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KWEE HUI KIAN

Cultural strategies, economic dominance
The lineage of Tan Bing in nineteenth-century Semarang, Java

Located on the north-central coast of Java, Semarang, the most important port-town after Batavia in pre-twentieth-century Java Sea, had attracted many long-distance merchants since the 1600s. The descendants of Tan Bing (1742-1810) were not only the most prominent merchants in Semarang from the 1800s to 1870s, but were also serving as captains (*kapitan*) and majors (*majoor*) - the highest administrative positions available to Chinese in the town during this period. This chapter examines the social-cultural strategies of members of this leading Chinese mercantile family, especially Tan Tiang Tjhing, Tan Hong Yan and Tan Tjong Hoay.[1] Specifically, it studies the establishment, endorsement and sponsorship of these individuals in the Wee Hwee Kiong, alias Tan Clan Temple (Chenshi Jiamiao), located in Semarang.[2]

This chapter argues that, the Tan family forged social-economic alliance with other merchants of the same surname, but not necessarily of the same blood, by forming a common lineage organization. Crystallized in the establishment of the Tan Clan Temple, Tan Bing's descendants and other Tan families, elevated a deity of the same surname – Tan Goan Kong alias Khay Tjiang Sing Ong – as their 'ancestor', and performed rituals and ceremonies around this figure to forge closer ties with one another. Placed in the context of their commercial activities, it is demonstrated that the Tan family's deployment of these social-cultural strategies was crucial for their rise to economic prominence in Semarang and more generally, in Central and East Java.

To reconstruct the social-economic lives and cultural strategies of these *towkay* (merchants) in the port-town, extensive use is made of Liem Thian Joe's

[1] Chinese terms and names are rendered in pinyin, except when individuals and institutions have been published using other forms of Romanization. Readers should note that 'Chen' is the pinyin rendition of 'Tan' - the Romanized form from the Hokkien pronunciation. Acknowledgements are due to the Royal Netherlands Institute of Southeast Asian and Caribbean Studies (KITLV) for their funding during the period of research and writing. I also thank Kenneth Dean for his comments on the paper.

[2] The Tan Clan Temple is also known as Klenteng Kaum Tan and Klenteng Seh Tan.

Riwayat Semarang (1933) and the compilation of epigraphic sources in the Chinese temples in Semarang by Claudine Salmon and Anthony Siu.[3] The former work chronicles the major events and figures in Semarang while the latter offers details on the social-religious lives of the most prominent *towkay*, who were invariably the managers and sponsors of the temples. The most unique sources for this chapter are the information from the ancestral tablets (*sien-tji*) in the Tan Clan Temple and the genealogy of Tan Bing's family. I have managed to acquire a copy of these materials thanks to the understanding and support of the Tan family who take care of the temple and other informants in Semarang.

Aspects of social-cultural strategies, family and networking have been one of the core research interests of Professor Heather Sutherland. In a workshop in Amsterdam in 2001 dedicated to honour Heather's contributions to the study of Southeast Asian history, when discussing the prospects and future developments for the field, various participants, including Heather herself, have proposed that: instead of viewing Southeast Asia as a fixed geographic area, researchers should focus their attention on the human actors in the region. In other words, rather than treating cities, states and regions as 'natural' categories, more studies should be conducted on people and networks operating within and across these borders.[4] The subject under study here is an attempt in this proposed direction. The chapter especially seeks to demonstrate how diasporic entrepreneurs utilized and adapted cultural and religious institutions from their home regions for purposes of mercantile and social networking.

Selecting this topic for the Festschrift is also to express my gratitude for Heather's continual guidance and support in my research projects, and more importantly, for initiating me on a path that I am now pursuing. When working on my PhD research on the political economy of eighteenth-century Java's Northeast Coast, Heather urged me to visit the *rumah abu* (ancestral temples) of longstanding Chinese families in Semarang to collect their genealogies. I have religiously done so. However, unable to interpret fully the Chinese temple and genealogical records at that stage, I put these materials aside and resorted to using mainly the Dutch East Indies Company archival sources to write the dissertation.[5] My recent project to study the networking abilities of the Chinese migrants in Southeast Asia brought me into contact with the works and scholars who study the socio-economic history of Fujian and Guangdong in the late imperial period. I am now able to gain a perspective on how to interpret the materials gathered in Semarang, particularly with

3 Salmon and Siu 1997:310-422. The term '*towkay*' is commonly used to refer to Chinese merchants in the Southeast Asian region.

4 See chapter 1 in Kratoska, Raben and Nordholt (2005). The first person to have proposed this for Southeast Asian studies is of course Denys Lombard. See Lombard (1995).

5 The study of Semarang subsequently expanded to entire Java's Northeast Coast. The thesis has been published, see Kwee (2006).

Professor Zheng Zhenman's guidance, both in extended conversations and from his written works. This chapter aims to demonstrate how the creative use of Chinese genealogies, temple inscriptions and ancestral tablets, combined with other Dutch and Indonesian archives and materials, could help to reconstruct, in a more comprehensive way, the Chinese commercial life in nineteenth-century Java and more generally Southeast Asia.

