

Tan Sing Tian (陳成典): The ‘Lost’ *Majoor der Chinezen* of Surabaya (1904- 1906) and His Influence Towards the City

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Abstract

Chinese settlements in Surabaya City have been evoked leastwise from Admiral Zheng He's expedition to Java Island in the fifteenth century. After that, the Chinese people who mainly men assimilated and married with indigenous people, performing interracial marriage for centuries. Few Chinese people obtained power from local kingdoms, like in Melaka or Banten to control and bridge Chinese people towards the ruler. Soon during VOC establishment and Dutch colonialism era, the practice of Chinese officers was inherited yet and spread to all big cities and towns in Indonesia. One of the Chinese officers in Surabaya, Tan Sing Tian served the city from young age until his eternal rest. The information about him was genuinely limited to the current situation or even in scientific papers. This paper challenged itself to expose any information about Tan Sing Tian as the lost *Majoor der Chinezen* at Surabaya (1904-1906) and to understand his influence towards Surabaya City. The methodology of this paper is a historical research method with archives (books, magazines, and/or newspapers) as the main resource of the research. This research found that Tan Sing Tian is not merely a Chinese officer, rather humanist, philanthropist, and a donor of *Kong Sie Poo Gie*, cultural council on promoting acculturation and tolerance. This paper recommends a new archaeological and social exploration about Tan Sing Tian's physical dignity and return of Tan Sing Tian's equipment from The Netherlands.

Keywords:

Majoor der
Chinezen;
Tan Sing
Tian;
Surabaya

Abstrak

Permukiman Tionghoa di Kota Surabaya setidaknya telah muncul sejak ekspedisi Laksamana Cheng Ho ke Pulau Jawa pada abad kelima belas. Setelah itu, orang-orang Tionghoa, yang didominasi oleh laki-laki, berasimilasi dan menikah dengan penduduk pribumi, melakukan perkawinan campuran selama berabad-abad. Beberapa orang Tionghoa memperoleh kekuasaan dari kerajaan-kerajaan lokal, seperti di Melaka atau Banten, untuk mengatur dan menjembatani komunitas Tionghoa dengan para penguasa. Di periode berikutnya, selama masa VOC dan kolonialisme Belanda, praktik pengangkatan pejabat Tionghoa diwarisi dan tersebar ke berbagai kota besar di wilayah Indonesia. Salah satu orang Tionghoa di Surabaya, Tan Sing Tian, menjadi pejabat kota tersebut sejak usia muda hingga akhir hayatnya. Informasi tentang dirinya masih sangat terbatas hingga saat ini, bahkan dalam tulisan-

Kata Kunci:

Majoor der
Chinezen;
Tan Sing
Tian;
Surabaya;
Tionghoa

tulisan ilmiah. Oleh karena itu, artikel ini berusaha untuk mengungkap berbagai informasi mengenai Tan Sing Tian sebagai *Majoor der Chinezen* yang hilang dari Surabaya (1904–1906) dan untuk memahami pengaruhnya terhadap Kota Surabaya. Metodologi yang digunakan adalah metode penelitian sejarah dengan menggunakan sumber berupa buku, majalah, dan/atau surat kabar. Penelitian ini menemukan bahwa Tan Sing Tian bukan sekadar seorang pejabat Tionghoa, melainkan seorang humanis, dermawan, serta donatur *Kong Sie Poo Gie*, sebuah dewan kebudayaan yang mempromosikan akulturasi dan toleransi. Artikel ini merekomendasikan eksplorasi arkeologis dan sosial terbaru mengenai jejak fisik Tan Sing Tian serta repatriasi objek budaya milik Tan Sing Tian dari Belanda.

Introduction

Nusantara people consist of hundreds of different races, beliefs, groups, and ethnicities. Nevertheless, Nusantara people shared the equivalent colonization and obtained their nationality as Indonesian under emblem Pancasila (Seran and Situmorang 2024). Chinese people in the history of Nusantara have assimilated and internalized with traditional or indigenous values. They have fled from southern China to Nanyang, the southeast Asia with its early gate through Admiral Zheng He's expedition (Hew 2018). Moreover, they ran as coolies or traders, if only they had sufficient resources throughout their fleet. Sporadically they attained special status as diplomats or controllers for commercial affairs in ancient kingdom eras (Santoso 2023).

