

Chinese Economic Activities in Java in the Late Eighteenth Century as Reflected in the Batavian Kong Koan (公館) Records¹

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Introduction

The period from the 1780s to the 1820s saw enormous change within Asia and globally, including the American Revolution, the French Revolution and Napoleonic wars in Europe, the Dutch ports in Southeast Asia declining, and the British beginning to establish settlements in Penang, Singapore, and Melaka. This new powerful player in the politics and economics of the archipelago also created new links between China and Southeast Asia, and a larger number of Chinese began moving into the Nanyang. Trade flows changed greatly during this period, with more opium heading towards China and much tea in the opposite direction. As a result, the increased European shipping meant greater competition and eventually decline for the Chinese junk trade. The period also saw the first newspaper established in Southeast Asia—the *Prince of Wales Island Gazette*, in Penang in 1806—that promoted new perspectives.

This was also a period of great change for the Chinese communities in Southeast Asia. Much work has already been done on the histories of the Chinese communities stretching from the Vietnamese coast around to the coasts of Thailand during this period.² In recent years, too, numerous other studies of Chinese economic activities in the archipelago during this era have also appeared.³ This note seeks to add to the growing intellectual current by examining the economic activities of the late eighteenth-century Chinese in Java, and mainly in Batavia, as revealed in the archives of the Batavian Chinese Council, or *Kong Koan*.

The Batavian Chinese Council (Kong Koan)

The Chinese Council in Batavia—also known as the Kong Koan (公館)—was an institution that emerged in the mid-eighteenth century, after the massacre of the Chinese residents of the city in 1740. It assisted the Captain of the Chinese in his diverse tasks, including supervising and coordinating social and religious matters. Leonard Blussé and Chen Meng-hong provide a useful introduction to the Council and

¹ A longer version of this paper was originally presented at the 18th Conference of the International Association of Historians of Asia Dec 6–10, 2004, Academia Sinica, Taiwan.

² The most recent is *Water Frontier. Commerce and the Chinese in the Lower Mekong Region, 1750-1880*, ed. Nola Cooke and Li Tana, Rowman & Littlefield, 2004, with chapters by Li Tana, Choi Byung-Wook, Yumio Sakurai, and Nola Cooke on these issues.

³ Important examples include Jennifer W. Cushman & A.C. Milner, "Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century Chinese Accounts of the Malay Peninsula", *JMBRAS*, LII: 1 (July, 1979); Claudine Lombard-Salmon, "The Contribution of the Chinese to the Development of Southeast Asia: A New Appraisal", *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, 12 (1981): 260-75; Peter Carey, "Changing Javanese Perceptions of the Chinese Communities in Central Java, 1755–1825", *Indonesia*, Vol. 37 (April 1984): 1-43; Leonard Blussé, *Strange company: Chinese settlers, mesitso women, and the Dutch in VOC Batavia*, Dordrecht, Netherlands, Foris Publications, 1986; J.W. Cushman (ed. Craig Reynolds), *Family and State: the Formation of a Sino–Thai Tin-mining Dynasty, 1797-1932*, Singapore, New York, Oxford University Press, 1991; *Chinese Economic Activity in Netherlands India: Selected Translations from the Dutch*, ed. Radin Fernando and David Bulbeck Singapore, ISEAS, 1992; Mary Somers Heidhues, *Bangka Tin and Mentok Pepper: Chinese Settlement on an Indonesian Island*, Singapore, ISEAS, 1992; several chapters in *Secret Societies Reconsidered: Perspectives on the Social History of Early Modern South China and Southeast Asia*, ed. David Ownby and Mary Somers Heidhues, M.E. Sharpe, 1993; most chapters in *The Rise and Fall of Revenue Farming: Business Elites and the Emergence of the Modern State in Southeast Asia*, ed. John Butcher and Howard Dick Basingstoke, Macmillan, 1993; most chapters in *Sojourners and Settlers: Histories of Southeast Asia and the Chinese*, ed. Anthony Reid, St Leonards, Allen & Unwin, 1996.

its various roles in *The Archives of the Kong Koan of Batavia*, from which the following few points derive.⁴

The Dutch had utilised Chinese *Kapitein* and *Luitenant*⁵ to assist them in governing the Chinese community of Batavia since the town was founded by the VOC in 1619. These men were meant to maintain order within the community, settle disputes, collect taxes, take censuses and participate in some of the Dutch colonial institutions. They also administered collective institutions such as cemeteries and temples. The first reference to any institution known as the Kong Koan was in 1747, when the *Kapitein Cina* was allocated an official residence in Batavia with an annex in which the Kong Koan could meet to discuss the issues they needed to resolve.⁶ It is clear from other texts, however, that the *Gong Tang* or Kong Koan⁷ was formally established in about 1742, immediately after the above-mentioned massacre, and obviously as a means by which to formalise the administrative functions of the Chinese officers.

The Kong Koan administered customary law on a weekly basis through sessions held at the Council's meeting room – the *rumah bicara*⁸ as it was known. In the second half of the eighteenth century, two secretaries joined its staff. In the mid-nineteenth century, *Majoor* Chen Yong-yuan moved the office to Tong-kang-an, where it remained until it was demolished by the Indonesian government in the early 1950s, after the Chinese Council was dissolved and reorganised into various temple foundations.⁹

The archival records of the Kong Koan were later moved several times before finally reaching the Netherlands, where a project to preserve and study them is well under way. The material in the archive ranges from details of marriages, divorces and deaths among the Chinese community, from the late eighteenth to early twentieth centuries,¹⁰ to matters involving real estate managed by the Council and records of temples or charitable organisations, as well as minutes of Council Board meetings. Those minutes form the basis for this article. Taken together, these records, mainly in Chinese,¹¹ constitute “the only relatively complete archive of a sizeable Chinese urban community in Southeast Asia,”¹² and are thus hugely important in understanding a wide range of historical phenomena, not only in Java but throughout East and Southeast Asia.

The Minutes of the Board Meetings of the Chinese Council

The board meetings of the Chinese Council apparently began in 1772, but the extant texts only date from 1787. Volume 1 of the “Minutes of the Board Meetings of the Chinese Council”, published in 2002 by the Leiden/Xiamen cooperative, covers the meetings from 1787 till 1791.¹³ They form the basis of the volume entitled *18 世紀末吧達維亞唐人社會*, or *The Chinese Community of Batavia at the End of the Eighteenth*

⁴ *The Archives of the Kong Koan of Batavia*, ed. Leonard Blussé and Chen Menghon, Sinica Leidensia Series, Vol. 59, Leiden, Brill, 2003. This volume emerged from a conference on the archive held in 1999.

⁵ *Kapitein* is a Dutch word represented in Chinese as 甲必丹. It was the title used for the Dutch-recognised leader of the Chinese community, from at least 1619. A further post of *Lieutenant* (雷珍蘭) was added in 1678 to assist the *Kapitein*. The system was formally abolished in 1931.

⁶ P. de Roo de la Faille, “De Chineesche Raad te Batavia en het door dit college beheerde fonds”, *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde van Nederlandsch-Indië*, Vol. 80 (1924), pp. 303–24.

⁷ These terms are used as synonyms in this article.

⁸ “Discussion hall” in Malay, or 嚙啞嚙厝 in Chinese.

⁹ For further information on the Chinese in Batavia and their administration by Dutch-recognised officials, see the various contributions in *Archives of the Kong Koan*, ed. Blussé and Chen.

¹⁰ They provide excellent and as yet essentially untapped demographic source materials.

¹¹ A few of the later records are in Malay/Indonesian.

¹² Introduction to *Archives of the Kong Koan*, p. 5. However, Li Tana has noted that there exist some large archives of Chinese communities in Vietnam.

¹³ This is the material from Archive No. 21001.

Century,¹⁴ as well as of this research note. Details exist for 664 cases. Some were so complex they were discussed at six or seven board meetings,¹⁵ and many others required multiple hearings. Appendix 1, which translates four sets of minutes, illustrates the type of materials and cases contained within the Council records.

