

Mixed Bloods in a Plural Society: Recovering the Place of Hybridized ‘Chinese’ in Indonesia’s Port Communities*

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ABSTRACT

In the late 1930s, J. S. Furnivall described the colonial population in the Netherlands East Indies as a plural society where Europeans, Chinese, and indigenous inhabitants lived side by side without mingling with one another. This portrayal of the Dutch colonial society was in line with racial segregation policies that were institutionalized in the nineteenth century. Although colonial narratives presented Chinese people as clearly distinguishable from non-Chinese peoples, I argue that such depictions did not conform with social reality at the time. Based on a study of statistical methodologies and travel accounts, this article shows that people who were labeled as ‘Chinese’ included people of mixed heritage and people of indigenous backgrounds. Taking a long-term historical perspective, this article shows that the history of mixedness developed in tandem with maritime trade, and continued to exist despite the presumed institutional disappearance of mixedness.

Key Words: mixed-race Chinese, overseas Chinese, plural society, colonial governance, port community

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I. Introduction

Compared to the scholarship of overseas Chinese history, which mostly focuses on overseas Chinese connections with China,¹ Southeast Asian scholarship has given more attention to mixed-race issues, primarily centering upon racial intimacy between Europeans and indigenous peoples.² While studies of Southeast Asian history, more generally, have discussed Eurasian phenomena, such studies are mainly concerned with interracial unions between Europeans and natives. Chie Ikeya rightly points out that there is much room to explore racial intimacy and mixedness between diverse Asian ethnicities.³ Although Southeast Asian scholarship contributes to the understanding of mixedness in Southeast Asian history, work that focuses exclusively on those of mixed race with Chinese heritage remains limited.⁴ This may be attributed to the desire to emphasize Chineseness in Chinese language sources (especially those produced in connection with Chinese political and cultural nationalism) and European observers who, influenced by nineteenth-century theories of race and racial hierarchy, favored viewing Chinese as a homogeneous group that was separate from others.

However, when closely reading and examining first-hand observations from a wide contextual perspective, it becomes evident that those who were labeled as ‘Chinese’ included mixed-race people with Chinese ancestry and indigenous peoples of interracial families. Rather than ‘Chinese,’ they were people of mixed ethnic and cultural heritage whose connections with China were often distant. Therefore, instead of placing emphasis on Chineseness and extracting Chinese aspects from a mixed descendant, this article foregrounds ‘mixedness.’ To look at the evolving history of mixed Chinese in the Indonesian archipelago, it is necessary to take a long-term historical approach that traverses the precolonial and colonial eras. In the following sections, this article first problematizes the category of ‘Chinese’ and

1 Yen, 1976; Godley, 1981; Kuhn, 2008; Chan, 2018.

2 Stoler, 1992; Bosma and Raben, 2008; Firpo, 2016.

3 Ikeya, 2013.

4 Skinner’s pioneering work “Creolized Chinese Societies in Southeast Asia” helped stimulate scholarly discussion on Chinese in Southeast Asia from the angle of ‘hybridization.’ The only book-length work is Lee Khoo Choy’s *Golden Dragon and Purple Phoenix: The Chinese and Their Multi-Ethnic Descendants in Southeast Asia* (Lee, 2013), but this book only provides biographical essays of eminent people and their significance, and does not provide thorough discussions on the historical development of ‘hybridized Chinese.’

hidden mixedness in the Netherlands East Indies. It does so by showing the limitations of Furnivall's portrayal of the colonial society as a 'plural society' resting on limited governmental mediation and a clear separation of racial distinction. Furnivall's paradigm, which was widely used in the study of Indonesian history, effectively depicted the multi-racial nature in colonial societies, but, at the same time, neglected to address the reality of racial interaction and mixed-race phenomena. Therefore, with the purpose of narrating Java's long history of mixedness, this article uses precolonial and colonial travel accounts to unravel the long history of Chinese settlement and mixedness in Java and its wider network.⁵ It does so by identifying the time periods and geographical locations where multiracial people with Chinese ancestry concentrated.⁶ It also shows that, despite the sustaining presence of mixed marriages and racial blending, people of mixed-race heritage were placed in the standardized categories of 'Chinese' and 'Native,' which, by the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, further masked their mixed-race backgrounds.

This article does not aim to provide micro-histories of mixed-race peoples in a specific port city. Nor does it aspire to examine specific events or particular historical episodes in detail. Rather, it identifies patterns in the long history of mixedness in the Indies. Employing travel accounts that cover a long period of time is useful, because examining narratives with geographic and historical sensitivity while taking nuances of the social context and language into account helps shape a broad picture of how, when, and where port communities with mixed heritage gradually became perceived as members of a distinct racial category in the plural society, such as 'Chinese.'

5 Place names and geographic locations that are mentioned in this article are marked on Map of Indonesia (Fig. 1).

6 Due to limited surviving primary sources that were written by people of the Indonesian island world, this article relies on Western and Chinese accounts about this region.

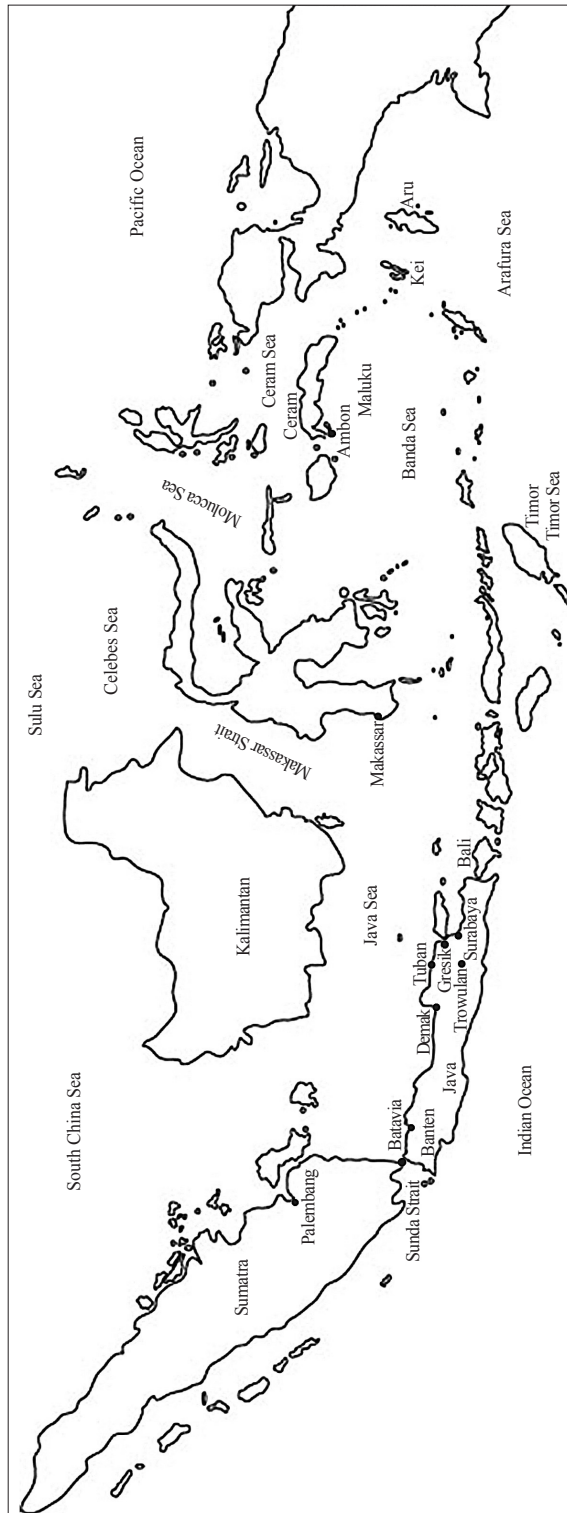


Fig. 1: Map of Indonesia

II. The plural society concept and the absence of mixedness

In 1939, Furnivall famously discussed the concept of the so-called 'plural society.'⁷ Primarily based on his knowledge of the Netherlands East Indies, he claimed that this concept was applicable to all societies and was most suitable for understanding the social and economic life of the people of the Netherlands East Indies.⁸ Furnivall stated that a plural society was a society 'compris[ing] two or more elements of social orders which live side by side, yet without mingling, in one political unit.'⁹ According to him, the Netherlands East Indies was a good example because it was a colonial society where the ruler and the ruled belonged to different races. Although his analysis was based on his knowledge of the Netherlands East Indies, he claimed that the plural society thesis was not solely limited to colonial societies but was also applicable in states that were not subjected to colonial rule. In Siam for example, Furnivall explained: "one finds a plural society also in independent states, such as Siam, where Natives, Chinese, and Europeans have distinct economic functions, and live apart as separate social orders."¹⁰ Both examples that Furnivall presented implied that a plural society would rest on racial division. Such societal segmentation based on racial distinction was visible in the political and economic structures of society.

The concept of the plural society that Furnivall articulated at the end of colonial rule in Southeast Asia has been a much-discussed analytical tool in both academic and non-academic circles to analyze societal makeup. It helps provide insight into the processes of state-building and politics of race in decolonized Southeast Asia. In the postwar era, the newly established independent Southeast Asian states continued, to varying degrees, building 'plural' societies where ethnic markers and racial distinction prevailed. Despite being critical of their colonial predecessors, studies have shown that Southeast Asian administrators (many of whom served their colonial governments before decolonization) inherited colonial methods of

7 Furnivall first introduced this concept in *Netherlands India: A Study of Plural Economy* and further expanded on this concept in *Colonial Policy and Practice: A Comparative Study of Burma and Netherlands India* a few years later (Furnivall, 1939; 1956).

