

THE 1740 RACIAL TRAGEDY AND LOSS OF BATAVIA SUGARCANE INDUSTRIES

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ABSTRACT

The racial tragedy in Batavia in 1740 generally has a great social and economic impact in Java. Chinese people, some of whom were the sugar industry owners possessing the links from the raw materials to finished products were targeted in this terrible situation. They then ran away from this chaotic condition bringing their sugar industry skills and this fact led the sugar industries to spread out of Batavia around Java. Batavia, which was initially as the sugar industry basis, therefore, was not surrounded by cane plantations; meanwhile, these types of plantations were spreading in the north coastline of Java and some parts of Central Java and East Java remote areas became sugar industry centers and the people of each area, therefore, were developing.

Key words: Chinese Ethnic, Chaos, Batavia, Sugar.

ABSTRAK

Kerusuhan rasial yang terjadi di Batavia pada tahun 1740 memiliki dampak yang luar biasa bagi perkembangan sosio-ekonomi Jawa secara umum. Etnis Cina yang menjadi sasaran dalam peristiwa tersebut ternyata sebagian merupakan pemilik industri gula yang menguasai jaringan sejak hulu hingga hilir. Ketika kemudian mereka melarikan diri ke luar kota Batavia, mereka membawa keahlian mereka dalam industri gula dan dengan demikian industri gula menyebar ke seluruh Jawa. Batavia yang semula menjadi perintis industri gula tidak lagi dikelilingi oleh perkebunan-perkebunan tebu sementara daerah pantai utara Jawa dan sebagian pedalaman Jawa Tengah dan Jawa Timur berkembang menjadi pusat industri gula dengan perkembangan masyarakatnya masing-masing.

Kata kunci: etnis Cina, Kerusuhan, Batavia, Gula.

INTRODUCTION

In Indonesian historiography, the racial chaotic situation which occurred in Batavia in 1740, generally known as Angke holocaust, plays a specific role. The nuance of writing this occurrence is a simultaneously, quickly and systematically ethnic cleansing to the community as their servants by VOC authority, both European and local officers (Wijayakusuma, 2005: 92). This tragedy illustrates the politically vulnerable condition of Chinese people along Indonesian history. On the one hand, their existence and contribution are needed par-

ticularly in VOC era. On the other hand, they were victimized as proved by this 1740 ethnic cleansing, which actually covered the hidden conflict of interest among VOC elites and Chinese ethnic became the victim of this conflict.

The tragedy with the deaths of around 10,000 Chinese people as Batavia citizens is considered as an important element in the Indonesian historiography, particularly from political perspectives. Many foreign and Indonesian writers believe that this is the biggest racial tragedy which took place in the East Indies history (Lombard, 1996: 358). However, there has been no historian

who studies this tragedy, especially its impact from different perspectives. The new conditions which appeared upon the tragedy, particularly with the long impacts, in the social and cultural Batavianese community and its surroundings are rarely revealed; however, these long impacts are more stressed on the existence of the new life of Chinese ethnicity after they had located their settlement in Batavia city scope Batavia (Geuzinge, 2008: 154).

This paper reveals and explains the change from another angle resulting from the Angke tragedy in 1740, focusing on the aspect of traditional sugar industries which belonged to Chinese ethnic and were initiated when the disension in Batavia occurred in 1619. The existence of these sugar industries played an important role in both economic and social aspects which really influenced this ethnic life and the location where they lived.

BATAVIA CHINESE ETHNIC COMMUNITY

Batavia city was established by VOC Governor General, Jan Pieterszoon Coen, on 30 May 1619, on the Jayakarta ruin he destroyed as a result of the war between VOC and Banten Sultanate (Ricklef, 2008: 58). When this city was established at the first time, Coen had owned the future plan to centralize all VOC authorities in Asia as the biggest Dutch Bandar (centre) in the East. Although the city he established looked like the fortress city in Europe in the Middle Ages, this limited area of the city did not hamper Coen to plan to widen and develop the city from different angles and this plan encouraged its social dynamic life increase.

To make what he planned come true, Coen meant to make Batavia the

busy economic centre with its orientation to VOC monopoly system. As the supporting factor, this city has the main supporting element, particularly from its own population, fundamentally determining the growth of a city which leads to a dynamic interaction making the city life busier, the determination of the city a widening factor and finally influencing the formation of the city morphology shape (Raben, 2000: 94). Before the VOC authority was established in this city, a lodge had been established in Batavia when this city was still under Banten Sultanate. Due to the conflicting fact with the British people and with the Banten authority, VOC left the city and sailed to Ambon. As the highest officer, Coen, however, insisted to make Batavia as the strategic headquarters for VOC trading centre. In May 1619 upon his return from Ambon with his powerful fleet of ships, he defeated Banten troops and destroyed Jayakarta or Jakarta city to start establishing what we call Batavia.