The Board, which comprised the Kapitein and Luitenants of the Chinese community, either mediated or passed judgement on cases ranging from economic disputes to marital and custody battles, wage claims, and so forth. Every Wednesday in the *berbicara* hall 嚙喳嘮厝, plaintiffs and claimants called defendants or debtors to appear before the Board. Like magistrates in China, the Council “instructed” (諭) members of the community who approached it for restitution or who were called to attend the meetings. Blussé has already detailed the Board’s options in various cases.¹⁶ When people did not appear after a third summons, the Board issued a warrant for their arrest.¹⁷ When required, runners or attendants (氏達) employed by the Council provided armed escorts for those being sent to prison or to other Courts. In some cases, the Council even instructed people to return to China to deal with commercial disputes.¹⁸

The Board members refused, however, to rule on a number of types of cases, including those involving loss of human life, which were passed to the appropriate Dutch officials.¹⁹ Other capital or serious cases were apparently sent to the Dutch *Schepenbank*, or Board of Aldermen of the town.²⁰

However, this paper focuses on economic cases brought before the Board of the Chinese Council of Batavia between October 1787 and February 1791 and on what they tell us about Chinese economic activity in Batavia and elsewhere at the end of the eighteenth century. In all, there are 503 cases relating to economic claims, or about 75 percent of the 664 cases discussed during that period.²¹ Table One roughly classifies these cases. The few vignettes that follow reflect only a very small proportion of these valuable archival materials; but hopefully they will draw further attention to the materials and to the areas in which they might provide useful sources for the social and economic history of East Asia.

As the table shows, most cases involved claims for unpaid debts or goods. They ranged from relatively small sums sought by petty traders, such as labourers and carpenters, to huge sums claimed by merchants. That some community members claimed sums as small as a single dollar suggests that at least some in the community were very hard-pressed, or perhaps enthused by the litigation process.

¹⁴ 包樂史、吳鳳斌 著 *18 世紀末吧達維亞唐人社會*，廈門大學出版社 2002 (Leonard Blussé and Wu Fengbin, *The Chinese Community of Batavia at the End of the Eighteenth Century*, Xiamen University Press, 2002).

¹⁵ This was the case involving a dispute between the business partners Zheng Xiang (鄭祥) and (朱溫), extending from the 9 April 1788 meeting until the 19 November 1788 meeting. Mandarin transcription is used here only because a standard exists for it. A much more appropriate transcription would be Hokkien readings of the characters.

¹⁶ *Archives of the Kong Koan*, ed. Blussé and Chen, pp. 20-21.

¹⁷ See the case of Chen Shi (陳是) in the minutes of the Board meeting of 26 March 1788.

¹⁸ As seen in the case of Chen Hu-guan (陳鵠觀) versus Cai Yu-zhen (蔡玉振) in the minutes of the Meeting held on 2 April 1788.

¹⁹ Examples of this include the throwing overboard of a female Balinese slave, observed in the case between Wu Yuan-guan (吳遠觀) and Zhong Lai-guan (鍾來觀) in the meeting of 14 November 1787, and the throwing overboard of a male Balinese slave in the case between Wang Lin-guan (王鄰觀) and Zhong Lai-guan (鍾來觀) mentioned in the meeting of 14 November 1787.

²⁰ For this latter avenue, see Leonard Blussé, “One Hundred Weddings and Many More Funerals a Year: Chinese Civil Society in Batavia at the End of the Eighteenth Century” in *Archives of the Kong Koan*, ed. Blussé and Chen, pp. 8–28, particularly p. 21.

²¹ Blussé and Wu, *The Chinese Community of Batavia*, Xiamen University Press, 2002, p. 97–98.

Table 1. Economic Cases Brought Before the Batavian Chinese Council 1787–91

Type of case	1787	1788	1789	1790	1791	total
Money owing	9	49	96	50		204
Goods owing	6	29	49	36	1	121
Money owed for medicine		2	2	5		9
Money owed for ship fares		7	3			10
Money owed from gambling	1	3	6	1		11
Wages owed to workers		17	10	15		42
Money owing with debtor fleeing		5	4	4		13
Goods owed and not returned		2	2	2		6
Seizure of assets due to monies owed				1		1
Partnership business disputes		15	12	19		46
Money entrusted for remittance to China		3	2	2		7
Division of family assets	1	5		1		7
Pawning of assets		2	6	1		9
High-interest credit		1		1		2
Rental or purchase of house		2	1	2		5
Rental of farm				1		1
Sale of opium		1		1		2
Sale of fake opium				2		2
total	17	143	193	144	1	503

Money and Currency

These claims show the various sorts of daily economic transactions at different levels of society, and reveal that people accounted their day-to-day monetary dealings in dollars²² (文 – *bbun*), 10-cent units (鈔 – *buat*) and cents (分 – *hong* or *bang*). While this reflects standard Chinese use of currency, the term “*buat*” is interesting as it remains in use in Penang, Malaysia, while in most other parts of the Malay Peninsula “*kak*” (角) describes the 10-cent unit. This name suggests Batavia’s early links with the new port of Prince of Wales Island/Penang in the late eighteenth century. Penang’s rise may well have contributed to Batavia’s loss of dynamism, something repeatedly alluded to by Isaac Titsingh when he returned in 1792 after five years away.²³ It seems no coincidence that these five years were also the first half-decade of the new port at Penang. The economic emergence of Bangkok at the time may also have been a factor, as was the rise of new Chinese economic centres in Riau, Brunei, Kalimantan, Bangka, Kelantan and Phuket, as Blussé cited.²⁴

A wide variety of coinage circulated in Java during this period, and the diversity of Chinese names for specie is reflected within the cases examined.²⁵ Some form of paper money also appears to have been in use, known as 紙字 (Hokkien “*tsoaje*”), but its nature is unclear from the references. It might have been a sort of promissory note.²⁶

²² Rix Dollar (also known as the Rijksdaalder or Nederlandse Rijksdaalder), each dollar being equivalent to 2.5 Dutch guilders.

²³ See Blussé, “Weddings, Funerals and Civil Society”, p. 16 for reference to Isaac Titsingh’s appraisal.

²⁴ Leonard Blussé, “Chinese Century: the Eighteenth Century in the China Sea Region”, *Archipel* 58 (1999), pp. 107–29.

²⁵ For a detailed study of the coinage circulating in eighteenth century Java and the Dutch efforts to institute their own coinage across the Central and Eastern areas of the island, see Kwee Hui Kian, “Colonialism Creeping In: The Dutch East India Company’s Promotion of Petty Coins in Central and East Java, 1740s–1790s”, a paper submitted to the Euroseas Conference in London, September 2004.

²⁶ See the case between Zhong Jia-lang (鍾加郎) and Chen Yong-he (陳永和) in the Meeting of 30 September 1789. This case is also described in Blussé and Wu, *The Chinese Community of Batavia*, p. 105.

Various claims made to the Board also involved people acting as *antar* (晏旦 or 晏旦付人), or guarantors, for loans and against whom claims were made when the original creditor could not be found.

Commodities and prices

The cases give us some insights into the commodities traded within the Batavian Chinese community: tea,²⁷ kain batik,²⁸ sandalwood, tobacco,²⁹ sugar, textiles,³⁰ wine,³¹ white cloth from China,³² leather shoes,³³ gambir,³⁴ deer meat, and opium all appear, among others.³⁵ These few items represented a very small proportion of commodities in the market, and detailed case studies will undoubtedly produce long commodity lists.

Commodity prices are often included in the testimony given before the Board. When Zhong Jia-lang took his commercial dispute with Chen Yong-he to the Kong Koan on 30 September 1794, for instance, the latter noted that they had initially agreed that the price of sandalwood (香柴頭) would be eleven dollars per *dan*,³⁶ but later reduced it to ten dollars per *dan*.³⁷ The price of tea was mentioned in a case between Chen Jiang-niang and Wang Xing-guang, at the meeting on 31 October 1797. The minutes recorded that seventeen one-catty boxes of tea, together with eleven catties of loose tea, were worth 32 dollars, 20 cents.³⁸ Barrels of wine were sold at twelve dollars each,³⁹ while 180 pairs of leather shoes were worth 121 dollars. One *dan* of deer meat cost 12 dollars, 20 cents.⁴⁰

Occupations and professions

Apart from the commodity traders who were so prominent in the Board meeting minutes, the sources reveal various other economic activities of the Batavian Hokkien community. Some prominent members were also manufacturers, like Kapitan Ong Tjoe Seeng,⁴¹ who ran a wine factory⁴² and a sugar refinery.⁴³ Another sugar plantation/refinery was

²⁷ For a case involving claims for two large boxes and 17 small boxes of tea, valued at about 40 dollars, see that of Chen Jiang-niang (陳江娘) versus Wang Xing-guang (王興廣) in the meeting of 31 October 1787.

²⁸ A case involving a *kain batik* transaction between 鄭扶觀 and 肖俊 is recorded in the meeting of 9 September 1789.

²⁹ With names like “double-dragon tobacco” (雙龍煙) and “China tobacco” (唐煙).

³⁰ These last-mentioned three commodities are listed in a case between 鍾加郎 and 陳永和 in the meeting of 30 September 1789.

³¹ The trading of barrels of wine between Batavia and Melaka is noted in the minutes of the meeting dated 17 June 1789.