8 Furnivall, 1939: 446.

9 Furnivall, 1939: 446.

10 Furnivall, 1939: 446. Furnivall regarded Siam as an independent or uncolonized state. Some studies disputed this notion of Siam having an uncolonized past and presented the argument of semi-colonial status. For a pioneering study on this question see Thongchai, 1997.

governance. Colonial legacies, such as using race as a factor to define the ‘excluded’ vs. ‘included’ peoples, remained firmly rooted in the politics and society of the postwar era.¹¹ Hence, retrospectively, one could claim that the multi-racial structure under one political unit that characterized ‘the plural society’ helped establish the administrative and societal foundations for the independent Southeast Asian states.

Besides understanding the politics of decolonized Southeast Asia, Furnivall’s study helped generate a scholarly trend in postwar scholarship that used the plural society concept as a lens to examine the history of Southeast Asia. Scholars of Indonesian Chinese studies, for instance, have explored the phenomenon of plurality in Southeast Asia. Heralding the plural society as a multi-racial society under a single political rulership, scholars analyzed the tension between races. With regard to the history of the Indonesian Chinese, the plural society thesis generated interest in focusing on the position of the Chinese as an ethnic minority within a state. Important works in this field include, for instance, *The Chinese in Indonesia*, edited by Jamie Mackie, which took on discussions concerning the Chinese position under the New Order; Donald Willmott’s study on the status of the Chinese in Indonesia, on the other hand, effectively narrated the struggles of the Indonesian Chinese community in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Scholars of the Indonesian Chinese community called for a more nuanced understanding of the Chinese as a single category. Studies by Leo Suryadinata, Myra Sidharta, and Mona Lohanda, for instance, enriched our understanding of the histories of Indonesian Chinese by distinguishing between groups within the monolithic rubric of ‘Chinese.’¹² Some scholars pointed out the differences between Totok (also called Sinkeh) and Peranakan Chinese, respectively, new immigrants from China and the settled community in Southeast Asia, whereas others examined the differences between various Chinese dialect groups including Hokkien, Cantonese, Hakka, and Teochiu. Instead of just portraying ‘Chinese’ as a homogeneous entity, they showed the heterogeneous nature of various Chinese groups. These works presented a more nuanced diversification of ‘Chinese’ sub-groups categorized according to their dialects, but they never disengaged themselves from the plural society paradigm.

Although Furnivall established the plural society theory based on his knowledge of the Netherlands East Indies and British Burma, he claimed that the plural

11 In most places in independent Southeast Asia (except for Singapore), ‘indigenous’ people replaced European predecessors as the ruling authority, but the ‘Chinese’ remained in a disadvantaged position and were often subjected to discriminatory policies.

12 Mackie ed., 1976 (a book that grew out of scholarly discussions in 1966–1968); Willmott, 1961; Lohanda, 2002.

society model was applicable beyond his own field of expertise. Indeed, the plural society concept was applied in the scholarship that emerged in the postwar era. Yet, studies critical of Furnivall rightly pointed out that despite being widely applied in case studies, such as the Caribbean, Africa, and Burma,¹³ few studies had problematized the plural society concept. As Englehart expressed aptly: "given [Furnivall's] importance in the field, there has been surprisingly little critical evaluation of his work."¹⁴ More recent studies have rightly questioned the universal applicability that Furnivall claimed. Although widely used in studies of the non-West, some recent studies have pointed out that Furnivall's political thought was influenced by liberalism. His analysis, therefore, lacked a proper understanding of the social and economic realities of precolonial and colonial societies.¹⁵ This article engages in discussion of these limitations by: 1) examining Furnivall's view on the relationship between race and the economy, especially the market place in a plural society; and 2) presenting the historical and continuing presence of interracial relationships and mixed-race population that Furnivall had neglected.

As mentioned above, Furnivall's concept of a plural society rested on the premise that a 'tropical dependency' (colony) was a multi-racial society where each race, driven by market forces, maintained separate economic and social lives. Despite illuminating the relationship between the economy and race of a colonial society, Furnivall perceived the systemic workings of society primarily from a Eurocentric approach, especially from the perspective of British liberalism. A former colonial officer in British Burma, Furnivall shaped the plural society thesis based on his knowledge of the Netherlands East Indies and British Burma and his observations of governance at the time. He used the Netherlands East Indies as a case study to build his theory on the evolution of the plural society, which was, according to him, a society where multiple groups of inhabitants subjected to the same rulership led separate and distinct social and economic lives. By mentioning that indigenous peoples, Chinese, and Europeans each had their economic functions, he implied that the distinction of race under a unified political structure generally overlapped with the social and economic lives of these different groups.

Furnivall presented, perhaps unconsciously, a rather fixed system of colonial society. Yet, instead of ascribing the race-based division of society to the govern-

13 For an overview of the scholarship that used the plural society paradigm, see Coppel, 1997: 565-566 (section "Reception of the 'Plural Society' Concept"); Englehart, 2011: 759.

14 Englehart, 2011.

15 Charles A. Coppel (1997: 565-566) discussed studies that used the plural society concept. Neil A. Englehart (2011) pointed out that Furnivall lacked a solid understanding of precolonial Burma.

mental structure or political system, he claimed that sharply visible racial segregation in people's political, economic, and social lives was mainly propelled by the economic system of society. Downplaying the role of governance and politics, Furnivall theorized that a plural society with limited governmental intervention was possible because of the existence of a so-called 'plural economy.' Dividing the plural society and its economic structure according to racial stratification, he claimed that the plural economy differed from a unitary economy in the sense that a 'plural state' consisting of different racial groups, such as Europeans, Chinese, and indigenous peoples in the Netherlands East Indies, lacked the common will or unitary social demand that would otherwise be present in a 'homogeneous society.'¹⁶

Furnivall stated: "Every social want, then, has its economic aspect, and in any community the resultant of such social wants is the economic aspect of its civilization or, in other words, the social demand of the community taken as a whole. But in a plural society, social demand is disorganized; social wants are sectional, and there is no social demand common to all the several elements."¹⁷ In other words, Furnivall claimed that unitary social will and common desires were absent in a plural society. However, even though distinct societal segments upheld different social desires and demands, separate divisions nevertheless shared a common ground within a plural society, namely, 'the market place.'¹⁸

According to Furnivall, the 'market place' played a pivotal role in a plural society, because it was the economic incentive that sustained the plural economy—a key feature of a plural society in the colonial economy of 'tropical dependencies.' Emphasizing the importance of production and economic advancement in a plural economy, economic incentives thus helped shape and cement the specializations in a division of labor, which, as Furnivall claimed, largely overlapped with racial divisions. Using colonial Java as an example, he claimed: "in Java... the present distribution of economic functions coincides largely with racial differences, and certain occupations are reserved, partly of deliberate intention but more by the working of the economic process, for Europeans, others for the Chinese and others again for Natives."¹⁹

According to Furnivall's analysis, economic functions converged largely

16 On the discussion of 'the plural state' and social demand being characteristics of the plural economy, see Furnivall, 1939: 447–449.

17 Furnivall, 1939: 449.

18 Furnivall, 1939: 449.

19 Furnivall, 1939: 451.

with racial backgrounds.²⁰ Race-based economic production then further stimulated the emergence of multiple segments in a plural society. He argued: “[t]his distribution of production among racial castes aggravates the inherent sectionalism of demand; for a community which is confined to certain economic functions finds it more difficult to apprehend the social needs of the country as a whole... In a tropical dependency [...] the conflict between rival economic interests tends to be exacerbated by racial diversity.”²¹ He continued that “[i]n proportion as conflicting economic interests are complicated by racial diversity, all members of all sections find a greater difficulty in regarding social problems from the standpoints of the common weal, and demand, like production, becomes sectionalized.”²² A plural economy stands in contrast to a homogeneous economy in three ways: one, in a place of a social demand common to the whole society, there are two or more distinct and rival complexes of social demand proper to each constituent element; two, by grouping production into castes; and, three, by further sectionalization of demand which follows when the social demand, proper to each constituent element, ceases to embrace the whole scope of social life and becomes concentrated on those aspects of social life falling within its separate province.²³ In other words, because economic, social, and political aspects converged in each division, there was little to no mingling across various divisions. Such an idea was clearly revealed in Furnivall’s following statement: “In a plural society, however, each lives within a closed compartment and life within each section becomes narrower...”²⁴ He went on to conclude that in a plural society, ‘the community tends to be organized for production rather than for social life; social demand is sectionalized, and within each section of the community the social demand becomes disorganized and ineffective, so that in each section the members are debarred from leading the full life of a citizen in a homogeneous community.’²⁵

Although Furnivall’s systematic analysis helped explain the societal makeup and its relationship with the economic system in a broad sense, the exclusion of governmental intervention and the portrayal of racial categories as clearly bounded, delineated groups in a plural society did not accurately illustrate the lived reality of colonial Java. He defined a plural society as ‘comprising two or more elements of

20 Furnivall, 1939: 451.

21 Furnivall, 1939: 451.

22 Furnivall, 1939: 451–452.

23 Furnivall, 1939: 452.

24 Furnivall, 1939: 458.

25 Furnivall, 1939: 459.

social orders which live side by side, yet without mingling, in one political unit.²⁶ From an administrative perspective, Furnivall's claim that 'social orders live side by side, yet without mingling' seemed valid at face value, but he overlooked the fact that the plural society that consisted of distinct racial categories primarily resulted from policies that were institutionalized by the government. As this article shows in the next sections, racial categorization and segregation were not made unconsciously as portrayed in official data and general media. The Chinese, for instance, subjected to colonial rule, were considered useful for their economic position, but were, at the same time, seen as a threatening presence.

