

WERNER KRAUS

Chinese Influence on Early Modern Indonesian Art? Hou Qua : a Chinese Painter in 19th-Century Java

New ideas, new art forms and changing cultural paradigms do not simply develop overnight or out of the blue. Long before they appear there is a period of evolution when they take root and grow – a developing process. This concept is well understood, yet it is often forgotten when we discuss the development of “new” or “modern” painting in Indonesia.⁽¹⁾ Historians and art historians alike (as far as they have shown any interest in this development at all), seem to insist that during the middle of the 19th century the Javanese painter Raden Saleh, a prominent figure of this hybrid age, arrived on the island, produced a number of strange paintings, a *Deus ex machina*, only to vanish a short while after, leaving the art scene bewildered but basically unchanged. There is a notion that this interlude might have had something to do with Indonesian modernism, but a continuum between this first flash of modernity and the “nationalist” modernity of the early 20th century is seldom constructed. In fact it is just as much rejected as the response of Javanese *priyayi* to the 19th-century European version of modernity. Modern Indonesian art, so they say, stepped on the stage of history fully grown and perfect as Persatuan Ahli Gambar Indonesia (PERSAGI) in 1937.

1. Both adjectives “modern” and “new” are used in the context of “non-traditional” Indonesian art. Unfortunately we have not developed a more striking term yet, *seni lukis baru Indonesia*, “new Indonesian painting”, was introduced in 1976 by Sanento Yuliman who unfortunately died much too early. See his *Seni lukis baru Indonesia : Satu Pengantar*, Jakarta, Indonesian Arts Council, 1976.

This story is naïve. As mentioned before new ideas and the new visual discourse introduced by modern art, had to develop over a certain period of time before it was able to dominate the stage. For quite some time we were convinced that modern Indonesian literature started with the works edited at Balai Pustaka. This notion was quickly recast when earlier literary works by Javanese authors were discovered and produced.⁽²⁾ The Sino-Malay literary works that were rediscovered by Claudine Salmon and her collaborators were even more relevant.⁽³⁾ These works predated the Balai Pustaka novels by many years and were of tremendous importance to the timid beginnings of Indonesian modern literature. The Sino-Malay literature and its associated institutions – journals, publishing houses, and lending libraries – laid the foundations for “nationalist” modernity in literature. Can we recognize a similar hybrid process in the arts as well? Was there a Chinese influence on the nascent “new” Indonesian paintings?

Mythological evidence

According to Javanese mythological tradition⁽⁴⁾ the most gifted of all Javanese painters, Purbengkara, was exiled to China (or Holland), where he practised his art from then on. The kingdom of Astina (Java) was later conquered by Islam and the art of painting was no longer practised in Java. It was the Chinese (or the Dutch), who had learned from Purbengkara and reintroduced the art of painting to Java. At least this could be one of the interpretations of the Purbengkara story of the *Serat Kandha*.⁽⁵⁾ *Serat Kandha* supports, in its own way, my hypothesis that there might be an early connection between *seni lukis baru Indonesia* and Chinese art.

Historical evidence – early images

The fashion of decorating the walls of the houses with pictures – engravings, etchings, prints, as well as oil paintings – was spreading throughout 19th century Java. European paintings were carried to Asian

2. To name just a few of the pioneering works : Pramoedya Ananta Toer, *Sang Pemula*. Jakarta 1985; C.W. Watson, “Some Preliminary Remarks on the Antecedents of Modern Indonesian Literature”, *BKI*, 127 (4), 1971, pp. 417-433; Henri Chambert-Loir, “Malay Literature in the 19th Century; The Fadli Connection”, in J.J. Ras and S.O. Robson (eds), *Variation, Transformation and Meaning : Studies on Indonesian literatures in honour of A. Teeuw*, Leiden, KITLV Press, 1991, pp. 87-114.

3. Claudine Salmon, *Literature in Malay by the Chinese of Indonesia. A provisional annotated bibliography*, Éditions de la Maison des Sciences de l’Homme, Paris 1981.

4. See Matthew Isaac Cohen, “Traditional and Popular Painting in Modern Java” in this volume.

5. A slightly different version of the same story can be found in the *Babad Jaka Tingkir*, which was translated and commented on by Nancy Florida in her *Writing the Past, Inscribing the Future : History as Prophecy in Colonial Java*, Durham, Duke University Press, 1995.

countries by the first ships that sailed east. In the year 1596, a Dutch ship on its way east ran aground on the Nova Zemlya archipelago, in the Arctic. It was carrying multiples of about 150 different images after works by various 16th-century Dutch engravers, including Hendrick Goltzius, Jacques de Gheyn II, Hans Collaert, Abraham de Bruyn, and Carel van Mander.⁽⁶⁾ In 1602, Admiral van Neek left more than 6000 Dutch engravings at the newly established Dutch factory at Patani.⁽⁷⁾ They were the remainders of his cargo, after he had called on Banten, Ternate, and Patani to take in pepper and spices. A lot of European artwork made its way to Asia on French and British ships. The cargo list of the British ship *New Year's Gift*, which set sail in 1614 for Surat/Gujarat and Japan, includes 86 oil paintings. Some of these were intended as presents and others as trading goods.⁽⁸⁾ The list mentions portraits “of the King & Prince, the Queen the Great Magoll, the Tamberlain”, but also suggests themes such as Vulcan and Venus, Adam and Eve, Paris' Judgement and so on. The European hope of their art reaping high returns on the Asian market was not met by reality. Still, illustrated books, engravings and paintings were highly prized and prestigious gifts for sultans, rajas, and shoguns.

By the 17th century, the European visual systems were common knowledge among the Asian elite, but they were neither adopted nor preferred. Certain selective processes took place, but as a rule local cultural traditions withstood. It was only during the 19th century that indigenous elites in Java, Javanese as well as Chinese, moved culturally closer to the Dutch example. Dress codes, eating and drinking habits, garden culture and interior design were all influenced by the “Dutch way”. In both regent houses and the *kra-ton*s, European pictures went up on the walls, mostly etchings and lithographies, sometimes paintings in oil. Duke Bernhard von Sachsen-Weimar, as commander-in-chief of the colonial forces of the Netherlands Indies, visited the *kraton* of the Sultan of Sumanap/Madura on the 12 August 1850. He commented :

... at the columns and pillars (of the pendopos) are all sorts of European pictures to be seen; lithographs, cheap views of European towns, ect.⁽⁹⁾

6. J. Braat, J.P. Filedt Kok, J.H. Hofenk de Graaff, and P. Poldervaart, “Restauratie, conservatie en onderzoek van de op Nova Zembla gevonden zestiende-eeuwse prenten”, *Bulletin van het Rijksmuseum*, Vol. 28 (1980).