³² In the case of Zheng Zhuan-guan (鄭轉觀) versus Wu Guang-tian (吳光田) in the meeting of 13 January 1790, it is noted that white cotton cloth from China was imported to Batavia in tubes (筒), each of which contained 25 bolts of cloth. Eight of these tubes were valued at 458 Rix dollars in 1786, with each *ge-li* (戈里) being valued at 45 dollars.

³³ The case of Chen Jiang-guan (陳江觀), Chen He-lang (陳賀郎) and Chen Yi-ran (陳亦然) versus Lian Dun-guan (連敦觀) in the minutes of the meeting held on 11 March 1789 refers to merchants travelling to Melaka to sell leather shoes.

³⁴ See the case of Xie Bao-guan (謝寶觀) versus Zhang Shang (張賞) of 25 June 1788, where the dispute was over gambir (甘密).

³⁵ The minutes of the meeting held on 5 November 1788 contained a plea for clemency for 27 persons, both Chinese and Javanese, who had been sentenced to death for opium smuggling.

³⁶ A *dan* is a picul of approximately 133 pounds.

³⁷ The case of 鍾加郎 versus 陳永和 in the meeting of 30 September 1789.

³⁸ See case of Chen Jiang-niang (陳江娘) versus Wang Xing-guang (王興廣) in the meeting of 31 October 1787.

³⁹ See letter from the Sultan of Terengganu included in minutes of the meeting on 17 June 1789.

⁴⁰ See case of Chen Mao-guan (陳毛觀) versus Lin Jin-guan (林近觀) in the meeting of 21 May 1788.

⁴¹ 王珠生.

⁴² As noted in the case of Zhu Wen-guan (朱溫觀) versus Zheng Xiang-guan (鄭祥觀) in the minutes of the meeting of 16 April 1788.

owned by one Chen Jian-sheng,⁴⁴ whose labourers took him before the Council to claim unpaid wages.⁴⁵ Other occupations mentioned in the proceedings included tailoring⁴⁶ and lacquer work.⁴⁷

Diversity of economic transactions

The minutes reveal a wide diversity of transactions. Claims for rent arrears, recovery of gambling debts, pawn-broking disputes, ship purchases, purchasing of *warungs*,⁴⁸ auctions,⁴⁹ recovery of debts from absconders, slave purchases, and prosecution of opium smugglers all feature in the 1787–91 archive. Given the space limitations, I will discuss only a few of them, with examples.

Revenue farming was long an avenue for wealth creation among the Chinese of Batavia.⁵⁰ A 1788 case between Zhang Lu-guan (張盧觀) and Li Mao-guan (李卯觀) noted that these two partners had run the gambling monopoly at Angke,⁵¹ with Zhang Lu as cashier and Li Mao as accountant. Another entry of that year refers to a monopoly for collecting market taxes.⁵² When the Dutch allocated a gambling monopoly at Shen-chi (神馳) in early 1789, we see that the main tender was divided into sixteen shares (股), of which four belonged to interests associated with a Lin Long (林隆).⁵³

Business partnerships

The widespread existence of business partnerships is reflected in the many disputes between such partners brought before the Kong Koan. One case from the meeting of 9 April 1788 noted that Zheng Xiang-guan⁵⁴ had formed a partnership with Zhu Wen-guan⁵⁵ to do business in Semarang, but Zheng claimed his partner had failed to clear the accounts with him. Of the huge number of other partnerships mentioned, most seem to have been short-term arrangements, covering a specific business venture or trip, after which the accounts were done and the profits divided. When merchants returned to China from Batavia, they left a *kuasa* person (an empowered agent) in charge of their property and business.⁵⁶

⁴³ As noted in the introduction to the meeting of 31 October 1787. The term used for the refinery is 部, pronounced “po” in Hokkien.

⁴⁴ 陳鑑生. Hokkien romanization is unknown.

⁴⁵ See the case against Chen Jian-sheng in the minutes of the meeting on 21 July 1790.

⁴⁶ The case of Zhong Jun-xiu (鍾俊秀) versus Zhang Hong-bo (張洪伯) in the proceedings of 14 January 1789 revealed that the first-mentioned worked as a tailor for Mr Zhang at a monthly wage of 3 or 6 rixdollars. The case involved the wage level actually offered originally and the payment of back wages.

⁴⁷ The case of Xu Wang-guan (許望觀) versus Chen Zhuang-guan (陳壯觀) indicated that the latter was an employee in the former’s lacquer shop (漆店).

⁴⁸ This Indonesian term for a stall or shop had already been incorporated into local Hokkien where it was represented in various ways, including 阿朗, 亞廊 and 亞郎.

⁴⁹ Represented in these Chinese texts by the term “li-long” (黎壟), or similar variants, deriving from the Portuguese term “leilaõ”, which was taken into Malay as “lelong” meaning auction.

⁵⁰ For a general background to revenue farming in Southeast Asia, see John Butcher and Howard Dick, *The Rise and Fall of Revenue Farming*, ed. Butcher and Dick, or for more specific details of revenue farming in colonial Batavia and the Hokkien role in it, see James Chin (錢江), “Merchants and other sojourners: The Hokkiens overseas 1570-1760”, PhD thesis, University of Hong Kong, 1998, pp. 234–50.

⁵¹ See case in the minutes of the meeting held on 30 July 1788.

⁵² See case of Zhan Li-guan versus Huang Du-guan (黃都觀) in the minutes of the meeting on 10 December 1788.

⁵³ See case of Lin Long-guan (林隆觀) versus Zhan Zhai-guan (詹宅觀) in the minutes of the meeting on 7 January 1789.

⁵⁴ 鄭祥觀.

⁵⁵ 朱溫觀.

⁵⁶ For an example of this, see the case of Lin Sheng-guan (林盛觀) versus Chen Mao-guan (陳毛觀) of 21 May 1788. People also often appointed a “kuasa” when they were near death.

Accounting records

It is clear from these records that individual merchants kept very detailed, and sometimes complex, accounting records. When commercial disputes came before the Council, it was not unusual for merchants to have to submit their full accounts to the Board, and sometimes to the Secretaris,⁵⁷ for inspection.⁵⁸ Sometimes, the accounts were too complex for the Board to unravel immediately and were sent elsewhere for more detailed analysis.⁵⁹

Corporate bodies — kongsis

While many debt cases involved individuals or partnerships, some included the names of corporate bodies, or *kongsis* (公司). In one such case detailed during the meeting of 23 June 1790, Lin Ci claimed Lin Han owed 115 dollars to a firm known as Wan-he Gong-si (萬和公司), although no further information was provided on the *kongsis* or its other members.⁶⁰ A Melaka-based *kongsis* known as the Shuang-ceng *kongsis* (雙層公司) was also mentioned as trading between Batavia and other ports in the archipelago in 1789.⁶¹

Trade with China

A number of the debt cases also provide information on the trade with China. Often people entrusted their goods to others for the journey to or from Batavia, and this frequently gave rise to disputes. In April 1790, for example, Wu Yu claimed for the value of 20,000 needles, given to Xie Yao in Amoy but not surrendered when Xie arrived in Batavia.⁶² In the meeting of 13 January 1790, Zheng Zhuan-guan⁶³ called Wu Guang-tian⁶⁴ to account for cloth that he had been commissioned to bring back from China in 1786, but which had not been delivered or paid for. The variety of such cases suggests that merchants in China tended to commission or entrust their goods to persons who were travelling to Batavia from China, rather than to go there personally.

Blussé has shown that, by the late eighteenth century, Dutch East India Company taxes had caused a great decline in the junk trade to Batavia.⁶⁵ However, the minutes of the Board meetings suggest that in the late 1780s and early 1790s, the arrival and departure of the China fleets were still important dates on the calendar. Many cases contained references to persons wanting to be paid before the China fleet sailed, or being unable to repay debts until the fleet arrived with their cargoes.

⁵⁷ The 朱葛礁, or "Secretaris" was a post that was established in 1750. In that year, the Kapitan Cina Oiej Tsom Ko (黃箴觀), who held the post from 21 April 1747 until October 1751, submitted a request to the Gouverneur Generaal seeking the appointment of a Chinese person as Secretaris. This was approved and thus Oiej Tsji Lauw (黃市鬧) was appointed to the post. He apparently used a large parasol when moving about and was referred to as "Da Zhu" (大朱). In 1766 a deputy position was established, filled by Xu Zhong-qi (徐仲奇).

⁵⁸ For an example of merchants being required to bring their accounts before the Secretaris, see the case Zhu Wen-guan (朱溫觀) and Zhu Chen-guan (朱琛觀) versus Zheng Xiang-guan (鄭祥觀) in the proceedings of the meeting of 16 April 1788.

⁵⁹ There is an instance of such in the case of Huang Hui-guan (黃會觀) versus Cai Liu-guan (蔡六觀) contained within the minutes of the meeting of 14 May 1788, whereby the two sides were ordered to take their account books to the office of Kapitan Njo Koang Ko.