Taking deep into the realm of Dutch colonialism, we recognized that Dutch East Indies Company or VOC had entered the Nusantara through Banten, Sunda Kelapa, and wholly over the archipelago. VOC controlled the Nusantara under special *Octroi* rights, which bequeath the Company to govern and decide without any approval nor suggestions from Kingdom of Netherlands (Grataridarga, Mardiati, and Putri 2023). The unlimited access, rights, and ability to proclaim and defend their governance in colonial states were contributing to the boundless number of resources they possessed.

During the governance of the *Compagnie*, social bridge issues between the Dutch people and ethnic groups in Dutch East Indies were vital. As the Dutch people in the seventeenth century accomplished several trade affairs with the Chinese, Arabian, or Bengalese people, they commissioned ethnic officers to connect with trade and commercial affairs inside colonial towns (Heidhues 1988). This status as civil officer is granted to ethnic families who are accountable and charismatic to the society, respectively. Generally, they were Cabang Atas family or opulent and prosperous families who practiced various businesses and networks with Dutch people. The *Compagnie* or local leaders initially granted the status as civil officer. During the dynamics of politics, the civil department of the colonial government selected those people who had been recommended by previous officers or by the common.

Civil officer status was such a distinguished occupation as they maintained particular lands outside the city and obtained land usage tax from local farmers. This job would not provide any wages to those certain people, rather bring prestigious titles and networks (Haryono 2017). Although this position emerged far before the Batavia Massacre in 1740s, this position accumulatively spread exaggeratedly after that event to Semarang, Surabaya, Medan, and over the Nusantara archipelago (Wells 2019). Batavia Massacre was started from Jakarta and surrounding cities, which ultimately pushed Chinese into the other part of Nusantara (Blusse 2017). Surabaya and other cities accommodated Chinese people to settle down and later consolidated them with acculturation and inter-ethnic marriage. This enabled Chinese communities to start trading and build Surabaya as port city organization in the Chinatown (Pertiwi 2019). In Surabaya, this position commenced by Han Bwee Kong from Lasem Han family as *Kapitein der Chinezen*, then down to his son and other famous wealthy family, e.g. The family and the Tjoa family.

In certain times, local politics has changed and lifted up a Surabaya-origin ordinary Chinese pawnbroker called Tan Sing Tian in the role of the highest Chinese officials whilst as *Majoor der Chinezen*. His life as Chinese officials could not be searched neither through mainstream websites nor present textbooks since his pathway has never been explored comprehensively. Surabaya, as a port city, offered opportunities to Chinese merchants who work with vast commercial linkages and trade various goods. However, without the role of *Majoor der Chinezen*, the business environment in Surabaya as port city would not be suitable for typical Chinese people as they would need to tackle certain contextual challenges, i.e. intermediary communication issues between European and indigenous people (Juwono 2024), 'unofficial' land tax collection (Baihaqi et al. 2024) and mobilizing particular land plot for Chinese community members (Rahayu et al. 2023). Therefore, the role of Tan Sing Tian as the *Majoor der Chinezen* should be appreciated. The objective of present research is to expose any information about Tan Sing Tian as the lost *Majoor der Chinezen* at Surabaya (1904-1906) and his influence towards history.

Research methodology here uses historical research methods. Historical research methodology, includes the exploration of old archives, the verification phase in intrinsic or extrinsic values, interpretation phase, and historiography phase (Pandey and Pandey 2021). In the first phase, online libraries and archival websites are uncluttered and all collections are assembled in the 1850-1910 eras. Delpher websites and Leiden University Online Library were utilized for this purpose. In the second phase, those archives or resources are verified within their intrinsic and extrinsic values, leading to information about Tan Sing Tian. To strengthen this verification process, each resource is linked to elite cooptation (or intermediary) model,

which is attributed to Broman (2021). In his paper, government might control population toward intermediary rulers, mostly elites with social positions and economic powers. These rulers possess bargaining power and political legitimation but sometimes lack compliance from citizenry, including in this case the Chinese officials. Next in methodology, to interpret the information within, verified information is compared respectively to prevent misinformation. The last phase is to write and comprehend the information in a single paper. In goals to promote openness and knowledge about Tan Sing Tian, the paper is published with open access.