7. J.W. Ijezerman, *Hollandsche prenten als handelsartikel te Patani in 1602*, 's Gravenhage, Gedenkschrift Koninklijk Instituut voor de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde van N.I., 1926, p. 84.

8. For this information I have to thank Miss Frederike Weis, Berlin.

9. R. Starklof, *Das Leben von Herzog Bernhard von Sachsen-Weimar-Eisenach*, Gotha, 1865, p. 251.

The same sort of wall decoration was found in Bangkalan/Madura as well. The German writer Therese von Lützwow, who travelled with the commander-in-chief, wrote in her “Javanese Diary” :

The wooden pillars were covered with bad lithographs in golden frames put up by the Penambahan. Most showed scenes from the recent French revolution of 1848. Good old Penambahan has no idea that he introduced the republican principles to his kraton. ... He believes that these cheap pictures, which were sold to him by a clever shop owner in Surabaya, might be the beginning of a valuable gallery.⁽¹⁰⁾

This new fashion had already been visually documented by 1811/12. The Anglo-Indian draughtsman John Newman (1795?-1818) spent some time with Colin Mackenzie depicting scenes of Java. In his watercolour “A Javanese grandee and an attendant”, we see a painting of a harbour view on the wall of the room, which might be of Dutch or Chinese production (Ill. 1).⁽¹¹⁾

Through this expanding fashion the foundations for local production of “non-traditional” paintings was laid. The ensuing visual discourse slowly changed the visual system of the people. European central perspective, as a highly complex construction of three dimensional realities on a plane, has nothing to do with the anatomy of vision. It is a cultural technique that has to be learned, just as the Asian “perspective of meaning” (important items are always bigger than unimportant, even when placed in a distance) has to be learned as well.⁽¹²⁾

The 19th century in Java can be looked upon as a hybrid age. Traditional ways of experiencing, viewing and representing the world slowly changed. European and Chinese visual motifs crept into the local system and created an ever changing mixture of cultural symbols. This process is beautifully documented by a *kitab hukum*, which is part of the Raffles Collection. While the text field is still constructed according to Javanese tradition the foliage and vases of the border are clearly influenced by European usage (Ill. 2).

This hybridisation of certain aspects of Javanese art was a prerequisite for the development of a *seni lukis baru Indonesia* – “new” Indonesian art. Jim Supangkat discusses this process in his book *Indonesian Modern Art and Beyond*. He claims that the integration of the European visual system started

10. Therese von Lützwow, *Javanisches Tagebuch*, unpublished manuscript, Staatsbibliothek Berlin.

11. We know of Indian miniatures from Udaipur and Surat, which depict Chinese export art on the walls of interiors. These reverse paintings on glass might have been imported by the Dutch factory in Surat. Andrew Topsfield, “Ketelaar's Embassy and the Farangi Theme in the Art of Udaipur”, *Oriental Art*, Vol. XXX, no. 4 (1984), pp. 350 ff.

12. It took connoisseurs of Western art quite a long time before they could value Chinese painting.



Ill. 1. – John Newman, *A Javanese grandee and an attendant*, ca. 1811.
Watercolour 249 x 395 mm, British Library WD 953, f.96 (107).

in the centres of Javanese culture already in the 17th century and that a special Javanese term was created for it : *kagunan adiluhung* (high art).⁽¹³⁾

This visual discourse developed in different Asian cultures at different speeds. It was the Chinese artisans and artists who took the lead – those who stood in the succession of the Jesuit painters of the Qing dynasty and those who were taught by the Jesuit und Augustinian monks in the Philippines. Chinese export painting (trade art) that developed during the 18th and 19th century in Macao and Canton (and to a smaller extent in Nagasaki and Manila) considerably expanded the base of this development. If we want to understand the evolution of *seni lukis baru Indonesia* we must not underestimate the Chinese connection. Chinese artisans/artists lived and worked in the countries of *Nanyang* for many years. During the 19th century they obviously controlled the trade of prints and lithographs. The fact that in 1850 a Madurese noble man possessed prints of the French February Revolution of 1848 purchased from a Chinese shopkeeper in Surabaya not only shows that the acceleration of the planet had shifted to a higher gear, but proves that the yearning for “new” pictures is not an invention of our times.

Chinese artisan/artists in Java : 17th and 18th century

Chinese artisans and craftsman controlled the trade and craft in the port cities to a large extent. Bishop Domingo de Salazar wrote to the Spanish King in late 16th century :

The handicrafts pursued by the Spanish have all died out, because people buy their cloth and shoes from the Sangleys,⁽¹⁴⁾ who are very good craftsman ... and make everything at a very low cost. ... What arouses my wonder most is, when I arrived no Sangley knew how to paint anything (i.e. in the European fashion) but now they have so perfected themselves in the art that they have produced marvellous works with both the brush and chisel ... The churches are beginning to be furnished with the images which the Sangleys made ... and considering the ability displayed by these people in reproducing the images which come from Espagna, I believe that soon we shall not even miss those made in Flanders.⁽¹⁵⁾

The situation in Batavia was not dissimilar, craft and small industry was dominated by the Chinese.

The earliest known painting in Southeast Asia, the *Nuestra Señora del Pronto Socorro* (Our Lady of Prompt Succour), painted around 1580, is the work of a Chinese artist. The Philippine art historian Santiago A. Pilar

13. Jim Supangkat, *Indonesian Modern Art and Beyond*, Jakarta, The Indonesian Fine Arts Foundation, 1997, pp. 11-12.

14. The term Sangley, of obscure origin, was used in the Philippines up to the 19th century by the Spaniards and the Filipinos to call the Chinese.

15. Derek Gillman, “Ming and Qing Ivories : Figure Carving”, in *Chinese Ivories from the Shung to the Qing*, London 1984, p. 34.



III. 2 – *Kitab Hukum* 1813, North Coast of Java.
Royal Asiatic Society, Raffles Java 6.

claims that two lines of tradition converge in the *Soccoro* : 1. the northern European, Flemish, type of Madonna portrayal and 2. clear hints of the iconography of Guanyin, the Chinese Goddess of mercy.

