercy of the Earth God, Fude zhengshen 福德正神, toward the inhabitants of Bogor 茂物, after his shrine had been moved to an auspicious place: 福奠茂邦三遷始得英靈地; 德孚物眾萬類鹹沾澤恩.

with local heroes or deities, either by asking for their protection, by expressing his gratitude,²⁸ or simply by praising their merits.

In brief, these inscriptions shed a light on the importance of the codified language of calligraphic works in the making of a certain Chinese cultural identity, still very masculine, although local born Chinese ladies may occasionally express their gratitude by means of calligraphy.

Worthy of note, in 1895, a Chinese lady from Makassar, Mrs. Meng, née Wen 孟文氏, presumably *peranakan*, donated a cast iron bell engraved with a long and informative inscription, written by Dai Lin 戴麟, a literatus from Quanzhou, to the Tianhou gong 天后宮.²⁹

Calligraphy as a Means of Political Dialogue

For a long time, the Qing government regarded Overseas Chinese as “deserters” or “political conspirators.” After the opening of the treaty ports in the 1840s, the trade of coolies compelled the Manchus to recognize the right of their subjects to emigrate, as well as the existence of Chinese communities abroad. The first consulate to be ever established for Chinese communities abroad was in Singapore in 1877. The Dutch were not in favor of opening Chinese consulates in the Indies, and the first consul was not appointed until after the establishment of the Chinese Republic in 1912. In order to deal with his subjects in the Indies, the Qing government was compelled to dispatch successive official visitors. Moreover, since the early 1890s at least, the authorities became interested in the remittances of the Chinese merchants abroad, especially during disasters. In return, for these acts of generosity, local authorities from Guangdong and Fujian conferred tokens of gratitude taking the form of pieces of calligraphy that were engraved on wooden panels. Such as the undated one formerly displayed in the Chinese Council in Batavia that reads:

Franke, Salmon & Siu, *Chinese Epigraphic Materials in Indonesia*, I (1), p. 178.

28. Such as this couplet in praise of Zehai zhenren 澤海真人 “The Fairy that Favours the Seas” along the coast of Java and more especially near Pekalongan 北加浪 and Tegal 直葛:

澤海化身在葛洋光被四方 Zehai became an immortal in the sea of Tegal, casting a light into the four directions

真人濟世斯浪境惠及萬方 Zhenren protects the people of Pekalongan and his favours extend everywhere.

29. Franke, Salmon & Siu, *Chinese Epigraphic Materials in Indonesia*, III p. 256. The bell was destroyed during a devastating fire of the temple in 1997.

Yizhong weisang 誼重維桑

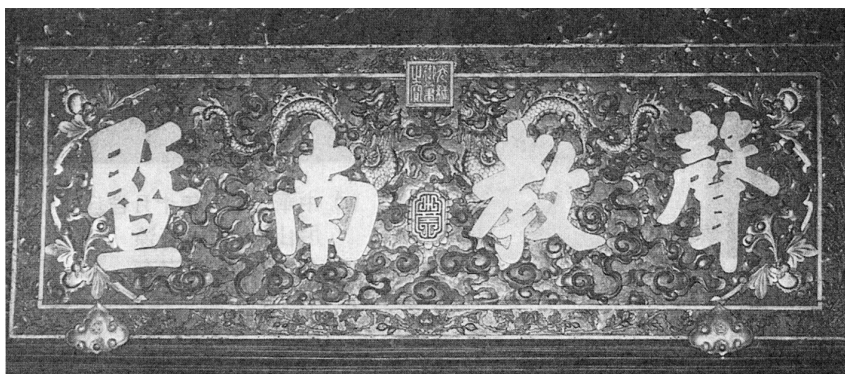
They Properly Appreciate their Native Village ³⁰ (P. 5)



In this new context, Emperor Guangxu 光緒 (1875-1908) did not hesitate to take his brush in order to make known his contentment in seeing Chinese culture reaching the southern countries with the creation of modern Chinese schools at the beginning of the 20th century. The Wenmiao in Surabaya still shelters such an inscription conferred by the said emperor, as the seal in its centre indicates: 光緒御筆之寶 “Treasure from Guangxu’s imperial brush”. It reads:

Sheng jiao nan ji 聲教南暨

The Emperor’s Teachings Open the South. ³¹ (P. 6)



30. Franke, Salmon & Siu, *Chinese Epigraphic Materials in Indonesia*, II (1), p. 123. For a similar panel displayed in Bandung in the Xietian gong 協天宮, see op. cit., p. 146. Two other panels, which now no longer exist, were to be found in Cirebon in the Chaojue si, and in Makassar in the Tianhou gong; see Franke, Salmon & Siu, *Chinese Epigraphic Materials in Indonesia*, III, p. 26; J.L.J.E. Ezerman, *Beschrijving van den Koan Iem-Tempel Tiao-Kak-Sie te Cheribon*, Batavia: Bataviaasch Genootschap van Kunsten en Wetenschappen, Populair-Wetenschappelijke Serie N° II, [1920], pp. 34-35, 40 (this one bears a slightly different inscription).

31. The panel is still displayed in the temple dedicated to Confucius. Franke, Salmon & Siu, *Chinese Epigraphic Materials in Indonesia*, II (2), p. 698.

The text is not dated, but it must have been donated in 1906, for the commemoration of the extension of the Wenmiao and the construction of an adjoining school, the Tjong Hoo Hak Tong 中和學堂, the name of which was changed to Tiong Hoa Hak Tong 中華學堂 the following year, after it was managed by an association called Tiong Hoa Hwe Koan 中華會館. This interpretation is corroborated by the fact that in 1907, Chen Baochen 陳寶琛 (1848-1935), First Class Consulting Expert in the Ministry of Education, who was sent to the Indies, ostensibly to inspect the educational facilities of the Chinese in the colony (but also to promote the sale of shares in a Fujian railway project), donated a couplet that alludes to the emperor panel.³² It reads:

地靈名早兆

天語祀新隆

The place is propitious, its name an early omen³³

The Emperor's words, in this sanctuary, a new gift. (P. 7)



How this panel from the emperor's hand was passed on, and handed over to the Wenmiao officials, remains a mystery. Worthy of note, in 1904, Emperor Guangxu had already conferred a similar panel to a newly founded Chinese school in Penang at the initiative of the famous mandarin capitalist

32. Franke, Salmon & Siu, *Chinese Epigraphic Materials in Indonesia*, II (2), p. 699.

33. One of the Chinese names of Surabaya is Sishui 泗水, which is also the name of a district in Shandong province.

Zhang Bishi 張弼士 (1840-1916, also known as Zhang Zhenxun 張振勳).³⁴ This form of dialogue between emperor and subjects residing abroad was, to the best of our knowledge, a novelty.