Coen, however, did not consider all qualified to contribute their ideas to Batavia development but he trusted a limited number of parties to make his plan discussed above come true. Besides the ethnics the VOC brought from its authority locations, like Ambonese and Ternate people recruited as slaves and native soldiers, the other local people, such as Balinese and Manggarai people got their opportunities to come to Batavia and then lived there. They were given different locations on separated places and this was determined according to their functions directly controlled and supervised by VOC (Lohanda, 2000: 115).

Their presence did not give the guarantee to achieve what Coen had hoped, while Ambonese and Ternate ethnics were functioned to underpin VOC power and local security. Moreo-

ver, The Balinese and Manggarai ethnics became the groups of slaves assigned to help the VOC officers' households, the middle group, who then played an important role in the economic life dynamics and widening projects of Batavia according to what Coen hoped which was fulfilled yet. Moreover, the middle class society was not yet believed by Coen for the purposes of the city widening. To fill in this empty fact, the only group that Coen really trusted was Chinese ethnic (Guns, 2011: 119).

Regarding that Coen held the highest position at VOC which accepted the responsibility and mandate from *Heeren Zeventien* in Amsterdam, was supported by the post trading links and the greatest VOC trade lodge spreading from South Africa to Deshima in Japan, the efforts to invite Chinese immigrants was not a difficult one. In some locations in Taiwan and east and south-east coasts of China, VOC owned some representatives to recruit local people to improve their economic conditions in East Indies. Such VOC offers were well responded by the on-land Chinese and they then took the ships provided by VOC or the private sectors to join the sail to reach one destination: Batavia.

When they arrived in Batavia, they then joined Chinese ethnic minority who had lived prior to their coming and actively functioned as the middlemen for the local authority prior to the VOC coming. As Coen predicted, the arrival and presence of Chinese ethnic with growing number of population took part in developing Batavia city. This finally came true because the traders not only activated the economic circle but also owned professional skills, such as craftsmanship, handicraft, financial specialization and labor as physical strengths for their bargaining power. Their contribution fastened the development of Batavia city and VOC then or-

dered this city like the ones in the Netherlands and the consequence of this development led VOC to appoint their officers to be responsible for controlling foreigners' presence and these officers were also assigned as the middlemen with their official levels as officers appointed as captains (Li Minghuan, 2003: 106).

Under a captain, then assisted by lower officers, Chinese ethnic was an integral part of Batavia settlement and were specially positioned in the social strata formed and controlled by VOC. Professionally, in the XVII Century and the beginning of the XVIII Century, the Chinese ethnic in Batavia showed their heterogeneity as shown by their life activities like blue collar workers, professionals, and middlemen groups in some economic strategies, such as *pachters* beyond VOC bureaucracy structure filled by local people (Chen, 2011: 97-98).

The professions of the Chinese ethnic illustrated the settlements they formed due to the fact that the colonial government did not provide any special locations for them to live and this condition was different from the local people provided by the colonial government. In Batavia, particularly outside the wall, there were *kampong Manggarai*, and *kampong Bali*. Upon the second middle age of the XVII Century *kampong Bugis* and *kampong Makasar* were established; whereas, *kampong China* was not provided. VOC officers even let them spread and live at any areas where they got the opportunities to have their locations. These Chinese people were generally required to live inside the Batavia wall; many were not limited with space and took their courage to live outside the wall due to their creativities.

The above situation led Chinese people spread to various places according to the life sources they found and

they had their own freedom to make their own living; therefore, they lived in a semi-nomadic manner without any clear fixed locations to live and without fixed jobs they had. Regardless their social impacts resulting from this condition, the life of Chinese ethnic can be a description of one aspect of Batavia City life activities at the beginning of the XVII Century. One of the conditions differentiating Chinese ethnic from others in Batavia was the greater dependence on VOC than that of other ethnics. This dependence was seen when in 1643 Governor General Anthony van Diemen, who believed that the VOC role in Batavia was already strong and would not be attacked by enemies, such as Mataram war in 1628, shifted their priority from Ambon ethnic to Chinese ethnic in term of security sectors. Amboinese and other ethnics were limited to have their settlements, but Chinese ethnic were given rights to have their own settlements as long as they had typical advantages for VOC themselves.