The earliest known watercolour made by a Chinese in Java is, as far as we know, the rhinoceros from the manuscript of Caspar Schmalkalden from Thuringia/Germany. Schmalkalden stayed in the Indies between 1646 and 1651. He wrote this about the watercolour : “This Rhinocer was painted by a Chinese painter after nature in Batavia” (Ill. 3).⁽¹⁶⁾

The Chinese “Rhinocer” from Batavia opens up some questions, since it certainly reminds us of the famous woodcut “Rhinoceros” by Albrecht Dürer (1515). The form, the shape, the nature, the whole *gestalt* of the animal is reminiscent of Dürer’s Ganda.⁽¹⁷⁾ But how does one explain that a Chinese painter in 17th-century Java had a clear idea about an almost 140 year old German woodcut? It is not very likely that he had access to a copy of Dürer’s Rhinoceros. More likely he had seen the rhino in one of the animal books of the time, most probably Johannis Jonstonus, *Naeukeurige Beschryving van de Natuur der Vier-Voetige Dieren...* Amsterdam, 1649-53. It was modelled after Dürer’s Ganda. The book was part of the goods shipped to Asia for representative purposes by the Dutch East India Company. We know that it was presented to the Shogun in Edo in 1663 by Hendrik Indijk, director of the Dutch factory in Deshima.⁽¹⁸⁾ [We also know of a very delicate study of the same Rhino by the Japanese painter Tani Bunchô (1764-1840)]. Before Jonstonus’s work went to Japan, it must have been in Batavia for a certain period of time, since all shipments to eastern harbours had to pass through Batavia.

The Chinese painter in Batavia must have also seen – besides Dürer’s idea of a rhinoceros – a real rhinoceros. This is proven by the fact that he did not repeat Dürer’s anatomical mistake, the so called “Dürer’s horned”.⁽¹⁹⁾ He most probably saw the young rhinoceros that was wounded and taken to Batavia in 1647.⁽²⁰⁾

16. Wolfgang Joost, *Die wundersamen Reisen des Caspar Schmalkalden nach West- und Ostindien 1642-1652*, Weinheim, Acta Humaniora, 1983, p. 118.

17. Ganda is the Gujarati word for rhinoceros, just as Badak is the Malay word for it.

18. The Japanese historian Sugita Genpaku claims in his *Rangaku Kotohajime* (History of Dutch science), 1817, that Jonstonus’ book has to be regarded as the starting point of the *rangaku*, the *Dutch science*, in Japan.

19. Dürer had never seen a real rhinoceros, but had to rely on a description only. He supplied his rhino with a little horn on its neck. For more than two centuries this mistake was repeated by almost all European artists.

20. J.J. Saar, *Ost-Indianische Fünfzehn-jährige Kriegsdienst ...*, Nürnberg, 1662. This rhino is also mentioned by J.J. Merklein and J. von der Behr.



III. 3 – Chinese painter, 1650?, Rhinoceros. Wolfgang Joost,
Die wundersamen Reisen des Caspar Schmalkalden nach West- und Ostindien 1642-1652, p. 117.

Another early art work by a Chinese is the portrait statue of the Deputy Governor of Bengkulu/Sumatra Joseph Colett, who served from 1712 to 1716. Here, for the first time we even know the name of the artist : Amoy Chingqua (Ill. 4).

Josua van Jpern makes mention of another early Chinese painter in Batavia. He identifies a Chinese artist who did some drawings and water-colours for him as Hokki.⁽²¹⁾ The same Hokki was rather critically commented on by the then secretary of *Bataviaasch Genootschap van kunsten en wetenschappen*, Friedrich Baron von Wurmb.⁽²²⁾ He complained that the Chinese artist is not educated in European coloring and chiaroscuro :

We have a Chinese here, who has a very clever and steady hand for drawing and who is able to reproduce everything you place before his eyes with the utmost exactness, but notwithstanding all the trouble I took to teach him the right shading and colouring he is not able to reproduce these necessary qualities in his own paintings.⁽²³⁾

A new beginning

Towards the end of the 18th Century the visual discourse reached an other density. Motor of the acceleration was the growing British involvement in Southeast Asia. British administrators and naturalists started to collect information on the local cultures in a grand style. Many able illustrators were required to create the big collections of basic data on the archipelago. Besides a number of military dilettanti and some Dutch draughtsmen, there were no specialists at hand forcing the British to use local talent, mostly Chinese as well as some Indians. Asian artists found employment during the compilation of William Marden's *History of Sumatra*, Thomas Stamford Raffles's *History of Java* and John Crawfurd's *The History of the Indian Archipelago*. The need for able draughtsmen was even bigger for naturalists like Joseph Arnold and William Jack, who worked for Raffles in Bengkulu. Their artists produced hundreds of sheets. Malay and Javanese draughtsmen were not yet at hand. The first Javanese to produce any such work for a European client was Sarip Saleh, who is better known under his later name

21. Josua van Jpern, "Beschreibung eines weissen Negers von der Insel Bali", German language edition of the first volume of *Verhandelingen der Bataviaasch Genootschap van kunsten en wetenschappen*, Leipzig, Wengandsche Buchhandlung, 1782, p. 352. Von Wurmb and van Jpern worked as secretaries of the *Bataviaasch Genootschap van Kunsten en Wetenschappen*.

22. Friedrich von Wurmb, who was responsible for the library of the *Bataviaasch Genootschap van Kunsten en Wetenschappen*, was an uncle of Charlotte von Lengefeld, wife of the famous German writer Friedrich von Schillers.

23. Ludwig von Wurmb, *Briefe des Herrn von Wurmb und des Herrn Baron von Wolzogen auf ihren Reisen nach Afrika und Ostindien in den Jahren 1774-1792*, Gotha, 1794.



Ill. 4 – Amoy Chinqua, ca. 1716, *Joseph Colett*, painted unburned clay, hight ca. 71 cm.
London, National Portrait Gallery.

Raden Saleh (1811-1880). He was attached to the colonial painter Antoine Payen and did drawings of certain native implements.