When in 1908, Emperor Guangxu passed away, soon followed by Empress Cixi 慈禧, the Chinese in Java organized various memorial ceremonies or *zhuidaohui* 追悼會. On a photo representing the staging of that held by the Chinese Chamber of Commerce in Semarang in 1909, one notices a framed calligraphy that reads:³⁵

Ru sang kaobi 如喪考妣 [Grieved] as if One Has Lost One's Parents

This last calligraphy emanating from a Chinese Chamber of Commerce shows that many of the great merchants remained attached to the monarchy. However, the first revolutionaries had arrived in Insulindia and started their activities with the support of some local merchants and craftsmen, especially in Surabaya.

Vicissitudes of Chinese Calligraphy during the 20th Century

Usefulness of Calligraphy in Times of Political Unrest

In China, the establishment of the Republic in 1912, the modernisation of education, and the new government's struggle against both Buddhism and Taoism had indirectly a negative impact on the use of calligraphic works inside Chinese temples. In Java too, during the 1910s-1930s, compared to the last decades of the 19th century, the number of couplets and engraved panels offered by donors seemingly declined, even if worshipping activities did not seriously recede.

However, two pairs of couplets in Semarang and in Surabaya deserve our attention. The first displayed in the sanctuary preceding the cave in honour of Sanbao is a very original couplet dated 1916. It was composed and written by Zhang Bingling 章炳麟 (1869-1924), one of "the Three Elders of the Revolution," and a most prolific revolutionary writer, during a tour he made through Southeast Asia. The text reads:³⁶

民國五年十月過三寶洞，此神若有之，庶其昭鑒
尋君千載後，
而我一能無

34. See Wolfgang Franke, 傅吾康 and Chen Tieh Fan 陳鐵凡 Ed., *Chinese Epigraphic Materials in Malaysia* / 馬來西亞華文銘刻粹編文銘刻萃編, 3 Vol., Kuala Lumpur: University of Malaya Press, 1982-1987, Vol. 2, p. 923. On Zhang Bishi, see *inter alia* Michael Godley, *The Mandarin-Capitalists from Nanyang. Overseas Chinese enterprise in the modernization of China 1893-1911*, Cambridge, London, New York, New Rochelle, Melbourne, Sydney: Cambridge University Press.

35. Liem Thian Joe, *Riwajat Semarang 1416-1931*, p. 195.

36. Franke, Salmon & Siu, *Chinese Epigraphic Materials in Indonesia*, II (1), p. 325.

勳二位前東三省籌邊使章炳麟 (P. 8)

I passed by the Cave of Sanbao during the 10th month of 1916; in case these deities exist, [I wrote this] in view to enlighten them:

I've been looking for you for a long time,

But I can't do anything

In front of you both meritorious [Zheng He & Wang Jinghong], Zhang Binglin, Frontier Defense Commissioner of the Three Eastern Provinces.

Here, Zhang Bingling refers to his former position, a post to which he had been appointed by Yuan Shikai 袁世凱 (1859-1916), but which amounted to little more than nothing.



The second one is displayed in the Wenmiao in Surabaya. In 1919, the revolutionary Jiang Baoliao (Tjio Poo liauw) 蔣報料, along with two unknown merchants, Wu Yingzhou 吳瀛洲 and Li Bingyao 李炳耀, donated a pair of tablets inscribed with parallel sentences that give the impression that Tjio was still a pious Confucianist. The text reads:³⁷

尼山雖謂宮牆遠
泗水依然廟宇存.(P. 9)

37. Franke, Salmon & Siu, *Chinese Epigraphic Materials in Indonesia*, II (11), p. 699.

The sanctuary walls in Nishan³⁸ are said to be far away,
But the temple in the city of Sishui³⁹ is still there as old.



Tjio, presumably, felt the need to publicly reassert his political commitment by alluding to the supremacy of the temple dedicated to Confucius in Surabaya, in order to better obscure his revolutionary activities.⁴⁰

Political Use of Calligraphy by the Republican Leaders

Soon after the establishment of the Republic, the new leaders, in the manner of the defunct imperial authorities, relied on calligraphy to reward the merchants of the diaspora who supported them. In Surabaya, where local revolutionaries were very active, such honorary gifts are difficult to trace, but they still exist in Makassar. The ancestral temple of the Tang 湯 family displays two wooden panels given in 1915 by the President of the Republic, *zongtong* 總統; the first one to Tang Heqing 湯河清 (1845-1910) Captain of Makassar since 1893, and the second one to Tang Longfei 湯龍飛 (1872-1942) who succeeded his father as Captain in 1910, and was later appointed Major. The current President of the Republic was Yuan Shikai who, in December of

38. Nishan in Sishui district, Shandong province, is the place of birth of Confucius.

39. Here, Sishui refers to Surabaya.

40. For more details, see C. Salmon, "Confucianists and Revolutionaries in Surabaya (c1880-c1906)," in Tim Lindsey, Helen Pausacker (Ed.), *Chinese Indonesians Remembering, Distorting, Forgetting*, Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2005, pp. 130-147.

the same year, proclaimed himself emperor. They read:⁴¹

Jigong haoyi 急公好義 Ready to stand out (up) for justice⁴² (P. 10)



Jian shan yongwei 見善用為 See an opportunity for doing right and to do it. (P. 11)



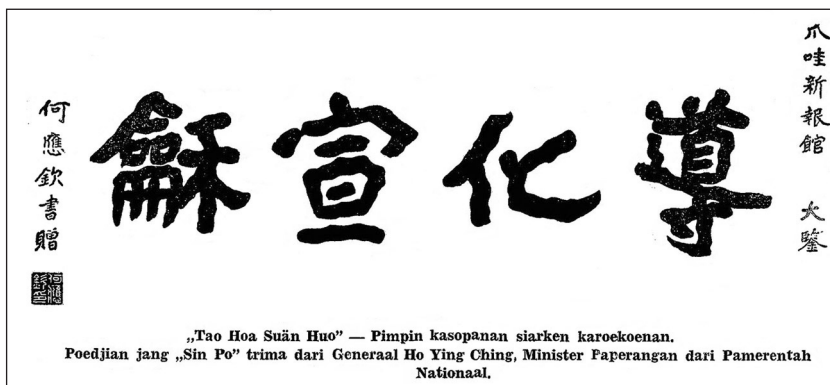
Subsequent leaders continued to use calligraphy as a means of dialogue, in particular when wishing to congratulate various Chinese newspapers in the diaspora, or when exhorting Chinese abroad to help the motherland. For instance, on the occasion of the commemoration of the 25th anniversary of the *Sin Po* 新報 weekly, Malay edition, various political figures of the Republic of China presented the journal with calligraphies. They were reproduced in the *Sin Po Jubileum - Nummer 1910-1935* (n. p.), along with translations in Malay, such as the one by General He Yingqin 何應欽 (1890-1987) that reads:

41. Franke, Salmon & Siu, *Chinese Epigraphic Materials in Indonesia*, III, p. 296.

42. This set phrase, *chengyu* 成語, is said to originate from the late Qing novel entitled *Guanchang xianxing ji* 官場現形記, "The Bureaucrats: A Revelation," 1903-1905.