CHINESE SUGAR INDUSTRIES AND 1740 CHAOS' IMPACT

Among the economic sectors the Chinese people in Batavia did is sugar making industry which actually existed when the tea drinking tradition among Chinese took place. Regarding the fact that the main ingredients for sweetening is the sugar taken from cane trees, Chinese people were encouraged to deal with the sugar making process and then developed these activities to become industries which gave them a lot of financial benefits. This industry was booming when the needs of sugar were strongly felt not only by Chinese ethnic but also for other groups, including native people and even foreign ones.

Prior to these industrial activities

in Batavia and its surrounding areas, the information about the Chinese people whose activities were related to sugar industries in other places before Batavia was founded to attract them to live here was very limited. In Banten, for example, although the Chinese traders had lived long before VOC came to East Indies, the information about the sugar making activities was rarely known, except the limited transactions that took place among the Chinese traders.

Was the above condition caused by insufficient data recording these issues or were Chinese not interested to deal with such industries due to the fact that they got great financial benefits from trading because of middleman traders, or did this result from the natural fact of Banten which did not support such industries? This issue cannot be comprehensively discussed. However, the close relationship between sugar use and Chinese people and their long experience regarding sugar industries did not take place all of a sudden; it took take.

It is true that before these people moved to Batavia and still lived in Banten, they were known to have sugarcane industries despite limited production. It is considered that pepper was more prospective than sugarcane, sugarcane was not chosen as *prima donna* household industries. When moved to Batavia, they got encouragement from Coen to develop these industries. There was an action to try to do sugarcane industries, household sugarcane industries still survived dominated in the area of *Ommelanden* Batavia in the XVII Century (Bulbeck, 1998:109)

This industry was growing when Chinese people had some opportunities to live in Batavia city, mainly those who lived outside the wall despite its fame as the city with socially critical security. That many Chinese who were economi-

cally poor could not live inside the wall of Batavia led them buy any lands where they could do their creativities connected to their lives; they, therefore, could have wide lands they could manage (Blusse, 2004: 156-157).

These Chinese people who lived outside social wall of Batavia city settled with Batavia native people, and other incoming citizens who could not live in the social city wall. These people usually did not have close relationship with VOC bureaucracy and administrative jobs, but they had to provide sufficient needs according to their settlements, mostly in regards with agricultural produce, like rice, corns, cassava, and cash crops, for their own individual purposes, trading commodities, or exchange products for their daily needs, such as salt, fish, meat, tobacco and others (Anon, 1841: 432). Besides crops, many wild trees that community did not grow and develop grew very well, like cane, bamboo, bushes and many others. Bamboo and rattan were then sold to VOC and made for ropes and baskets in which spices from Maluku were exported. Both crops and wild trees were well growing surrounding Batavia city.

Cane, however, was the most interesting tree. The community was not interested to grow this kind of trees because VOC did not need this plantation and they fulfilled their sugar needs through imported products; cane trees, then, did not sell well in the markets and its price never increased. They at that time let cane trees grow wildly after they had used these trees in a very limited number for their individual needs. Such condition was used by Chinese people who were interested in managing such trees to become sugar by buying them from the native people through product exchange besides growing such trees around their houses (Jacobs, 2006: 423).

The cane trees collected from their own grown ones or they purchased from the local people were squeezed to get its liquid sugar which was cooked and then made into solid. Mixed with some spieces, the liquid cane sugar thickened and some of this liquid was made solid and finally considered as pure distilled cane liquid. Crystal-like solid matters are the purest and commonly called *gula batu* (stone sugar); meanwhile, the rest products cannot be made solid and this is called syrup sugar (*molasses*).

The producers then sold the sugar collected in the city and found the VOC officers and rich Chinese people as buyers who mixed the sugar into their drinks, particularly tea. Tea, then, was getting more and more famous and reached more consumers; the producers, therefore, intended to massively develop sugar industries and changed the functions of their houses to become sugar workshops.

This led them to build two-storey houses, commonly called *loteng*, and with the first floor functioned as sugar making industrial workshop and the second floor as the area which functioned as their house. Chinese sugarcane pressing businessmen merely had houses and distilling tools with buffalos to move the grindstones, but they did not have the areas on which cane was planted. The VOC encouraged the native people who lived in the remote areas to plant cane and submitted their produce to these sugarcane pressing companies. The price decided by the colonial companies was 9 reals per *pikul* (around 133 pounds), or doubled prices than international price; therefore, the sugarcane pressing labourers were ready to produce themselves. The means of transportation, like boats, and horse carried carts, was provided by the buyers (Niemyer, 2012: 119).

