

Centre for the Study of the Chinese Southern Diaspora,
The Australian National University



Occasional Paper Number 2, November 2009

**IDENTIFYING HOKKIEN (AND OTHER) MERCHANTS
IN VOC-RULED BATAVIA: DATA FROM THE CI JI
STELE (1697) AND THE FINANCIAL RECORDS OF
THE *AMFIOEN SOCIËTEIT*, 1745–1785**

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Series editor, Nola Cooke

Introduction

This paper transcribes two important new sources that increase our knowledge of the identities of Hokkien and other opium merchants, and their commercial guarantors, in eighteenth-century Batavia under the Dutch East India Company (VOC). These two new primary sources are: a 1697 stele from the Ci Ji temple at Qing Jiao, near Xiamen, in Fujian Province (south China); and the debenture bonds (called *obligatien*) that recorded loans for opium purchases from the *Amfioen Sociëteit* (AS), the specialist, external organisation established by the VOC in 1745 to take control its opium commerce. These records are held in the Arsip Nasional Republik Indonesia (ANRI), the Indonesian national archives in Jakarta.¹ Together these sources inform the analysis expounded in George Bryan Souza's article, "An Anatomy of Commerce and Consumption: Opium and Merchants at Batavia over the Long Eighteenth Century", which is published on-line in *Chinese Southern Diaspora Studies*, 3 (2009): http://csds.anu.edu.au/volume_3_2009/CSDS_2009_Souza.pdf.

Before moving to the data, a few words about the two sources are necessary.

The Ci Ji Stele

The historical importance of the 1697 Ci Ji stele (see Figure 1 over page)² was first discussed by James K. Chin.³ Although located in China, it is a real Hokkien communal "who's who" for Java. It names 119 Javan-based Hokkien individuals, from thirty-nine families or lineages, who donated over 751 *taels* in silver to repair and restore the Ci Ji temple in southern China in 1697. Thanks to this, the source provides historians of the Chinese in eighteenth-century Java with a way to identify actual individuals and merchants, whose real names had always been deformed by phonetic Dutch approximations of their spelling, and by the Dutch habit of referring to them collectively the "Chinese". The Ci Ji stele also provides historians with a "baseline" in time that establishes which Hokkien family or lineage names were present or prominent on Java before or around 1697. Geoffrey Wade's translation of the information on this stele forms basis of the material organised in Appendix One (Tables 1a, 1b and 1c).

The AS *obligatien*

The fundamental importance of VOC archival records for the study of Chinese southern diaspora, and related topics, has long been recognised. George Bryan Souza discovered this second new source while researching in the Company's voluminous archives, held in the Dutch section of the Indonesian national archives, when he was a visiting fellow at the Asia Research Institute of the National University of Singapore in 2008. The *obligatien* he uncovered are similar to promissory notes (or IOUs) in that they both acknowledge a commercial debt and guarantee its repayment by including the names and signatures of at least two guarantors. The wealth of information they

¹ ANRI, AS 1-36. The financial records contained in this data paper, from 1745 to 1785, can be found at ANRI, AS 6-9. For an overview and guide to the ARSIP's holdings, see *The Archives of the Dutch East India Company (VOC) and the Local Institutions in Batavia (Jakarta)*, compilers and contributors, G.L. Balk, F. van Dijk, D.J. Kortlang, F.S. Gaastra, Hendrik E. Niemeijer, P. Koenders (Leiden: Brill, 2007). This surpasses *Inventaris van 'sLands Archief te Batavia (1602-1816)* [Inventory of the Government Archive at Batavia (1602-1816)], compiler Jacobus A. van der Chijs (Batavia: Landsdrukkerij, 1882).

² This stele, dated in the reign year of Kangxi 36 nian or 1697, is transcribed without any further notes or comment in Zheng Zhengman and Kenneth Dean. *Epigraphical Materials on the History of Religion in Fujian: the Quanzhou region*, 3 vols. (Fuzhou: Fujian Peoples' Publishing House Press, 2004), III, pp. 1025-26 [郑振满、丁荷生编纂:《福建宗教碑铭汇编》,泉州府分册,福州,福建人民出版社 2003 年] The English translation of the document that appears in Appendix I of the Souza article in *CSDS* 2009 mentioned above, is also by Geoff Wade.

³ For its importance in the history of the Hokkien community overseas, see James K. Chin (Qian Jiang), "Merchants and Other Sojourners: The Hokkiens Overseas, 1570-1760", Ph.D. dissertation, The University of Hong Kong, 1998, pp. 231-32.

provide about Batavian merchant communities, especially the Chinese or those of Chinese origin, is unique.