Daohua xuanhe 導化宣和

[*Sin Po*] Leads, Instructs, and Propagates Harmony (P. 12).



Similar gifts, this time emanating from Lin Sen 林森 (1868-1943) President of the Republic from 1931 to 1943, and from no less than eleven eminent political personalities – among whom two generals, Jiang Zhongzheng 蔣中正 (i.e. Jiang Jieshi 蔣介石, 1887-1975), and Li Zongren 李宗仁 (1891-1969) – were presented to the weekly for New Year's Day 1940, at a time when the Republic, being at war with Japan, needed the support of the Chinese abroad. These calligraphies are reproduced in a special issue of the *Sin Po* weekly, with Malay translations.⁴³ Worthy of note, they are accompanied in the same issue by a long and manuscript letter by General Feng Yuxiang 馮玉祥 (1882-1948) urging Chinese in the Indies to continue to join forces for the war of resistance to the enemy.⁴⁴ Here we just quote the text emanating from President Lin Sen:

愛祖國振僑群文字宣揚光輝日著 (P. 13)

Love the motherland, shake all the Chinese Overseas, make propaganda in Chinese characters, make the future ever more glorious.

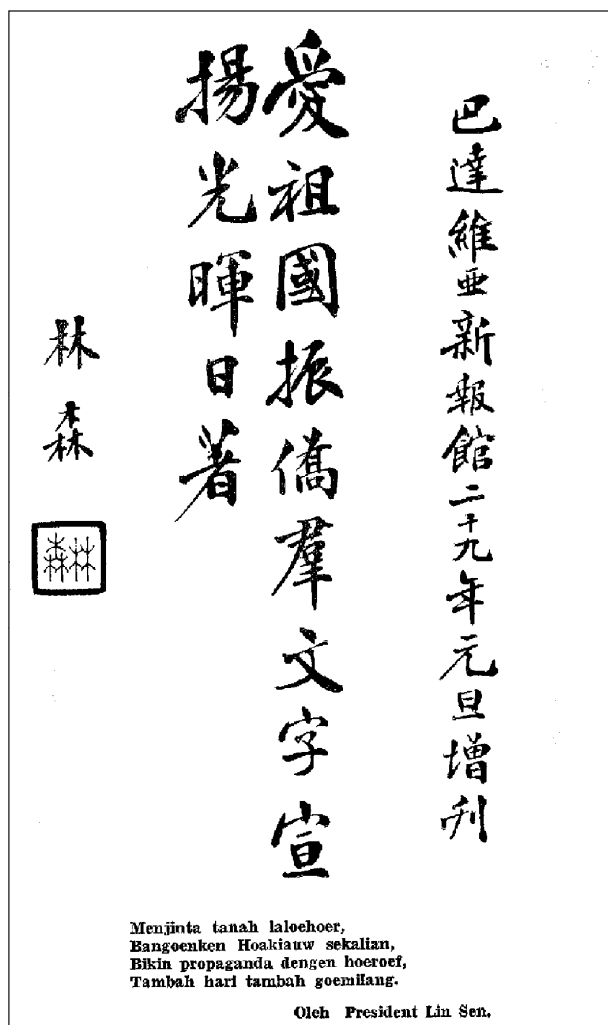
These last examples show enough the importance of calligraphy in the dialogues between Chinese rulers and their compatriots abroad, and that of the media in these very dialogues.

Reconstruction of the Social Fabric in the 1950s-60s and Calligraphy

Little is known about the calligraphers' social life before 1965. However, a Chinese Calligraphy and Painting Study Club existed in Jakarta in the

43. *Sin Po* weekly, Speciaal - Nummer N° 879, 3 Feb. 1940, n.p.

44. Feng Yu Hsiang, "Koempoel saloeroe Kiauwpaio poenja tenaga goena perang perlawanan 彙集全體僑胞的力量為抗戰服務," *Sin Po* weekly, Speciaal - Nummer N° 879, 3 Feb. 1940, n.p. As a matter of fact, Overseas Chinese's remittances dropped off dramatically after 1937, see Glen Peterson, *Overseas Chinese in the People's Republic of China*, Abingdon: Routledge, 2013, p. 67.



1950s. It was founded by Lee Man Feng 李曼峰 (1913-1988), Liang Ie-Yen, and Ling Yunchao 凌雲超 (or Ling Nanlong 凌南龍, 1914-1985), a calligrapher and industrial born in China, who had learned calligraphy with Li Zhongqian 李仲乾 (b. in 1882), and Chinese painting with Zhang Daqian 張大千 (1889-1983).⁴⁵

45. *Pameran Seni-lukis Lembaga Seniman Yin Hua, 7-14 Djanuari 1956*, n.p.; Leo Suryadinata, *Prominent Indonesian Chinese. Biographical Sketches*, Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1995, pp. 100-101; "Ling Yunchao xingshu geyan

A certain time after the end of the Second World War, with the consolidation of the Republic of Indonesia, some communities in Java renovated their temples and decorated them with new calligraphies. This was especially the case for Semarang and Cirebon where the population tried to reaffirm its links with local historical landmarks. In the Cave of Sanbao, to the west of Semarang, repairs were undertaken in the late 1950s. And in 1958, the director of the Indonesian Chinese Federation of Chambers of Commerce donated a pair of wooden tablets to commemorate the first visit by Zheng He in 1405. Its content is rather modern, in the sense that it alludes to the different perception of the Admiral, in Chinese scholarship and popular beliefs. The text reads:⁴⁶

航海成名有容在史，古洞詆徊歌仰止
立功異域吾道其南，世人膜拜奉為神 (P. 14)

He became famous for his maritime expeditions that are recorded in history, in the old cave, it is little more than meditations and songs

He established merits in foreign countries, we praised him in the South, common people worship him as a deity.



chouming zuo jianshang 凌雲超行書格言軸名作鑒賞,” <http://www.gujinwenxue.com/zhuanti/37334.html> (retrieved on 11/11/2019).