⁶⁰ See case between Lin Ci-guan (林次觀) and Li Han-guan (李翰觀) in the meeting of 23 June 1790.

⁶¹ See letter from Sultan of Terengganu included in minutes of the meeting on 17 June 1789.

⁶² See the case of Wu Yu (吳育) versus Sun Zong-bao (孫宗寶) and Xie Yao (謝瑤老) in the minutes of the meeting of 14 April 1790.

⁶³ 鄭轉觀.

⁶⁴ 吳光田.

⁶⁵ Leonard Blussé, "Chinese Trade to Batavia During the Days of the V.O.C.", *Archipel* 18 (1979), pp. 195–213.

Remittances and Immigration

The importance of remittances to Fujian by Chinese labourers in Java is reflected in a range of the cases. When a group of labourers, led by Chen Su-guan,⁶⁶ took their employer before the Council in 1790, Chen stated: “Su and my fellow labourers came abroad to earn a living and the small wages we earn are all sent back to our families. Su and my fellow labourers were last year employed in the sugar plantation of Chen Jian.” After listing the amounts owed individually to them by the employer, they noted: “At this time, when the ships from China are about to return to China, we all seek payment from Chen Jian, so that we can send remittance letters to our families.”⁶⁷

There existed individuals called “Chui-ke” (水客) or “Lam-nyu-ke” (南洋客), who travelled frequently between Fujian and the ports of Southeast Asia. They brought goods from China for sale in the archipelago and took Southeast Asian produce back to trade in China. They were also the news bearers and often the carriers of letters and remittances. This system, and its abuse, appears in various cases, precisely because cases before the Council usually involved wrongdoing or disagreement. The process of sending the remittance, the guarantors arranged, the issuing of receipts in Batavia, and non-receipt of silver sent to China, are recounted in a range of these cases.⁶⁸

The main importance of shipping from Fujian and Chaozhou in this period appears to have been its role as a carrier of people. Various vignettes reported reveal the systems in place, the fare payments system and, again, the abuses that occurred. In a case from June 1789, for example, we read of how Xie Lai-feng travelled regularly between Chaozhou and Batavia carrying trade commodities and persons. His guaranteed ticket price for a fare from Chaozhou to Batavia was sixteen “floral-border” dollars in Chaozhou, promising the payment of sixteen “big sword” dollars in Batavia. In this case, the immigrants could not repay their fares.⁶⁹ A similar case is reported for people brought from Siam to Batavia in 1788.⁷⁰ Further details of human transport between Chaozhou and Batavia appear in another case from 1787.⁷¹

Trade within the Archipelago

Another interesting aspect of some of these cases is what they tell us about Chinese merchants’ connections within the archipelago (Nusantara). Links around the archipelago are shown in a letter sent to the Kong Koan by Sultan Mansur⁷² of Terengganu in 1789. This letter noted that on board a ship blown from Melaka to the Sultanate was a certain Hong Feng-guan.⁷³ He was a relative of Hong Ao-guan,⁷⁴ the ship master, who had died earlier in Annam and whose trading accounts were thus confused. The letter reported that there was a dispute between Hong Feng-guan and “the *kongsi*” (which here seems to refer to other people on board who held shares in the cargo): Hong Feng-guan wanted the *kongsi* to pay him out, after which he would return

⁶⁶ 陳素觀.

⁶⁷ See the case in the minutes of the meeting on 21 July 1790.

⁶⁸ For a representative case of silver being entrusted to another and not delivered in China, see the case of Wu Ying-yang (吳膺揚) versus Tang Run-zhang (湯潤章) and Tang Xin-sheng (湯新聲) in the meeting of 27 May 1789.

⁶⁹ See cases of Xie Lai-feng (謝來鳳) versus Guo Qing-ming (郭慶明) in the meetings of 10 June 1789 and 24 June 1789.

⁷⁰ See case of Yang Yin-guan (楊印觀) versus Qiu Huan-guan (邱煥觀) and Cao Cheng-guan (曹成觀) in the Board meeting of 28 May 1788.

⁷¹ See the case involving the 紅頭鵠船主陳鵠 (Captain Chen Hu) who operated out of Zhang-lin 樟林 port in Chao-zhou, as detailed in the minutes of the meeting of 26 March 1788.

⁷² This was certainly Sultan Mansur Shah (I) ibni al-Marhum Sultan Zainal Abidin who reigned from 1733 until 1793.

⁷³ 洪艷官.

⁷⁴ 洪鰲官.

to Batavia, but the *kongsi* members said Hong Feng-guan had no cargo in the hold and refused to pay him any money. Both sides held to their stories, the letter added.

The Sultan's letter also said that, according to Hong Feng-guan, the ship had loaded 100 barrels of wine in Batavia, of which fifty were for the Dao-lang *kongsi* (道郎公司), twenty-five for ship's master, and twenty-five for the personal account of Hong Feng-guan. It had been agreed that they would be taken to Melaka and, after they were sold, Feng-guan would take the silver back to Batavia to pay the costs incurred in their purchase. In addition, Feng-guan took with him sugar, medicinal materials, garlic, and other cargo. But the ship sailed to Songkhla, where the *kongsi* sold the wine and other trade goods, leading to bad blood between the two sides. Fearing to return to Melaka with them, Feng-guan wanted the accounts cleared in Terengganu before taking another ship back to Batavia. As the Melaka-based Shuang-ceng (雙層) *kongsi* members had claimed Feng-guan had no cargo in the ship, the Sultan had inspected the sales logs of the *kongsi* and found some of the wine sold in Songkhla had indeed been marked as Feng-guan's property. Hong had obviously been telling the truth.

In the meantime, the *Kapitan Cina* of Melaka had sent his younger brother, Chen Yi-guan,⁷⁵ to Terengganu, apparently to make representations for the Melaka *kongsi* members. The Batavian wine merchants had also sent an account for the wine to Melaka and payment had been arranged by the *Kapitan Cina* in Melaka. The letter ended with the Sultan suggesting the Kong Koan call the various parties to testify about the other cargo Feng-guan claimed to have lost.⁷⁶

A letter from the *Kapitan Cina* of Batavia to the Sultan of Terengganu appeared in the minutes for the meeting of 27 June 1789. The Sultan's reply (using the title Tun Tuan Mansur), which sought a duly stamped letter from the Melaka authorities before he would release Feng-guan's funds, appeared in the minutes of the 20 January 1790 meeting.

Another example of external links appeared in the minutes of 19 May 1790, in reference to the *Kapitan Cina* of Johor, Tang Lian-guan (湯聯觀), also a Hokkien. He had written to Chen He-guan⁷⁷ in Batavia to advise that he had consigned some goods to Zhu Zhao-yan,⁷⁸ who would bring them to Batavia. In his partnership arrangement with Zhu, *Kapitan* Tang was to have his original capital repaid, after which any profit would be shared between the two partners, after Chen He-guan had sold the goods in Batavia. But when Zhu Zhao-yan arrived, he sold the goods on his own account rather than transfer them to Chen He-guan, and refused to hand over the proceeds. Chen thus summoned Zhu before the Kong Koan, where Zhao-yan claimed he had not sold the goods, only an anchor to pay for his living costs. The Council ordered him to hand the goods over to Chen He-guan, as well as any money from goods sold, and he agreed.⁷⁹

A third example relates to Riau. In a case brought on 25 June 1788, Xie Bao-guan (謝寶觀) claimed that, in Riau, Zhang Shang (張賞) had promised him five *dan* of gambir for sailing from Riau to Batavia, but had only given him two *dan* on arrival. The Council required that he pay a further two *dan*.

Other cases concerned business partners going to trade in Bali,⁸⁰ another person going to Banjarmasin to sell batik and other textiles,⁸¹ and a merchant who went

⁷⁵ 陳奕官

⁷⁶ The entry can be found in the minutes of the meeting dated 17 June 1789, on pp. 167–68 of 包樂史, 吳鳳斌校註, 公案簿 (第一輯). It is also discussed on pp. 151–52 of 包樂史, 吳鳳斌 著 18 世紀末吧達維亞唐人社會.

⁷⁷ 陳鶴觀.

⁷⁸ 朱昭彥.

⁷⁹ See the case of 陳鶴觀 versus 朱昭彥 of 19 May 1790.

⁸⁰ See the case of Gao Lai-guan (高賴觀) versus Lin Zhen-guan (林鎮觀) in the proceedings of the meeting on 29 August 1789.

⁸¹ See the case of Guo Chao-guan (郭潮觀) versus Jiang Dun-guan (江敦觀) of 27 June 1789.

annually to Banjarmasin to sell goods on behalf of another.⁸² There are also a number of other references to Batavian Chinese ships trading to Melaka and Semarang.