As I have explained elsewhere, fearing the growing power of those placed under the racial category of 'Chinese,' the Dutch colonial government institutionalized a residential system and a pass system for monitoring and controlling economic mobility as well as geographical mobility of the Chinese. Initially, the intention of the Dutch government was to control their mobility within the Dutch colony, under the circumstances of rising Chinese nationalism and intensified political, cultural, and economic exchanges with China in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the Dutch attempted to contain the traffic between the Chinese in the Indies and China.²⁷ Although people with Chinese backgrounds already tended to live in close proximity before the implementation of the residential and pass systems, governmental policies imposed on the Chinese further exacerbated the clear segregation between the Chinese and non-Chinese. Because of such measures, race-based communities indeed came to 'live, without mingling, in separate social orders.' Therefore, Furnivall's claim that indigenous inhabitants, Chinese, and Europeans lived separately mainly due to economic motives rather than governmental policies raises questions. To monitor movement and activities of the colonial population, the colonial government assigned different residential quarters for various ethnic groups. Colonial efforts to keep the various ethnic groups (albeit administratively divided) separate was a way to diminish the threat of the colonial population (the threat of the ruled majority to the ruling minority).

Besides claiming that limited governmental intervention was involved, Furnivall's portrayal of a population without racial mingling was also incorrect. Although according to official data such as the census, the colonial population of the Netherlands East Indies was neatly carved into racially distinct categories, this population count did not accurately reflect social reality at the time. Despite the so-called 'Chinese' people living in their designated quarters with similar ethnic

26 Furnivall, 1939: 446.

27 Liu, 2014.

backgrounds (called Pecinan or Patekwan in Batavia), the census-taking method showed that the absence of racial mingling was overstated. Not only did explanatory notes reveal that census-makers had difficulties defining 'Chinese,' but they particularly struggled with categorizing people of mixed heritage.

Compilers of the 1930 *Volkstelling* (*Census of 1930*), which was a Dutch source that Furnivall used when he presented the plural society concept a few years later,²⁸ for example, proved that the racial lines were blurry and not as neatly divided as Furnivall claimed. The census description stated that those who were included in the category of 'Chinese' were all people who belonged to or descended from a *stam* (Dutch for 'ethnic group') in China, including those who were granted a status equal to that of Europeans (*gelijkgestelden*). This definition revealed that Dutch census-makers not only considered those of full blood 'Chinese' people, but also included people who had distant ancestral or familial linkages with China in the category.

In addition to including Chinese emigrants' descendants ('*afstammelingen*' in Dutch), Dutch census-makers also used marital status to determine women's racial categories. Women who were not ethnically Chinese but were married to someone belonging to the racial category of 'Chinese' would be considered as 'Chinese' after marriage. This regulation applied to not only the 'Chinese' but also 'Other Foreign Asians' (Asians that were considered neither natives nor 'Chinese'). The census explanatory notes stated: "All women who did not belong to the category of Chinese or Other Foreign Asians (including Arabs, Indians, and Japanese) before marriage would follow the category of their husbands."²⁹ In other words, if a non-Chinese woman married a Chinese man, she would assume the racial category of her husband after marriage and be considered 'Chinese,' albeit only in official data. The same rule of 'race swapping' in census categories also applied to Chinese women marrying non-Chinese men. If a woman who had belonged to the Chinese race or 'Other Foreign Oriental' before marriage married a man that belonged otherwise, that woman would automatically be included in the race-based census category of non-Chinese or non-Foreign Oriental.

Clearly, in congruence with the Dutch Protestant marriage code, authorities maintained a male-centered approach for confirming the racial status of married couples and their descendants because a patrilineal approach also determined the race of their offspring. Children resulting from state-recognized mixed marriages

28 Departement van Economische Zaken (Department of Economic Affairs), 1935. Hereafter cited as '*Volkstelling 1930*.'

29 *Volkstelling 1930*: 9.

would be ascribed a racial status according to the paternal line. Discarding women's premarital ethnic background and racial status and the negation of children's maternal race for statistical and administrative purposes clearly revealed loopholes: despite exhibiting clear distinct racial divisions on paper, such statistical methods did not conform with social reality at the time. They failed to recognize interracial unions and people of mixed heritage. Although the precise number is untraceable due to lack of data and recognition at the time, such explanations also revealed that children and people of mixed heritage were present, and that authorities were struggling to resolve the 'mixed problem.' Unlike in colonial Philippines, for example, where the Spanish maintained a separate category for the mestizo until the late nineteenth century, the Dutch did not introduce census categories for mixed-race peoples. Therefore, despite Dutch census numbers presenting racially distinct categories where, according to Furnivall, 'people of different races' seemingly 'lived side by side' and did 'not mingle,' the reality of interaction between people of different races and interracial blending was clearly present. This article holds the viewpoint that the social reality, therefore, contradicted the government's vision of a colonial population that consisted of clearly divided races.

From an institutional perspective, carving up the colonial population according to distinct races was a state project. It could be considered a governmental tool for controlling and monitoring the colonial population that helped keep the population number in check. Applying different policies to various groups could diminish the potential threat towards colonial rule. This argument can be supported by surveying the Dutch's overall policies during the colonial era: when the Dutch gave 'Chinese' privileges, the 'Natives' were often disadvantaged. Conversely, when the Dutch adopted affirmative policies for the indigenous populations, it launched discriminatory restrictions on the Chinese. As such, it can be argued that social desires and common will were not solely economically driven as Furnivall claimed, but were also directed by the political agenda. For a governmental structure that relied on controlling separate groups, a mixed-race category could confuse and hinder the principle of maintaining difference. Therefore, being conscious of the mixed-race reality on the ground and perceiving mixed-race presence as a social and political problem, the colonial government defined and assigned racial categories and regulated the population's social, economic, and political lives through race-based policies such as the quarter system, residential requirements, and so forth.

III. Mixed-race normalcy

Whether intentionally aiming at realizing a political vision or used as a method

to control the colonial masses, the invention of artificial racial purity and race-based policies introduced by nineteenth-century colonial administrators de-historicized mixed-blood reality in the Indonesian island world. Studies show that long-term traffic and webs of trade networks across the South China Sea and beyond that had started long before colonial rule caused mixed-race unions to develop. Mixed marriages and descendants of blended heritage were therefore common, and not exceptional, especially along the islands' coasts.

The need to uncover mixedness, an aspect that studies adhering to the plural society model generally obliterated, was aided by development within the historical discipline itself. Postwar scholarship was primarily concerned with the formation of nation- and state-building within state-bounded entities, but the increasing demand to look at history transnationally and globally later led to the approach of viewing histories *across boundaries*. The transnational turn that culminated in the 1990s opened avenues for unraveling connections between various geographically bounded spaces. Meanwhile, the emergence of ethnohistory and the intersections of the disciplines of history and anthropology stimulated scholars to question the idea of the 'presumed fixedness' of cultural frontiers. Although not being a mainstream approach in history at the time, there was a growing consensus by the late 1970s that ethnohistory was no longer merely regarded as 'sub-branch of ethnology' or 'sub-discipline of cultural anthropology.'³⁰ Instead of being exclusively reserved for anthropologists, both historians and anthropologists that were committed to ethnohistory or ethnohistorical methods agreed on the significance of the 'diachronic dimensions of history and the synchronic sensitivity of ethnology.'³¹ The increased intersectionality between history and anthropology allowed ethnohistorians to examine socio-cultural changes that occurred over time when societies came in contact. Such approach emphasizes the importance of ethnological or ethnographic insights and scrutinizing causes of societal shifts that emerged on the frontier of mainstream cultures.

30 Axtell, 1979: 1.

31 Axtell, 1979: 2. Axtell states that by the late 1970s, both historians and anthropologists maintained that 'ethnohistory is essentially *the use of historical and ethnological methods and materials to gain knowledge of the nature and causes of change in a culture defined by ethnological concepts and categories*' (italics by Axtell). Although such an ethnohistorical approach was in its infancy in the 1970s, it paved the way for exploring further intersections between history and anthropology. Besides the works by Ann Stoler and William Skinner that are mentioned in this article, other examples that cross the intersections of history and anthropology are, for instance, Ong and Nonini, eds., 1997; Willford and Tagliacozzo eds., 2009.

The fact that uniformity of dominant cultures often disintegrates on the cultural frontier where new socio-cultural assemblages occur is exemplified by studies of hybridized or mixed-race societies. Within studies of Southeast Asian Chinese, William Skinner's study on the creolized Chinese in Southeast Asia is exemplary and has paved the way for scholars to further examine the hybridized phenomena of Southeast Asian Chinese. Describing the Southern Seas as 'a virtual laboratory for studying the dialectics of ethnicity,'³² Skinner concluded that by the late nineteenth century, the development of a new socio-cultural system, namely, a creolized Chinese culture, stabilized among the Chinese mestizos of the Philippines, Peranakan Chinese of Java, and the Babas of Malaya. Despite being subjected to different colonial rules (respectively Spanish, Dutch, and British) and upholding locally unique customary aspects, as well as cultural, religious, and linguistic variables, these communities shared common traits—namely, they were descendants of mixed Chinese and indigenous ancestry that adhered to a blended culture consisting of Hokkien, indigenous, and Malayan elements. By the nineteenth century, according to Skinner, cultural fusion of these 'creolized Chinese societies' stabilized and developed into a new culture, namely, the Peranakan Chinese culture or Chinese mestizo culture, which was distinct from both mainstream Chinese and indigenous cultures.³³ According to him, the desire to prevent downward social mobility prevented mixed descendants from marrying indigenous peoples. It was common for these Peranakan Chinese to marry other Peranakan Chinese or China-born Chinese, which helped sustain the socio-cultural system of the creolized Chinese.³⁴ Skinner attributed this stable development to the establishment of European outposts.³⁵ Although interracial unions and blended cultures predated European presence, as this article will show in this section, Skinner's valuable insights on creolization among the Nanyang Chinese prompted the need to foreground mixedness instead of Chineseness.