It was said that the Marquis Wellesley and Edward Clive might have been the first Europeans to employ Chinese painters.⁽²⁴⁾ This might be true for Penang, but in Batavia this had happened for a long time. The reports mentioned above of Caspar Schmalkalden and Baron von Wurmb are proof enough. Besides that the French traveller Innigo de Biervillas mentioned a tradition of Chinese female painters in Batavia in early 18th Century who obviously worked for European customers.⁽²⁵⁾ Unfortunately we have not yet found, as far as is known, any of these early Chinese paintings/drawings from Batavia. But research in the Chinese Trade Art in general has barely begun and surprises might still be waiting for us.⁽²⁶⁾

If we disregard Schmalkalden's Rhinoceros, the first extended series of pictures completed by Chinese artists in Southeast Asia are the naturalist sheets of the Marsden and Raffles Collections. In between 1794 and 1808 Marsden ordered several Chinese painters to illustrate the flora and fauna of Sumatra. Some of these watercolours are to be found in the Oriental & India Office Collections of the British Library (Ill. 5).

Sir Stamford Raffles did similarly to Marsden, but on a much bigger scale. He had collected between 2000 and 3000 sheets mostly completed, as far as we know, by Chinese artists. All of them burned when his return vessel, the *Fame*, exploded off the coast of Sumatra in February 1824. But he didn't want to go back to Europe empty handed and within 10 weeks his Chinese draughtsmen produced another 91 sheets! They found their way into the collections of the British library (Ill. 6).⁽²⁷⁾

Munshi Abdullah, secretary of Raffles mentions in his autobiography that Raffles had already in 1811 employed a Chinese artist from Macao in Malacca, "very expert at drawing life-like pictures of fruits and flowers".⁽²⁸⁾ The beautiful watercolours of the Raffles Collection are proof of the excel-

24. Craig Clunas, *Chinese Export Watercolours*, London, Victoria and Albert Museum, 1984, pp. 84-85.

25. « Les Chinois ne sont pas moins jaloux de leurs femmes que ceux de notre nation. Ils les obligent quand ils ne sont pas joüeurs de profession à garder la maison, où elles s'occupent à travailler à des ouvrages de soyë, or & argent très magnifiques & même à des peintures & miniatures que les étrangers achètent chèrement ... », *Voyage d'Innigo de Biervillas à la côte de Malabar, Goa, Batavia & autres lieux des Indes Orientales*, Paris, Antoine Dupuis, 1736, vol. II, pp. 18-19.

26. As far as I am aware of nobody has yet recognized that there was a kind of Japanese export art in Deshima as well.

27. John Bastin, "Raffles the Naturalist", in Nigel Barley (ed.), *The Golden Sword. Stamford Raffles and the East*, London, British Museum Press, 1999, p. 22.

28. *The Hikayat Munshi Abdullah*, translated by A.H. Hill, Kuala Lumpur, Oxford University Press, 1970, p. 76.

lent craftsmanship of the Chinese painters of his days. Sheets like *Front View of Raffles's House at Pematang Balam, Bengkulu* testify to the close connection to the tradition of Chinese trade art paintings developed in Macao and Canton (Ill. 7).

Chinese export art

During the early decades of the 18th century a peculiar side product of the China trade developed : Chinese export art. Artisan artists from Macao and Canton produced goods for the traders and ship people of the different European and American trade expeditions including furniture, painted China ware, reverse glass paintings, watercolours and oil paintings on paper and canvas.

On 27th December 1727 the commander of the British East Indiaman Prince Augustus added four cases of "pictures" to his usual cargo of tea, silks, and porcelain. This is possibly the earliest mentioning of Chinese export painting.⁽²⁹⁾ Originally the little paintings produced by the Chinese in the European style served as a kind of souvenir for the sailors and merchants who had to spend weeks on end in the tiny trading enclaves of the Pearl River delta. Soon the traders realized that these little pieces of art were highly valued in the West and they bought them in ever growing quantities. The Chinese studios not only produced ship paintings, port scenes, portraits and genre paintings of Chinese every day life, but copies of European prints as well – usually as reverse glass paintings. These were re-imported, as a kind of second original, to Europe and influenced, in a certain way, European reverse glass painting.

Views of Southeast Asian land marks were produced in Canton as well. We know a gouache of Anyer Point in West Java, painted in "Tingqua's style"⁽³⁰⁾ around 1840. This scene was most probably painted in the style of a lithograph or etching (Ill. 8).

After the Opium War and the forceful opening of a number of southern Chinese ports the trade cycle changed considerably and with it the traditional clientele for trade art. It seems that some of the Cantonese painters moved to Hong Kong, others went even further down to the newly growing ports of Singapore and Batavia. We know that Chinese export artists lived and worked in Singapore since around 1850. Singapore was a fast growing city during this time. Its skyline changed constantly. Therefore it is quite easy to date these (rare) vistas of the port of Singapore (Ill. 9).

29. Graig Clunas, *Chinese Export Watercolours*, London, Victoria and Albert Museum, 1984, p. 10.

30. Carl L. Crossman, *The Decorative Arts of the China Trade*, Woodbridge, Antique Collectors' Club, 1997, p. 421. Tingqua was a younger brother of Lam Qua.



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Illustration non autorisée à la diffusion

Ill. 5 – *Durian*, Chinese painter. Watercolour 377 x 536 mm, British Library, Marsden Collection, London.

Ill. 6 – *Durian*, Chinese painter, 1824. British Library, Raffles's collection, NHD 48.

Illustration non autorisée à la diffusion

Ill. 7 – *Front View of Raffles's House at Pematang Balam, Bengkulu.*
Possibly a Chinese painter, 1824, Water-colour and gouache, 450 x 565 mm.
India Office Library, London, WD 2975.

Very few paintings of Chinese artists in Southeast Asia are signed. But we do know that some of the well known artists from Canton and Macao also had studios in Singapore. Sun Qua, who had a rather big studio in Canton, worked in Singapore around 1867. He had a shop located on 26 Malacca Street.⁽³¹⁾ Singapore might have developed into a kind of base from where Chinese painters found their way to the Netherlands East Indies.