To elaborate the paper and because of the researcher's background in development studies, history (along with genealogies and lineages) is seen as a manifestation of social capital. Social capital or assets in sustainable livelihoods framework expose features of social institutions, which then the higher values of social capital might enhance the support of sustainable livelihoods (Mohammadi, Omid Najafabadi, and Poursaeed 2024). Belatedly, social capital is bringing co-operative initiatives and benefits to the networks. Other research found out that trust (in networks), solidarity (in cause of willingness to unite), and responsibility (to the state of affairs) are sensitive to and determined by social sentiments (Guzhavina 2018). By this sentence, it is important to devise positive social sentiments about Tan Sing Tian, especially at Surabaya city in order to generate collective memory and historical consciousness. This paper will reintroduce the historical significance of Tan Sing Tian into Surabaya's collective memory and satisfy contemporary dynamics about Chinese-Indonesian to urban history.

Tan Sing Tian: His Genealogies

Chinese names are made from chosen three out of thousands Chinese characters with social status and clan names in it. Typical Chinese names contain one surname, one generational name, and given names (Bin and Millward 1987). Surnames of Chinese people are automatically inherited from the biological Chinese father, such as Chen (陳), Wang (王), Lin (林), and others. These surnames, which have been arranged with generational names, are unique in each family. Generational names are common to differentiate each family in a city; in this case, Tan Sing Tian comes from Chen (陳) surname and at Sing (成) generations. Tian (典) is his given name from his parents.

Chen family history in Surabaya dates back to the seventeenth century, when Chinese massive migration to Nanyang (Southeast Asia) occurred. Like other immigrants, Chen family who came from Fujian Province adopted and assimilated with indigenous people, especially Javanese arts, and culture (Surya 2022). Those Chinese immigrants live near the coastline of Java Island since the probability to acquire occupation at *Pasisir* was higher (Kian

2006). The part of *Pasisir* is strategically situated at Surabaya City, which has become the center of trade networks to the eastern part of Nusantara. Nevertheless, the Chen family of Surabaya was not *Cabang Atas* family, but rather an ordinary family which fortunately lifted up their social status as a wealthy family in his generation. *Cabang Atas* refer only to successful and wealthy families which have the power to control Chinese people and Dutch bureaucrats (Haryono 2017). By this condition, Tan Sing Tian had given generosity to poor, marginalized, and “problematic” people. Later, this background was questioned and compared to The family whose generation has become the Chinese officers in four generations, like The Boen Keh or The Toan Ing.

He was a Peranakan person who lived near Pabean Tjantian as the son of a businessman. Although no resources have explained about his father, assumption refers to Tan Tian Pik, local trader and the founder of Tan Tian Pik & Co (*Arakfabriek* Dinoyo) in 1856. The assumption was underlain in his skills on *Arak* making, which have been awarded with the Silver Medal (Harmsen 1893; Mundt 1893). His father’s house was located also at Kayoon, but unfortunately on sale in 1879 (*Soerabaijasch Handelsblad*, 1 April 1879). His father owned land parcels at Karang Pilang and the third estate of Banyu Urip (Anonymous 1867; 1884), which was then owned by him, the third estate of Banyu Urip (approximately in the Simo area). Tan Tian Pik also paid 34.225 guildens to exploit new land at Bluluk forest in Lamongan regency (*Bataviaasch Handelsblad*, 29 March 1872). According to *Het Vaderland*, his father is not a trader, but rather a coolie (*Het Vaderland*, 8 September 1904). His mother is unknown but was probably a Peranakan. The information about his genealogy or ancestors is extremely limited due to his ancestors’ problematic issue: smuggling indigenous *kettingangers* (chain gang slaves) in the *arak* factory.

Tan Sing Tian During His Life

His first advertisement in the newspaper started with selling ammonia, a chemical component which is commonly used as fertilizer and household equipment cleaner. He sold imported ammonia in his *Lombardhuis* (European style shophouse) at Cantikan (*De Locomotief*, 1 October 1877), outside the Chinese camp. After two years, he earned his first public auctioneer work on 25 April 1879, pawning for C.G.C. Bruno for his furniture (*Soerabaijasch Handelsblad*, 26 April 1879). His work as an auctioneer from 1879 to 1905 was published 977 times in various newspapers, especially *De Locomotief* and *Soerabaijasch Handelsblad*. Tan Sing Tian was known for his strict auction, demanding mourning families to sell their expired lease furniture during grieving days. He became a matter in question in Chinese people about his habit, especially after the public auction in the mourning house of deceased