Yet, it was not until recent years that scholarship on the hybridized Chinese in Southeast Asia began to grow. Studying Southeast Asian Chinese histories from the lens of mixedness and hybridity had previously received surprisingly little attention, and most scholarship concerning the history of Southeast Asian Chinese continued to use a Sinocentric perspective. However, despite such oversight of the

32 Skinner, 1996: 51.

33 For a detailed analysis of the characteristics of these creolized Chinese cultures, see Skinner, 1996: 51-64.

34 Skinner, 1996: 51-64.

35 Skinner, 1996: 53.

role of mixedness, these Sinocentric studies provided useful insights. Studies on the history of the overseas Chinese have shown that Chinese, especially Hokkiens (Fujianese) and to some extent also Cantonese merchants, were key drivers to link China with Southeast Asia. Skilled in trade, they showed that Chinese sojourners and settlers were key agents for the thriving South China Sea trade and helped to weave Southeast Asia into an early global commerce network. Southeast Asia thus became an *entrepôt* for global commerce.³⁶ Studies of Chinese migration history and the Chinese diaspora highlighted the fraternal network among overseas Chinese communities across the South China and East China Seas, but most studies did not fully attribute Sino-Southeast Asian connectivity to interracial unions and peoples of mixed heritage. Similarly, as discussed above, because the colonial government divided the colonial population into distinct racial categories, studies based on nineteenth and twentieth century primary sources, therefore, also tend to treat the category of 'Chinese' unproblematically. Hence, instead of highlighting the trade network as consistently and entirely Chinese as assumed in most Chinese and Western studies, this article attempts to pay close attention to mixedness in Indonesian port cities.³⁷

As this article shows, the trade network did not merely rely on Chinese traders; rather, more specifically, it was forged by traders of mixed Chinese heritage. Foregrounding mixedness shows that the presence of mixed populations was more the rule than the exception. Before colonial efforts of racial segregation, inter-ethnic interaction and blended racial unions were key for generating regional connections and integrating Indonesian ports into a multi-zonal system of global commerce. Although it is impossible to trace the earliest beginnings of mixed-race unions, studies of early modern Southeast Asia revealed that mixed unions between Chinese

36 There are many studies about the Nanyang trade. See for instance: Gungwu Wang, 2000; 1991; Lynn Pan, 1990; Chin-Keong Ng, 1983; James K. Chin, 2013. Studies on Sino-Southeast Asian mixed heritage since G. William Skinner's important work "Creolized Chinese Societies in Southeast Asia" and Anthony Reid's "Hybrid Identities in the Fifteenth Century Straits" have been limited but are increasingly receiving greater attention (Skinner, 1996; Reid, 2010).

37 A number on Southeast Asian studies wrote about the importance of interracial unions, an important aspect that Chinese diaspora studies generally left undiscussed. But while overseas Chinese history highlight Chinese aspects, Southeast Asian studies emphasized Southeast Asian aspects. Therefore, rather than highlighting Chineseness or Southeast Asianness, this article attempts to foreground mixedness. But due to the subject matter, this article only discusses mixed heritage between Chinese and non-Chinese and excludes discussions of mixed heritage among non-Chinese which was also common in the Indies, for example, mixed unions between Europeans and natives, Arabs, and natives, and so on.

and local populations were a common phenomenon that was very much tied to commerce.³⁸ Yet, discussions of mixed Chinese heritage are almost non-existent in studies concerning the modern era. By using Chinese and Western travel records, this article shows that mixed-race unions did not end abruptly after the early modern era transitioned into the modern era. Instead, people of mixed Chinese heritage were gradually absorbed in fitted racial categories that the government created. Many travel accounts did not contain terms such as mixed-blood peoples or mixed-race societies, but based on reading authors' descriptions of port communities within the context of their social, economic, and political backgrounds, it can be concluded that those whom travel writers referred to as 'Chinese' included people of mixed heritage or intercultural backgrounds.

The following sections use travel accounts for identifying the time periods and geographical locations where people of mixed Chinese ancestry concentrated.³⁹ They also use the spice trade as an example to show the relationship between trade and Chinese of mixed heritage. Although it is impossible to provide a complete picture due to limited data, using travel accounts from various time periods is useful, because examining narratives with geographic and historical sensitivity while taking nuances of language concerning ethnicity and race into account helps shape a broad picture of how, when, and where port communities with mixed heritage gradually became perceived as members of distinct racial categories, such as Chinese, in the plural society.

A. Early settlement and mixedness: East Java and its inter-island network on the eastern fringes

Tracing the earliest beginnings of blended unions between Chinese and indigenous peoples is impossible, but Chinese and Western written records did document Java as one of the earliest places in the Indonesian archipelago where blended unions were formed. Before Europeans voyaged to Southeast Asia, Chinese travelers already observed that people of Chinese descent had a long history of interaction with surrounding populations. Scholars of overseas Chinese history have used textual sources such as Ma Huan's records to show that when Zheng He visited Java in 1413, Chinese migrants in Java were part of a wider Hokkien sojourning community and diasporic network. While such studies are helpful to show that there was indeed a long history of Chinese migration, especially Fujianese/Hokkien migration,

38 See: Barbara Watson Andaya, 1998; Craig A. Lockard, 2010.

39 Due to limited surviving primary sources that were written by people of the Indonesian island world, this article uses selected Western and Chinese accounts about this region.

references such as *Tangren* (唐人) or *Huaren* (華人) in Chinese texts contained Sinocentric connotations and caused the tendency to focus on 'Chinese' aspects when studying the history of Chinese migration and settlement. Hence, the scholarly focus on diasporic ties led to limited discussion on their mixed backgrounds.⁴⁰

Indeed, the presence of Chinese and their influence was already established when Zheng He visited Java in 1413. He took his fleet to East Java, which was the political core of the Majapahit Empire at the time. Records of Zheng He's chronicler, Ma Huan, evidenced that East Java thrived on maritime trade and that the coastal areas were inhabited by people of various ethnic backgrounds. He described that the coastal towns, including Tuban, Gresik, Surabaya, and Majapahit City (Trowulan), that the fleets visited were large international port towns without walls.⁴¹ Based on Ma Huan's portrayal of the coastal towns on the northern coast of East Java, it can be concluded that these towns were not just centers for international trade. The absence of walls in these port towns allowed free movement of people of diverse ethnic backgrounds. Traders and seafarers from the Middle East and the Indian subcontinent had a long history of voyaging across the Indian Ocean and marked their long presence in Java, which predated the Chinese.⁴² Ports, therefore, served as a contact zone where multiple ethnicities congregated. Interethnic contact on the 'open' maritime shore, therefore, became a center of mixedness where people mingled and cultures blended.

Ma Huan documented his observations of Chinese migrants and settlement during the Majapahit era. He also documented that residents in these towns located on the northern coast included Chinese people (唐人). There were over one thousand families residing in Tuban, including many Chinese from Guangdong province and Zhangzhou prefecture.⁴³ New settlements were also founded. According to the records, Gresik was initially a desolate shore until Chinese people settled there.⁴⁴ It was established by the Chinese sometime between 1350 and 1400, and they called

40 Overseas Chinese studies emerged in the 1980s as a sub-field of Chinese history, thanks to the efforts of pioneering scholars such as Wang Gungwu and Yen Ching-hwang. In its early stages, overseas Chinese history was also referred as Chinese diaspora history. As the word 'diaspora' indicates, scholarly focus was on emphasizing the continuing connections of the Chinese diaspora with China as their ancestral land.

41 J. V. G. Mills ed. and trans., 1970: 86.

42 For Islamic and Indian influences, see G. Coedès, 1968; K. N. Chaudhuri, 1985; O. W. Wolters, 1999; Eric Tagliacozzo ed., 2009.

43 Mills ed. and trans., 1970: 89; Ma, 1937: 16.

44 Ma, 1937: 16-17.

it ‘New Village.’ It became a significant port after 1400, eventually with over one thousand families, and even surpassed Tuban as being the major port for the spice trade.⁴⁵ Starting from its establishment and during Zheng He’s time, Gresik was led by someone from Guangdong. Although it was established by Cantonese, people of various ethnicities went to Gresik for trade.⁴⁶ It was an important port for international trade, and attracted people from elsewhere to go to Gresik for commerce. East of Gresik was Surabaya. Ma Huan did not mention the ethnic background of the leader of Surabaya, but did document that the ruler led a community of over a thousand non-Chinese households and people from China.⁴⁷ From Ma Huan’s account it can be concluded that the Chinese people that settled in these towns lived among non-Chinese. These unwallied port towns on the northern coast thrived on the Indian Ocean and Nanyang trades. Maritime communities from near and afar, and of various ethnic backgrounds congregated and traded goods at these maritime entrepôts.