Chinese social-economic presence in Semarang

Various port-towns on the north coast of Java, including Semarang, were the outlets for the hinterland of central and East Java in the early modern period. Commodities such as timber, rice, textiles, sugar, salt, rattan, mats, tobacco, bird's-nests and opium moved in and out of these towns. The political-economic importance of Semarang was enhanced when the Dutch East Indies Company took control over the rule of the Java's Northeast Coast (Pasisir), and made Semarang the seat of the Dutch governorship in this region from the 1680s. Up to the mid-1950s, the most important mercantile community, besides the Dutch, were the Chinese *towkay*. Having operated in the region since the fourteenth century if not earlier, the Chinese possessed rich knowledge of trading operations in Java and the Indonesian Archipelago. While the Dutch company administrators were generally more adept at trading in bulk quantities, these East Asian merchants became important partners in retailing Dutch imported goods and also gathering commodities for the Company administrators.[6] Among the private merchants, Chinese *towkay* predominated over the sales and export of chief commodities from central and East Java such as rice, sugar, timber, salt and cotton products. From the nineteenth to mid-twentieth century, the richest Chinese merchants on Java were not based in Batavia but in Semarang, including the famous sugar-kings (*raja gula*) Oei Tiong Ham and Kwik Hoo Tong (Kwee 2006:158-71; Claver 2006; Liem 1979; Post 2002).

The Chinese did not only operate as merchants but also worked as craftsmen, construction workers, ship builders and manufacturers of sugar, *arak* (palm wine), chalk, barrels, bricks and other items. Becoming wary of the rising numbers of Chinese on the Pasisir, the Dutch passed various regulations after 1711 to stop the entry of newcomers. These prohibitions did not yield the desirable results though, as many *anachodas* (captains of Chinese junks) flagrantly violated the rules by landing their passengers along stretches of coasts not patrolled by the Company fleet. The Chinese population in Semarang alone

6 Various Indian and European merchants had been important on the Pasisir before the 1680s. However, the Dutch Company expelled these merchants when it gained political leverage over the north coast of Java as they were keen rivals of the Company in the import of Indian textiles and opium (Kwee 2006:45-75).

increased steadily from about 150 in the 1690s to roughly 5,000 in the 1740s, a number which more than doubled by the early nineteenth century. The growing presence of the Chinese was also attested by the number of places of deity worship built in the port-town. In the eighteenth century, at least four *klenteng* (Chinese temples), including the Gedung Batu (alias Sam Po Tong), Tay Kak Sie, Tek Hay Bio and Gang Pasar Baru (alias Houfu Miao) temples had been built. A century later, there were no less than 11 temples in Semarang (Nagtegaal 1996:95-7; Kwee 2006:160-4; Carey 1987:13-4; Salmon and Siu 1997:310-404).

Among these Chinese temples, three were the so-called 'ash-houses' (*rumah abu*) or ancestral temples. They were the Tek Hay Bio (alias Kwee Clan Temple), See Ho Kiong (alias Ma Tjouw Kiong and Liem Clan Temple) and Wee Hwee Kiong. Not much is known about their histories except for the data from the inscriptions of these temples. In today's popular conception, these *rumah abu* were seen as the ancestral temples of the people of these respective surnames. The underlying assumption is that the deceased consecrated in each of these temples were from the same family, or in other words, they were consanguineous.

More generally, among historians of Southeast Asia, cultural and religious institutions like the Chinese temples were usually regarded as a matter of belief and custom and segregated from the analysis of political and economic affairs. By contrast, scholars working on Fujian and Guangdong in the late imperial period have been examining the social-economic functions of ancestral halls and temples since the 1960s.[7] So far, the results of their research have not been used to help understand the cases in Southeast Asia, to which many people from the south Chinese provinces had sojourned since the seventeenth century. This chapter analyses the Wee Hwee Kiong temple and draws from the research on South China for comparison to demonstrate how the founders of the temple both utilized and adapted home traditions for social-political and commercial alliances.

Wee Hwee Kiong; A multi-lineage ancestral temple

Located to the west of Jalan Sebandaran, the Tan Clan Temple was built under the initiation of Tan Tiang Tjhing in 1815.[8] The Wee Hwee Kiong had two halls: the front hall was for the worship of Tan Sing Ong alias Khay Tjiang Sing Ong, literally, 'Saintly King Who Opened Up Zhangzhou'. There was also a shrine on the side for Hok Tek Tjeng Sin – the Earth God. The hall in the

7 See Kwee (2007) for a discussion of this historiography.

8 In early 1851, observing that it was becoming dilapidated, his son Tan Hong Yan decided to renovate the temple. However Tan Hong Yan passed away before the project was completed. His son Tan Tjong Hoay saw it through and completed the renovation in 1853.

rear, named Yimou Tang, literally '(Ancestral) Hall of the Good Examples to Posterity', was for the deceased members in the Tan clan.[9]

When I visited the temple in January 2002, there were a total of 188 tablets in the Yimou Tang, arranged in 17 horizontal rows. Each of these wooden tablets is about 12 by 30 centimetres in size, with two slabs fitted into a base. The front slab of the tablet inscribes the names of the deceased and his wife or wives, as well as his official title in his lifetime, if he had one. These titles included the Dutch official titles of major, captain, lieutenant and secretary; and also Qing imperial titles like *jinshi, tongzhi, dengshi lang* and *tai xuesheng*.[10] For the official titles relating to the Dutch administration, the name of town where the deceased had held office is also mentioned, such as Semarang, Demak, Welahan, Pekalongan, Madiun and so on. The front slab also denoted whether the deceased passed away in the Qing, Republican or the more contemporary period.

About 80 of these tablets contain information in the inner slab. They include details on:

- the home village of the deceased in China,
- the birth and death dates and/or times (*shicheng*) of the deceased and his wife or wives,
- the various names (*ruming, zi, hao, shi*) of the deceased and his wi(ves),
- the sequence of birth of the deceased and his wi(ves) in their families,
- their age when they passed away,
- the names of their descendants,
- the location and *fengshui* of their graves, and also
- the date and time when the inheritance was divided among the beneficiaries

Only about 12 tablets contain all the above stated details, while the rest have some of the information.