Tio King Nio, arranged by Tan Sing Tian as the auctioneer (*Soerabaijasch Handelsblad*, 29 April 1879). His popularity increased rapidly, despite his controversial habit of auction. He sold furniture and antiques in several later advertisements. Not only auctioning goods, but he also sold an imported automaton which smokes a cigarette and does other human activities with a price of 1350 *gulden* or approximately ten thousand dollars. The automaton was exhibited at his *Lombardhuis* (*Soerabaijasch Handelsblad*, 11 May 1886). According to a newer source, Gustave Vichy, together with his wife invented an automaton who did several things, including smoking a cigarette in the 1880s in a similar era with Tan Sing Tian's advertisement (Forlini 2012).

Nevertheless, of his controversial habit and strengthened with his generosity to help Chinese and Dutch people, he was appointed as the *Lieutenant der Chinezen* on 26 July 1893 by the Civil Department of Colonial Government of Dutch East Indies (*Bataviaasch nieuwsblad*, 26 July 1893). No people talked about his position or his future as the civil Chinese officers as the epicentrum of focus was still at The family with The Toan Lok, reigned as the captain of Surabaya Chinese society. Analyzing from his action, he clearly understood that his position should be supported with Chinese community in Surabaya. To protect his status as *lieutenant*, he funded a local association called Poo Gie, recalling Chinese pan-nationalism and conservatism to Chinese society. Association Poo Gie was made under the name of Kwee Khee Hien as the president and Liem Ping Ting as the secretary with *Staatsblad* Number 191 in 1888 (Hordijk 1888). Not only that, he developed his business by opening two pawnshops at Wonokromo No. 452 and Kalianyar No. 426 (*Soerabaijasch Handelsblad*, 9 February 1895). He surely made a network with Chinese landlords and merchants to gain popularity and legitimation among Chinese community in Surabaya.

Tan Sing Tian was awarded as the provisional tender in 1898-1900 with guarantee by Tan Siok Ing and Oen Ping Hien (*Soerabaijasch Handelsblad*, 20 December 1897). In the same newspaper, he published his annual income from pawnshops up to 6210 *gulden*, the highest income of pawnshop at that time. Tan Sing Tian was the most successful pawn holder in 1897 with hundreds of sales and public auctions. This achievement later provoked the local government to appoint him as the new captain for the Chinese society of Surabaya.

He was commissioned as *Kapitein der Chinezen* on 4 March 1898 (*Bataviaasch nieuwsblad*, 4 March 1898), leading to speculation and decline from Surabaya Chinese society about him. His new position as the public servant raised opinions about how he would act to various serious problems ahead in Chinese society at Surabaya city. Five months after his appointment, he let Oei Ming King, debtor of Hok Lie Gwan be jailed by the authorities (*Soerabaijasch Handelsblad*, 11 August 1898). He had also been involved in

bailment of Ang Ting Nio, a Chinese madam who robbed the prize of Assistant- *Wedana* of Gunung Gangsir equals ten thousand guildens. With his ability and networks to track her down, Ang Ting Nio was finally jailed in Batavia (*Soerabaijasch Handelsblad*, 26 May 1898).

Some news about him during his captain services was incredibly unique as not a lot of the information gathered upon him. He offered his house for the fireworks making, which was later owned by Tjo King Tie, Tjo King Gwan, and Joe Swan Swa in Banyu Urip soon after the established residence permit (*Soerabaijasch Handelsblad*, 14 April 1898). This expressed his participation on settling Chinese communities to survive in Surabaya city. He also controlled and monitored the opium selling in Surabaya (*opiumregie* program), with colonial controller Versteegh. They decided to establish nine opium houses (*opiumkitten*) to manage opium selling inside the city (*De Locomotief*, 1 October 1898). This enrolled him as an 'equal colleague' for colonial government officials, since *opiumregie* practically monopolizes opium selling in Dutch East Indies. Later in 1903, he investigated the criminal case of robbing in Ong Khe Lok's house, together with sheriff Scheere, police controller Meijer, and police supervisor Bisel. They later investigated Ong Sian Thay's house with negative results and rolled into bigger cases of Surabaya robbing (*De Preanger-Bode*, 29 December 1903).