Java was a well-connected place in the Majapahit era. When narrating the route between East Java’s ports, Ma Huan documented that foreign ships would first arrive at the ports of Tuban, then go respectively to Gresik and Surabaya, which were highly populated with Chinese people. From there they proceeded to Trowulan, the Majapahit capital city located southwest of Surabaya, where the Majapahit ruler resided.⁴⁸ The wide circulation of Chinese copper coins and trajectory of foreign ships revealed that Sino-Javanese trade was consolidated firmly in the fifteenth century.⁴⁹ Particularly blue ceramics, musk, ‘fold-flecked hemp-silks,’ and beads were in demand in China.⁵⁰ From time to time, the Majapahit king dispatched his chiefs to send tributes to China.⁵¹

Ports on the northern coast of East Java were maritime commercial centers through which goods of inter-island trade flowed. According to the *Ying-yai Sheng-lan*: “Tuban was a wealthy and important port with many Chinese settlers. Being the port of Majapahit and the point of departure for the Moluccas, it exported an abundant supply of foodstuffs, and imported a rich variety of products from the

45 Mills ed. and trans., 1970: 89–90, fn. 6.

46 Ma, 1937: 17.

47 Ma, 1937: 17; Mills ed. and trans., 1970: 90.

48 Mills ed. and trans., 1970: 86.

49 Mills ed. and trans., 1970: 88, 96.

50 Mills ed. and trans., 1970: 97.

51 Mills ed. and trans., 1970: 97.

Moluccas.”⁵² Gresik, established by the Chinese between 1350 and 1400, grew into an important nodal point for regional trade. It imported spices from the Moluccas and sandalwood from Timor, in exchange for rice, textiles, and ceramics. It even took over Tuban's role as the major port for the spice trade,⁵³ and also sold other goods such as gold and precious stones. Gresik attracted foreign traders and developed into a wealthy port village.⁵⁴ Besides inter-island trade, Gresik was also important for neighboring trade, as it was the main port for goods that proceeded to Surabaya. Because of estuary surroundings, Surabaya only allowed small vessels to pass through. Yet, despite being a small settlement until the sixteenth century, it later outgrew Gresik in size and significance.⁵⁵

Zheng He did not visit West Java. Zheng He's course through East Java showed that he was especially interested in East Java, which flourished during the Majapahit era. The presence of Chinese settlement is undeniable. However, many settlers assimilated to the surrounding cultures. When Ma Huan described the port communities, he mentioned: “[t]he country contains three classes of persons.⁵⁶ One class consists of Muslim people; they are all people from every kingdom in the West who have migrated to this country as merchants; [and] in all matters of dressing and feeding everyone is clean and proper. One class consists of Tang people (唐人); they are men from [Guangdong province] and from [Zhangzhou] and [Quanzhou] and other such places, who fled away and now live in this country; the food of these people, too, is clean; [and] many of them follow the Muslim religion, doing penance and fasting. One class consists of the people of the land... this country being among the ‘devil-countries’ spoken of in Buddhist books.”⁵⁷ Since many ports in Java at the time were controlled by Muslims, Chinese settlers and new arrivals, mostly men and refugees, converted to Islam and assimilated with the surrounding community.

Ma Huan's observations of Java's multi-ethnic ports corresponded with that of a Portuguese traveler, Tomé Pires, around a century later. Pires noted that many

52 Mills ed. and trans., 1970: 89.

53 Mills ed. and trans., 1970: 89-90, fn. 6.

54 Mills ed. and trans., 1970: 90.

55 Mills ed. and trans., 1970: 90. Surabaya has grown into the second largest city in present-day Indonesia.

56 Note that Ma Huan used ‘class’ (等) to distinguish various communities. He categorized three hierarchical classes based on the level of cultural refinement and religion of each class. See Ma, 1937: 19-20.

57 Mills ed. and trans., 1970: 93.

of the principal Javanese ports were controlled by Muslim leaders, who initially arrived to the Javanese coasts as foreigners, such as Arabs, Parsees, and people from Gujarat and Bengal, and earned their wealth through maritime trade. Rulers of the ports also included people of Chinese descent. Pires stated: “These lord[s] are not Javanese of long standing in the country, but they are descended from Chinese, from Parsees and Kling.”⁵⁸

The growth of East Java in this period was also stimulated by intra-insular trade, especially trade with the spice islands directed by Muslims of mixed heritage. As mentioned before, Gresik (the port east of Tuban and west of Surabaya) even surpassed Tuban’s position as a major port for exchange. Spices from the Moluccas had long been in high demand in China, but starting from the late fourteenth century, China became less interested in obtaining spices via Luzon and the Sulu Seas. Instead, it obtained spices indirectly through ports where trade goods were being exchanged. Indeed, a study of Chinese sailing manuals by Mills shows that by circa 1500, Chinese navigators departing from Amoy (now Xiamen) and Quanzhou primarily took two routes to Southeast Asia. While the western route ran via Guangzhou and Hainan along the coasts of Vietnam, Thailand, the Malay peninsula, and Sumatra, Chinese manuals provided ships eastern route instructions to sail to Luzon, and further southward to Tuban and Gresik via the western coast of Borneo.⁵⁹ In other words, based on the sailing manuals it can be concluded that Chinese ships regularly sailed across the South China Sea, reaching mainland Southeast Asia, the Philippines, West Indonesia, and East Java, but the region between East Java and the island world east of Java was not well traveled by navigators from China.

It was in this time period that an increase of Java-based seafaring traders traveled to the Moluccas to meet the growing demand for international trade in spices. Most sojourners of fifteenth-century Java were based along the northern coasts such as Tuban, Gresik, Surabaya, and Demak, and were Muslims from Java who had mixed Chinese, Javanese, and Malay ancestry.⁶⁰ These Java-based traders established sustained inter-island trade networks with the residents based in Banda, a center of the Moluccas, of which the majority were Muslims of Chinese heritage who settled there in the fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries. By the late fifteenth century, they formed local trade networks, married local wives, and established themselves as the leading trade elite. In order to secure their position from potential newcomers to Banda, these leaders who bore the title of *shahbandar* (harbormaster)

58 Cortesao ed., 1990: 182.

59 For a detailed outline of the ‘western route’ and ‘eastern route,’ see J. V. Mills, 1979: 75–81.

60 Hall, 2011: 314–315.

did not allow newly arrived traders to settle in the Moluccas permanently. Instead, they exchanged Moluccan spices to a select group of seafaring merchants.⁶¹

Trade between East Java and the Moluccas in this time period functioned primarily via a network of people with blended heritage. Initially, mixedness was exclusively Asian, which resulted from a varying blending of islanders, Malayan, Chinese, Indian, and West Asian civilizations, etc. However, after the arrival of the Portuguese and also the later Dutch presence, mixedness in the eastern archipelago incorporated Western heritage, however. Cloves and nutmeg that were indigenous of the Maluku attracted various groups of seafarers from elsewhere to go to Maluku in different time periods.

B. Changing perceptions of mixedness and race on the eastern fringes

Portuguese and Dutch desire to take control over the spice islands had a much larger impact than just controlling trade. Their long-lasting presence and Dutch control since 1605 permanently changed the ethnic makeup of Maluku's population. Soon after it took control over Ambon the Dutch East India Company (hereafter VOC) introduced three population categories for non-VOC servants, namely Europeans, Chinese, and indigenous citizens. Already since the very beginning of VOC's rule, the people placed in these categories consisted of people of mixed heritage. People who were labeled as 'Europeans' in Ambon emerged in around 1610 and included Eurasians that resulted from marriages between Dutch men and Ambonese and non-Ambonese Asian women. The VOC also introduced the category of 'Chinese' soon after its establishment in Ambon. Its policy toward the 'Chinese' were at times hostile and at other times friendly. Whereas before the mid-seventeenth century the Chinese enjoyed a favorable position, in the second half of the seventeenth century they were subjected to anti-Chinese policies. The Chinese were considered separate from the indigenous population that, ironically, during the VOC-era consisted of Asians that did not originate from Ambon. The majority of the indigenous peoples were not Ambonese, but freed slaves of Sulawesi and Bali.⁶² Moreover, despite being seemingly clear-cut rubrics on the surface, these fictive ethnic lines were far from rigidly demarcated. A fascinating study on Ambon's population of 1694 noted that a Christian Chinese slaveowner who was born in Ambon was regarded as 'indigenous,' whereas the wealthiest Chinese slaveowner and women of Makassarese and Balinese origins who married into Chinese house-

61 Hall, 2011: 314-315.

62 Knaap, 1991: 110-112.

holds belonged to the ‘Chinese’ category.⁶³ These categories, although arbitrarily conceptualized by the VOC administration at the time, had a lasting impact on how people were perceived in later eras, especially after the Dutch colonized the Netherlands East Indies.

Although spices first attracted traders from Java and China, by the nineteenth century, spices had attracted global interest not only from European but also American explorers. When Alfred Bickmore, an American naturalist, traveled to the Netherlands East Indies in 1865–1866, he visited Ambon. Describing it as a Moluccan island famous for cloves, he mentioned that the Chinese were probably the first non-locals to discover the spice. He stated: “I believe the first people who fancied its rich aroma, and warm, pungent taste, were the Chinese. The similarity of the native name to that of the Chinese, and its marked difference, according to Dr. Cauto, from that of the Brahmins or Hindus, lends probability to this view.”⁶⁴ Like most of his contemporaries, Bickmore’s descriptions revealed that he clearly distinguished the Chinese from the Hindus. Whether intentionally or unconsciously, Bickmore was influenced by Western theory of racial differences that had matured by the mid-nineteenth century. To justify racial hierarchy and Western colonial rule in an era of colonialism, European and American scientists categorized the global population according to distinctive physical characteristics where blurriness, hence racial mingling, was not desired.