Figure 1. The Ci Ji Stele (image courtesy of James K. Chin)

The great value of these records lies in the way they sequentially numbered and registered commercial credit transactions involving opium sales. In total, 1832 of these

financial instruments were registered, of which roughly half (968) are extant and in consultable condition. Unfortunately, the rest (864) are missing or too badly damaged to be used. Almost all consultable *obligation* (957 from 968) involve opium. They are unequally distributed over the period from 1745 to 1785: 712 (or 74%) for 1745–1751; 100 for 1755–1756; and 156 for 1772–1785. Despite gaps caused by missing data, and the statistical skewing caused by the preponderance of early data, these records remain significant because they can provide a clear quantitative and qualitative vision of trends as well as precious personal information about the merchants and guarantors involved in the opium trade.

Obligation were logged under corresponding numbers in the AS registers, using standardized language and a two page format. On the front page there appeared the date of the document and the name (or names) of the opium buyer. Other information about the buyer included an ethnic or religious marker, occupation, sometimes a reference to any social, colonial or communal administrative position held, and an address. The amount of opium being supplied on credit was usually expressed as a number of chests, while its value was always included in *rijksdaalders* (*rsd*)⁴ at least once, if not twice. The duration of the *obligation* (usually four months) was also stipulated, as well as the monthly interest rate (half a percent from 1745 to 1775, thence $\frac{3}{8}$ of a percent) that buyer and guarantors accepted. On the back page came the names of the guarantors. Their ethnic or religious markers, occupations, sometimes the social, colonial or communal administrative positions they held, and their addresses were also generally included here. The document was signed by the buyers, guarantors, AS officials, and witnesses. The illiterate might make their marks, and occasionally company seals (or chops) were also used. The data compiled by the two authors from AS *obligation* appear in the tables in Appendix Two.

As important as they are, *obligation* do have some limitations as a source. As mentioned above, we lack a perfectly distributed sample since the great majority of legible extant *obligation* come from the earliest period. Further, the total sales of opium on credit probably did not exceed half of all AS sales over the period. Of this probable half, Souza was only able to examine roughly half of all AS opium sales, meaning the surviving records statistically document around 20-25 percent of AS opium sales between 1745 and 1785.⁵ Even so, statistically speaking the sample remains significant, especially for the earliest decade, while historically the information it contains is invaluable.

Sales on credit formed the largest volumes and values of opium transacted by the AS. This suggests that merchants who were regarded as sufficiently trustworthy by the AS to purchase its opium on credit enjoyed real commercial clout. That view is supported by the information contained in AS records about the merchants and their guarantors, all of which indicates that they constituted the *crème de la crème* of commercial, political, and communal elites at Batavia and throughout the Indonesian Archipelago. These carefully recorded and maintained documents not only confirm the central role of opium in Batavia's commercial prosperity but also provide us with the basic information necessary about its buyers and guarantors, and their lives and livelihoods, for us to begin to glimpse the outlines of their actual commercial networks. In other words, the documents provide new insights into aspects of the social history of Batavia and the wider Indonesian trading world of which we still know relatively little.

George Bryan Souza

⁴ The *rijksdaalder* or rix-dollar was a silver coin worth 2.5 *guilders* or *florins*, and approximately equal to one *tael*.

⁵ This is a very conservative estimate: sales of opium by the AD, for example, in the late 1790s and early 1800s, suggest it was increasingly difficult to sell opium without providing credit to buyers and the ratio of credit to cash sales (3:1 or greater) clearly and dramatically exceeded this earlier estimate.

APPENDIX ONE: THE CI JI STELE

Table 1a: Ci Ji Temple stele, with Chinese characters

Captains	Names	[Donation Amount]
Lin Ying Zhang	林應章	30 <i>taels</i> silver
Guo Tian Bang	郭天榜	60 <i>taels</i> silver
Wang Ying Rui	王應瑞	18 <i>taels</i> silver
Guo Ju Ding	郭居鼎	36 <i>taels</i>
Huang Ting Chen	黃廷琛	30 <i>taels</i>
Ma Guo Zhang	馬國章	60 <i>taels</i>
Lin Yuan Fang	林元芳	12 <i>taels</i>
Cai Zong Ling	蔡宗齡	60 <i>taels</i>
Lin Wan Ying	林萬應	12 <i>taels</i>
Chen Jiong Shang	陳炯賞	12 <i>taels</i>
Lin Zu Yan	林祖晏	6 <i>taels</i>
Cai Feng Xiang	蔡鳳翔	6 <i>taels</i>
Wang Shao Rui	王紹睿	24 <i>taels</i>
Lin Ru Lian	林儒連	6 <i>taels</i>
Loyal [Buddhist] Disciples		
Chen Ye Zhuang	陳燁壯	
Fu Zong Wang	傅宗汪	
He Ri Zhang	何日章	
Guo Bin Xiao	郭彬孝	
Wang Shi Zhuan	王士轉	
Ye Meng Kui	葉夢魁	
Chen Guo Liang	陳國良	
		Each of the above persons gave 12 <i>taels</i> of silver
[No Description]		
Guo Bang Hui	郭邦輝	
Lu Mao Guan	魯卯官	
Chen San Guan	陳三官	
Guo Yu Xiu	郭昱秀	
Wang Shi Ling	王士苓	
Wang Kun Yu	王昆餘	
Zhao Xun Hua	趙勳華	
Guo Zhuang Qi	郭壯奇	
Huang Zeng Zhao	黃增肇	