A tablet about three to four times larger than the other ancestral tablets is placed at the centre of the highest row on the altar table. In the ancestral halls in South China, what is generally inscribed on this tablet is the name of the first ancestor and the generation (*dai*) from which the lineage has descended. In the Wee Hwee Kiong temple however, the main tablet on the ancestral altar merely says: 'Altar of the various gentlemen of the Tan lineage in Semarang' (*Long-jun yingxian yongying wangming Chen-fu liewei xiansheng lao daren shenzuo*).

The fact that a common ancestor could not be named suggests that not all the deceased persons worshipped in the temple were consanguine-

9 See the pictures of these name-bearing panels in Salmon and Siu (1997:362).

10 *Jinshi* is an academic title that was awarded to scholars who had passed the pan-country imperial examination administered in the capital every three years. *Tongzhi* and *dengshi lang* are both civil official ranks in Ming and Qing China of the fifth and ninth rank respectively. *Tai xuesheng* refers to individuals who had registered for the imperial examinations (Miyazaki 1976; Ho 1959).

ous relatives. A closer examination of the ancestral tablets shows that the Tan clan comprised of at least 13 separate families, who came from different localities in the prefectures of Zhangzhou, Quanzhou and Chaozhou in Fujian and Guangdong. These included Wuxi, Shengmeng and Haicang of Longxi district, Qianban in Nanjing district, and Zhenwei and Liutian in Haicheng district, all in the Zhangzhou prefecture; Songzhai in Nan'an district and Roushan in Siming district in the Quanzhou prefecture; and Daimei in Chenghai district, Chaozhou prefecture. It would have been possible that a consanguineous clan had spread out to these various places in South China, though in such a case, the lineage organization would have been able to name the common ancestor.

Having no common human ancestor, what the founders of the Tan Clan Temple did to legitimize and strengthen the fictive lineage was to render Tan Sing Ong, a deity of common surname as themselves who was to be venerated as the main deity in the temple, as their common ancestor. This manoeuvre could be deduced from an inscription installed in 1862. The latter began with an elaborate introduction of Tan Sing Ong, about how he was the deified form of Tan Goan Kong, a general in the Tang dynasty (618-907) who was sent to Zhangzhou to 'appease the region and incorporate it into the Tang empire'. After his death, popular tales reported that the people in Zhangzhou venerated him as a deity to thank him for 'civilizing' the region.

This passage was a trite narrative that is often seen in many temples dedicated to Tan Sing Ong in South China.[11] Unlike the temple inscriptions in South China however, the Semarang inscription concluded with a short paragraph proclaiming the obligation for 'the various descendants [of the Tan family Tan] residing in Semarang' to 'protect their progeny for eternity'. It then recounted how Tan Tiang Tjhing had established the temple, and that his son Tan Hong Yan and grandson Tan Tjong Hoay had subsequently renovated it.[12] In other words, their actions should be read as works trying to preserve the memory that they had descended from Tan Goan Kong. Hence, in an implicit way, Tan Sing Ong was consecrated as the common ancestor in the Tan Clan Temple of Semarang.

Lineage as social organization in South China

A clan organization consisting of various lineages not necessarily linked by blood ties is not uncommon in South China during the late imperial period. Members from different lineages and surnames had come together to form

[11] By the early second millennium, the belief in Tan Sing Ong had become a prominent deity cult in South China, particularly in the prefecture of Zhangzhou (Ter Haar 1990).

[12] A reproduction of the inscription is available in Salmon and Siu (1997:360-2).

what Zheng Zhenman calls 'contractual lineages', that is, lineages formed on the basis of common interests. Such lineages came into being because of a combination of factors. The ideology of ancestor worship and patrilineal kinship had been dominant in Chinese history and was particularly popularized by neo-Confucianist scholars like Zhu Xi and Cheng Yi during the Song dynasty (960-1279). The taxation implemented during the early Ming dynasty further strengthened lineage organization among the populace. This scheme, which included tax in money and kind, as well as service levy, was based on household registration. By the mid-Ming, people in Fujian and Guangdong fell back on the old registration of their grandfathers and earlier ancestors, and shared the load of taxation with other kinsmen of the great extended family. Such procedures would enable them to avoid shouldering more tax burdens as would be the case if these descendants had registered themselves as new households. To ensure that each branch and sub-branch fulfil their share of the load of taxation, besides the yearly rituals for lineage members, contracts (*qiyue*) were created to ensure that everyone executed their duties. As the taxation scheme largely remained the same in the subsequent dynasty, lineage organizations were sustained as a popular form of social organization in the Qing period.[13]

It would be essential to enroll oneself as a tax-paying household in order to be recognized as legal subjects by the state. Legality would entail rights to imperial examinations and to fending off extortion and penalty by local officials in the event when the latter discovered that one was not paying taxes. What would then happen if individuals, whose ancestors had not registered themselves in the early Ming dynasty, subsequently wanted to enroll themselves as tax-paying subjects? In South China, what these people tended to do was to 'buy' legal household status from existing ones. Such purchases were usually made by paying some money to the persons in charge of tax collection. The latter would direct the interested parties to households which were having problems fulfilling tax obligation because of their diminishing sizes and/or family fortunes. When these parties subsumed under these households as the same tax-paying unit, they would become the same lineage, at least in the eyes of the state.

Fulfilling tax obligations was not the only reason inducing people to form common lineage organizations in the Ming and Qing dynasties. In other cases, some small lineages had allied themselves to form a common lineage organization to contend against a big lineage in the vicinity. Other concerns were more commercially-oriented, such as the lineage organizations formed among merchants in port-cities like Xiamen.