His works as Chinese captain were also shown through his social life in Surabaya. He arranged a special feast as a celebration to his daughter's matrimony. Invitations were sent all over the city and a few special gourmets were served to the guests (*Soerabaijasch Handelsblad*, 12 April 1902). In this case, he carried a significant role to cohesively unite all ethnicities in Surabaya, including Dutch, Arabs, and Javanese on the same table. The usage of 'special gourmets' would mean that he exposed his wealth to his friend and the citizenry in aim to obtain social status and pride among the people.

He was appointed as *Majoor der Chinezen*, the highest position of Chinese officers on 10 June 1904 (*Soerabaijasch Handelsblad*, 10 June 1904). This news shocked Chinese society in Surabaya or even national-wide, because of his personality which made entire Chinese societies. His official image as depicted in Figure 2 showed his Qing-dynasty costumes with mandarin



Figure 1. Tan Sing Tian in his Qing-dynasty costumes. Source: Indische Genealogische Vereniging Website, <https://igv.nl/tweede-druk-kind-in-indie-ook-uitverkocht>

collar shirt, Manchu surcoat, and Qing-style head cap. Later his costumes are known to symbolize his conservatism to Chinese culture and acculturation with indigenous culture. In a later newspaper in heading Tan Sing Tian's influence, Tan Siok Ing was known to not use Dutch or Chinese frequently, but more to Malay language.

As Chinese mayor, he attended several important events and also became the main topic of gossip around the city. Kwee Hing Tjiat, a Chinese and main editor of Sin Po newspaper who mainly influenced by China-oriented patriotism mentioned that Thian Tee Hwee (an unspecified Chinese association in Surabaya) had declined Tan Sing Tian to enter their organization (Kwee 1921). In Kwee's context, he assumed that Tan Sing Tian was just a mere Chinese officer who would not help Chinese people, but only to benefit Dutch people. Perhaps the same gossip was lifted in *Het Vaderland* edition September 9, 1904, when The Toan Ing's supporters warned Tan Sing Tian for his new position as *Majoor der Chinezen*. A Dutch contributor for *Het Vaderland*, Elvira, compared the new mayor with past officers, from The Sing Koo to The Toan Ing (from The family of Surabaya) who contributed large benefits to Dutch people. In this situation, Tan Sing Tian was stuck in a conflict with both Dutch, and Chinese people, as mentioned by Kwee Hing Tjiat before. This later comply the elite intermediary concept that somehow these intermediary rulers might misplace citizenry conformity, and later on expel him from the elite status.

He married Oei Lian Nio and had 6 children, which are Tan Siok Ing (entitled as the *Lieutenant der Chinezen* of Surabaya), Tan Siok Hien (Jan Tan), Tan Siok Kie (Herman Tan), Tan Khay Nio, Tan Kiang Nio, and Tan Kiong Nio. His son then married Han Tiat Nio and had two biological daughters and stepson, Tan Kiang Nio, Tan Kiong Nio, and Han Hok Gie (or renamed as Tan Hok Gie). Han Hok Gie was later found out as Han Sik Khiam and Kwee Giok Nio's biological son, who was adopted by Tan Siok Ing because of the absence of a biological son (*Swara Publiek*, 15 April 1930). Inheritance of Tan Sing Tian's wealth (which fell to Tan Siok Ing) got in trial under High Court of Justice and contradicted three times with various family members, predominantly by Tan Bong Pioe and Tan Bong Lan, Tan Sing Tian's biological son from his concubines, Katidja (*Swara Publiek*, 29 April 1930). The two last sons of Tan Sing Tian are still unknown, though Tan Bong Lan was known to retain the continuance of Tan clan of Surabaya. Tan Bong Lan are still known for his wealth by buying a ground lot at Jombang town. Another case, adoption of Tan Siok Ing later got in trial by his brother and sisters.

Tan Sing Tian died on 28 October 1906 at age 53 and buried at Banyu Urip Chinese Cemetery, simultaneously with the death of Sidoarjo Regent, Raden Tumenggung Panji Cokronegoro (*De Locomotief*, 28 November 1906).