Even though intermixing was not favored, not all scientists refuted the prevalence of the mixed-race reality. In 1857, Alfred Wallace, a naturalist and theorist of evolution, who visited Maluku a decade before Bickmore concluded that the islanders of Maluku had a long history of ethnic mingling, which by the mid-nineteenth century had seemingly become commonplace. When describing the traits of Ambonese people, he stated that the people of Ambon were descendants of mixed heritage—primarily Malay and nearby Islander blood, mixed with European and Chinese heritage. This shows that the people of Ambon, who by the nineteenth century had gradually indigenized and become Ambonese, were formed not only by Asian and European settlers from afar (for instance, mixed Javanese-Chinese people as discussed above), but were also connected with neighboring island communities of Ceram and Papua. Describing the mixed background of Ambonese, Wallace stated: “[t]he native Amboynese who reside in the city are a strange half-civilized half savage lazy people, who seem to be a mixture of at least three races, Portuguese, Malay and Papuan or Ceramese, with an occasional cross of Chinese

63 Knaap, 1991: 119–125.

64 Bickmore, 1868: 156–157.

or Dutch.”⁶⁵

Of course, Wallace's perception and accuracy could be called into doubt; Wallace believed that Ambon at the time was the place where the true Malay race was to be found. He stated: “The Malay is undoubtedly the most important of these two races, as it is the one which is the most civilized, which has come most into contact with Europeans, and which alone has any place in history. What may be called the true Malay races, as distinguished from others who have merely a Malay element in their language, present a considerable uniformity of physical and mental characteristics, while there are very great differences of civilization and of language.”⁶⁶ Aware that hybridity was widespread, Wallace was a proponent against mixing, a perspective that was also clearly revealed in this section.

Despite the long history of ethnic mingling as mentioned above, in just a few years after the official introduction of a race-based census in the Netherlands East Indies, Western sources showed that, at least from the perspective of the West and colonial governments, the idea of a racially distinctive population had been applied on the ground. Although the idea of racial categorization might not yet have been shared by the local residents themselves, Dutch administrators and Western travelers were perceiving Ambon as a plural society. When observing the local population a few years after the introduction of the 1854 government regulations that officially categorized the colonial population according to assigned races, Bickmore reported that Ambon's population comprised 32,000 residents, including 700 Europeans (2.1% of total population), 300 Chinese (0.9%), 400 Arabs (1.25%), and the remaining residents were all natives (95.6%).⁶⁷

The population count that Bickmore presented raises the following questions: Wallace stated that the majority of the population was of mixed heritage, but a decade later, not only did Bickmore not confirm that people of mixed heritage prevailed, but instead stated that the majority of the population was native. Such contradictory observations most likely resulted from governmental policies. Due to the shift to race-based census as discussed in the first part of the article, people of mixed heritage were arbitrarily placed in whichever population categories that the government institutionalized. As mentioned before, by the fifteenth century, the trade in Maluku was primarily controlled by Muslims from Java of mixed Chinese descent who settled in Maluku. Their efforts of limiting the number of newcomers from profiting from the Maluku trade and the subsequent control of the

65 Wallace, 2015: 399.

66 Wallace, 2015: 743-744.

67 Bickmore, 1868: 132.

Portuguese, British, and Dutch over Maluku further prevented any sizable settlements of Chinese, both full and mixed blood to be rooted on the islands. By the nineteenth century, the descendants of Java's Muslims of mixed Chinese heritage had possibly indigenized and gradually absorbed into the indigenous population, but the discovery of Chinese graves on the hills of Ambon showed a Chinese historical footprint.⁶⁸

Traces of distant Chinese influence in Moluccan mixedness were also present in the neighboring islands. Just like in Ambon, the people of Aru were of mixed heritage which had resulted from long-term blending with the Malay, Chinese, Portuguese, Dutch, and Papuan peoples. Placing mixedness in a historical context, Wallace stated: "some early Portuguese traders had penetrated to these islands, and mixed with the natives, influencing their language, and leaving in their descendants for many generations the visible characteristics of their race. If to this we add the occasional mixture of Malay, Dutch and Chinese with the indigenous Papuans, we have no reason to wonder at the curious varieties of form and feature occasionally to be met with in Aru."⁶⁹ Despite being aware of the widespread phenomenon of mixed heritage, Wallace believed in racial differences and hierarchy, which could be exemplified by his description of the Aru people as having a 'complicated mixture of races in Aru,' but with 'delicate features of the European' that were more prominent than the Papuans.⁷⁰ Viewing people of Aru and Ambon as those belonging to the Malay race, he stated: "Malays and Papuans are radically distinct races; and that the Polynesians are most nearly allied to the latter, although they have probably some admixture of Malayan or Mongolian blood."⁷¹

Although historical traces of indigenized mixed Chinese heritage were found among the populations of Ambon and Aru, Chinese presence at the eastern end of the Moluccan islands, such as Ceram and Kei, seemed to be very limited or even more distant. The inhabitants of these islands also included Muslims of mixed-race descent, but such mixedness consisted primarily of Bugis, Papuans, and Islamized natives mixed with European heritage. The Muslims of Kei likely moved to Kei after the Europeans had driven them out of Banda, where they mixed with the Malay and Papuan peoples.⁷² The people of Ceram, on the other hand, were mainly

68 Bickmore, 1868: 130-131.

69 Wallace, 1886: 450-451.

70 Wallace, 1886: 450.

71 Wallace, 1886: 602.

72 Wallace, 1886: 425.

mixed with Malay or Bugis ancestry.⁷³ Inhabitants of Waihai, located at the north coast of Ceram, for instance, were 'Mahometans of mixed race.'⁷⁴ Hence, viewing from the perspective of long historical developments, it can be concluded that the trade network between East Java and the eastern archipelago was built on a network of people with mixed heritage, especially those who followed the Islamic religion. The role of Javanese-Chinese traders who were active pioneers at the beginning of the global spice trade gradually weakened as the Portuguese and Dutch competed for control and dominance over Maluku. Their long-term presence and settlement further diluted inter-Asian mixedness of the early settled island community.

C. Mixedness in Java under Dutch rule

As mentioned in the previous sections, Gresik, a town that was established by Chinese settlers in the fourteenth century, grew into the main port of East Java a century later. But the port not only became important for linking Maluku with East Java, it was also a key port for transporting goods from and through Java's western circuit, an area that encompassed West Java, Sumatra, and the Malay peninsula. Gresik's favorable location at the center of the Indonesian archipelago connected Indonesia's island world with the Indian Ocean trade. Pires described that Gujarati merchants sailed from Malacca after departing from Cambay, a Gujarat-port in West India, and passed the Sunda Strait along West Java to Gresik where they obtained products from Maluku.⁷⁵ Moreover, Chinese navigators marked Tuban and its nearby ports as one of the few destination ports on Java.⁷⁶ These port towns on the northern coast of East Java, therefore connected West Indonesia with East Indonesia. Two port towns in West Java were important for international and regional trade, namely Banten (Bantam) and Kelapa (Batavia). Besides exporting local products from West Java both ports were important transit places for trade with Sumatra, the Malay Peninsula, and the eastern Indonesian archipelago. Being the main port of the Sunda kingdom (669-1529) that thrived on maritime trade, the Sunda Kelapa (later renamed Batavia under Dutch rule) developed into a well-established port frequented by Indian Ocean and Nanyang traders, making it a multi-ethnic entrepôt.

73 Wallace, 1886: 365. Bugis were an important maritime trade diaspora in the Java Sea. Originally from South Celebes, they became active in the entire maritime region covering roughly the Moluccas in the east to the Straits of Malacca.

74 Wallace, 1886: 607.

75 Cortesao ed., 1990: 45-46.

76 See map included by J. V. Mills (1979) on page 74.

The demand for Southeast Asian products attracted Chinese merchants to seek livelihoods in Southeast Asian waters. These so-called ‘sojourners’ would follow the monsoon winds and travel in the area that stretched over Southeast Asia and China. Many of these early migrants did not stay permanently. Some waited until the next monsoon winds, while others stayed for a few years. Most of the travelers came to Batavia from elsewhere and were seeking a livelihood in Kelapa. The Chinese arrived in Kelapa since the Song era. A number of the Chinese stayed here for a few years to engage in trade and returned to China upon accumulating sufficient wealth.⁷⁷

The growth of pepper in West Java was among the main products that attracted Chinese interest. China’s demand in pepper could be traced back to the Song era. Roderich Ptak noted that during the Song and Ming eras large amounts of pepper were exported to China via Quanzhou and Guangzhou. The huge demand for pepper attracted Chinese merchants and other merchants from elsewhere to travel to cultivation regions such as Banten in West Java,⁷⁸ Patani in the Malay peninsula, and Banjarmasin in Kalimantan for the pepper trade.⁷⁹ Seeing it as a lucrative trade item, the Portuguese also became interested in the pepper trade but were out-competed by Hokkien merchants. Ptak stated that by the time the Portuguese set foot in Asia, ‘Fujianese merchants gradually had already taken control over much of the pepper shipments from the production areas in Southeast Asia to the ports of Fujian.’⁸⁰

The Chinese played a pivotal role in Java’s trade. The *Dongxiyangkao* 《東西洋考》 published in 1617 provided a glimpse of the trade system in West Java at the time: when a Chinese junk arrived, a chief met with the shipmaster who would report to the king when ships arrived. The junks received approval to proceed to the port after paying tokens. Because foreign trade was important, four Chinese (華) people and two other foreign persons worked as the king’s financial assistants. Although the *Dongxiyangkao* did not elaborate on whether the assistants were of full Chinese or mixed heritage, it is certain that they were multilingual. People with multiple linguistic abilities were considered particularly useful for facilitating trade and communication. Therefore, a Chinese person who knew non-Chinese

77 Medhurst, 1824: 10b.

78 Besides pepper, West Java also cultivated other products, such as papaya, coconut, etc., but due to limited space and thematic focus, this article concentrates on spices.