The activities in the sugar industrial workshops spreading from the western part of Tangerang to the eastern part of Bekasi and in Batavia *Ommelanden* proved them as home industries whose centers were at local workshops employing a lot of manpower who were not only Chinese people with their relatives, other traveler Chinese and also the local people delivering their cane trees and employing themselves as laborers in these sugar cane industry workshops. Accordingly, at *Ommelanden* Batavia, the first home industry making sugar was managed by Chinese people.

Trading activities, however, were not only limited on sugar industries, but these people could still use other advantages of cane trees, which were squeezed to get their essence then mixed with yeast and preserved in the drums in some days as the fermentation process occurred in the leftover liquid. The result of these industrial processes was *arak tebu* (distilled cane arrack), classified as traditional Chinese alcoholic drinks with rice wine as the raw materials or *Ciu* (Lorimer, 1998: 351).

Unlike sugar industries, arrack industries did not grow that well due to its limited raw materials and a small number of their consumers. Initially, the arrack consumers were middle class and lower class of Chinese people and local people, particularly the ones from Java and Ambon. An interesting point is that arrack processing activities occurred at the same area of sugar workshops and this led to the fact that the front part of the workshops were used for sugar industries, while the rear part of the workshop was used for arrack industries.

The process of arrack cane was an interesting phenomenon. Besides through personal offers with uncertain packaging sizes, for such a far distance, supplied to the inside wall, arrack together with sugar, rice and other com-

modities was transported by rafts in Ciliwung river. Compared to sugar, arrack products were risky for the producers and buyers due to monopoly sale by VOC; arrack, therefore, was considered traditional alcoholic drinks with yeast and the purchasing and buying process could be sanctioned by seizing such products and catching the producers.

By having two business industries, both sugar and arrack products, Chinese traders could dominate one of the economic potentials around Batavia. These products, benefits and incomes even had potentials to be developed in the informal sectors in this area. The role of Chinese ethnic became important in this sector by marginalizing the roles of European people, both in the private and government sectors (VOC officers themselves) (Knight, 1975: 131).

The increasing number of Chinese people in Batavia at the end of the XVII Century resulted in a new problem for high-level VOC officers. Initially, these Chinese immigrants were encouraged to contribute their activities to develop Batavia as the key traders with high productivity, but in the next century the opposite fact took place. The VOC leader's believed that the presence of the Chinese ethnic caused more disadvantages than the advantages, due to the frequency of social problems, especially those closely connected to security.

With such high population density, many Chinese people did not have jobs, were roaming in the city wall and in *Ommelanden* as unemployed and were involved in crimes in the settlements. Those who were established with their earnings, especially the middle and upper community levels, were considerably considered to dominate the economic sectors of Batavia city, threatening the roles of European people, who generally consisted of VOC officers and retired

ones with business backgrounds (Hoevell, 1840: 13).

The above condition was worsened by the issues among the elite VOC that elite Chinese were highly suspected to prepare the conspiracy to take over the power (Hoetink, 1918). Accordingly, before the political fact was getting worse, they tried to find the solution to reduce the potential power of Chinese ethnic and to put them under VOC control. When Governor General Valckenier was in power in 1737, he decided to catch these Chinese people who did not have fixed jobs and drove them away. The official issue spreading in the community was that they were employed in the VOC cinnamon plantation in Ceylon. Another rumour was that Chinese people who were caught were drowned in the middle of the sea and this rumour created confusion among Chinese ethnic (Veth, 1912: 136).

Many Chinese people refused to be recruited and pulled themselves to leave the city and lived outside. They even equipped themselves with weapons and continued their travel while making some disturbance with VOC assets and their officers as their targets. VOC management invited Chinese officers in Batavia on 25 September 1740 to discuss such condition and this discussion led to an agreement for Valckenier to send two reliable Chinese to Tanah Abang considered as the chaotic points for Chinese, while the posts of the walls and Meester Cornelis were strengthened on 5 October.

Due to the fact that these two officers who brought the VOC's instruction failed to execute the assigned job to force the Chinese people to surrender and submit their weapons, Valckenier made a decision to take a strong action in the form of attacking Chinese settlements at Angke and Tanah Abang on 9 October 1740. However, at night the at-

tack in the form of chaotic tragedy, and ethnic cleansing on Chinese took place and on the next days this tragedy was spreading to all directions of Batavia.

Actually, the people who were doing this chaos were the local people, including Ambonese and other ethnics controlled by VOC high officers themselves. They destroyed all Chinese symbols and this tragedy was spreading to *Ommelanden* area. All Chinese who lived here suffered from the wave of this chaotic tragedy which destroyed hospitals, collateral buildings, opium houses, gambling houses and others.