[13] Information for this section, unless otherwise stated, is derived from Zheng (1998, 2001), Szonyi (2002) and Ng (1983). Fu Yiling and Maurice Freedman were the first scholars to emphasize the centrality of lineage as social organization in South China but the scholarship has advanced further since their times. See the discussion of the historiography on kinship and lineage organization in South China in Szonyi (2001), Chun (1996) and Kwee (2007).

In effect, the lineages described here would not have a common human ancestor. Then what did they do to legitimize and strengthen the fictive lineage? One method was to pick a common surname which would be necessarily fictive. In the case of commercial cooperation, 'Jin', meaning 'gold, wealth', was often selected as the common surname. As for defensive alliances, the surnames selected often bore the definition of 'all-encompassing', such as 'Quan', meaning 'all, everyone'; 'Qi', meaning 'unite, unity'; and 'Wan', literally 'million, all'. Such fictive surnames would be used only during rituals and celebrations relating to the lineage, but in daily life, the members would be using their original family names. Some multi-familial lineage of common surname would also name a deity of the same surname as their ancestor, for instance, the Lins tended to use 'Goddess of the Sea' (Mazu), whose maiden name was Lin Moniang, as their ancestor. Other multi-familial, multi-surname lineage organizations in South China also elevated a deity as their forefathers, including Shundi and Yaodi – deified versions of the first emperors of China. Lineage organizations formed among people of the surnames Liu, Guan and Zhang also worshipped Liu Bei, Guan Yu (Guandiye, the 'God of War') and Zhang Fei as their common ancestors in reference to the tale of how these three individuals swore as brothers in the popular story of 'Romance of the Three Kingdoms'.

It is remarkable that these people had chosen to group themselves through the formation of lineages rather than adopting other types of social organization. The popular use of lineage as a form of organization, that is, to use a common ancestor as a way of structuring relationships, even in cases when there was no ancestral lineage, demonstrated that the use of lineage as a form of organization had become a recognized orthodox practice in South China in the Ming and Qing dynasties. Whether individuals chose a common surname and/or deity to create their lineage organization depended on which form served best for the actual historical circumstances. Ultimately, it is 'the form of being a lineage' that is the most important.

Whether they were consanguineal or contractual lineages, the construction of an ancestral hall was only one way to hypostasize the formation of lineage organization. Other methods to forge closer relationship were annual rites and rituals of common ancestor worship during the spring and autumn sacrifices (*chunji, dongji*) and on the birthday of the first ancestor of the clan. There would also be other major clan festivities during the Chinese New Year where all the male descendants would conduct the ritual of bowing in a circle (*tuanbai*) and collective celebration on the fifteenth day of the New Year or during the Lantern Festival (*dengjie*). This set of protocol was fairly established in China by the late Ming dynasty and is still practised by many Chinese clan organizations in South China and Southeast Asia in the present day. These ceremonies would be regular enactment and strengthening of the relationship among the kinsmen of the multi-lineal clan, they were equally important even for those with blood ties.

With the consecration of Tan Sing Ong as the ancestor and the establishment of the Wee Hwee Kiong temple, the formation of the Tan lineage organization in Semarang was thus following an established tradition in late imperial South China. Still, this phenomenon begs the question of what motivated people like Tan Tiang Tjhing, Tan Hong Yan, Tan Hong Yan and other Tan families to form a multi-lineal clan. What benefits were they after? Who did they include and exclude in the process?

Answering these questions poses some challenges. Based on the information we have, it is not possible to verify many of the names on the ancestral tablets in the Tan Clan Temple. Only a few individuals who were from the most prominent families could be identified through close comparison of the tablet information with the Dutch East Indies Company archives, the accounts of Liem Thian Joe, the Chinese epigraphic materials from Semarang and the genealogy of Tan Bing. They are:

1 one headed by Tan Bing with 22 tablets on the altar,
2 one headed by Tan Tjeng with 6 tablets,
3 one headed by Tan Tjauko with 7 tablets,

The following section shows how it is possible to derive a part, if not all, of the reasons of why it would be attractive for these three lineages, and other families and individuals, to form a common lineage organization by understanding the power and influence of these three families.

The prominent Tan lineages in Semarang

For the lineage of Tan Tiang Tjhing, the principal founder of the Wee Hwee Kiong, its first ancestor to be established in Semarang was Tan Bing. Tan Bing was from Shancheng *bao*, Nanjing district in Zhangzhou, Fujian.[14] According to Liem Thian Joe's chronicle, when Tan Bing arrived in Semarang in late eighteenth century, he started out as a peddler of provisions and small wares in the port-town. Tan Bing subsequently opened a *warung* and as his wealth grew, he also acquired forest concessions from the Dutch East Indies Company administrators in Central Java.[15] His business really took off under the management of his third son, Tan Tiang Tjhing (1770-1833). With his help, Tan Bing acquired more timber concessions and also opened sugar-mills in Semarang, Kendal, Salatiga, Magelang, Demak, Kudus, Yogyakarta and other

14 *Bao* was a sub-prefecture administrative unit in Qing China.

15 *Warung* is an Indonesian word referring to small stalls selling items ranging from sundry goods to foodstuff.

regions in central and East Java.[16]

Liem Thian Joe described Tan Tiang Tjhing as a bold man with business acumen. From the 1790s to 1810s, the situation in Semarang, and more generally in Java, was very chaotic with the shift of political authority from the Dutch to the French in the Netherlands, and the repercussions to the management of Dutch affairs in the East Indies (Schutte 1974). The rule of Java subsequently came under the English from 1811 to 1816. During this period of political upheaval and economic uncertainty, many well-off people fled Semarang with the exception of Tan Tiang Tjhing and his family. The latter rose to prominence in these troubled times (Liem 1933:73-6).