46. Franke, Salmon & Siu, *Chinese Epigraphic Materials in Indonesia*, II (1), p. 326.

In Cirebon, the Chaojue si, the oldest Chinese temple of Java still in existence, was repaired in the early 1960s, as a wooden inscription of 1963 indicates. Several wooden tablets were donated during this period, possibly by newcomers from Fujian who regarded Buddhist countries as enchanting lands. These calligraphers, who were learned in Buddhism, signed their works, either with their names or with pseudonyms. Among them, was a certain Zhang Houde 張厚德, native to Zhangzhou 漳州. One of his couplets, dated 1961, reads:⁴⁷

是妙境佛境
有鐘聲潮聲

This is a wonderfully pleasing place, the domain of the Buddha
With the sound of the bell, and that of the tide. (P. 15)



The rather optimistic atmosphere of the early 1960s did not last long. As a result of the events of 1965, the Indonesian government planned a number of measures aimed at cutting off the Indonesian Chinese community from its ancient roots and speeding up its assimilation process. Chinese schools were

47. Franke, Salmon & Siu, *Chinese Epigraphic Materials in Indonesia*, II (1), p. 220.

systematically suppressed, as were publications in Chinese, with the exception of one governmental newspaper in Jakarta. Moreover, Chinese characters were prohibited in public place. This put an end to the use of calligraphy in Chinese sanctuaries. Chinese characters were obliterated everywhere, panels were taken down and relegated to the storerooms, and the texts of many inscriptions covered with paper.⁴⁸ During the thirty odd years during which Chinese characters were banned, Sino-Indonesian calligraphers were compelled to work secretly in the privacy of their apartments.

Calligraphy and Sino-Indonesian Identity since the Late 1990s

After the fall of President Suharto in 1998, the prohibition of Chinese characters was released, newspapers and Chinese medium schools gradually reappeared, while the old calligraphers came out of the shadows, as if they had been forced to sleep for several decades. Judging by the rapidity with which the old calligraphers initiated collective activities, one may assume that they just resumed old habits. It is also quite possible that during the New Order, some of them did not discontinue meeting and even teaching calligraphy. Women calligraphers who quite often had been educators in Chinese schools may have played a significant part in that respect, but these facts remain difficult to establish.

We will see successively: how calligraphers tried to structure their calligraphic activities by creating diverse associations at the local, national and international levels; how they used these associations to organize various calligraphic exhibitions; finally, how they planned the calligraphic education of the young generations.

A Multitude of Calligraphic Associations

It seems that in order to consolidate their social and political position, the Sino-Indonesians renewed with their old ways of forming various kinds of associations ranging from geographically based ones to professional, and cultural ones, sometimes the three sorts overlapping. As far as one can judge, a great many of the persons interested in calligraphy were and still are of Hakka origin. The Hokkiens come in second position.

As early as 1998, a first association of calligraphy called Zuimo shufa she 醉墨書法社 or “Drunk Calligraphy Society” was founded at the

48. A few professionals excepted who continued to write epitaphs and various types of couplets used for private ceremonies: wedding, funerals, and New Year festivities. Such as Li Tju Kwet (71 years old) who owns a small shop in Glodok, Pancoran VI, N° 7 (Jakarta). See <http://nationalgeographic.grid.id/read/131627263/lim-tju-kwet-kaligrafer-aksara-han-yang-tersisa-di-pecinan-glodok?fbclid=IwAR0BwflpaIQfLQuZI2mGdleOL3634lm7xHhegSXU2ChNYvLmiCrVgDJh-Y> (retrieved on 7/12/2018).

initiative of Li Xiuxian 李秀賢, and Huang Guonan 黃國楠. Li Xiuxian, Indonesian name Susianawati Rusli, is a talented and dynamic Hakka lady of Fengshun 豐順 (Guangdong) ancestry. She was born in 1947 in Pematang Siantar, was educated in Medan (Sumatra), and taught there for a time in a Chinese school where her mother was a teacher. She later on settled in Jakarta along with her husband. This little society soon attracted the attention of numerous calligraphers from the capital, all more than sixty. In 2003, it was expanded and renamed Yinni shuyi xiehui 印尼書藝協會, or Indonesian Calligraphy Association. It is worthy of note that these calligraphers inscribed their new association within the framework of the Indonesian nation, as if to signify that their art is an integral part of the national culture, and thus to assure its legitimacy.

Li Xiuxian presided the first three sessions. She was succeeded by two other lady calligraphers: Tao Biru 陶璧如, about whom little is known, for the two following sessions and, since 2019, by Rao Yunzhi 饒韻芝.⁴⁹ Rao Yunzhi (born in 1955), equally of Hakka ancestry, comes from a family of artists and received part of her schooling in Taiwan. Her father Rao Xiquan 饒錫全 was a painter, several of her relatives are also involved in calligraphy. The Raos are said to be related to the late historian, painter and calligrapher Jao Tsung-I (Rao Zongyi) 饒宗頤 (1917-2018) native of Chao'an 潮安, Guangdong, who was based in Hong Kong. His memory is kept in the Jao Tsung-I Academy, or Rao Zongyi wenhuaguan 饒宗頤文化館.

Equally during the same year 1998, calligraphers and painters from East Java founded an association named Dongzhuawa shuhua xiehui 東爪哇書畫協會. This initiative was followed by those calligraphers residing in other cities, such as Bandung, where the Wanlong shufa xiehui 萬隆書法家協會, or Bandung Association of Calligraphers, was founded on March 9, 2009 by Huang Dechang 黃德昌 (of Hakka ancestry, born in Bandung in 1947, who had learned calligraphy with his father),⁵⁰ and a few other personalities. Such as Li Huizhu 李惠珠 of Hakka ancestry, born in Bandung in 1941, and currently teaching calligraphy at Maranatha Christian University⁵¹. Similar associations were created in Semarang, and Medan. The first, called Sanbaolong shuhuajia xiehui 三寶瓏書畫家協會, or Semarang Association of Calligraphers, was initiated in 2009 by Fang Fujie 方福捷; the second, called Yixinyuan shuhua xueshe 怡馨苑書畫學社, "Painting and calligraphy Study Group from the Garden of Harmony and Fragrance," was founded (date unknown) by Kuang Baocheng 鄭保

49. *Shangbao* 商報 (Jakarta), 2019.05.29, "Rao Yunzhi dang xuan yinni shuyi xiehui diliuren huizhang 饒韻芝當選印尼書藝協會第六任會長."