79 Ptak, 2006: 486.

80 Ptak, 2006: 486.

languages was placed in every ship to serve as an interpreter.⁸¹ Foreign ships also traded directly with the villages. When describing transactions, *Dongxiyangkao* explained that a village that was previously called *si cun* (廝村) until the Chinese people arrived and renamed it 'new village' (*xin cun*, 新村) was headed by a Cantonese who led more than one thousand families. *Dongxiyangkao* described that when a merchant boat arrived, products would be exchanged at the market which was overflowing with goods.⁸²

The other important port, Banten, located at the western end of Java's coast, adjacent to the Sunda strait between Java and Sumatra, attracted Chinese migrants and settlers where they, besides trading products from the Indies and China, also cultivated rice and pepper.⁸³ Claudine Salmon noted that people of Chinese descent were an integral part of Banten's political and economic functioning, which at the time was controlled by the Banten sultanate. The Chinese settled community was active throughout Banten's society. They participated in various economic activities, such as farming, brick-making, handicraft, retail, sugar and salt production, and international trade, but the main trade activities that they engaged in was pepper trade, and starting from the seventeenth century, sugar also became a core produce. Sugar started to develop in Kelapa Dua (South Banten) in the early 1620s.⁸⁴ According to Salmon's description, Kelapa Dua was 'a little Chinese center within the sultanate where the population was involved in sugarcane plantation, sugar processing, and arak distilling.'⁸⁵ The role of the Chinese in Bantenese trade became even more important when they took over Kling's roles as *shahbandar*,⁸⁶ the post as harbormaster, which was also acceded by Muslims of mixed Chinese heritage from Java settled in Maluku.

It was around this time that Batavia, too, increasingly became a desirable place for the Chinese population. After the Dutch took control over the Indies' ports, Batavia became one of the main ports of the pepper trade.⁸⁷ The establishment of

81 Zhang, 1981: 48. Note that Zhang's account referred to 下港 (also known as 萬丹 in Chinese) as Kelapa and Sunda, the former name of Batavia (see Zhang, 1981: 41). It is therefore unclear whether the author intended to discuss either the port of Banten or Kelapa, or the coastal region of West Java covering Banten and Kelapa.

82 Zhang, 1981: 44.

83 Fernando and Bulbeck eds., 1992: 6.

84 Salmon, 2015: 61.

85 Salmon, 2015: 66.

86 Salmon, 2015: 61.

87 Ptak, 2006: 487.

Batavia attracted Chinese from Banten to move to Batavia, and it later even surpassed Banten as the center for the pepper trade. In the 1620s, Chinese traders of Banten began to move to Batavia. The Dutch expanded Batavia by incorporating its surrounding areas, also referred to as the ‘Ommelanden’ (literally translated surrounding land).⁸⁸ Batavia’s land expansion as well as agricultural and commercial development in the Ommelanden further stimulated migration to Batavia. A community of residents that consisted of slaves, former slaves, military communities, Peranakan communities, and new immigrants to Java was formed. High labor demand for developing the Ommelanden attracted both migrants of Chinese descent from the surrounding areas in Java and migrants from China, especially Fujian and Guangzhou. Besides trade, Chinese worked on the docks and helped build bridges and other infrastructural projects. By the eighteenth century, the Chinese community in the Batavia-region worked in sectors of handicraft, carpentry, and cash-crop production.⁸⁹

The Chinese had a long history of interaction with the local populations and other non-Chinese foreign traders (such as Indian Ocean traders). As mentioned before, Chinese traveling to Kelapa began at least since Song times. Chinese seafarers depended on the monsoon winds to travel across the vast seas. Some merchants stayed on till the next monsoon winds would bring them back to China or the next destination, while others stayed for several years to engage in trade and accumulate wealth before returning to China.

Besides these sojourners, there were also Chinese who opted to settle in Java. According to *Yaoliuba Zonglun* 《咬啣吧總論》 from the nineteenth century, ‘more than half decided not to return and stayed on where they married local people and had children.’ Because Chinese women generally did not leave their homes in China according to cultural custom, most new immigrants from China married Javanese women or Peranakan Chinese women, i.e., women whose parents were of mixed ancestry.⁹⁰

Marrying local women was not a complicated process. *Dongxiyangkao*, published in 1617 based on Zhang Xie’s visit in Java, stated that there were no marriage contracts in Kelapa/Batavia. If a man was interested in marriage, he would first visit the house of his potential partner and would welcome his wife five days after her family received dowry.⁹¹ The people of Kelapa/Batavia did not have the

88 The name of Batavia was also used to refer to Batavia and its surrounding areas.

89 For a brief summary of the society in Batavia’s Ommelanden, see Riskianingrum, 2013: 161-164.

90 Medhurst, 1824: 10b-11a.

91 Zhang, 1981: 41-42.

custom to bear surnames; they were only given first names.⁹² It could therefore be concluded that these women, despite entering a marriage agreement, did not marry into a clan (like the Chinese). Dissolving a marriage was not complicated either, nor were divorces and abandonments stigmatized in the Javanese society. The uncomplicated nature of marriages and divorces (especially compared with Chinese customs) is important for understanding mixed marriages in this time period. Describing local women as 'temporary wives,' Barbara Andaya's fascinating study argued that mixed marriages were often of, indeed, temporary nature. In premodern times, sojourning men would arrive in Java and other parts of Southeast Asia and seal a temporary marriage with local women, who would provide shelter, food, sex, and even access to the local economic markets. After the departure of the sojourning husband, the women were permitted to remarry or commit to another agreement.⁹³

Mixed marriages in Kelapa/Batavia continued during the VOC era. Despite VOC's attempts to regulate the ethnic composition of the population in Batavia via the Chinese Council, it did not succeed in eradicating mixed marriages. When the Dutch established the VOC headquarters in 1619, not only did it change the town's name from Kelapa to Batavia, but it also changed the administrative system. Under Dutch rule, the Chinese of Batavia were administered by the Chinese Council (Kong Koan), a semi-autonomous institution that worked under the auspices of the Dutch. In an attempt to regulate marriages, the Dutch required couples to register their marriage at the Council. Whereas prior to 1717 Chinese marriages were officiated according to existing customs, the new rule required institutional intervention to conform with Dutch standards. Applying for a written request for marriage and issuing a marriage certificate upon an approved marriage by the Kong Koan was a new requirement that the Dutch imposed.⁹⁴ A study of the Kong Koan archives concluded that throughout the eighteenth century, it was common for Chinese men to marry indigenous freed slaves of Balinese, Makassarese, and Javanese origins. When the Dutch government forbade interracial marriages between the Chinese and the indigenous women, the Council documented cases in which indigenous women were adopted into Chinese families before proceeding with the marriage application.⁹⁵ The Kong Koan archives provided a rare glimpse of the Chinese community in Batavia. It also showed that, despite Dutch efforts to prevent interracial unions, mixed marriages continued to take place. Subjected to administrative

92 Zhang, 1981: 42.

93 Andaya, 1998: 11-16.

94 Blussé, 2003: 10.

95 Blussé, 2003: 20-25.

rigidity, the Chinese circumvented the prohibition of mixed marriages by first adopting indigenous women and then presenting the adoptees as members of their Chinese household. In so doing, the Chinese managed to continue the practice of mixed marriages. After marrying into a Chinese household and being considered as 'Chinese' after marriage, these women further helped reinforce the Peranakan Chinese communities.

Chinese men marrying local women was not just limited to Batavia and its vicinity but also took place in other Java's coastal societies. Particularly in towns along the northern coast, mixed marriages that resulted from trade were a common phenomenon. As mentioned above, inter-ethnic blending in the port towns in East Java was already clearly present when Zheng He and his fleet visited Java. Ethnic mingling continued in the centuries that followed. Because Chinese women rarely traveled, men who settled in Java married local women and tended to assimilate to the surrounding cultures. Others, such as the sojourning merchants who merely stayed temporarily, often left behind children that resulted from their temporary marriages with the mothers when they returned to their places of origin.

When narrating inter-ethnic trade and mixed marriages in Java's port societies in the late eighteenth century, Ong Tae Hae (Wang Dahai 王大海) mentioned in his book *Haidaoyizhi* 《海島逸志》 (1791): "The virtuous influence of our [Chinese] Government extending far, all the foreigners have submitted, and thus mercantile intercourse is not prohibited."⁹⁶ His observations showed that Chinese influence was firmly present and that trade between the Chinese and the non-Chinese was permitted. Besides visiting Batavia, Ong stayed in Semarang and Pekalongan in central Java in 1783 where the Chinese had a long history of domicile. There was a Pecinan (Chinatown) in Pekalongan. Based on his description, most Chinese probably lived in the center in Pekalongan. He stated: "To the north and south it is defended by wooden palisades; the Chinese dwell between these, and commonly call the place Pa-China-an, or Chinese town."⁹⁷ He also observed that mixed unions between the Chinese and the locals in port societies were common, revealing that Chinese men were desired partners, stating: "According to the custom of the place, those who come originally from China are preferred as sons-in-law, while those born in the country are not esteemed."⁹⁸

96 Ong, 1849: 2.

97 Ong, 1849: 11.

98 Ong, 1849: 9.

IV. Fixing mixed-race problems in a plural society

After the Dutch consolidated its power over the Indies through colonization, the Indies society became increasingly 'pluralistic.' Whereas earlier textual sources revealed that intermixing, mixed marriages, and multi-ethnic heritage were common aspects of the port societies, most Western sources from the 1800s onward increasingly presented the population of Java as a multi-racial society that consisted of separate and distinctive racial hierarchical orders, with 'Chinese' being the largest group of 'Foreign Orientals' that was couched between a relatively small number of Europeans and a large number of indigenous peoples.