Tan Tiang Tjhing was very resourceful in seeking out patrons in the mercantile circles and government sectors. He apparently made his name in the commercial circles of West Java in the early nineteenth century. Liem Thian Joe recounted an instance during this time when Tan went to Batavia on a business trip with several shiploads of commodities, and practically spent all the money he made to entertain the elite merchants there. Tan Tiang Tjhing was also close to the commandant of Semarang, F. von Winckelmann (in office, 1811-1816). Liem described that Tan Tiang Tjhing had won the respect of Von Winckelmann, when Tan reasoned out with the latter why he had violated the regulation of crossing the commandant's lawn during evening times. Tan was also attentive in offering expensive gifts, including a beautifully carved ivory piece which he ordered from China, to the commandant.[17]

Under the English rule, Tan Tiang Tjhing himself was not only promoted from a Chinese lieutenant to captain, his brother Tan Goan Ing (alias Tan Tjhing Soei, 1776-1820) and both his sons Tan Hong Yan (1792-1851) and Tan Siok He, were also appointed as Chinese lieutenants in Semarang.[18] The official fate of the family continued to flourish when the English returned the governance over Java to the Dutch authorities. Tan Tiang Tjhing stepped down as Chinese captain in 1828, but the Dutch colonial government made him one of the sub-commissioners of agriculture (*lid van de subcommissie van landbouw*) in the following year.[19] In 1829, the government also conferred on Tan Tiang Tjhing

[16] Liem 1933:71-2; Salmon and Siu 1997:364, #92 and 184. As mentioned earlier, the ancestral tablets are arranged in seventeen horizontal rows, with a parting line in the middle. #1-10 are the tablets in the top most row, the sequence is from left to right; followed by #11-22 (second row), #23-34 (third), #35-46 (fourth), #47-58 (fifth), #59-70 (sixth), #71-82 (seventh), #83-94 (eighth), #95-104 (ninth), #105-115 (tenth), #116-26 (eleventh), #127-38 (twelfth), #139-49 (thirteenth), #150-60 (fourteenth), #161-71 (fifteenth), #172-82 (sixteenth) and #183-88 (seventeenth).

[17] Liem 1933:73-6. In Liem's account, he only referred to the English administrator in Semarang as 'Se Mow Ong', literally, 'hairy barbarian'.

[18] Liem 1933:74, 86; #10, 70, 159, 181, 182. Dates of birth and death of these *towkay* are given whenever known. These details are not available for Tan Siok He.

[19] The appointment was made because the Dutch considered Tan to have much experience in agricultural issues, particularly in sugar production. The 1820s was a period when the colonial government was trying to venture into this undertaking and Dutch administrators often sought Tan's advice on these matters (Liem 1933:96; Bosma 2007). Ironically, by the early 1830s, Europeans start to establish sugar factories in Surakarta and Kertoarjo, using power from water-mills. This sugar, that is known as sugar grains (*gula pasir*) scored good sales, such that the sugar produced by Chinese gradually got sidelined (Liem 1933:97).

the title of honorary major (*major titulair*), the first time this title was ever bestowed on a Chinese in Semarang. After Tan Tiang Tjhing stepped down as captain, the first of his two sons, Tan Hong Yan, was promoted from lieutenant to captain to replace him. In 1836, having taken notice that Tan Hong Yan had performed many meritorious deeds, the colonial government made him an honorary major (Liem 1933:96, 101).

By the 1840s, Tan Thiam Sioe (alias Chen Jingzhi, 1804-1839), the son of Tan Ngo Siang or the fifth brother of Tan Tiang Tjhing, as well as two sons of Tan Hong Yan, namely Tan Tjong Tjing (alias Chen Shaode) and Tan Tjong Hoay (alias Chen Shaonan, 1832-1882), were appointed as the Chinese lieutenants of Semarang. When Tan Hong Yan passed away in 1851, his son Tan Tjong Hoay was promoted from lieutenant to succeed him as Chinese captain, while another son, Tan Tjong Thoen (alias Chen Shaoling, 1828-1882), was appointed to fill in the vacated lieutenancy. In 1860, Tan Tjong Hoay, like his forefathers, was made the major of Semarang (Liem 1933:103-4, 124, 127; #9, 58, 114, 123, 167).

In many port-towns of Southeast Asia in the nineteenth century, the most prominent merchant was often the lessee of the most lucrative tax farm, namely, the rights to import, produce and sell opium. By the 1810s, Tan Tiang Tjhing had become the opium revenue farmer of Semarang. Between 1828 and 1831, his son Tan Hong Yan was managing the opium tax farm for the whole of Java. Succeeded by Tan Tjong Hoay, this family continued to keep their hold over the revenue farm business in many Javanese towns until mid-1870s. The Tans also held the timber concession for a large stretch of the north coast of Java up to Ulujami (Liem 1933:82, 98-9, 127, 141-2).

Members of this Tan family also leased the salt tax farm, the most profitable venture on the Pasisir at the turn of the nineteenth century. They continued to do so until the English authorities terminated the tax farm in 1813 and placed the control over salt production and sales under government monopoly. The Tan family also rented the market (*pasar*) revenue farm until its abolition in the 1850s. Besides tax farming, they also owned many sugar-mills and warehouses, and ranked among the most important sugar merchants in their time. It was not coincidental that the mansion Tan Tiang Tjhing built in Ambengan, Semarang, in the 1810s was named the 'Sugar Mansion' (Gedung Gula) (Liem 1933:71, 78-9, 82-4; Boomgaard 1989:117-9; Fernando 1996).