50. *Guoji ribao* 國際日報 *International Daily News* (Jakarta, Jawa Pos Group), 2017.04.20, "黃德昌生平事蹟."

51. Private communication from Li Huizhu.

成, presumably of Cantonese ancestry, as chairperson, and Chen Daorong 陳道容 of Hainanese ancestry, as vice chair. All these associations live on membership fees as well as donations.

Given the success of these different societies, some of their members decided to create a national association that would facilitate dialogue with foreign calligraphy counterparts. After a meeting of the main officials, the Yinni shufajia xiehui 印尼書法家協會, Perkumpulan Kaligrafer Indonesia or Indonesia Calligraphers Association, was founded in Bandung on February 27, 2011.⁵² Li Xiuxian was appointed chair of the first session, Huang Dechang deputy executive chair, and Ruan Yuanchun 阮淵椿 acting chairman. Ruan Yuanchun, Indonesian name Steve Yenadhira, of Hokkien ancestry, was born in Jakarta in 1948, and he has practised calligraphy and Chinese painting since the time he was a child. He is a well-known book artist in Indonesian art world, who has worked in the vanguard of advertising for visual arts for more than twenty years.⁵³ The association is hosted at the headquarters of Yongding huiguan 永定會館.

This pyramid structure was further reinforced with the creation in Jakarta of two international associations: the first, called Dongmeng – Zhongguo shuhua jia lianhe zonghui 東盟–中國書畫家聯合總會 or ASEAN-China Federation of Calligraphers and Painters,⁵⁴ was founded, on November 11, 2013, under the leadership of Ruan Yuanchun;⁵⁵ the second, called Shijie haiwai huaren shufajia xiehui 世界海外華人書法家協會 or Overseas Chinese Calligraphers Association (OCCA), bringing together calligraphers from around the world was founded on December 19, 2015. At that time, the OCCA regrouped calligraphers belonging to 33

52. “亚细安书法：印度尼西亚书法家协会”，<http://icalligraphy.blogspot.com/2016/05> (retrieved on 04/02/2020).

53. In 1995, Ruan Yuanchun and his wife founded Phoenix which is a wide format digital printing company, that specializes in off-set, digital and screen printing. In 2006, they launched the Divine Art Gallery known in Chinese as Siyuan meishuguan 思源美術館 (The H Tower Kav.20, Jl. H. R. Rasuna Said, RT.1/RW.5, Karet Kuningan, Kecamatan Setiabudi, Kota Jakarta Selatan). In 2013, Phoenix was merged with Innova (a creative media division of Voxa that was founded in 2001) to form Innophoenix. It specializes in innovative advertising. See Innophoenix profile 2013/01/30: <https://innophoenix.wordpress.com> (retrieved on 04/02/2020).

54. The Dongmeng shufajia xiehui 東盟書法家協會 or South East Asia Calligraphers' Association (SEACA) had been founded in Malacca on September 9, 2016. http://blog.sina.cn/s/blog_16e22c1580102x4z1.html (retrieved on 10/02/2020).

55. *Guoji ribao International Daily News*, 24/06/2016, “Ruan Yuanchun cujin yinni shufa wenhua pengbo fazhan de jiaojiaozhe, Hu Sudan heli goujian yinni zai haiwai shufajie de mengwhu diwei 阮淵椿 促進印尼書法文化蓬勃發展的佼佼者, 胡苏丹 合力構建印尼在海外書法界的盟主地位.”

countries.⁵⁶ Hu Sudan 胡素丹 has been appointed Counseling chairperson, Ruan yuanchun Chair, and Li Xiuxian Vice chair. Worthy of note, Hu Sudan, the youngest of the three, was born in Jakarta, where she received her Chinese education from her Hakka mother.⁵⁷

Calligraphic Activities and Identity Shaping

Calligraphy and painting exhibitions took place in Java even before the foundation of the Indonesia Calligraphers Association. This very fact shows enough the importance of calligraphy as a means to renew social links. For instance, the Perhimpunan Pengusaha Indonesia Tionghoa or Chinese Indonesian Entrepreneurs Association and the 中國書畫國際交流中心 or China Calligraphy and Painting International Center – founded the previous year in Shenzhen 深圳 – initiated an exhibition presenting 120 pieces of art (70 from China and 50 from Indonesia) that took place in VOC Galangan (Jakarta) from 20 to 24 September 2008. According to a report published in *Kompas*⁵⁸ among the Indonesian calligraphers who exposed works were “Steve Yenadhira [Ruan Yuanchun], Abidin Tane, Darwin H., Pai Cien Nan [白建南], and Chaeng Sui Lung.” Three other exhibitions were held in 2009, 2010, and 2011, at the initiative of Fang Fujie, and with the financial support of the Sino-Indonesian community; they were aimed at presenting calligraphic works from Jakarta, Surabaya, Bandung and Medan.

Since the foundation of the Indonesia Calligraphers Association, cultural activities related to calligraphy have continued to develop in a spectacular way, strengthening among Sino-Indonesians the feeling of belonging to a cosmopolitan cultural world, while being an integral part of Indonesian society. In order to give the reader an idea of this development, we present below a non-exhaustive chronological list of these meetings around calligraphy.

- 2011, shortly after the establishment of Yinni shufajia xiehui, several members of the association went to Guangzhou in order to participate in the creation by 100 artists from the whole world of a long calligraphic scroll, 100 meters long, to commemorate the centenary of the 1911 Revolution.

56. Among which: France, Germany, Great Britain, Netherlands, Spain, Italy, Belgium, Korea, Japan, Philippines, Vietnam, Thailand, Malaysia, Brunei, Singapore, Laos, Myanmar, Canada, United States of America, Brazil, Peru, Australia, New Zealand, Tanzania.

57. Hu Sudan’s husband, You Jizhi 游繼志 (Indonesian name Budi Yuwono), of Yongding ancestry, is the owner of the PT Sinde Budi Sentosa which produces a wide range of pharmaceutical products and famous health drinks marketed through Indonesia and abroad, and the chairman of the Yongding huiguan.

58. <https://regional.kompas.com/read/2008/09/17/17314278/voc.galangan.selenggarakan.pameran.kaligrafi.cina>. “VOC Galangan Selenggarakan Pameran Kaligrafi Cina” (accessed on 15.12.2019).