Chinese painters in the Indies

On 4th August 1866 the newspaper *Bintang Timoer* (Surabaya) printed the following news :

Koetika tanggal 30 juli soedah dateng di Samarang dari Singapura, tiga orang Tjina toekang gambar, dan orang njang mengliat bilang njang boeat-annja itoe gambaran bagoes sekalieh.⁽³²⁾

The same news was printed by *Selompret Melajoe* (Semarang) as well :

Samarang. Kapan hari senen soedah ada bangsa Tjina tiga dateng dari Singapoera. Pekerjaannja djadi toekang gambar bekin portret-portret pake tjat. Dia orang bawah djoega bebrapa portret bekinannja sendiri. Katanja njang soedah meliat baik-baik bagoes, kentara dia orang soedah bisa betoel.⁽³³⁾

Three years later we find another, more explicit report in *Bintang Soerabaya* (16.6.1869) :

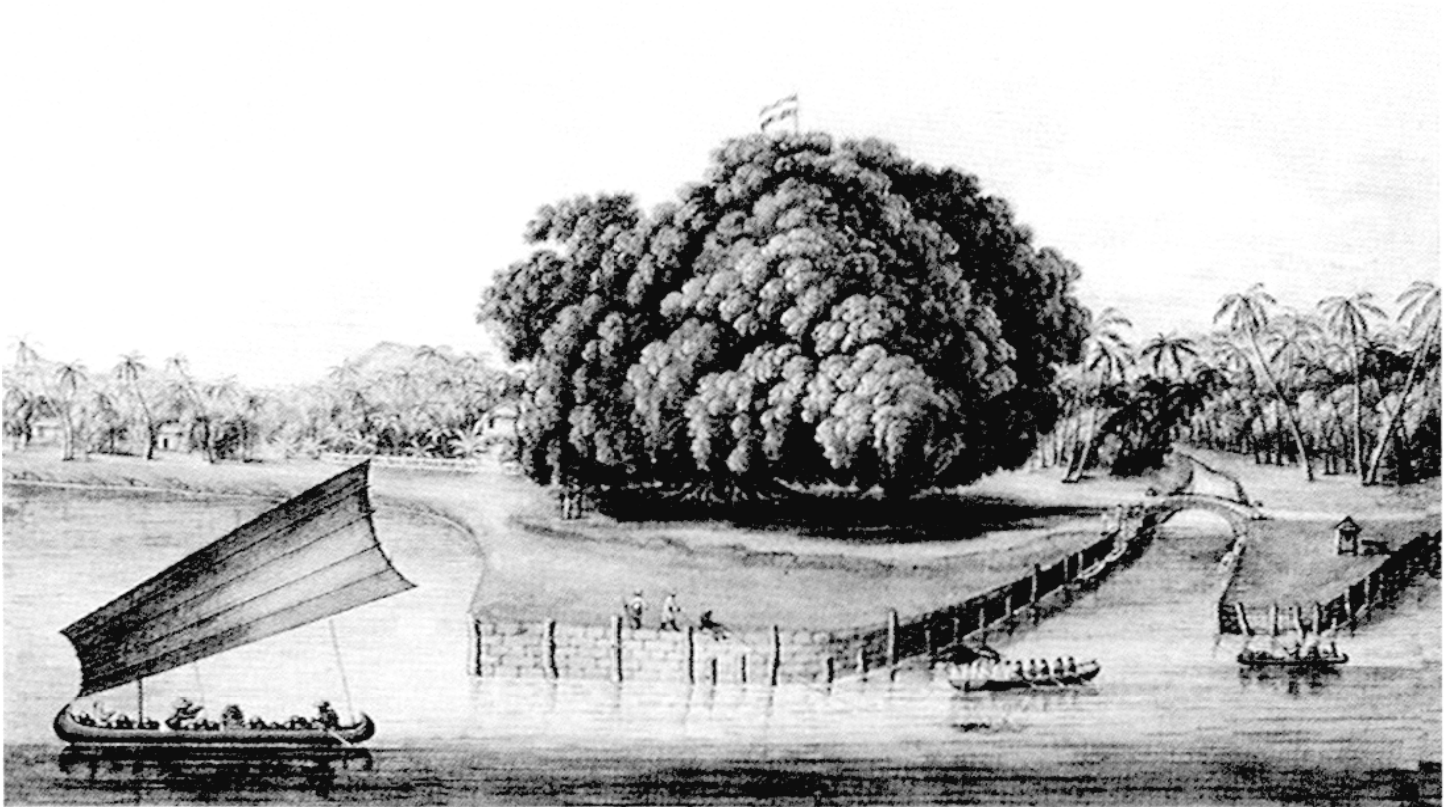
Satoe orang jang bisa skali menggambar dengan pakee minjak tjet. Dia bikin gambar bagimana jang digambar poenja besar dan begitoe sama roepanja, sampee jang liat seperti liat sendiri orangnja (jang di gambar tadi).Tiada melinken gambar manoesia tapi djoega roepa roepa goenoeng – tanah tanah dan pasiran ia sanggoep dan bisa sampeken dengan segala kabetoelan. Kaloe orang kapingin liat kapandeannja, bolih pigi di tempat toean J.B. Jaspers di Gatotan, dimana ada satoe doea gambar dari boeatannja, jang sengadja di liat-liatken soepaja orang pertjaia. Ho Kwa beratsal dari Hong Kong – soedah taoe djalan koeliling tanah Hindia Britani dan kamoedian pergi di Batavia dimana ia menoenpang pada Raden Saleh pandai gambar jang kesoehoer. Ho Kwa tra tinggal lama lagi di Soerabaia dan ada beroemah di Petjantian.

It is reported that a painter is in town who is good at portrait and landscape painting. His works are on display at the house of Mr. J.B. Jaspers.