The lineage descending from Tan Bing was not the earliest family of the surname Tan to rise to prominence in north Java. Two other lineages had become very notable by the second half of the eighteenth century. The first family came from the Qianban *she*, Shancheng *bao*, in the Nanjing district of Zhangzhou,

Fujian.[20] Based on Liem's account and the ancestral tablets, Tan Tjeng was the first in this family to become Chinese lieutenant in Semarang from the 1750s to 1770s. One of his descendants, Tan He Ling (1768-1824), was appointed the Chinese *boedelmeester* – member of the Board of Property Management – of Semarang in the 1790s. This position was the fourth highest official appointment, behind majorship, captaincy and lieutenancy; in which Chinese individuals could assume in Dutch-ruled areas in the Indonesian Archipelago in the nineteenth century. Another descendant, Tan Pik Houw (alias Tan Goan Lik, 1788-1822) became the Semarang lieutenant in the early years of 1800s. About 50 years later, Tan Hoo Lien (alias Tan King Hong, 1795-1871), a son of Tan Pik Houw, became the *boedelmeester* of Semarang (Liem 1933:49-50, 74, 124; #32, 45, 69, 132, 134, 137).

The second Tan family to have exercised substantial weight and influence in Semarang hailed from the 'Hall of Nanchuan Dunben', in the twenty-ninth city of Longxi district, Zhangzhou, Fujian. This Tan family in fact established their business empire in Pekalongan. Tan Tjauko, the first in the family to become highly successful in commerce, started out in Pekalongan in the 1730s. From the Dutch East Indies Company archival records, we can tell that Tan Tjauko leased the *syahbandar*-ships of Pekalongan, Batang, Kendal, Pemalang and Tegal; the salt-producing villages Paradesi, Wedong and Brahan; as well as the tax farms on Kedu tobacco and bird's nests on the south Javanese coast in 1754. As these were the most sought-after ventures in the eighteenth century, Tan Tjauko, who had become the Chinese captain in Pekalongan by the mid-eighteenth century, was hence the biggest tax farmer and merchant in this part of Java. He was also a major sugar, salt and rice trader and exporter. In the height of his career in the 1750s, not only did Tan Tjauko own many sugar-mills on the north coast of Java but he also rented the entire district of Ulujami near Pekalongan for rice production (Kwee 2006:84, 165-7; #20, 33, 36, 41, 49, 147, 171).

Tan Tjauko's son, Tan Banglong (1747-1784), who was only seven years old when the former died on 26 December 1754, was appointed the captain of Pekalongan when he came of age in the 1770s. He captured the *syahbandar*-ships of Batang and Pekalongan from 1776 until his death in 1784. His son Tan Tiauw (1781-1821) was appointed *boedelmeester* of Semarang in the 1800s. One of Tan Tiauw's sons, Tan Tiong Touw (1802-1844), was also made the Semarang *boedelmeester* in the 1810s (Liem 1933:74, 86; Kwee 2006:90; #33, 44, 171).

[20] *She* was a form of social-religious organization at the sub-village level in South China during the late imperial period (Szonyi 2002:174-85).

In-group versus out-group

Examining the backgrounds of three of the dominant Tan families in the Wee Hwee Kiong temple helps to illuminate the desirability for the formation of a common grouping. Although they belonged to the most powerful mercantile family in Semarang from the 1810s to 1870s, it would still be expedient for Tan Tiang Tjhing, Tan Hong Yan and their descendants to forge closer ties with the other Tan lineages through the formation of a single lineage organization. For one thing, since members of the latter families, like Tan Tiauw, Tan Tiong Touw, Tan Pik Houw and Tan Hoo Lien; were holding positions as lieutenants and *boedelmeesters* in Semarang, it would ease cooperation and coordination by co-opting them as 'lineage members'. The motivation was particularly strong considering that many of these subordinate officials had eminent ancestors who were in leading positions in earlier decades and continued to be influential merchants themselves. For similar reasons, members of these other families would also find it appealing to form stronger social bonding with Tan Bing's descendants.

Besides those in Semarang, important merchants in other Javanese towns were also incorporated into the lineage. One of them was the Chinese lieutenant of Pacitan, Tan Ing Soen, alias Tan Kong Toh. The Dutch administration had accused him of being a collaborator of Tan Tjong Hoay in opium smuggling in Central Java in the 1860s (Rush 1990:75-7, #145). Other ancestors worshipped included those who had served as *kapitan* and lieutenants of other port-towns like Welahan, Yogyakarta, Lasem and Demak (#30, 56, 112, 148, 151, 156, 170). Whether or not these merchants were blood relatives of Tan Bing's scions or other Tan lineages in the clan temple could not be ascertained based on the available materials. It is also not possible to tell from the limited information why other familial groups and individuals, who had no official titles to boast of, joined the lineage organization. Nevertheless, it is not far-fetched to assume that, for these people, it would be desirable to form closer ties to the more powerful merchants of the Tan surname.

Such multi-lineage formation was significant in view of the centrality of hometown affiliations among the Chinese populace in Java, and more generally in Southeast Asia during the pre-twentieth century. Nineteenth-century European observers often characterized the Chinese in Southeast Asia as a very 'clannish' people, whose sense of affinity was connected 'almost exclusively [...] to the district in which he was born' (Pickering 1876:438-40, Vaughan 1879). Chinese *towkay* in the Indonesian Archipelago commonly formed clan associations with peers of the same surname to aid one another in social and business dealings (Yen 1988). The *she* bonding was especially strong. Introduced by the first Ming emperor Zhu Yuanzhang (1368-98), *she* was the smallest administrative category under the district (*xian*), city (*du*), canton (*tu*) and sub-canton

military unit (*bao*) during the Ming period (1368-1644).[21] By the Qing dynasty (1644-1911), *she* was no longer an administrative unit but people in the Fujian and Guangdong regions popularly used it as a form of social-religious organization and self-identification (Szonyi 2002:174-85).