Later it is found out that they are friends who have good relationships with each other. A newspaper published that Tan Sing Tian might suffer from a stroke, since he had cramps on his left arm and hand (*De Locomotief*, 31 October 1906). His burial procession started by a parade from his house at Pabean Cantikan, Kembang Jepun, Red Bridge, southward to Banyu Urip. Lots of people gathered to watch the procession, enlivened by flags, paper figures, and big carriages with six horses pulling. The burial procession was lurid, though it was sorrowful (*Soerabaijasch Handelsblad*, 26 November 1906).

Later, the *Haagsche Courant* published opinions and conditions in mourning days of Tan Sing Tian.

De majoor der Chineezten te Soerabaja, Tan Sing Tian, lid van den gemeenteraad, is plotseling tot zijn vaderen vergaderd. Hij had nog te 2 uur een partijtje gemaakt en was daarna gaan rusten; men vond hem dood in zijn bed. De overledene was zijn landslieden niet sympathiek, schrijft het „Soerab. Hbl.” Van geringe afkomst hoog geklommen, wist Tan Sing Tian niet meer tot zijn landgenooten af te dalen en was, al streefde hij met hart en ziel naar eerlijkheid, daardoor vaak bitter onrechtvaardig en ongemotiveerd streng als het niet behoefde; zwak en meegaande daarentegen, als Europeesche ambtenaren anders wilden dan hij. Vooral de meer verlichte Jong-Chineezten ontmoetten in den conservatieven majoor een remmende kracht, die hen tegenwerkte waar hij kon, en velen hunner spreken dan ook onomwonden uit, dat nu voor hen een aera van grootere vrijheid zal aanbreken. Onder de kapiteins is een zeer verlicht man, die bij een plebisciet der kampbewoners vast met 95 pCt. der uitgebrachte (Haagsche Courant, 29 November 1906, 1).

Free translation of the news is below. Please note that the latest research found that Tan Sing Tian was also becoming a *Volksraad* member, along with The Toan Ing for Surabaya people. But according to his obituary in the newspaper, he was a member of the City Council (*Gementeraad*), not *Volksraad* in Jakarta.

Majoor der Chinezen te Soerabaja, Tan Sing Tian, member of the Gementeraad, has returned to his father suddenly. He had a party, took a rest, and found himself dead. The deceased had not gained sympathy from his fellow citizen, wrote in Soerabaja Handelsblad, as he was from a lowly background, Tan Sing Tian was not able to descend to his fellow citizen and even though he strove with heart and soul for honor, he was therefore bitterly unjust and unmotivated, strict when he did not coerce to be, weak and compliant; on the other hand, if European ambitions were different from him. Enlightened particular Young Chinese organizations encountered a restraining force from conservative

mayor, who opposed them where he could, and therefore vehemently expressed omoronads in their speech, that now the era of greater freedom will dawn for them. Among the captains (he) is an enlightened man who, during a plebiscite of the camp residents, won with 95% of those cast.

Tan Sing Tian and His Influence

He has influenced Chinese community in Surabaya with his official power to control people, communicate intermediary with hierarchical society, and while then earning social-economic benefits from his role. He perceived these benefits in forms of wealth, networks, and pride. Throughout the historiography in this range of era, he was recorded with several houses and lands. He built a beautiful house at Tjantian but also owned an infamous pawnshop at Kembang Jepun. His house was struck by lightning in 1889 and made his townhouse crack a little (*Bataviaasch nieuwsblad*, 11 March 1889). He also owned several pawn houses at the back of Sambongan area (or now at Samudera-Bongkaran street), Wonokromo, Kalianyar, Kembang Jepun (as his central pawn house), Gili Ketapang (under Poo Gie), and Tjantian. He also had two plots of houses near Keputran and Kayoon, sold by Mr. De Bruyn and Mr. Thomson with plot number 1620, but then put on sale soon due to his mortgage (*Soerabaijasch Handelsblad*, 2 February 1907).

His exquisite art preference is shown through his Hindu-Buddha era statue collection, which recorded by *Oudheidkundige Dienst* or the

Archaeology Office of the Dutch East Indies (Jasper 1906). As the famous pawn holder, he received antiquities and furniture, which might become the reason he owned various antiquities from Hindu-Buddha era. Archaeology Office found that the collection of Tan Sing Tian was abundant and precious, including Ganesha, Laksmi, Siva, Mahakala, Harihara, or even Nandi (Bataviaasch Genootschap van Kunsten en Wetenschappen 1907). With a lump up to 39 statues, he carried a prominent role in preserving indigenous culture and arts, replacing The Toan Ing (former Chinese mayor) who owned more Chinese-style and European-style bronze statues. In the same report, he brought a statue from Tjoa Sin Goan, a sugar factory and land owner in Simo area in Surabaya, who affiliated with



Figure 2. Nandin statues. Source: Pott 1953.