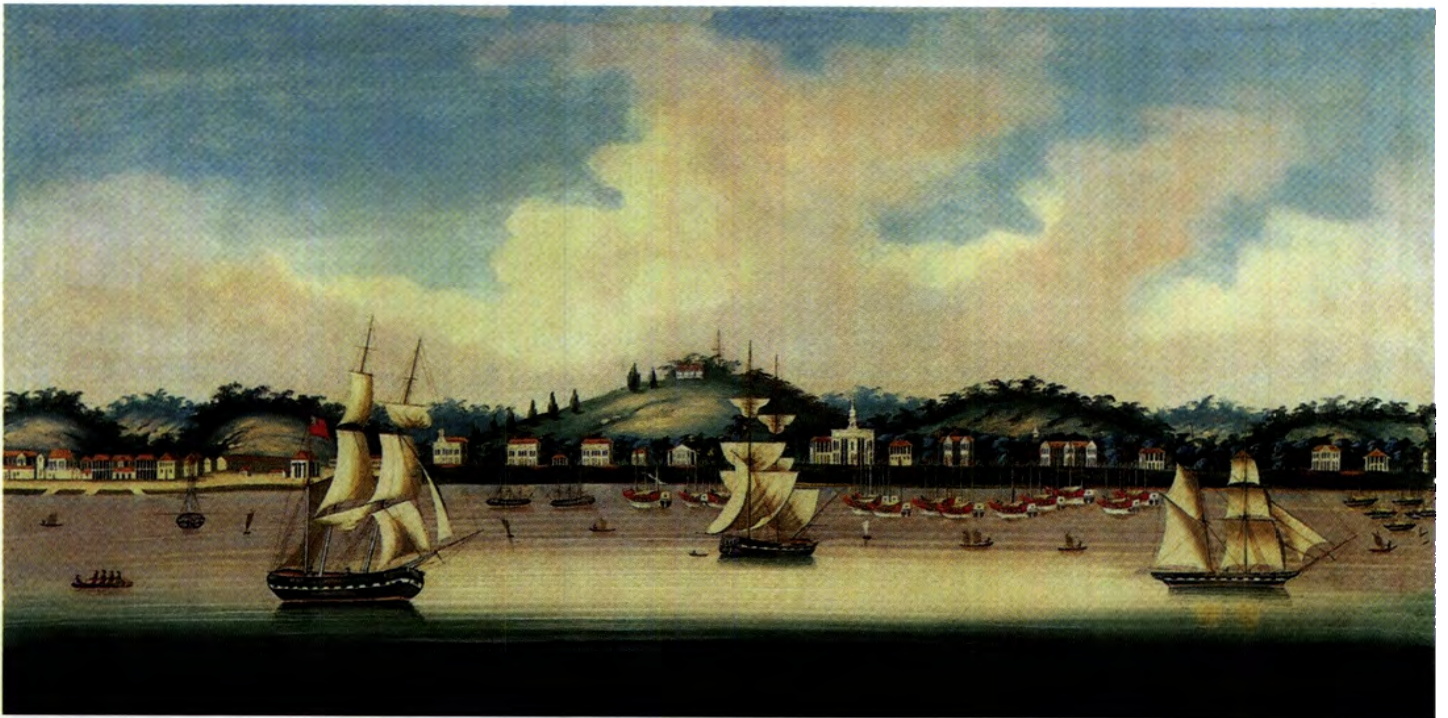
31. *Painting the East, Paintings and Drawings 1790-1940*, London 1997, Yu Chee Chong Fine Art, illustr. 32.

32. "On 30th July three Chinese painters from Singapore arrived in Semarang and people who have seen their paintings claim that they are very good." This and the following articles from the Chinese press in Java were shown to me by Prof. Dr. Claudine Salmon. I have to thank her as well for many valuable comments.

33. "On Monday three Chinese arrived from Singapore. They are painters of portraits in oil. They carried some portraits and those who have seen them claim that they are very good, the painters know their trade".



III. 8 – School of Tingqua. *Anyer Point*, ca. 1840.



Ill. 9 – Chinese Artist, ca. 1850, *Singapore*, oil on canvas, 425 x 760 mm.
(The tower of St. Andrews Church was built in 1843 and destroyed in 1855).

The name of the painter is Ho Kwa.⁽³⁴⁾ He originally comes from Hong Kong and has spent some time in Hindia Britani (British Malaya?). Before he came to Surabaya he worked in Raden Saleh's studio located in Batavia. The paper mentions that Ho Kwa will stay only for a short time longer in Surabaya and that he stays at Petjantian.

By a lucky coincidence while flipping through a catalogue from the auction house Larasati in Jakarta, the following entry was found : *Hou Qua, Portrait of Ecoma Verstege, (Batavia 1865/66)*⁽³⁵⁾, oil on canvas, 69 x 53 cm.⁽³⁶⁾ The enigmatic Chinese painter Ho Kwa from *Bintang Soerabaya* finally has a face (Ill. 10).

The portrait depicts a 7 or 8 year old child, sick and suffering, who gazes at us with deep sad eyes. Her small body has to carry a big head and her arms are thin. She wears a striped dress and a half length pair of white trousers. Her crossed feet are covered by white socks and a pair of sturdy brown shoes. With her left hand she holds a branch of a *rambutan* tree with two pieces of fruit on it (a symbolic meaning?). Her right hand rests listless on a small round table. The uncommon nakedness of the table heightens the sadness of the young subject. The chair, obviously made for a youngster, is still too high for the growth inhibited child. Her neck and wrists are adorned by little red chains. Her very big left ear displays an earring. Who is that girl? Could her identity supply us with some information about the painter Hou Qua? An enquiry with *Larasati* brought about the additional information that on the backside of the painting, the name of the girl was given : J.W.J. Ecoma Verstege.

By coincidence I met Mr. Hans van der Woude from Zuidlaren, Holland. He has researched the history of the Ecoma Verstege family and shared his vast knowledge generously. A girl by the name of J.W.J. Ecoma Verstege was at first not to be found in his archive which did not deter him at all. Quite on the contrary, and he was successful. We finally identified the girl in Hou Qua's portrait. Her name was Julia Wilhelmina Jeane Ecoma Verstege, born on 25th December 1865 in Batavia where she died at a young age 20 years later on 23rd August 1886.

34. From now on I shall use Hou Qua instead of Ho Kwa. "The Chinese term *kwa* (Mandarin *guan*) was the second element of the personal name in Guangdong and especially in Fujian. It was shared by more or less all men except those whose position was higher and who used *sia*. The parallel form for women was *nio* (Mandarin *niang*). These peculiarities, the history of which may be traced as far back as the Tang Dynasty, were maintained in Southern China and in the diaspora until the 20th century. This is well reflected in the epigraphic records from Malaysia and Indonesia. During the 18th-19th centuries the trade painters only used their personal names as it was the case in the Dutch Indies." Personal communication from Claudine Salmon.

35. This date can't be right since the sitter was born in 1865. I date the portrait 1873(?).

36. *Larasati, Pictures of Indonesia*, 6 June 2004, Catalogue p. 66.



Ill. 10 – Hou Qua, *Portrait of Ecoma Verstege*, 1873(?), oil on canvas, 690 x 530 mm.

She was the daughter of Charles Matthieu George Arinus Marinus Ecoma Verstege (1827-1892) and Helene Anne Jeane van Spall (1834-1877). Charles Matthieu George Arinus Marinus Ecoma Verstege, resident of Timor and Bangka, was a son of Johannes Jacobus Verstege (1799-1859), military commander of Tomo/Java and Cheribon. His father or Julia Wilhelmina Jeane's great grandfather was Matthijs Eliza Verstege (1763-1847), *provinci-aal inspecteur der accijnzen* of Northern Brabant.