The scroll entitled “Jinian xinhai geming bainian haineiwai bairen baimi shufa changjuan 紀念辛亥革命百年海內外百人百米書法長卷” is kept in the Memorial Hall of the Revolution of 1911 or Guangzhou huanghuagang jinianguan 廣州黃花崗紀念館.⁵⁹

– 2012, several Indonesian calligraphers went to Guangzhou again in order to take part in the 2012 Dragon Year International Dragon Painting and Calligraphy Exhibition or Longnian guoji shuhua dazhan 龍年國際書畫大展, organized at the initiative of the Zhongguo wenhua yishu yanjiu zhongxin 中國文化藝術研究中心 or Chinese Culture and Art Research Center and the Guangdongsheng qiaolian 廣東省僑聯, or Guangdong Overseas Chinese Federation. The same year the Indonesia Calligraphers Association in conjunction with the Divine Art Gallery and the Chinese Culture and Art Research Center organized a similar exhibition in Jakarta.⁶⁰

– 2014, the Zhongguo – dongmeng wenhua jiaoliunian shuhua dazhan 中國–東盟文化交流年書畫大展 or China-ASEAN Cultural Exchange Year Calligraphy and Painting Exhibition took place successively in Jakarta on December 6, 2014, and in Guangzhou on December 17, 2014.⁶¹

More than 300 pieces coming from mainland China, Hong Kong, Macao, Taiwan, Indonesia, Singapore, Malaysia, Brunei, Thailand, Vietnam, Cambodia, Philippines, Burma, and Laos were exhibited.

– 2015, a special calligraphy exhibition took place in Jakarta to commemorate the 60th anniversary of the Bandung Conference. It exhibited a hundred pieces of works emanating from 80 calligraphers coming from Indonesia, China, Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand and the Philippines.⁶²

– 2016, the Indonesia Calligraphers Association along with Shanghai shufa xiehui laonian weiyuanhui 上海書法家協會老年委員會, or Shanghai Calligraphers Association Senior Committee, organized in Jakarta an exhibition entitled “Hanmo qiandao qing 翰墨千島情 or Affectionate Calligraphic Expression for the Thousand Islands.”⁶³

– 2017 the first OCCA Calligraphy exhibition, that was entitled “Yidai

59. <http://www.xhgmw.com/html/huodong/2014/0811/17760.html> (retrieved on 06.02.2020).

60. <http://ecul-web.wsbg.com/Culture/Detail?newId=50665>; <https://indonesia.sinchew.com.my/node/29360> (retrieved on 07/02/2020).

61. Richard Ren, 12/22/2014, “2014 Zhongguo-dongmeng wenhua jiaoliunian shuhua dazhan zai yajiada he guangzhou juxing 2014 中國–東盟文化交流年書畫大展在雅加達和廣州舉行,” <http://aacyf.org/?p=487> (retrieved on 06/02/2020).

62. <http://world.people.com.cn/n/2015/0418/c157278-26866472.html> (retrieved on 07/02/2020).

63. “谢锋大使出席‘翰墨千岛’中印尼书法交流展 2016/02/26,” id.china-embassy.org/ (retrieved on 07/02/2020).

yilu 一帶一路 or One Belt One Road” took place in Jakarta. It exhibited calligraphic works from 39 countries.⁶⁴

– 2019 the Indonesia Calligraphy Association organized the 3rd Indonesian-Malaysian Calligraphy Exchange Exhibition entitled Yefeng moyun 椰風墨韻 that may be understood as “Wind in the Coconut Palms and Calligraphic Rhymes” or “Atmosphere of Coconut Palms and Calligraphy.” The exhibition was held on 18/01/2019, for the inauguration of the “Yun” Artified Community Art Center or “Yun” Meishuguan 《韻》美術館⁶⁵ newly founded by Rao Yunzhi⁶⁶ at Jl. Katamaran 3, N° 33-35, Kapuk Muara, Kec. Penjaringan.⁶⁷

– Six months later (from 12 to 14 July 2019), with the assistance of the Qi Gong shuyuan 啟功書院, or Qi Gong Academy,⁶⁸ from Beijing Shifan daxue 北京師範大學 or Beijing Normal University, Rao Yunzhi organized a second exhibition entitled Sichou hanfeng 絲綢翰風 or Silk Road Calligraphy, aimed at presenting 130 master pieces emanating from 100 professors of calligraphy coming from the PRC. After the inauguration speeches, the participants were requested to compose one calligraphic piece each, which they presented to the Art Center. And to close the exhibition, the director of the Qi Gong shuyuan, Wang Ke 汪珂, and several other professors gave lectures on the art of calligraphy and its history.⁶⁹ It was certainly an unprecedented event. For Indonesian calligraphers, it was a rare occasion to make up for the time lost during these thirty odd years during which the use of Chinese writing had been prohibited; for their Chinese counterparts, it was an opportunity to reinforce the cultural dialogue with calligraphers abroad.⁷⁰

64. “印尼舉辦紀念亞非會議60周年全國書畫作品”; <http://world.people.com.cn/n/2015/0418/c157278-26866472.html> (retrieved on 07/02/2019).

http://usa.fjsen.com/2017-05/12/content_19510790.htm “一帶一路”首屆海外華人書法家協會大展筆會在雅加達舉行” (retrieved on 07/02/2020).

65. “Yun 韻” means rhyme, harmony, refined...

66. The “Yun” Artified Community Art Center was inaugurated on 18/01/2019. “The opening Yun Artified’s official opening was marked with the opening exhibit by Yince Djuwija herself and Beijing-based artist Zheng Lu whose work was on display in Jakarta for the first time. A total of 60 artworks are on the display - featuring Chinese Calligraphy, naturalist paintings and a few sculptures - curated by Jim Supangat.” Source: Yun Artified Community Art Center Officially Opens | NOW! JAKARTA (retrieved on 2019/01/23).

67. <https://kknews.cc/culture/8pze46l.html> (retrieved on 07/11/2019).

68. Qi Gong or Qigong (1912-2005) was born in Beijing into a Manchu family. His father and grandfather were literati. Qigong himself was a renowned calligrapher, painter and scholar. He taught as professor in the Department of Chinese language of Beijing Normal University. The Qi Gong Academy was founded in 2012.

69. <https://news.sina.cn/2019-07-19/detail-ihytcitm3078302.d.html> (retrieved 15/11/2019); <https://news.sina.cn/2019-07-19/detail-ihytcitm3078302.d.html> (retrieved on 17/12/2019).