The creation of a race-based society in colonial Java was influenced by the prevailing Western theories of racial hierarchy and superiority at the time. Yet, such depiction did not conform with social reality. The mixed-race reality also hampered Dutch long-term vision of colonial control. To make a colonial population 'controllable,' the Dutch therefore divided the population into separate racial groups, through which the Dutch attempted to control the economic, social, and political lives of the colonial masses. In 1854, the Dutch officially adopted a race-based approach toward dealing with the colonial population of the entire Netherlands East Indies by creating the racial categories of Europeans, Foreign Asians, and Natives, and systematically institutionalized race-targeted policies: such as the quarter system (first required in 1835 and formally implemented in 1866) that required people to live in designated quarters according to their assigned races; the pass system (first introduced in 1816 and reimplemented in Java and Madura in 1863) to control people's movement; and so on.

Such policies took effect on the ground. Unlike earlier records and travel accounts where port communities mingled and blended, sources from the nineteenth century depicted the colonial population as a society with clearly demarcated racial boundaries. Describing the residential quarters or kampong of people belonging to different races, William Barrington D'Almeida described: "The police of Java is composed of the townspeople of each respective quarter of the town. The different localities are designed by the national names of the races by which they are inhabited; hence there is the Malay Campong, the Chinese, the Arab, and, of course, several Javanese Campongs; and each of these quarters is under the supervision and, to some extent, the jurisdiction of the most influential man in his neighborhood, who is generally of Royal blood, or very high standing, and distinguished by the titles of Pangeran, Addipatti, Raden Addipatti, Reghent, Tumungong, and the like."⁹⁹ Roads

99 D'Almeida, 1864: 17-18.

and rivers helped segregate people belonging to different races. D'Almeida described: "On the right hand is the Peppay road, so called from a small river which runs past it, dividing the Chinese from the European quarter."¹⁰⁰ Moreover, divided by the Kali Basar (river in Batavia), '[b]eyond the gates, situated to the left of the inner canal, we had a peep of the Chinese Campong, easily distinguished by the regularity of the rather low-built brick houses, with the corners of the roofs turning upwards.'¹⁰¹

Furthermore, contrary to earlier accounts, censuses of the latter half of the nineteenth century provided data of the population make-up in detail. Bickmore reported that the population of Batavia, Semarang, and Surabaya in the mid-nineteenth century was comprised of 2,816,637 residents in total. Of these, 15,862 were Europeans, 64,641 were Chinese, 2,726,114 were Natives, 15,299 were Arabs, and the remaining 5,448 were documented as other Eastern nations.¹⁰² But did these numbers and race-based census categories reflect social reality? Looking at the evolvement of society from a long-term historical perspective, mixed heritage was common in the East Indies port cities. So why did interracial unions and people with mixed heritage disappear in the nineteenth century?

Mixed races that straddled these racial lines worked against a Dutch vision of a neatly racially-ordered society, and were therefore considered undesirable elements that needed to be de-hybridized and purified, albeit only on paper. Despite presenting the colonial society as a society with strict segregation between races, census-takers were unable to completely resolve loopholes. When compiling the population count, the census-takers were aware of the inability to accurately represent the population. They raised two factors that affected the reliability of the population count.

First, the Dutch's recognition of marriages and legitimate children conflicted with sociocultural practices in Java. As mentioned in the earlier sections, the practice of Sino-Javanese marriages had existed long before European presence in Java. Although the Chinese tradition of concubinage was generally not in conflict with Java's practice of temporary wives or cohabitation, such practices were not supported by the Dutch government. Despite the fact that Dutch civil code rejected

100 D'Almeida, 1864: 50.

101 D'Almeida, 1864: 7-8.

102 Batavia counted 517,762 residents, which included 5,576 Europeans, 47,570 Chinese, 463,591 natives, 684 Arabs, and 341 of other Asian nations. Semarang counted 1,020,275 residents in total, comprising 5,162 Europeans, 11,441 Chinese, 438 Arabs, 1,982 people from other East Asian places or of Asian descent other than Chinese, and 1,001,252 natives. Lastly, Surabaya had a total population of 1,278,600 residents, including 5,124 Europeans, 1,261,271 natives, 7,603 Chinese, 1,477 Arabs, and 3,125 of other Asian nations. See Bickmore, 1868: 33, 49 and 105.

concubinage and polygamy as well as children that resulted from such relationships, there were cases in which Chinese men reported their children of mixed Sino-Javanese heritage as legitimate 'Chinese' children borne from their indigenous mothers.¹⁰³ In the coastal regions of West Borneo, for example, it was reported that cases of recorded marriages did not fulfill the conditions as stipulated in the civil law, but the children who were officially considered as illegitimate children were nevertheless included in the official census count.¹⁰⁴ Although the exact numbers of such children were not reported, the fathers of these children who were of mixed Chinese and indigenous heritage reported their children as 'Chinese.' In addition to mixed-race children, non-Chinese women who married Chinese men were also considered 'Chinese' after marriage.¹⁰⁵

In addition to being unable to resolve unrecognized mixed marriages on the ground, Dutch census-takers also had difficulties distinguishing Chinese from indigenous people. They expressed that counting Chinese populations was problematic in certain regions; it was especially difficult to distinguish the Chinese from 'natives' when they had adopted Islam and assimilated to the native population. Although Dutch regulations stipulated that indigenized Chinese had to be regarded as Chinese, cases of indigenized Chinese were nevertheless officially reported as 'natives.'¹⁰⁶ Such data shows us that people of mixed heritage, including those with distant Chinese heritage such as those in Maluku as described by Wallace, were considered indigenous.

V. Conclusion

The population of colonial Indonesia is often described as a plural society where interaction and mingling between people belonging to different races, such as Europeans, Chinese, and indigenous inhabitants, was limited. This article tackled the issue of the seeming absence of interracial interaction and blending. Based on precolonial and colonial travel accounts and nineteenth-century census method, it

103 *Volkstelling 1930*: 9.

104 *Volkstelling 1930*: 9.

105 All women who due to their birth were not considered Chinese or Other Foreign Orientals were, following their marriage, included in their husbands' censuses category accordingly. The reverse rule applied as well: women who were born as Chinese or Other Foreign Oriental and who married into another racial group were included in their husbands' racial categories. Children who were officially recognized by law would follow the paternal racial categories.

106 *Volkstelling 1930*: 9.

can be concluded that Furnivall's concept of a plural society where people lived side by side under one political rule was problematic. Although it generated scholarly insights for nation-building and state-formation in postwar scholarship, Furnivall's depiction of colonial societies as plural societies, with racial boundaries where people belonging to the same race would not mix or mingle, is inaccurate. The accounts showed instead that mingling between various ethnicities was more common than the exceptions. Moreover, it was ethnic interaction (instead of solely Chinese sojourning trade networks) that particularly helped maritime trade to flourish.

Continued reliance on the plural society model to understand Indonesia's past has ignored its long history of mixedness. Looking at descriptions of people from the *longue durée*, however, this study shows that instead of mere changes in ethnic composition, perceptions and depictions of the Indies population have shifted. While accounts until about the mid-nineteenth century described inter-ethnic relations and mixed-blood peoples, nineteenth-century depictions of the Indies society in later periods tended to negate mixed-race presence. The consolidation of colonial governance and colonial vision to construct a society with clearly demarcated racial divisions artificially caused the mixed-blood phenomenon to have seemingly disappeared. Governmental rules such as assigned residential quarters (*wijkenstelsel*), pass system (*passenstelsel*), education system, and the monopolization of trade among other policies further helped de-stabilize the fluid inter-ethnic interactions in favor of realizing the process of constructing a plural society with clear racial boundaries. As a consequence, the differences between racial categories of indigenous peoples, Chinese, and Europeans became more distinctive and discernible. The fixation of race and perception of 'Chinese' being immutable categories further overshadowed the reality of mixed-blood heritage and unions across the racial lines which, as this article shows, had started in precolonial times and, despite its diminishing trend, continued well into the first quarter of the twentieth century. This article therefore calls for any investigations to look beyond the seemingly fixed racial lines and explore the hidden mixedness and indigeneity which constituted the social reality behind the 'Chinese' label.

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混血與多民族社會： 尋回在荷屬東印度殖民時期 消失的混血華裔港口社會

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摘 要

英國殖民官兼學者 J. S. Furnivall 在 1930 年代提出荷屬東印度的殖民社會是「多民族社會」。歐洲人、華人和原住民等在各自設定的範圍活動，互不交集和混合，而華人社會與其他民族更有明顯的分野。但據史料的考證，本研究發現「多民族社會」的概念與事實並不相符，民族界線並非壁壘分明。從長遠的歷史角度而言，華人與印尼群島向來有著密切的關係，種族互動和混血後裔更是社會長期出現的形態，卻因殖民時期提倡「多民族社會」的方針，導致混血社會被邊緣化。本研究將探討本土華裔混血如何透過海上貿易在印尼歷史上扮演重要和持續性的角色。

關鍵字：混血華裔、海外華人、多民族社會、殖民統治、港口社會