Tjhin Tjhik Kong Soe (a wealthy Chinese association which owned several particular plot in Surabaya). It is figured out later that there was a land transaction between Tjoa Sin Goan and Tan Sing Tian in Simo, Surabaya. Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam owns one of his Hindu statues collections, as mentioned by the past curator of Museum of Ethnology in Leiden (Pott 1953) and represented in Figure 2.

His philanthropy performance in Surabaya is resembled through his participation in several social programs. He owned a horse which have competed in national horse-riding competition (*Soerabaijasch Handelsblad*, 17 May 1901). In several Chinese holidays, he organized several funds for feasts, like Cap Go Meh with crowdfunding up to 16.000 gulden (*De Locomotief*, 4 February 1901). He also donated a set of gamelan in *Slendro* tune for the Lawang Asylum in 1903, simultaneously with other donors during their visit to the asylum. Several remains of this particular gamelan is still stored in the Lawang Asylum (now: dr. Radjiman Wediodiningrat Asylum) but without any acknowledgment to Tan Sing Tian as the donor.

He could simultaneously counterpoise his power and status between communities, as seen in the renovation of local temple and association. He donated and renovated Hong Tiek Hian Temple, the oldest Taoism temple back to the thirteenth century (Franke 1998). In the establishment stone inscription of new building of the temple in 1899, he was not addressed with "Tan Sing Tian", but "Tan Hoei Tjhong" (陳輝宗). Hoei comes from *Hui* (輝) and Tjhong comes from *Zong* (宗) in Fujianese dialect, respectively mean "enlightened elder". Not only that, in the last sentence of the stone inscription, Tan Sing Tian was addressed with Captain Tan (陳長). In respect to the new captain, Poo Gie was also celebrating his nomination, by arranging a special feast with gas lighting and fireworks around the city. This association speculated that the new captain would not only alter the Chinese people, but also progressively act to Dutch people (*De Locomotief*, 9 April 1898). This past inscription and Poo Gie's celebration revealed how he was actually respected by the Chinese society itself in Surabaya city yet powerfully exert influence on and regulate the city. He shared his wealth for communities, leaving a new building of Taoist temple and arranging an inclusive feast for Surabaya citizen.

He satisfied the Dutch people by also arranging a special Chinese parades for the opening of Surabaya Public Water Pipelines. Tan Sing Tian also enrolled as one of the main commissioners for this event, together with locals (including Javanese), Chinese, Bengalese, Dutch, and Arab people. He invited Chinese traditional performers, like *Lian Ting*, Chinese pennants, *Loling*, *Djengge*, *Ho Pa Saij Tjiang*, Chinese music corps, and Liang Liong. He was acknowledged as *Kapitein der Chinezen* (captain officer for Chinese people), the only Chinese officers who participated in that feast (Arends



Figure 3. Handgun with Tan Sing Tian name's inscription. Source: Martens, Bas. *Het pistool van een 'Majoor der Chinezen'*. 2019. Photograph. SAM Wapen- Magazine, n.d., 2019, <https://www.samwapenmagazine.nl/het-pistool-van-een-majoor-der-chinezen--->

n.d.). Under the same value, he exercised diversity in terms of ethnicity in most of his work, including this feast. He showed no resistance against other ethnicity, but otherwise embracing different races and traditions.

Although some news stories issued about his conservatism during his era, the majority of Surabaya Chinese people loved him as become the symbol of resistance to the Dutch colonialism. Newspaper *De Locomotief* stated that Resident Lange had refused to come when Tan Sing Tian was appointed as the *Majoor der Chinezen* of Surabaya, instead asked Assistant-resident Arends to install Tan Sing Tian as the Chinese mayor. This phenomenon made the situation heated between the government and Chinese people inside the camp (*De Locomotief*, 20 April 1907). After a century ahead from his ruling as *Majoor*, a handgun (FN Browning Model 1900) made by Browning Arms company with series number 196838 was found in Finnish Arms Museum Foundation (as shown in Figure 3). The handgun is decorated with pearls, gold powder, and silver. It is estimated to be manufactured in 1905, might be given as a prize to Tan Sing Tian's installment as *Majoor der Chinezen* from colonial military officers (Martens 2019). The conclusion is that Tan Sing Tian was actually had respectable relation with Dutch people, locals, or even Chinese wealthy society with whom had frictions before.