70. <http://www.guojiribao.com/shtml/gjrb/20190703/1487691.shtml> (retrieved on

All these activities show that the practice of calligraphy has entered a new path. In addition to self-expression, it has become a means to develop social relations both regionally and internationally. In doing so, the calligraphers participate in several cultural worlds at the same time, which consolidates their social status in their own society. We have yet to see how the Indonesian calligraphers intervene in an attempt to sustain their new cultural identity within their own society.

How to Sustain the Place of Calligraphy within Indonesian Society?

Interested parties do not elaborate much on the subject, but some hints may be found by investigating the various measures that have been taken at different levels, ranging from the development of calligraphy teaching (mainly with tuition fees), to specific actions for its political acceptance.

A great number of private calligraphy academies have been initiated, or perhaps revived, in the main cities of Java, and in Medan. One of the oldest, if not the oldest, is certainly the Indonesia Calligraphy and Painting Institute, Yinni shuhua xueyuan 印尼書畫學院, that was founded in Jakarta in 1998 by Li Xiuxian and Hu Sudan. It is hosted on the fourth floor of the Yongding huiguan, and provides collective courses every Saturday morning. When I visited this institute in January 2019, there were four or five teachers for about thirty students whose age ranged from about 7 to more than 70. At the end of the course, teachers and students shared a lunch together. It is difficult to figure the real number of these academies in Jakarta alone, because they do not seem to advertise in the press.⁷¹ However, journalists occasionally allude to such institutions in relation with calligraphy exhibitions, such as for the one organized in 2011 by the Yujiazhuang yishu buluo 漁家莊藝術部落, or Group of Artists of the Fisher Village, headed by Yang Meng 楊猛;⁷² they also make presentations of these institutes when they open, such as the Wenyuan shuhuayuan 文遠書畫苑⁷³ when it was created in 2012, and the “Yun” Artified Community Art Center in 2019. Some fifty people attended the inauguration ceremony of the Wenyuan shuhuayuan newly founded by Ouyang Wenzhi 歐陽文植 at Jl. Merpati 1, N° 80, Kav. Polri Jelambar. Among them were the chairs of various calligraphy and painting associations, such as Li Xiuxian,

07/12/2019).

71. In this study we do not include the calligraphy institutes founded by foreign agencies.

72. 漁家莊藝術部落書畫展開幕, <http://old.shangbaoindonesia.com/?p=5085> (retrieved on 12/12/2019).

73. The name of this academy refers to the Chinese set phrase *yanwen xing yuan* 言文行遠, that may be rendered as “Elegant words can spread far away”.

Ruan Yuanchun, and the late Hu Yuanjing 胡原菁, the latter being the chair of another association named Zhonghua shuhua xiehui 中華書畫協會 or Association of Chinese Calligraphy and Painting.⁷⁴ As for the inauguration ceremony of the Yun Artified Community Art Center, a non-profit institution, initiated by Rao Yunzhi (who is also the founder of the non-profit organization Indonesia-China Art Association or ICAA),⁷⁵ it was attended by more than one hundred guests coming from any corner of Indonesia and from China, Malaysia and Singapore. This last institution is composed of a museum that hosts various exhibitions of painting and calligraphy, and of a non-commercial art center that holds regular workshops for the public, varying from oil painting, Chinese calligraphy to Chinese ink painting, and sculptures.⁷⁶

The calligraphers have also worked very hard to ensure that the meaning of calligraphy may be understood by the non-Chinese Indonesians. Some of them give once a week courses free of charge, like Li Huizhu in Bandung, who teaches in the Yayasan Dana Sosial Priyangan, or Boliangan fuli jijinhui 渤良安福利基金會, for any Indonesian interested in this form of art, even if he or she has not yet learned Chinese.⁷⁷ Moreover they do their best to make Chinese calligraphy enter public celebrations, as the two following examples show.

At the occasion of the Festival Pecinan that took place in Pancoran (Jakarta) on March 3, 2018, Ruan Yuanchun presented Governor DKI Jakarta Anies Baswedan, and Vice-Governor Sandiaga Uno with a pair of scrolls containing a special message dedicated to them, in the shape of an old adage, that reads:⁷⁸

風調雨順
國泰民安

[May] the wind and rain come in their time

[May] the country be prosperous and the people at peace (P. 16)

74. <http://old.shangbaoindonesia.com/?p=33226> (retrieved on 11/11/2019).

75. The first exhibition organized by ICAA was held at the National Museum Indonesia (18-25 October 2014), see <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5GM-COGAVfo> (retrieved on 10/12/2019).

76. <https://www.thejakartapost.com/life/2019/02/08/nonprofit-yun-artified-community-art-center-aims-to-connect-chinese-indonesian-artists.html> (retrieved on 23/01/2019).

77. <http://dy.163.com/v2/article/detail/EDAC86150520GBCO.html> (retrieved on 07/12/2019).

78. <https://www.tribunnews.com/metropolitan/2018/03/03/hadiah-kaligrafi-tionghoa-mengandung-arti-untuk-anies-baswedan-dan-sandiaga-uno> (retrieved on 20/11/2019).



In the same way, but at the national level, they managed to introduce calligraphy for the commemoration of the 2018 National Day on August 17, and the 18th session of Asian Games that took place the following day. For this purpose, on August 16, they held in Jakarta at the Nelayan International Exhibition Hall, an international exhibition called in Indonesian Pameran Kaligrafi Merayakan HUT RI dan Asian Games Jakarta, or Calligraphy Exhibition Celebrating Republic of Indonesia Anniversary, and Jakarta Asian Games, and in Chinese: Mohai hongfan 墨海紅帆, or Red Sails on a Sea of Ink.⁷⁹ This Chinese title was conceived by Hu Sudan and is reproduced on the official invitation card (P. 17). She also contributed a piece of calligraphy that reads *zhenxing yinni* 振興印尼, or To Achieve Prosperity to Indonesia, that expressed the wishes of the whole Indonesian community. Ruan Yuanchun, on his side, wrote a calligraphy in four characters that reads *shutu tonggui* 殊途同歸 or To Reach the same Goal by Different Routes, which is an old Chinese adage.⁸⁰ Here it alludes to the Indonesian device *Bhinneka Tunggal*

79. http://icalligraphy.blogspot.com/2018/08/2018_22.html (retrieved on 20/11/2019). The red color having here a double meaning: symbolizing the Indonesian flag “Merah Putih” and the Chinese tradition according to which the red color is used to celebrate big events.