Apart from giving us the names of otherwise unknown *Kapitans Cina*, such as *Kapitan* Tang in Johor, these entries reveal a number of things about the role of *Kapitans Cina* in the region and about the regional commerce of the Hokkien maritime merchants at this time. The *Kapitans Cina* were powerful figures recognized regionally, and even by Sultans, as having power over Chinese businessmen, and seen as the representatives of these “merchants without empire”.⁸³ But we also see they obviously belonged to a hierarchy of importance, with those in Batavia and Melaka higher than those in places like Johor.

The case also shows that the institution of the *kongsi* was clearly very important to Hokkien merchants. How many people might constitute a *kongsi* is not clear; but the one noted above was evidently based at Melaka, and the sources strongly suggest that the Melaka *Kapitan Cina* either had a personal interest in it, or a vested interest in ensuring that regional commerce was not affected by bad *kongsi* reputations.

It is also clear from these minutes that Hokkiens sailed on business to a range of ports in Nusantara—in this case Batavia, Melaka, Songkhla, and an unnamed Vietnamese port where the ship’s master had died. This shipping connected all these ports and news passed quickly between them. We can see these Hokkien trading networks extending throughout the archipelago, something James Chin has also described in his various studies of the Hokkiens abroad. One in particular, in the early seventeenth century, was focused on Intje Moeda, a Hokkien convert to Islam whose brother in Jambi promoted the family business with the local ruler. At the same time, he was related to the Hokkien merchant community in Batavia through his daughter’s marriage to Bencon (Su Minggang), the *Kapitan Cina*. Other family and commercial connections also linked him to Java, Taiwan, Manila and Nagasaki, making him, in Chin’s words, one of the Hokkien “merchants with virtual empires”⁸⁴ in wider East Asia.

Conclusion

These few vignettes represent a small fraction of the stories within the first published volume of the Chinese Council papers. That volume is, in turn, but the smallest part of the papers within this invaluable archive. We have thus only just begun to tap one of the richest sources for the history of the Chinese in Southeast Asia in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Much greater scope exists for these materials to illuminate economic and social life at all levels of the Batavian Chinese community. Because they were produced by and for the Hokkien community, they provide an entirely different lens, from the oft-cited Dutch materials, with which to examine the Chinese of Batavia. They can also help us better to understand and use the existing Dutch sources. Their translation into other languages, so that they can be accessed by non-Chinese readers, is therefore essential.

But beyond all that there is another matter. Because these materials involve the personal pleading of cases, the detailed investigation of claims and counter-claims, and the recording of personal evidence, they bring a very human element to the history they illumine. One is reminded of the letters by eleventh- and twelfth-century Jewish merchants in the Mediterranean world, and beyond, as translated by S. D. Goitein from

⁸² See the case of Zheng Zhu-bin (鄭朱弁) versus Chen Tai-xue (陳太學) and Yang Xin-zheng (楊心正) of 9 December 1789.

⁸³ A term coined by Wang Gungwu and used in his article “Merchants without empire: the Hokkien sojourning communities”, in *The Rise of Merchant Empires: Long Distance Trade in the Early Modern World 1350-1750*, ed. James D. Tracy, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1994.

⁸⁴ Chin, “Hokkien Merchants and Other Sojourners”, p. 364.

documents in the Cairo *Geniza*, the storeroom in the Synagogue of Ibn Ezra.⁸⁵ While usefully revealing a broader economic context, the documents were also personal letters to spouses and to business partners and abound with examples of the vagaries and foibles we all share. This is another precious element of the Chinese Council papers. Through such windows as the sorrow of those deceived by friends, the poignancy of hard personal circumstances, the delicacy of dealing with the sexual approaches of the boss's wife, or the clinically detached description of throwing a mentally disturbed Balinese female slave overboard, we see not only the economic activities in which all these people were involved, but the personal emotions, the anger, the fears, and the greed that make us all so human.

⁸⁵ S.D. Goitein, *Letters of medieval Jewish traders*. Translated from the Arabic with introductions and notes by S. D. Goitein, Princeton, N.J., Princeton University Press, 1974.

Appendix I: An English Translation of Some Chinese Council Board Meetings in 1787

1. Council Board Meeting of 31 October 1787

Qian-long *ding-wei* (52nd) year, ninth month, 21st day (Dutch date 31 October 1787, a Wednesday). Kapitein Ong (Lieutenant Ong Tjoe Seeng)⁸⁶ had proceeded to the sugar factory⁸⁷ and was not present. Kapitein Tung⁸⁸ chaired the proceedings.

Zhang Zhou-guan⁸⁹ summoned Xu Lang-sheng,⁹⁰ who did not appear.

Luo Zuo-niang⁹¹ summoned Liao Ya-hua⁹² and Hu Ya-li.⁹³ The witnesses were Xu Xian-cai⁹⁴ and Hu Si-man.⁹⁵

Luo Zuo-niang provided testimony, stating: “Liao Ya-hua is indebted to me for the amount of 56 dollars,⁹⁶ and 14 cents and, despite repeated demands, the debt has not been repaid. In the past, in the Council,⁹⁷ senior uncle Liao Ya-shou⁹⁸ urged him to negotiate,⁹⁹ but still the repayment has not been arranged. I hereby humbly petition.”

The joint members of Council¹⁰⁰ advised: “In terms of the money which Liao Ya-hua owed to Liao Ya-shou, judgement¹⁰¹ was already passed on this in the earlier session on the 22nd day of the eighth month (3 October 1787). This no longer needs to be brought before the Council.”

Wang Jian-guan¹⁰² summoned Luo Zhang-guan.¹⁰³
Agreement reached.

⁸⁶ Wang Zhu-sheng (王珠生) in modern Mandarin. Ong Tjoe Seeng was a Hokkien, the eldest son of the Luitenant Ong Eeng Saij (王應使), who had served in the post from 8 July 1729 to 1757. Ong Tjoe Seeng served as Lieutenant from 4 August 1775 till 7 June 1790, and as Kapitein from 8 June 1790 till 11 October 1791. He was a very prominent figure in late eighteenth-century Batavia and is mentioned in Wang Da-hai's *Hai-dao yi-zhi* (王大海《海島逸志》).

⁸⁷ The term used is 部, pronounced Po in Hokkien.

⁸⁸ This refers to Luitenant Tung Pien Ko (唐編舍), a Hokkien, who was the third son of Tung Ing Ko (唐恩). He served as Lieutenant from 6 April 1764 until 1774 and then as Kapitein from 31 January 1775 until 19 December 1775. From June 1772 until June 1774, Tung Pien Ko had served as Boedelmeester, an official charged with managing assets. He then served as Luitenant from 19 December 1775 until 1795.

⁸⁹ 張宙觀. Where Hokkien readings are not available, Mandarin transcription is used.

⁹⁰ 許浪生.

⁹¹ 羅左娘.

⁹² 廖亞華.

⁹³ 胡亞理.

⁹⁴ 許顯才.

⁹⁵ 胡四滿.

⁹⁶ Spanish dollars, equivalent to 2.5 Dutch guilders.

⁹⁷ “Gong-tang” (公堂), an alternative name for the “gong-guan” (公館) – the Chinese Council in Batavia.

⁹⁸ 廖亞壽. Presumably the elder brother of Liao Ya-hua.

⁹⁹ Here the term used is 嚙渣嘮 (*berbicara*), a Malay word meaning to speak or discuss. The Hokkien term has a variety of meanings, including judgement, negotiation, accusation, to deliberate.

¹⁰⁰ Here the term used is 列臺, but this is also sometimes represented as 列甲.

¹⁰¹ The term used is 案奪.

¹⁰² 王塞觀.

¹⁰³ 羅章觀.

Chen Qing-guan¹⁰⁴ summoned Chen Tian-yu¹⁰⁵

The testimony of the two can be found in detail in the earlier session of the Council on the 14th day of the ninth month (24 October 1787).

[Here a line of the text is incomplete, but it appears that Chen Qing submitted a further petition]

Chen Tian-yu requested that his repayments be limited to ten dollars per month, and thereby he could gradually repay the entire amount and settle the debt.

Chen Qing was willing to accept these arrangements.

Chen Jiang-niang summoned Wang Xing-guang¹⁰⁶

Chen Jiang-niang submitted her testimony, stating: "As my husband has gone off to sea and we are apart, I am left alone to mind the shop. Wang Xing-guang purchased from me two large boxes and seventeen small boxes of tea at a negotiated price of forty dollars, and he paid a deposit of 12 dollars, 20 cents. Who would have suspected that, after he had taken the tea, he wished to re-negotiate the price of the tea to 32 dollars, 20 cents? I was unwilling to sell at that price, and thus he immediately took back his deposit of 12 dollars, 20 cents. The deposit has been taken back, but the tea has as yet not been returned. It is humbly requested that the matter be rigorously investigated."

