

The Research Network for the Study of Chinese Communities in the Netherlands

The Research Network for the Study of Chinese Communities in the Netherlands (RSCCN) was established in 2001 as a joint initiative of the IAS, and Asian Studies in Amsterdam (ASIA), at the University of Amsterdam. This informal research network aims to bring researchers together, facilitating their cooperation. The field of study covers any aspect of social life among the Chinese communities in the Netherlands, as well as the study of Dutch-speaking Chinese in countries such as Belgium, Suriname, Indonesia, and South Africa.

14 March 2003  
Amsterdam,  
the Netherlands

During the RSCCN's third annual meeting there were lectures on human trafficking by Melvin Soudijn, and by Judith Suurmond on the connection between participation in Chinese voluntary associations in the Netherlands and the formation of a civic community and socio-political integration of Chinese descendants. Peter Post screened amateur films from the 1930s produced by members of *peranakan*, elite Chinese families in the Dutch East-Indies, thereby putting forward a fascinating new way of looking at the position of Chinese descendants in a Dutch colonial setting. < Dr Leo Douw, [ldouw@fmg.uva.nl](mailto:ldouw@fmg.uva.nl)

# Human Cargo

Report >  
China

Human smuggling organizations are currently held responsible for the transport of refugees, bounty hunters, and other migrants to the West. The Dutch Public Prosecutor's Office works on the assumption that the movement of asylum seekers to the Netherlands is to a large extent 'regulated' by the activities of human smugglers. Although the nationalities of both the smugglers and the people transported vary greatly, as do the methods used, it is generally assumed by both the public and criminologists that the pursuit of profit is an important, and probably the most important, motive for human smuggling organizations. A turnover of billions of euros worldwide is attributed to these organizations.

By Melvin Soudijn

Within the spectrum of human smuggling, the smuggling of Chinese nationals provokes a lot of interest, not only among the media, but also in the world of international investigation. There are various possible reasons for this. In the first place, a series of well-publicized incidents have caused the commotion. There is virtually no study, investigation or publication concerning human smuggling from China which does not refer to the Golden Venture incident of 1993 and/or the Dover tragedy of 2000, two extremely dramatic events involving Chinese victims. Furthermore, human smuggling from China, whether rightly or wrongly, is generally believed to present several unique characteristics. The sums of money involved are higher than those paid by any other nationality, abuses, such as slavery, exploitation, and prostitution is rife, the level of organization is extremely high and there (presumably) is associated crime involved (directed by Triads). Finally, in the West there seems to be a fascination for, and simultaneously a fear of, the exotic. To this one could add the enormity of China's population, presenting a huge potential market for smuggling, and the many references in publications on Chinese communities to a 'culture of secrecy'. All this leads to the impression that the authorities cannot seem to get a grip on the community.

Human smuggling from China is

not a recent phenomenon. In his study *Chineesche immigranten in Nederland* (Chinese Immigrants in the Netherlands), published in 1936, F. van Heek notes that various countries have drawn up immigration laws to halt Chinese migration. As a result, attempts were made (and this is still the case today) to circumvent these immigration laws, and human smuggling thrived. Van Heek would not state exactly how many people came into the Netherlands as stowaways, but he suspected that the numbers were very large. Rotterdam, 'as an important shipping centre [...], and with its hundreds of Chinese inhabitants [would constitute] an ideal temporary refuge from which the Chinese emigrant could try to reach the place where he now wishes to live' (p. 82) (translation: MS).

Van Heek also discusses the ways in which these people enter the Netherlands. They may enter with a valid passport, by ship's discharge, as a stowaway, as a deserter from a ship, or clandestinely over a land border. The method of stowing away was not, however, wholly without its dangers. For example, people hid in empty water-tanks or boilers, where the temperature could soar if the ship was sailing in the tropics. This sometimes led to fatalities (p. 82).

Furthermore, Van Heek notes that in the past, staff from the Dutch consulates sometimes issued visas too easily, without ascertaining whether the traveller had sufficient means of sup-

port. Several pedlars from Zhejiang, for instance, had indeed entered the Netherlands with valid passports, but ones to which they were not actually entitled. 'In Europe, too, the Chinese happily make use of such consular benevolence. They let one another know where an "easy" consul is stationed, and send their friends who live in the country in question to the consulate to apply for a visa. The consulate sometimes neglects carefully comparing the passport-photo with the applicant's face, and the visa is issued. The applicant sends it back to his friend who wishes to travel to the Netherlands, and soon afterwards our yellow brother enters our country in a completely legal way' (p. 90) (translation: MS).

In their research report *Chinese ouderen in Amsterdam: verslag van een onderzoek naar de leefsituatie van Chinese ouderen in Amsterdam* (Elderly Chinese people in Amsterdam: research report on the living conditions of elderly Chinese people in Amsterdam), Sciortino et al. discuss the case of a Chinese man, 83 years old in 1993, who recalls how he was persuaded by a former neighbour to come to Europe in 1936 (p. 12). He had to pay what was then the enormous sum of 300 Chinese guilders for the journey. He eventually set out with four others from his village. His wife and young son remained behind. He travelled to Marseilles on a German cargo ship and secretly went ashore. From there he travelled overland to Germany and then to the Netherlands.