The story becomes very interesting at the mention of M.E. Verstege. He was known as a mentor and fatherly friend of the Javanese painter Raden Saleh while the latter studied in The Hague. The portrait of M. E. Verstege from 1834 is one of the earliest works of Raden Saleh.⁽³⁷⁾ In a letter to his son Johannes Jacobus, M.E. Verstege writes :

The Hague, 21 August 1835. My son : I gave to my friend Raden Saleh the article of our Professor J.H. van der Palm on the serene Prophet Muhammad and an other one on the Koran as the gospel of the Mogul. These pieces he should translate into Malay. Out of friendship he has painted my portrait. I'm your loving father M.E. Verstege.⁽³⁸⁾

This portrait was copied in 1836 by Cornelis de Cocq, a pupil of Raden Saleh.⁽³⁹⁾ M.E. Verstege is an important source for Raden Saleh research, since he transmitted an authentic description of the way Raden Saleh used to work in The Hague.⁽⁴⁰⁾ In a letter addressed to J.C. Baud, the Minister of Colonies, dated Dresden 13th February 1843,⁽⁴¹⁾ Raden Saleh remembered his old friend : "Saja kapengin djoega taoe apa Tuan Verstege toea masih ada? Saja maoe kirim soerat pada dia".⁽⁴²⁾ He talks about *Tuan Verstege toea* since by then he had met *Tuan Verstege muda*, Johannes Jacobus Verstege and had painted his portrait.⁽⁴³⁾ And this was not the end of the connection between Raden Saleh and the Verstege family.

A son of Johannes Jacobus Verstege, Johannes Jacobus Wilhelmus Eliza Verstege (1834-1890), who was also an officer in the Netherlands East Indian army, married Johanna Maria Menu, a daughter of the well-known Colonel Petrus Henricus Menu (1790-1875). Raden Saleh must have already

37. Raden Saleh, *Matthys Eliza Verstege* (1834), oil on canvas, 100 x 80 cm, Belasting Museum Rotterdam.

38. Sotheby's *Catalogue Singapore Auction September 1997*, lot 232.

39. This copy was sold in 1997 by Sotheby's Singapore (Auction September 1997, lot 232) as the original painting by Raden Saleh. The original is still in Rotterdam. Another copy was done by the Belgian painter Hanssens in 1882 (private collection, Den Haag).

40. NA, Archief J.C. Baud. Two letters of Verstege to van der Capellen dated 5.9.1837 and 8.10.1837.

41. NA-MvK, verbaal, 17-8-1843.

42. "I wonder if Mr. Verstege the elder is still alive? I would like to send him a letter".

43. Raden Saleh, *Johannes Jacobus Verstege* (1837?), oil on canvas, 35 x 30 cm, private collection, Amsterdam.

met P.H. Menu in The Hague, since he painted a portrait of one of his sons and later in Java, a portrait of the colonel himself.⁽⁴⁴⁾ Raden Saleh's portraits of the more distant members of the Verstege family will not be cited here.

Let's return to Hou Qua and his portrait of Julia Wilhelmina Jeane Ecoma Verstege. If we assume that the girl was about 7 or 8 years old, the picture must have been completed roughly in 1873. Four years earlier, in 1869, Hou Qua had told *Bintang Soerabaya* that he had worked in Raden Saleh's studio before he went to Surabaya⁽⁴⁵⁾ and most likely returned to Batavia after his sojourn to East Java.

The portrait of sick little Julia Wilhelmina Jeane Ecoma Verstege and the newspaper article about Hou Qua in Surabaya have one thing in common : both construct a relationship between the Javanese painter Raden Saleh and the Chinese painter Hou Qua. This could be regarded as merely coincidental. Or as timid proof for Chinese involvement in the development of "new" Indonesian Painting. We know where Raden Saleh received his education as a painter : The Hague, Dresden, Paris. Hou Qua's educational history is not documented. He claimed to have come from Hong Kong where he most likely obtained his initial training. If we look at his portrait of Julia Wilhelmina Jeane Ecoma Verstege, it seems that his style could have been influenced by Lam Qua.

Lam Qua (1801-c. 1860)

Lam Qua, whose full Chinese name was Guan Qiaochang, was a student of the English artist George Chinnery (1774-1852) who worked in Macao from 1825 until his death. Lam Qua left his master and opened his own studio in Canton. He certainly never attained the same technical brilliance as Chinnery, but his style was admired by the local Europeans and Americans alike, plus he was a good deal cheaper than Chinnery. As a portraitist he stuck to the truth of reality. His answer towards unhappy subjects is still well known :

"How can handsome face make, when handsome face no has got?".⁽⁴⁶⁾

44. Raden Saleh, *Kolonel Petrus Henricus Menu* (1856), oil on canvas, 130 x 180 cm. See : V.I. van de Wall, *Indische landhuizen en hun geschiedenis*. Batavia, 1932, p. 97.

45. This must have been before December 1868, since Raden Saleh had moved, with his young wife, to Bogor at this time.

46. Jenyns Soame, "George Chinnery (1774-1852) with emphasis on the Chinese period (1825-1852) and the so-called Chinnery School of Chinese trade painting", in *The Westward Influence of the Chinese Arts*, ed. by William Watson, Colloquies on Art & Archaeology in Asia No. 3, University of London, Percival David Foundation of Chinese Art, n.d., p. 74.

Lam Qua⁽⁴⁷⁾ was the first Chinese painter whose works have been shown during his lifetime in European and American exhibitions (Ill. 11).⁽⁴⁸⁾

An American medical missionary, Reverend Peter Parker, M. D. commissioned Lam Qua to paint a large number of medical portraits, they included people with large tumours before and after an operation. This set of 114 paintings is a uniquely valuable resource for research on the beginnings of modernity in China, and in particular, on changing attitudes toward the self during this time.⁽⁴⁹⁾

Lam Qua's "pseudo-academic" style, especially in regard to his portrait painting, was definitely influenced by 19th century European academic conventions of representation of the individual. I call it "pseudo" since he was of course not steeped in European art techniques, but rather copied it through his close working relationship with George Chinnery. We still do not know much about Chinnery's legacy in South China. The leading specialist in that field, Carl L. Crossman claims that :

It will take years of additional research, in the West, in China and in Hong Kong, to establish just how many of the Chinese painters working for the export trade were working in the style of Chinnery. Their names are still not known today.⁽⁵⁰⁾

Unfortunately, not only are their names largely unrecorded, but their influence on the development of modern Chinese art is not researched at all. Still we can be sure that they played a very important role in the developing discourse of modernity in China. Or as Craig Clunas puts it :

Although 'Lamqua' and his Cantonese contemporaries are not generally integrated into the history of 'Chinesc painting', they added significantly to the possibilities for visual representation in China, particularly in technical terms.⁽⁵¹⁾

After the downfall of Canton as the only open port of the Chinese trade and the rise of Hong Kong, many Cantonese trade artists felt obliged to move

47. For Lam Qua see Carl L. Crossman, *The Decorative Arts of the China Trade*, Woodbridge, Antique Collectors' Club, 1997, chap. 3, and Craig Clunas, *Art in China*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1997.