Zheng Kai¹⁰⁷ was summoned and his testimony was the same as that of Jiang-niang.

Wang Xing-guang submitted his testimony as follows: "On the 10th day of the eighth month last (21 September 1787), I met with Zheng Wang-bo¹⁰⁸ and paid the 100 dollars (大鈔) owed to the circulating credit group.¹⁰⁹ It was agreed that this would be returned on the 14th day of this month. When the date arrived and I went to demand the sum, there was no trace of him to be seen. When I enquired of his wife, Chen Jian-niang, and his younger brother, Zheng Xue-xi,¹¹⁰ they both said that Wang-bo had gone out to collect his accounts and had not yet returned, and that if there were any problems that they could be sorted out when he returned, and that he would certainly not default. On another day I went again, and again could not find Wang-bo. His wife and younger brother again consoled me with the same words as previously. This happened on repeated occasions, and I then knew that he wanted to appropriate my hard-earned capital, and deceive me with pretty words. It was thus that I purchased seventeen one-catty boxes of tea and eleven catty of loose tea from his wife Madam Chen at the agreed price of 32 dollars, 20 cents, and the intention was to wait until her husband returned in order to make the payment. Who would have thought that Madam Chen would have insistently pushed for payment of the tea! Now she has brought her complaint to the Council. It is truly unthinkable that she should hope to have her tea

¹⁰⁴ 陳情觀.

¹⁰⁵ 陳天雨.

¹⁰⁶ 王興廣.

¹⁰⁷ 鄭開.

¹⁰⁸ 鄭旺伯. This was the husband of Chen Jiang-niang.

¹⁰⁹ 湊會. This is a traditional form of rotating credit circle, whereby participants all contribute a certain regular amount of cash. It is then provided to each member in turn.

¹¹⁰ 陳學喜.

back while my capital is gone! It is respectfully hoped that you will make an insightful ruling.”

Chen Jiang-niang said: “I am truly unaware as to whether my husband owes any money to Xing-guang. But how am I to feed myself without money. It is humbly requested that you exercise benevolence and will deign to have pity on me in my poverty.”

The joint members of Council instructed Wang Xing-guang: “The dispute between Zheng Wang-bo and yourself should be dealt with after he returns. However, the money owed to Madam Chen for the tea should be paid immediately.” Wang Xing-guang stated: “The price of the tea was actually 32 dollars, 20 cents. It is requested that we wait for three more weeks so that I can look for Wang-bo, and he can arrange the repayment. If Wang-bo is not found, then on that date I will arrange the clearing of the debt.”

Chen Jiang-niang was willing to accept these arrangements and withdrew.

2. Council Board Meeting of 14 November 1787

Kapitein Njo¹¹¹ and Kapitein Tan¹¹² chaired the proceedings. [Qian-long] *ding-wei* (52nd) year, tenth month, 5th day (Dutch date 14 November 1787, a Wednesday).

Wang Xing-guang summoned Zheng Wang-bo

Wang Xing-guang submitted his testimony stating: “Zheng Wang-bo owed me 100 dollars. He was unwilling to repay this and fled to a distant place. Now I have found him and have specially brought him here. It is humbly requested that the matter be investigated and the money recovered.

Zheng Wang-bo submitted a testimony, stating: “I indeed owe Wang Xing-guang 100 dollars, but Xing-guang owes my wife 32 dollars 20 cents for tea. I am willing to pay him the difference. As to the remaining amount of 67 dollars 20 cents, I humbly request permission to repay the amount gradually.”

Chen Jiang-niang was summoned and questioned as follows: “As to the 32 dollars 20 cents which Wang Xing-guang owes you for tea, are you willing for it to be taken from the money which your husband is to return to Xing-guang?” She replied: “I am willing.”

Wu Yuan-guan¹¹³ summoned Zhong Lai-guan.¹¹⁴

¹¹¹ Luitenant Njo Koang Ko (楊款官), a Hokkien. From 29 December 1775 until 1799, a quarter of a century, he served as Luitenant. Wang Zhu-sheng (王珠生) in modern Mandarin. Ong Tjoe Seeng was a Hokkien, the eldest son of the Luitenant Ong Eeng Saij (王應使), who had served in the post from 8 July 1729 to 1757. Ong Tjoe Seeng served as Luitenant from 4 August 1775 till 7 June 1790, and as Kapitein from 8 June 1790 till 11 October 1791. He was a very prominent figure in late 18th-century Batavia and is mentioned in Wang Da-hai's *Hai-dao yi-zhi* (王大海《海島逸志》).

¹¹² Tan Hoelo (陳富老), also known as Tan Hoekwa (陳富官), a Hokkien. Served as Boedelmeester from 21 December 1775 until 1 December 1783, and from 2 December 1783 until 24 November 1789 he served as Luitenant.

¹¹³ 吳遠觀.

¹¹⁴ 鐘來觀.

Wu Yuan submitted his testimony, stating: "I purchased a female slave in Bali, and arranged for her to come to Batavia as a passenger on Zhong Lai's ship. After the ship had been sailing for four or five days, the female slave became inconsolable about leaving her village and her family. The ship's captain Zhong Lai said that the woman was mad and had lost her mind and ordered me to throw her into the sea, as otherwise he would throw me into the sea. In such a situation I had no choice but to push the female slave into the sea. Thus, when I returned to Batavia, I had no money with which to repay my debts. It is humbly requested that the joint members of Council instruct Zhong Lai to return me the price of the female slave."

Zhong Lai submitted his testimony, stating: "The female slave who was bought by Wu Yuan was already mad and had lost her mind in Bali. After she boarded my ship, she screamed and wailed for much of the night. Some other persons on the ship said that this slave has already lost her mind, and noted that when she is put up for sale in Batavia, there would be no one willing to purchase her. Wu Yuan heard this and pushed his female slave into the sea. Why would I force him to drown his slave? You can question other persons on the boat to ascertain this."

The chief officer,¹¹⁵ Huang Bang,¹¹⁶ was summoned and queried: "As to the events which occurred, you can testify according to the facts." He responded: "The female slave whom Wu Yuan bought was already demented and had lost her mind in Bali. Because during the journey, she screamed and wailed all through the night, Wu Yuan himself threw her into the sea. The captain did not say anything to cause him to drown her." Lu Cai¹¹⁷ and Cai Si-chuan¹¹⁸ were also summoned and questioned and their testimony was the same as that of Huang Bang. When Wu Yuan was again questioned as to whether there were any witnesses, he responded: "There were".

The joint members of Council advised that because this case involved human life the Council could not pass judgement on it. They thus ordered the Council's troops to forward Wu Yuan and Zhong Lai under escort to the *Buiten Tumenggong*,¹¹⁹ for judgement to be passed.

Lin Ting-guan¹²⁰ summoned Huang Juan-guang.¹²¹

Lin Ting offered his testimony, stating: "Previously, I had a concubine who gave birth to a girl. When the girl was but four months old, I passed my concubine on to Huang Juan for a sum of fifty dollars, as I wished to return to China. I also passed on the baby girl for him to rear for me. I further signed a contract with him that he could not sell this slave on to anybody else, but that he could allow her to become a free person. When I again came to Batavia, I asked for the return of the small girl in accordance with the contract, but he refused to hand her over. I have already laid plaint to the *Buiten Tumenggong* and the senior Kapitein (Kapitein Chua Tun-kwa¹²²) and only then was I able to get the girl back. After this, Huang Juan called for deliberation at the *Buiten Tumenggong*, and sought his expenditure. The *Buiten Tumenggong* ordered me to pay

¹¹⁵ 夥長.

¹¹⁶ 黃榜

¹¹⁷ 呂才.

¹¹⁸ 蔡四川.

¹¹⁹ 外澹 = 城外澹板公 = *Buiten Tumenggong* = (Dutch) Landdrost, the official responsible for managing matters outside the city walls of Batavia.

¹²⁰ 林聽觀.

¹²¹ 黃倦觀.

¹²² 蔡敦官.

him costs of twenty-five dollars. Now I am giving this money amounting to twenty-five dollars to the Council to pass on to Huang Juan for his receipt, in the sincere hope that in future there will be no further troubles.”

Huang Juan accepted the money and withdrew.

Li Ri-chang¹²³ summoned Su Chun-niang,¹²⁴ Li Xiu-chang,¹²⁵ Li Shao-long,¹²⁶ and Li Shuang-bang.¹²⁷ Witnesses: Zhang Yin-guan,¹²⁸ Li Ya-zheng,¹²⁹ Chen Xiu-yi,¹³⁰ Li Ning-bo¹³¹ and Zheng Cheng-tai.¹³²

The Council's soldiers reported: Originally, the accused had all assembled outside the Council, but now they have all dispersed.”