The *she* institution held significance for people from Fujian and Guangdong, when they ventured in large numbers to Southeast Asia in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. This was particularly the case for Java. Liem Thian Joe described that, up to the 1920s, when a person of the same *she* newly came from China to Semarang or other parts of Java, he would be 'received with open arms' by fellow *she* members, who would regard him as their own family and relatives (*tjhin-lang*) and give him lodgings and work. If there was no job around, this newcomer (*sinkheh*) would be supported with money or some commodities so that he could have a means of livelihood (Liem 1933:121).

While members of the Tan clan of Wee Hwee Kiong might not be from the same *she* or even the same ancestral hall (*tang*) in China, they could forge similar bonds by forming a multi-lineal clan. They might have originated from different lineages and regions in China. Here in Semarang however, they were of the Tan Clan Temple, under the ancestral hall of 'Yimou Tang'. The intra-lineage affinity disposed them to offer assistance to fellow clan members when the need arised, akin to what Pierre Bourdieu (1986) calls 'social capital'. For both merchants and commoners, such forms of mutual help were especially valuable in a space and time when the ruling authorities were not always amenable, and where legal and policing mechanisms were not usually reliable.

Fictitious though the entity might be at its core, not everyone with the surname Tan in Semarang and its environs was acknowledged as part of the lineage. A selective process was at work to decide who were to be included in the lineage. The ancestral temple did not have the tablets of merchants and captains like Tan Boen In, Tan Kok Tong and Tan Tong Haij, who were business rivals of members of Tan Bing lineage. Established in Kediri, Tan Boen In allied with Han Liong Ing and Liem Kok Sing to form a business confederation (*kongsi*) which held the farms in Cirebon, Tegal, Pekalongan, Rembang and Jepara.[22] On the other hand, Tan Kok Tong was famous for his plantations and sugar-mills, and owned a large number of properties in Madiun and Surabaya residencies as well as in his home residency in Kediri. More notably, Tan Kok Tong, who was also the Chinese captain in Kediri, and Tan Tong Haij formed another *kongsi* in the town. These two Kediri-based partnerships had family ties and vied with Tan Bing's descendants for the opium tax farms throughout the larger part of the nineteenth century (Rush 1990:96, 102).

[21] In today's China, it is a unit smaller than a village.

[22] Rush 1990:96, 181, 185, 189. Tan Boen In died bankrupt, in poverty and disgrace (Rush 1990:248).

There was another Tan family of importance in the commercial and political scene in eighteenth-century Semarang but it did not seem to be incorporated in the Tan Clan Temple. Originating from Shixi, Longxi district in Zhangzhou prefecture, this lineage was in fact the most prominent family in Semarang before the rise of Tan Bing's descendants. For four consecutive terms or from 1761 to 1809, members of this family, namely Tan Janko, Tan Lecko, Tan Jok and Tan Tiang Khong, were appointed to the position of Chinese captain in the port-town.[23] Tan Kie Sing, Tan Kie and Tan Koei, scions of this family, were also appointed the Chinese lieutenants and *boedelmeester* of Semarang in the late 1780s and early 1790s (Liem 1933:56; Salmon and Siu 1997:364). In the second half of the eighteenth century, this family descending from Tan Janko controlled the *syahbandar*-ships and other tax farms in Semarang, Pasuruan, Banger, Bangil, Blambangan and Nusa Barung. Members of this family were also major producers, traders and exporters of the chief commodities in the region, namely, salt, rice, sugar and timber (Kwee 2006:91-2, 165-6).

Given the glorious political-economic career of members of this family in Semarang in the second half of the eighteenth century, it would have been easy to spot their names from the ancestral tablets by looking out for the titles of 'captain' and 'lieutenant' in Semarang. This family was however missing, suggesting two possible scenarios. First, the descendants of this family may have not done well in the nineteenth century and so they were not deemed worthy by other *towkay* to be incorporated into the Tan Clan Temple. This is very likely the case considering that Liem Thian Joe's book also did not mention any eminent member from the Tan Janko family. The second possibility is that they were political and commercial rivals to those *towkay* who were part of the Tan lineage organization. Further research in the nineteenth-century Dutch archives would be necessarily to ascertain these hypotheses.

Concluding remarks

Traditions at home thus offer ingenious cultural strategies for the purposes of social and commercial networking among the Chinese merchants in Southeast Asia. Founders of the Wee Hwee Kiong were certainly very familiar with these social-religious conventions back home and utilized them well to their own advantages. The Tan Clan temple was in fact the second 'contractual lineage' ancestral hall in Semarang. The first, named Tek Hay Bio, was built by the Kwee clan around 1758, where a similar set-up was observed: the front hall

[23] In Liem's account, Tan Lecko or Tan Lik was a younger brother (*saudara*) of the deceased Tan Eng or Tan Janko. My close reading of the Dutch archives show that Tan Lecko was in fact the son of Tan Janko. Unfortunately, their ancestral tablets (#68 and 80) did not provide sufficient details for verification purposes.

was dedicated to the worship of a local deity Kwee Lak Kwa, alias Tek Hay Tjin Djin, and the rear was the lineage hall of the Kwee clan (Salmon and Siu 1997:329-43). The Liem Clan Temple, whose formal name was Liem Clan's See Ho Kiong, was built in 1881 at the initiation of Liem Siong Djwan and Liem Kiem Ling. The deity worshipped was the 'Goddess of the Sea' (Mazu), the deified form of Lin Moniang or in Hokkien rendition, Liem Bik Nio.[24] Up to the late nineteenth century, forming alliances among people of the same surname through such ancestral temples seems to be an option that some merchants would resort to. This option is particularly appealing to *towkay* whose family names were more common in the locality, like the Tans, Liems and Kwees in Semarang.