His role as intermediary elite also risk him into dangerous action or scandal. In 1897, he smuggled a Javasche Bank swindler, Kwee Sin Hie, son-in-law of Liem Tik Swie from Bojonegoro to his residence. The police could not enter his residence, but soon they investigated the districts and found the letter from Liem Tik Swie to her son-in-law (*Bataviaasch nieuwsblad*, 16

October 1897). Although no news exposed his intention of smuggling, but presumably led to his scope of merchant networks in Surabaya. On the next year, Tan Sing Tian in 1898 also paid penalties equal to 1600 gulden for his brother-in-law, Jan Daendels, cashier of Scheeps shipping agency (*Sumatra-courant: nieuws- en advertentieblad*, 21 February 1898). Before his death, a news reported a fund embezzlement case in an anonymous association, which had been complained by Handels Vereeniging Amsterdam (HVA) who donates 25000 guildens. Tan Sing Tian as one of the investigators found that he was not on the list of donors (*Het nieuws van den dag voor Nederlandsch-Indie*, 30 October 1906). Then, he valued solidarity and fairness throughout his mayor era, as revealed through his donor to several association in Surabaya and protect his family or community members.

In 2019-2025 onsite exploration to Banyu Urip Chinese Cemetery sites (which were destroyed for settlements and modern housing in 1950-1990), only two *bongpays* exist under the name of Tan Thaij Goan and Tan Too Kam inside Simo Gunung villages. In the complex of Banyu Urip, data about identity for each grave are limited and hamper the exploration of searching Tan Sing Tian and his family cemetery. However, according to the local oral tradition, this cemetery was bought and donated by anonymous wealthy Chinese person with a significant role in the city. If this oral tradition and the similarity with Tan Sing Tian's ownership over Simo land are correct, therefore Tan Sing Tian has left a valuable land for Surabaya Chinese community to be buried securely in a cemetery complex, which lasts until nowadays.

Conclusion

Tan Sing Tian was actually a 'lost' figure from Surabaya history, even not voluminous people know about this figure. His position as the highest Chinese officer in Surabaya only lasted two years with abundant pros and cons from both Dutch and Chinese people. Despite his two-year experience as a Chinese mayor, he was acknowledged by loads of newspapers about his dignity during his career, mostly as intermediary elites. Hereby Tan Sing Tian's dignity as *Majoor der Chinezen* is undeniably verified with those socio-cultural influences, started by his conservatism to Dutch people, intermediary skills, until generosity to oversee various social problems beside him. He also conducted and donated to a social association called *Poo Gie*, one of the wealthiest Chinese associations in Surabaya along with other *Thian Tee Hwee*. It could be greatly concluded that he contributed on developing well-being in Surabaya city, correspondingly to culture and arts inside the city. His motivational life and difficulties during his lifespan taught the next generation about life resilience.

Our recommendations for future steps are to advocate for revamping

multicultural interactions in Surabaya city by capturing similarities in history and writing genealogical records for every ethnic. Tan Sing Tian has chosen acculturation and harmony between Chinese and Javanese culture, by admiring Javanese gamelans, Hindu and Buddha ancient statues, and prefer to use Chinese or Malay language, rather than Dutch language. Instance socialization and revitalization of various multicultural programs for all need to be supported. Scopes of the multicultural programs vary on how the government utilizes this paper in the future to gain collective memory and action to the development of Surabaya city.

Like other wealthy families, like The or Tjoa family in Surabaya, other clans especially Chen family or other family need to rebuild their generational networks and provoke union for intra-family in Surabaya. Clasp genealogy and development programs will create generations with knowledge on their origin and bring pride to their family. As each family had the same lineage in certain levels, they might unite and start to join collectively. For other purposes, this paper also highlights how to develop social capital, not only by individually helping others, but by associating and cooperating in communities to obtain bigger fruitful values for the bigger beneficiaries.

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