Huang Hui-guan¹³³ summoned Cai Liu-guan¹³⁴ and Cai Long-hong.¹³⁵ Both failed to appear.

Summoning and questioning Xu Cui-niang¹³⁶ on the affairs of Chen Guo-shi.¹³⁷

The detailed testimony of Xu Cui-niang and her son Chen Guo-shi can be found in the account of the Council meeting on the twentieth day of the 9th month (30 October 1787).

Xu Cui-niang presented an account, indicating a debt by Guo-shi for 3350 dollars. Chen Guo-shi also presented a register containing the miscellaneous expenditure he had made on behalf of his mother, that showed an outgoing of 6348 dollars, 21 cents. Deducting one from the other showed that Xu Cui-niang owed Guo-shi 2998 dollars, 21 cents.

The Council asked whether Xu Cui-niang was willing to pay this amount of money. She replied: “Please let me think about this quietly and I will respond on another day.”

Copy of the letter of response to the Gouverneur Generaal in respect of the affairs of Chen Guo-shi.

¹²³ 李日昌.

¹²⁴ 蘇春娘.

¹²⁵ 李秀常.

¹²⁶ 李兆龍.

¹²⁷ 李雙榜.

¹²⁸ 張寅觀.

¹²⁹ 李亞正.

¹³⁰ 陳秀義.

¹³¹ 李寧柏.

¹³² 鄭承泰.

¹³³ 黃會觀.

¹³⁴ 蔡六觀.

¹³⁵ 蔡龍洪.

¹³⁶ 許萃娘.

¹³⁷ 陳國使. Chen Guo-shi was a quite prominent member of Batavian society. He was married on 1 September 1779, at age eighteen, to the fifteen-year old Lin Qian-niang (林謙娘), with the officiant on the male side being Chen Fu-lao (陳富老), the *Boedelmeester* at the time. See Leonard Blussé and Wu Feng-bin (eds.), *Gong An Bu (Minutes of the Board meeting of the Chinese Council)*, Vol 1, p. 374, note 11.

Cai Dun¹³⁸ received instructions from the Gouverneur Generaal to investigate the affairs of Chen Guo-shi. Dun, together with the various Luitenants summoned Chen Guo-shi's mother for questioning, and inspected the accounts. Chen Guo-shi had made miscellaneous expenditures on behalf of his mother Xu Cui-niang amounting to 6348 dollars. He also owed his mother 3350 dollars. Deducting the second figure from the first, leaves an amount that he actually expended on behalf of his mother, totalling 2998 dollars, 21 cents. They also investigated the money derived from the sale of the sugar factory. The Luitenant Chen Fu-lao repaid debts on behalf of Chen Guo-shi as well as the money he had personally taken, amounting to 19,279 dollars, 11 cents. Deducting the 18,500 dollars received from the sale of the sugar factory, Chen Guo-shi thus appropriated an extra 779 dollars, 11 cents of Chen Fu-lao's money. This is respectfully reported and submitted with the original testimonies.

3. Council Board Meeting of 21 November 1787

Kapitein Njo and Kapitein Tan chaired the proceedings. [Qian-long] *ding-wei* (52nd) year, tenth month, 12th day (Dutch date 21 November 1787, a Wednesday).

Wang Lin-guan¹³⁹ summoned Zhong Lai-guan

Wang Lin submitted testimony, noting: "In Bali I purchased a male slave and brought him back on Zhong Lai's ship. Half way through the journey, Zhong Lai started whipping my slave with a rattan strap. When he had finished, he pushed the slave into the sea. Thereby, the money I had earned through traversing thousands of *li* was sunk in an instant! It is respectfully requested that the matter be investigated and responsibility ascertained."

Zhong Lai submitted his testimony, noting: "Wang Lin's slave started a quarrel on board the ship and it was thus that he was pushed into the sea." He was questioned: "Did the slave have a sharp weapon in his hands?" He answered: "He had no sharp weapon in his hands, and his legs were held with iron chains. He created a ruckus and disturbance and pushed Xu An¹⁴⁰ into the sea. Fortunately, Xu An fell onto the toilet and managed to escape unhurt."

The witness Xu An also testified: "Wang Lin's slave caused trouble on the boat. He had freed his hands from his chains, while his legs were still restrained with chains. He created a clamour and disorder, and it is thus that the captain pushed the slave into the sea."

A further witness Lin Tian-sheng¹⁴¹ stated: "Wang Lin's slave had already freed his hands from the chains and while his legs were still held by chains, he created trouble on board the ship and pushed Xu An into the sea. Xu An was able to grab the side of the toilet and fortunately escaped unhurt. The captain saw what had happened and thus pushed the slave into the sea."

¹³⁸ 蔡敦。 Also known as 蔡敦官 (Swa Toen Ko), he served as Luitenant from 31 January 1775 until 25 November 1784. From 26 November 1784 until 2 June 1790, he served as Kapitein.

¹³⁹ 王鄰觀。

¹⁴⁰ 許安。

¹⁴¹ 林天生。

The Council stated that as this case concerned human life, the Council's troops were to forward Wu Yuan and Zhong Lai under escort to the Buiten Tumenggong, for investigation and trial.

Tang Xin-guan¹⁴² and Gu Chang-sheng¹⁴³ (who did not appear) summoned Ye A-liu.¹⁴⁴ Witness: Tang Zhang-guan.¹⁴⁵

Tang Xin-guan offered his testimony, stating: "On the 11th day of the sixth month last year (6 July 1786), sixty-one dollars was given to Ye Ya-liu, and it was agreed that he would provide twenty-three *dan*¹⁴⁶ of peanuts¹⁴⁷ in return. As of yet, these have not been provided. Today, he gave my nephew 30 dollars, 20 cents back, but there remains outstanding 30 dollars, 20 cents.¹⁴⁸ It is humbly requested that the matter be investigated and the debt recovered.

Ye Ya-liu requested to be allowed until the second month of the following year to clear the debt.

Wang Xing-guang¹⁴⁹ and Yang Bu-ye¹⁵⁰ summoned Zheng Wang-bo,¹⁵¹ Chen Jiang-niang¹⁵² and Zheng Xue-xi.¹⁵³ Zheng Wang-bo was in prison and did not appear, nor did Jiang-niang or Xue-xi appear.

Wang Xing-guang offered his testimony, stating: "In the previous session of the Council (14 November 1787), Zheng Wang-bo admitted he owed me 67 dollars, 20 cents. Later, he went to the Buiten Tumenggong and said that I had taken tea from his wife to the value of 200 dollars. The Buiten Tumenggong instructed that the tea be handed over to the Secretaris¹⁵⁴ Lin Chun-Guang¹⁵⁵ for temporary storage until the case was resolved, after which the case of the tea could be discussed."

Lin Chun-guang instructed Wang Xing-guang, saying: "You can discuss this with Wang-bo. If he is willing to sign a contract saying that he owes you 100 dollars, the tea can be returned." Xing-guang responded politely and withdrew.

Lin Yin-guan¹⁵⁶ summoned Lin Qiu-shui.¹⁵⁷

¹⁴² 湯新觀.

¹⁴³ 古長生.

¹⁴⁴ 葉亞六.

¹⁴⁵ 湯長觀.

¹⁴⁶ A *dan* was equivalent to approximately 133 pounds.

¹⁴⁷ 塗豆. Often used in Java for their oil.

¹⁴⁸ Figures as given in the text.

¹⁴⁹ 王興廣.

¹⁵⁰ 楊部治.

¹⁵¹ 鄭旺伯.

¹⁵² 陳江娘.

¹⁵³ 鄭學喜.

¹⁵⁴ The 朱葛礁, or "Secretaris" was a post established in 1750. In that year, the Kapitan Cina Oiej Tsom Ko (黃箴觀), who was in the post from 21 April 1747 until October 1751, submitted a request to the Gouverneur Generaal seeking the appointment of a Chinese person as Secretaris. This was approved and thus Oiej Tsji Lauw (黃市間) was appointed to the post. He apparently used a large parasol when moving about and was referred to as "Da Zhu" (大朱). In 1766 a deputy position was established, filled by Xu Zhong-qi (徐仲奇).

¹⁵⁵ 林春光.

¹⁵⁶ 林隱觀.

¹⁵⁷ 林秋水.

Lin Yin submitted testimony stating: “Lin Qiu-shui previously borrowed fifty-five dollars from me, but despite repeated deadlines for repayment, the debt remains unpaid. It is requested that the matter be investigated and the debt recovered.