Today, would we view the above cases as the result of criminal human smuggling organizations? The answer is probably 'yes'. My doctoral research aims to clarify the structures underlying human smuggling. When should one view 'a little bit of help from your friends' as smuggling? That leads me to the question of what 'smuggling' or 'illegal migration' really is, and whether everything is as closely organized as is generally supposed. The inclusion of a historical perspective might provide us with a better understanding. <

References

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Melvin Soudijn, MA conducts his research at the NSCR (Netherlands Institute for the Study of Crime and Law Enforcement) in Leiden.  
[msoudijn@nscr.nl](mailto:msoudijn@nscr.nl)

# Malay Contacts with Sri Lanka

Research >  
South Asia

The Malays have always been intrepid sailors, travelling westwards as far as Madagascar. Sailing westward from a port in the Malay Peninsula or from Western Sumatra, one was likely to disembark on the eastern and southern coasts of Sri Lanka (Paranavitana, 1959): it is therefore not surprising that the Malays made contact with Sri Lankans. Evidence of early contact between Sri Lankans and Malays lies in Sinhala literary works from the Polonnaruwa Period (1098-1234) and the Dambadeniya Period (1220-1293).

By Shihan de Silva Jayasuriya

Historical evidence also confirms that there was a Malay presence in Sri Lanka in the thirteenth century. In 1247, Chandrabhanu, the Buddhist Malay King in the Malay Peninsula, attempted to invade Sri Lanka. Sinhala literary works record that Chandrabhanu's mission was supported by Malay (*Javaka* or *Malala*) soldiers. He was determined to possess the Buddha's tooth relics, which were sacrosanct to the Sinhalese, and which were in the possession of the Sinhalese monarch.

In contemporary Sri Lanka, there are about 46,000 Sri Lankan Malays. They form 0.31 per cent of the population. Their ancestry can be traced back to the Dutch Era (1656-1796) and the British Era (1796-1948). The Dutch referred to the Sri Lankan Malays as 'Javanese' because they were recruited in Batavia (the Dutch appellation for Jakarta). The

British referred to the Sri Lankan Malays as 'Malays' as they spoke Batavian Malay, known today as Betawi or Jakarta Malay. The British also transported Indonesians from the Malay Peninsula (Penang, Malacca, Singapore, Pahang, Trengganu, Kelantan), Java, Madura, and North Borneo to Sri Lanka. The Indonesian soldiers in Sri Lanka were recruited from Jakarta in Java and therefore had a common 'geographical identity'. Though ethnic groups from various parts of the Indonesian Archipelago lived in distinct parts of Jakarta, they spoke a common *lingua franca*, either Batavian Malay (Omong Jakarta, a creole) or Low Malay/Trade Malay/Bazaar Malay (a pidgin). The Sinhalese have given the appellation *Jaminissu* (people from Java) to all Sri Lankan Malays, regardless of whether they are from Indonesian or Malay descent.

Some of the earliest Malay political exiles came to Sri Lanka from the

Moluccas and the Lesser Sunda Islands. From 1708 onwards, Javanese princes were exiled to Sri Lanka. According to Dutch documents, these Indonesian aristocrats were mainly from Java, but others came from Bacan, Sumatra, Macassar, Tidore, and Timor. The Dutch also exiled the King of Java, Susana Mangkurat Mas, to Sri Lanka, together with his retinue: in 1723, he was followed by 44 Javanese princes and noblemen who had surrendered at the battle of Batavia. At the other end of the social spectrum, there was a steady influx of Indonesian convicts, who came from all walks of life. However, no specific information is known about their ethnic background. The Dutch also brought Javanese men to be employed in several capacities in Sri Lanka, but the largest group of Indonesians were the soldiers who served in the Dutch garrison in Sri Lanka. They came from the Ambon, Banda, Bali,

Java, Madura, Buginese, and Malay areas. Most Malay slaves sent to Sri Lanka originated from the Moluccas and the Lesser Sunda Islands.

During the Dutch period and in the early British period, the Malays formed most of the Sri Lankan army, enlisted in the Ceylon Rifle regiments. The last regiment was disbanded in 1873 and the Malay soldiers joined the Police force. Malays were, thereafter, employed in the Sri Lankan military, police, fire brigade, prisons, plantation sector, and in salterns. Sri Lankan Malays have blended into multi-ethnic Sri Lanka but have retained their 'Malay' ethnic consciousness, their mother tongue, Sri Lankan Malay Creole, uniting, binding, and defining them. Sri Lankan Malay Creole is a contact language. When people who do not speak a common language come into prolonged contact with one another, a verbal means of communication becomes necessary, and contact lan-