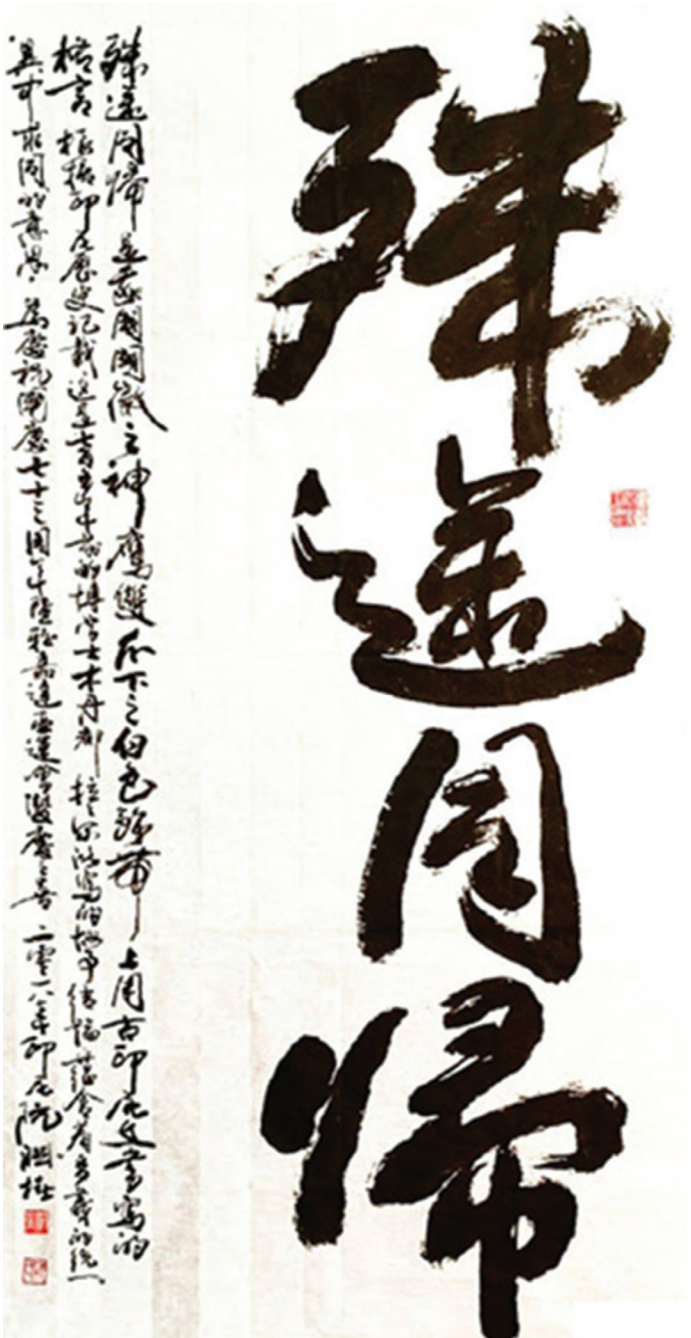
80. http://icalligraphy.blogspot.com/2018/08/2018_22.html (retrieved on 20/11/2019). It takes its origin from a commentary to the *Yijing* 易經, or Book of Changes (one of the Five Classics) named *Xici xiazhuan* 繫辭下傳 (diwu zhang 第五章), The complete



Ika, or Unity in Diversity (inscribed on the scroll gripped by the Garuda's claws), that takes its origin from a 14th century poem in old Javanese written by Mpu Tantular, as Ruan Yuanchun explains in his commentary.⁸¹ (P. 18)

sentence reads: “易曰：「憧憧往來，朋從爾思。」子曰：「天下何思何慮？天下同歸而殊塗，一致而百慮，天下何思何慮？“The *Yijing* says: If one is irresolute, only our friends follow us in our thoughts. The Master said: In this world, how to think, how to ponder? By different roads we reach the same goal, by different ways of thinking we reach unity. In this world, how to think, how to ponder?”

81. The commentary reads: 殊途同歸 是我國國徽之神鷹雙爪下之白色飾帶上，用古印尼文書寫的格言。根據印尼歷史記載，這是七百多年前的博學士 木丹都拉爾所寫的故事，結論蘊含著多義的統一，“異中求同”的意思”。為慶祝國慶七十三周年暨雅加達亞運會雙慶之喜。二零一八年 印尼 阮淵椿. Our thanks to Leo Suryadinata who helped us decipher a few characters.



The exhibition was organized by the Indonesia Calligraphers Association in conjunction with the ASEAN-China Federation of Calligraphers and Painters. It displayed about 200 calligraphies that all expressed in one way or another their wishes for a flourishing Indonesia and successful Asian Games.

This study focuses almost entirely on the use of pragmatic and political calligraphy among Chinese communities of Java over a little more than three centuries. It leads us to the conclusion that, as in China, calligraphy has been the most influential popular form of culture, and the most common means of social, religious, and political dialogue. This raises the question of the literacy of the migrants and their descendants. If we consider that, at least since the late 17th century, the various heads ruling local Chinese communities issued regulations on placards written in Chinese,⁸² one may assume that a sufficient number of the urban male population was composed of medium-literates. The calligraphic inscriptions from 18th century-merchants discussed here, show that calligraphy was part of the curriculum of many merchants, even those born locally such Wang Zhusheng (Ong Soe Seeng). Since the end of the 19th century, and even more after the establishment of the Republic, serious efforts were made to develop education by the creation of modern Chinese schools for boys as well as for girls.

From the 20th century onward, amateur calligraphers have come from the business world and from the teaching profession. We know almost nothing about the first female calligraphers who were possibly teachers born in China. We only perceive those of the second or third generation, born in Indonesia, like Li Xiuxian. Due to the twists and turns of the 20th century, we more or less lose track of calligraphers and their role in society. The abrupt stop being brought on with the prohibition of the use of Chinese characters during all the period of the New Order. In 1998, the rehabilitation of Chinese characters in public spaces, the reappearance of a press and schools in Chinese revived the public use of calligraphy. The old generation of calligraphers, for the most part born in Indonesia, resurfaced, all older than 60. As in other Asian countries, these calligraphers started to form calligraphy and calligrapher associations. The first calligraphers to structure themselves were those of Singapore in 1968; they were followed by their counterparts in China (1981), Malaysia (1985), Philippines (1989), Indonesia (1998), and Thailand (2012). All these associations focus on promoting research, exchange, innovation, education, as well as gathering of artists, and calligraphy exhibitions. In the case of Indonesia, these associations also aim at shaping a new cultural identity within Indonesian society, that may be summed up with the motto: *Saya Tionghoa Seratus percent Indonesia*, or “I am Chinese One Hundred Percent Indonesian.”

82. Some of these placards dating from the 17th and 18th centuries still exist.