Lin Qiu-shui testified, stating: “I actually borrowed forty-five dollars from him. The other ten dollars, he claimed my elder brother had taken. When I asked my brother, he said that he had borrowed the money but had returned it to him. As to the amount that I borrowed, I have agreed that at the end of this month I will return ten dollars and the remainder will be cleared after my ship returns to port. If my ship has not returned, when the ships from China arrive,¹⁵⁸ I will be able to clear the debt. In the mean time, I will arrange a guarantor.”

Lin Yin agreed to the proposal.

4. Council Session of 22 November 1787

A meeting at the office of the Senior Kapitein.¹⁵⁹ Kapitein Njo and Kapitein Tan chaired the proceedings. [Qian-long] *ding-wei* (52nd) year, tenth month, 13th day (Dutch date 22 November 1787, a Thursday).

Hong Yue-niang¹⁶⁰ summoned her husband Chen Rong-guan,¹⁶¹ Chen Pu-guan¹⁶² and Zhou Wen-qu.¹⁶³

Hong Yue-niang submitted testimony, stating: “I am abused and cursed by my husband throughout the day and he provides me with not even a dollar to cover expenditure. Now he has driven me out of the house and I have no idea of the reason for this. It is humbly requested that you make a fair judgement.”

Chen Rong explained stating: “On one day, because our house was without rice, I had my wife go out to buy a *dou* of rice to fill our bellies. Out in the street, my wife started yelling in a loud voice that all the water and rice in the house was provided by her, and that I did nothing to provide. It was truly difficult to listen to insults against me like this, and so I said to my wife: “If you are willing to spread malicious words and bring disgrace on us both, what purpose is there in continuing to live together?”

Hong Yue-niang further stated: “Chen Pu’s wife Zhou Wen-qu has, without any reason, cursed me continually (順丹?). It is humbly requested that this be investigated.”

Zhou Wen-qu stated: “It is Yue-niang who has been cursing me without end. When did I ever curse her?”

The joint members of Council instructed Chen Rong and Hong Yue-niang, saying: “At times husbands and wives experience ups and downs. This is the case with everyone. Why is there a need to continually find fault with each other? You two are urged to be amicable to each other as in the past.”

¹⁵⁸ In this period, a fleet of 9–10 ships arrived annually from the southern ports of China

¹⁵⁹ Here referring to Kapitein Chua Tun-kwa (蔡敦官).

¹⁶⁰ 洪月娘.

¹⁶¹ 陳榮觀.

¹⁶² 陳普觀.

¹⁶³ 周文取.

They also instructed Chen Pu and Zhou Wen-qu, saying: "Yue-niang and her husband have had a quarrel. This is no business of yours. In future, you are not permitted to gossip about them." The four persons responded politely and withdrew.

Appendix II: Unusual Hokkien Terms Appearing in the Proceedings of the Chinese Council Board Meetings

Glossary

The *Kong Koan* records are particularly useful in understanding the changing language of the Baba, or what might be called the indigenized Hokkien in Southeast Asia. The Hokkien language that the newcomers spoke became indigenized through repeated interactions with other peoples of the archipelago. The interactions recorded in the Council provide us with many examples of these hybrid terms, as well as unusual Hokkien terms in use during the period, both from Fujian and those used to describe institutions in Southeast Asia. Many of these terms remain in use today among Hokkien speakers in Indonesia, and in Penang, Melaka and Johor.

1. Southeast Asian terms adopted and Hokkienized

嚙嗲嘮 = (Malay) bicara = to discuss, negotiate
 咬旦 = (Malay) antar = guarantee/guarantor
 甲板 = (Malay) kapal = ship
 交寅 = (Malay) kahwin = marry
 干多 = (Malay) kantor = office
 甘密 = (Malay) gambir = Juice of the *Uncaria Gambir* plant.
 黎龍 = (Portuguese/Malay) =lelong = auction
 掛沙 = (Malay) kuasa = attorney, proxy
 掛沙惹蘭 = (Malay) kuasa ?? = person who guarantees
 龜里 = (Tamil?) = coolie
 監光 = (Malay) kampong = village
 唐人監光 = literally "Chinese Kampong" = Chinese quarter
 = (Javanese) Nyi, nyai = 妻, 妾, 太太 = wife, concubine
 亞芬 = opium
 失憐壘 = (Malay) selendang = Malay sling of cloth worn over shoulder
 審萬達 = (Persian) shahbandar = harbour master
 土庫 = (Javanese) toko = shop, stall
 沙囊 = 沙籠 = (Malay) sarong
 巴殺 = 把殺 = (Malay) pasar = market
 絲里 = (Malay) sireh/sirih

2. Terms coined to describe institutions in Southeast Asia

甲必丹 = Kapitein/Kapitan
 雷珍蘭 = Luitenant
 武直迷 = Boedelmeester (also 大點)
 公堂 = 公館 = Chinese Council
 盾 = guilder/gulden
 達氏 = (Dutch) "soldaat" = the Council's soldiers/attendants
 外澹 = 城外澹板公 = Buiten Tumenggong == (Dutch) Landdrost

王上 = Gouverneur Generaal
 伽頭 = Dutch “directeur” = manager
 美色甘 = 美惜甘 = Weeskamer
 美色甘朱葛礁 = Weeskamer Secretaris
 公勃低 = (Dutch) Gecommitteerd = mandated, proxy, or in these texts, the person responsible
 公勃壘 = (Dutch) Commandant = commander
 噍 噍 噍 厝頂 = Dutch court
 梁礁 = Dutch “notaris” = agent, notary, or to draw up a contract
 雙柄 = 相柄 = Raad van Indië/Council of the Indies
 伴陶公 = a member of the VOC Raad van Indië
 公班衙 = Compagnie
 蠻律 = (Port.) mandor = 工頭 = foreman, overseer

3. Unusual Hokkien terms, likely also used in Fu-jian

葩 (pronounced “po”) = (sugar) factory
 削視 = 見證人 = witness
 郎 (lang) = Hokkien term for person
 舍 (sia) = Hokkien address for a young person
 官 (觀) (kwa) = Hokkien address for a respected male
 文 (bbun) = dollars
 鉞 (buah) = 10 cents
 方 (hng) = cent
 案奪 = Hokkien term for to make judgement
 承坐 = 承受 = inherit
 做字 = to sign a contract
 家伙 = 家具 = furniture, personal effects
 交閱 = 交易 = trade
 辛金 = 薪金 or 工錢 = wage, salary
 厝頂 = house
 厝稅 = 房租 = house rent
 兒曹 = 兒輩帶 = 孩子們 = children
 囡仔 = Hokkien (gia) = children
 上山 = 往城外 = to go outside the city walls
 下城 = 往城內 = to go back into the city
 碼仔 = Tax farm. Also known as 包稅, 餉 or 餉碼
 稱亭 = 秤亭 = weigh-house where taxes were paid.
 單 = 字據 = deed, bond, agreement
 賭枰 = dooping = a place for gambling. (In Dutch, this became “toppen”)
 財副 = 財副 = 裁副 = (閩) zai fu = someone who manages the accounts and property
 甲辦 = (閩) kat pan = box for holding money and valuables
 貓黎 = 家具, 矮櫃 = furniture, dresser
 大不該 = profuse apologies
 銀信 = remittance letters
 花押 = affixing a signature or mark to a document
 火油 = oil for illumination lamps
 的棲 = 檢查 or 察視 = inspection

荷包 = 袋子 = bag or purse
 紅頭船 = Guang-dong ship
 綠頭船 = Fu-jian ship
 白頭船 = Zhe-jiang ship
 親丁 = 清丁 = The person who registers cargo in the hold of the ship
 令郎 = 您的兒子 = your son (polite)
 入字 = 呈文 = memorial, petition
 狗捶 = (Go Cé) = policeman
 字 = (Zuǎ) = contract, document
 拈鬮 = a form of divination
 坐還 = 付還 = repay money
 黃錦箔 = gold-leaf paper used for sacrifices
 盟神 = Oath taking before the spirits at a temple
 “閩俗：呼人曰郎，呼公子，公孫曰舍，呼有體面者曰官。訛官為觀，遂多以觀為名者。朋友相稱曰老，廈俗亦然” 周凱《廈門志》卷15 風俗記

4. Place names

八茶罐 = Petekoan/Patekoan (place name)
 武訖 = Bugis (Sulawesi)
 萬蘭 = 盤檀 = 文誕 = 萬嘮 = Banda Island
 萬丹 = 下港 = 順搭 = 巽他 = Banten
 舊港 = Palembang (toponym)
 北加浪 = Pekalongan, on Java's north coast
 十六間 = Jilakien = area of Batavia
 安汶 = Ambon
 三寶龍 = Semarang
 望加錫 = Makassar