The other objects which were also destroyed were Chinese sugarcane distilling areas and arrack manufacturing structures. The owners of these industries could not maintain their asset and ran away, while their left fabrics which were then massively looted and destroyed. Similarly, their sugarcane plantation were destroyed and then burned and the same thing happened to sugarcane storages and cane which were ready to be distilled. These Chinese owners ran away and then were suspected to regroup with other Chinese people who ran away from Batavia, forming some groups in the remote areas in Krawang, Priangan or Central Java to start the *Pacina* war period.

This war changed the political constellation in the remote areas of Java, particularly along the north Java coastlines which were the fertile lands. These Chinese people became the wholesale tax collectors of the markets, toll gates, villages, and even rice stocks for VOC needs. They became victimized by community anger, and attacks causing many casualties. When Chinese opposition was spreading to Central Java on 19 October marked by the escapees from Batavia to Semarang, the polarization between native Chinese became the united group and this unity led to oppose VOC

(Remmelink, 1994: 127).

This systematic and massive destruction led to make the all Chinese sugarcane industries stop operating, and were even destroyed. After 1741 the chaotic tragedy stopped and was restored by the VOC decree to assign Chinese people in special settlements in Batavia, the sugarcane industries at Ommelanden could not grow anymore. Many sugarcane industry businessmen pulled themselves from Batavia and set up their business activities in these new locations, for example, in Karawang, Cirebon and Central Java many traditional sugarcane industries were established at the second half of the XVIII Century and at the beginning of the XIX Century, before their existence was marginalized by European sugarcane industries (*onderneming*) at the end of the XIX Century.

The sugarcane industries in the north coastlines of Java, from Cirebon to Pekalongan managed by Chinese people ended when Kultuurstelsel system officially issued the governmental economic hegemony on agricultural economic sectors were implemented. Those who had rice milling were obliged to plant cane and then sold it to the colonial government with the price determined by the government. This process made the sugarcane pressing companies belonging to Chinese people taken over by European businessmen in the 1830s, who changed the sugarcane pressing company working systems into the contracts between private sectors with the government. See G.R. Knight, "Gully coolies, weed-woman and snijvolk: the sugar industry workers of North Java in the early twentieth century" (Linblad, 1993: 69).

CONCLUSION

The existence of sugarcane indus-

tries around Batavia and *Ommelanden* for more than one century is a specific phenomenon in the history of Batavia. The development of such industries proved that there was a specific economic system which could survive and could grow around the city as the government centre and economic control with the focus of monopoly system. This existence certainly contributed to the local economic dynamics dominated by VOC with their special rights given by the Dutch government in Europe. Similarly, besides the production supplied to the storages in Batavia seaport as export commodities and enjoyed as the local commodities, these sugarcane industries influence the external cooperation beyond monopolistic VOC bureaucracy and were purely controlled by private or individual capitals.

Another factor which we can conclude regarding these sugarcane industries is that the areas around Batavia can be developed as the sugarcane areas for Java Island. If the tragedy in 1740 had not taken place in Batavia and had not destroyed these sugarcane industries, it can be predicted that such industries could have grown and widened to the remote areas of Batavia. This could have changed not only the history of Batavia but also of Indonesia, particularly Java.

For Batavia, if these sugarcane industries had been developed, the private lands would not have grown, but sugarcane plantations (*suiker onderneming*) in Batavia and *Ommelanden* would have grown and these plantations which would have been dominated by the sugarcane industries with different exploitation and administration systems from those managed by private sectors. In addition, the farmers around these areas would have experienced their social economic and behavior changes from the sugarcane farmers to become labourers of such industries.

Java is historically famous as the island which has produced sugar to fulfill the needs of all over Indonesia and the development in Batavia would have resulted in a lot of its historical changes. The sugarcane areas like Cirebon-Pekalongan, *Vorstenlanden* and East Java would not have reached the dominant position which took place in East Indies, particularly Cirebon-Pekalongan directly feeling the impacts of the changes in Batavia predicted to not have experienced the development of sugarcane areas. Regarding the development of fabrics and sugarcane industries in remote areas of Java closely connected to the installment and widening transportation routes, especially railways, the dominance of sugarcane industries of Batavia would have changed the city planning, proliferation directions and transportation means in the local areas, particularly in West Java. The racially chaotic tragedy in 1740 in Batavia can be concluded to have changed the social-economic structure in most areas in Java and development has Java as it is today.

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