48. Between 1835 and 1845 some of his paintings were shown in London, New York, Philadelphia and Boston.

49. Larissa Heinrich, "Curing Chinese Culture : Lam Qua's medical portraiture", in : *Translating Modernity*, ed. by Lydia Liu (forthcoming); S.L. Gilman, "Lam Qua and the development of a westernized medical iconography in China", *Medical History*, 30(1), Jan. 1986, pp. 57-69; J. Chang, "A reconstructive surgeon's taste in art : Dr Peter Parker and the Lam Qua oil paintings", *Annals of Plastic Surgery*, 1993 May; 30(5), May 1993, pp. 468-474.

50. *Ibid.*, p. 100.

51. Craig Clunas, *Art in China*, Oxford, New York, Oxford University Press, 1997, p. 199.



Ill. 11 – *Lam Qua*, self-portrait.
Oil on canvas, 273 x 232 mm, Peabody Museum Salem.

shop to the crown colony. Lam Qua also opened a studio at 3 Oswald Building, Queen's Road, Hong Kong. (52)

Perhaps our mysterious painter Hou Qua, who originally came from Hong Kong and whose style is so similar to Lam Qua's was an apprentice of the master painter in his new studio? So far we have no proof of this whatsoever and as Crossman has mentioned above we still have no name list of Chinnery's or for that matter Lam Qua's students. But we can assume that Hou Qua had known Lam Qua's works and developed a style very close to it.

Hou Qua had neither understood nor internalised the basic technical rules of European art of his time. He employed on a rather convincing but superficial manner the rules of shortening and perspective. As long as the person is concerned. When it comes to space he neglects these rules as can be seen by his treatment of the tiles in the portrait of Julia Wilhelmina Jeane Ecoma Verstege : their joints run totally parallel, there is no narrowing caused by the rules of perspective. This detail is often found within Chinese trade art and is most probably explained by the Chinese convention of "parallel perspective" and a different understanding of construction of space. (53) This shows that Chinese trade artists, while working for the taste of their European clientele remained committed to their own cultural understanding of the representation of the world on canvas or paper. To borrow Wen Feng's phrasing : "In conclusion it may be said that the unity of space in an early Chinese painting is achieved only intellectually, never optically". (54)

The European trained Javanese painter Raden Saleh, who could not fall back on a rich tradition of local painting, never fell into that trap : his tile joints are always done in the "right" (European) manner according to the rules of central perspective. (55)

52. Patrick Conner, *George Chinnery 1774-1852, Artist of India and the China Coast*. Woodbridge, Antique Collectors' Club, 1993, p. 267; catalogue *George Chinnery. His Pupils and Influence*, Hong Kong Museum of Art, 15.3.1985-14.4.1985.

53. The problems of perspective in China are discussed in Richard M. Swiderski's "The dragon and the straightedge, part 1", *Semiotica*, Vol. 81, 1-2 (1990).

54. Wen Fong, *The Lohans and a Bridge to Heaven*, Washington, Freer Gallery of Art, 1958.

55. His *Portrait of a Chinese Gentleman*, Private Collection Jakarta and the *Double Portrait of a Javanese Couple* at the ARMA in Bali are examples for this claim.

Conclusion

While the documented existence of the Chinese painter Hou Qua in Java and his connection to Raden Saleh does not comprehensively prove my theory that Chinese painters played a similar role during the formation of *seni lukis baru Indonesia* as did the Chinese writers for the nascent Indonesian modern literature, his existence asks us to keep our minds and eyes open and look for further examples.

Raden Saleh and Jan Daniel Beynon⁽⁵⁶⁾ might have been the only local painters in 19th Century Java acknowledged and seen by the Dutch, but there was a number of Chinese painters as well in the field. After all we know that the *pelopor*, the pioneer of Sino-Indonesian literature, Lie Kim Hok, hesitated for some time to which art he should turn : painting or literature. His talent for the fine arts was testified by his teacher, the *pelopor* of *seni lukis baru Indonesia*, Raden Saleh.⁽⁵⁷⁾ He asked Lie Kim Hok's father to send his son to Europe for further artistic education. But the mother was not ready to accept separation from her son for a longer period of time.⁽⁵⁸⁾ Lie Kim Hok's father, Lie Hian Tjoan, was by the way a painter as well.⁽⁵⁹⁾

56. Jan Daniel Beynon (1830-1877) was the son of Jacob Willem Beynon (1795-1874) and Johanna Petronella Hoogveld (1806-1887). The Beynon family originated from Frankfurt/Germany and came to the Indies in 1752. After careers in the service of the VOC the family got rather wealthy. The Beynons were the only family in Batavia to send one of their young men to Europe to study art. Jan Daniel Beynon studied at the academy in Amsterdam from 1848 to 1855. After he returned to his native Java he painted landscapes, genre scenes and portraits. Since his financial situation was secured he did not have to sell his paintings and never really entered the art market. His style is very lively and in a way more "modern" than Raden Saleh's. Few of his paintings are in public collections.

57. Tio Ie Soei, *Lie Kim Hok (1853-1912)*, Bandung, Good Luck, 1958, p. 41 ; Claudine Salmon, *Literature in Malay by the Chinese of Indonesia. A provisional annotated bibliography*, Paris, Éditions de la Maison des Sciences de l'Homme, 1981, p. 228.

58. Tio Ie Soei, *Lie Kim hok*, p. 41.

59. Many years later, in the 1930s, the Chinese painter Yap Seng Teng was of great influence for the development of Balinese painters like I Gusti Made Deblog and Rai Regug. Walter Spies and Rudolf Bonet were not the only teachers of young Balinese painters. Yap Seng Teng has to be mentioned as well. On his life see : "The unknown guru to Bali's master painters", *The Jakarta Post*, October 04, 2001.