[No Description]		
Huang Hui Zu	黃輝祖	
Xu Di Guan	許帝官	
Huang Kui Guan	黃魁官	
Wang Lian Deng	王聯登	
Guo Yi Zai	郭奕載	
Ke Chao Zhen	柯朝振	
Wang Yu Guan	王裕官	
Huang Miao Guan	黃妙官	
Chen Jun Chong	陳君冲	
Zhong Cui Bing	鐘萃炳	
Lin Feng Chun	林逢春	
Ye Qi Zhong	葉啓忠	
Chen Er Shun	陳爾舜	
Zheng Wen Guan	鄭文官	
Han Ji Guan	韓驥官	
Guo Kai Yao	郭開曜	
He Chang Yu	何長裕	
Li Feng (?) Lin	李逢麟	
Lu Huai Hong	盧懷宏	
Zhang Yuan Guan	張員官	
Huang Guang Guan	黃光官	
		Each of the above persons gave 6 taels of silver
Hong Zhang Guan	洪漳官	
Lin Pin Guan	林聘官	
Wang Lin Guan	王琳官	
Cai Zong Guan	蔡宗官	
Wang An Guan	王安官	
		Each of the above persons gave 3 taels and 6 mace
Zhong Biao Guan	鐘標官	
Yu Guo Guan	餘國官	
Huang Yue Guan	黃越官	
Ke Ke Guan	柯科官	
Wei En Guan	違恩官	
Wu Ren Guan	吳仁官	
Li Miao Guan	李妙官	
Lin Run Guan	林潤官	
Chen Xiong Guan	陳雄官	
Yang Si Guan	楊飼官	
Wang Ke Guan	王科官	
Dai Zhen Guan	戴珍官	
Lian Pin Guan	連品官	
Wang Ning Guan	王凝官	
Huang Ying Kui	黃應魁	

[No Description]		
Lu Sheng Guan	呂盛官	
		Each of the above persons gave 2 <i>taels</i> and 4 <i>mace</i>
Xuan Han Guan	軒漢官	
Guo Jie Guan	郭解官	
Huang Teng Guan	黃騰官	
Xu Qian Guan	許千官	
		Each of the above persons gave 1 <i>tael</i> and 8 <i>mace</i>
Lu Bo Guan	盧伯官	
Ou Guan Guan	歐官官	
Huang Song Ren	黃宋仁	
Pan Qing Guan	潘卿官	
Wang Qian Guan	王潛官	
Wu Guo Guan	吳果官	
Xu Yin Guan	徐蔭官	
Che Tian Guan	車添官	
Shi Hao Guan	施好官	
Zhao Bu Guan	趙補官	
Li Cheng Guan	李成官	
Kang Qiang Guan	康強官	
Xu Qin Guan	許勤官	
Wang Xiao Guan	王笑官	
Liu Ri Guan	劉日官	
Zheng Gun Guan	鄭棍官	
Huang Xiang Guan	黃向官	
Huang Kai Guan	黃凱官	
Chen Kai Guan	陳開官	
Lin Ming Guan	林明官	
Wang Bu Guan	王補官	
Zhang Zhan Guan	張展官	
Zhu Song Guan	朱宋官	
Zheng Zheng Guan	鄭政官	
Mao Zhou Guan	毛周官	
Chen Lu Guan	陳盧官	
Xu Er Guan	徐二官	
Hong Huan Guan	洪換官	
Zheng Zhen Guan	鄭箴官	
Shi Ping Guan	施平官	
Lin Qian Guan	林前官	
Zhou Peng Guan	周鵬官	
Ou Yang Guan	歐陽官	
Cai Jin Guan	蔡進官	
Jiang Zhi Guan	江智官	
Wang Yin Guan	王愔官	

[No Description]		
Huang Wei Guan	黃尾官	
Wu Qi Guan	吳起官	
Luo Yue Guan	羅月官	
Yan Bo Fen	顏伯奮	
Chen Tong Guan	陳童官	
Yan Wu Guan	顏五官	
Cai Qing Guan	蔡慶官	
		Each of the above persons gave 1 <i>tael</i> and 2 <i>mace</i>

Appendix 1b and 1c [xls]

- 1b. Donor List, organised by total amounts donated by individual families or lineages
1c. Donor List, organised by total amounts donated, with possible Dutch transliterated Romanization of names

Appendices 2a and 2b[xls]

- 2a. Appendix IIa: *Amfioen Sociëteit* (AS or Opium Society) *obligatien*, buyers 1745-85
2b. Appendix IIb: *Amfioen Sociëteit Obligatien*, Guarantors, 1745-85