The fate of the Tan family declined tremendously in the 1870s, mainly because of the losses incurred in opium revenue farming business. In 1870 and 1871, Tan Tjong Hoay had accumulated a combined deficit of 722,418.80 Dutch guilders from his tax farms in Batavia, Kedu and Semarang. Though in 1872, he won the bid to retain his hold over these tax farms for another two years, these were acquired at a price a few times higher than normal because of the keen competition. Tan suffered a disastrous loss, and was forced to sell off many properties including the ancestral property at Gedung Gula to pay his lease. Despite having done so, Tan Tjong Hoay still could not pay off the entire sum. Together with four other *kongsi* members, he was imprisoned for failing to pay a debt of nearly 600,000 Dutch guilders. At this point, Tan resigned as Chinese major and captain of Semarang. His position was taken over by Tan Khoen Siong, a scion of the Tan Tjeng's lineage (Liem 1933:142-4, Rush 1990:49-50, #134).

By the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, Tan Bing's descendants were no longer among the so-called *cabang atas* (upper class) or the most prominent merchants. Instead, they were people like Be Biauw Tjoan, Oei Tiong Ham, Kwik Hoo Tong, Liem Kiem Ling, Sih Khay Hie and their family members. These *towkay* dominated the opium tax farms, owned large number of properties, and presided over the business of shipping and money-lending, as well as production and trade of commodities such as sugar, textile, rice, indigo and cotton in Java and also other parts of the South China Sea in the early half of the twentieth century.[25]

When I visited Semarang in 2002, the Tan Clan Temple was managed by some descendants who were of modest means. In fact, they took up residence in the yard behind the temple building. This present-day Tan family did not

[24] Liem 1933:145, 191; Salmon and Siu 1997:392-5. I have also copied all the ancestral tablets but by comparison, the information inside the tablets of these temples is much more scant than that of the Tan Clan Temple. I have hence used the Tan Clan Temple to illustrate how such multi-familial lineage organization was formed in Semarang in the pre-twentieth century.

[25] Salmon and Siu 1997:392-5; Rush 1990:102-5; Liem 1933:121; Post 2002; Liem 1979; Dick 1993.

possess any personal memory of the preeminence of their ancestors, something they could only derive from the titles of major, captains, lieutenants and *boedelmeesters* inscribed on the ancestral tablets and ceremonial boards in the temple. The very sudden plunge in the Tan family's fortune in the 1870s had probably brought about this drastic discontinuity. From the identities of the individuals on the tablets in the more recent decades, it also appears that people with Tan surname of more humble background were placed on the altar. It appears that, in the latter days, anyone of the Tan family name could be admitted into the Tan clan altar, if they paid a nominal amount of fees.

Similar situations are also observed in the two other clan temples in Semarang. In the case of the Kwee Clan Temple, a group of six to seven Taoist believers, mostly in their forties, was managing it. They had completely no relation with the Kwee family and explained that they voluntarily took up the task of running the temple in 1995 as it was then completely abandoned. As for the Liem Clan Temple, although many older Semarang Chinese still remembered the Liem temple's illustrious ancestors, the temple was in a deplorable state after the last head (*ketua*) of the temple was taken ill in the late 1990s. He passed away in late 2002, and his children and grandchildren, who had mostly adopted Christianity under Suharto's New Order rule, lost touch with the Chinese temple tradition and faith. So they could not carry on their forefathers' endeavour.

This chapter has tried to show how the creative use of Chinese genealogies and temple inscriptions and ancestral tablets, and the combination of these with other Dutch and Indonesian archival and texts, could offer a more comprehensive reconstruction of the Chinese commercial life in the nineteenth century. In the study of the history of Chinese mercantile activities, particularly in the pre-twentieth century, scholars have often tended to segregate the economic life of the Chinese from their social and cultural activities. More pertinently, cultural and religious institutions like the Tan Clan Temple were not only a matter of belief and custom but could be very efficacious apparatus to forge symbolic alliances with other *towkay* in Semarang and in central and East Java as a whole.

Appendix: Chinese terms mentioned in the text

bao	堡
chunji	春祭
dai	代
dengjie	灯节
dengshi lang	登仕郎
dongji	冬祭
du	都
fengshui	风水
hao	号
Jin	金
jinshi	进士
Khay Tjiang Sing Ong	开漳圣王
kongsi	公司
Liem Clan's See Hoo Kiong	林氏西河宫
Long-jun yingxian yongying wangming Chen-fu liewei xiansheng lao daren shenzuo	垄郡英贤永膺王命陈府列位先生老大人神座
Qi	齐
qiyue	契约
Quan	全
ruming	乳名
she	社
shi	谥
shicheng	时辰
sien-tji	神主
sinkheh	新客
tai xuesheng	太学生
Tan Bing	陈猛
Tan Clan Temple (Chenshi Jiamiao)	陈氏家庙
Tan Goan Kong	陈元光
Tan Hong Yan	陈烽烟
Tan Seng Ong	陈圣王
Tan Tiang Tjhing	陈长菁
Tan Tjong Hoay	陈崇淮
tang	堂
Tek Hay Bio	泽海庙
tjhin-lang	亲人
tongzhi	同知
tu	图
tuanbai	团拜
Wan	万
Wee Hwee Kiong	威惠宫
xian	县
Yimou Tang	诒谋堂
zi	字

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