Chinese new migrants in Suriname: the inevitability of ethnic performing

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Overseas Chinese in general can be easily labelled problematic. According to Rothschild, who had Southeast Asia in mind, Overseas Chinese fit the pattern of politically significant ethnic stratification as an economically strong but politically vulnerable pariah / outsider ethnic minority, usually part of a wider, trans-sovereign diaspora, ‘performing commercial and entrepreneurial functions that are conspicuous, remunerative, important, but socially disparaged, versus politically dominant but economically unskilled majority’. He notes that the entrepreneurial skills of such minorities are readily considered ‘polluting and corrosive’ by the host society. Anti-Chinese sentiments in Suriname and the Caribbean as a whole also focus on the image of Chinese entrepreneurial chain migrants as parasites, but they are not quite as institutionalized as in Southeast Asia.

Anti-sinicism in colonial Southeast Asia has its roots in the relationship between Chinese trading minorities and Western colonial overlords, but it is exacerbated by issues of modernization of the Southeast Asian states and China. Moreover, communal separation is not an option in the Western concept of the nation-state. In the post-colonial states of Southeast Asia, Chinese have the choice of being either outsiders (foreign residents, non-bumiputera, etc.) or assimilating and becoming non-ethnic. On the one hand unfavourable Western colonial views of the Chinese minorities deeply impacted attitudes towards Chineseness in the post-colonial states. On the other, anti-colonial movements in Southeast Asia were often anti-Western (and to some extent anti-Christian in the case of Indonesia), which also did not bode well for those Chinese who were associated with modernization / Westernization. Modern anti-sinicism in Southeast Asia is also related to resinicization among successful younger generation who are abandoning an ancestral regional identity in favour of a general ‘Chinese’ identity; this resinicization meshes with outsider stereotypes of a monolithic Chinese group.

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1 Rothschild 1981: 74-75.
Anti-Chinese sentiments in Suriname are also typified by a conflation of Chinese migrants with Chinese ethnicity, but anti-sinicism is not quite applicable to the way Chinese are viewed in the particular brand of Surinamese multiculturalism. Immigrants from the PRC and people with an ethnic Chinese background in Suriname are guided and limited in their articulation of identity—which can seem exclusively ethnic under the strong influence of apajah ideology in Surinamese society—by the way Chineseness is viewed by non-Chinese. This view acquires structure through outsider stereotypes of Chinese. Actors wishing to manipulate Chinese ethnic identity in Suriname instrumentally have to take into account this structured view of Chineseness, as otherwise Chinese identity would not be recognizable and any completely new articulation would not only be difficult to imagine but also potentially threatening precisely because it is new. Ascribed Chineseness is more clearly constructed along Chinese stereotypes in Suriname. Historically, this ascribed identity has been articulated instrumentally by elites in local media as a reaction to perceived competition by socially mobile Chinese migrants, although recently it is articulated by non-elites as a form of anti-government (anti-establishment and to a certain extent anti-globalist) protest.

In fact, recent popular and official responses to renewed Chinese migration in Suriname are shaped by such strong anti-immigrant sentiments. The style of anti-Chinese statements is based on the pattern of Chinese stereotypes in Suriname mentioned above, but their content is determined by four underlying issues relating to the renewed Chinese presence in Suriname. Cheap PRC-made commodities were discussed in Chapter 4 and the issue of increasing influence of the PRC was raised in Chapter 5. Two other issues relating to the entry of New Chinese will be discussed in this chapter: irregular migration and violent crime. In the mind of the Surinamese public the PRC, Chinese migrants and cheap Chinese-made commodities all boil down to the same thing: a massive, unstoppable wave from the East —a Yellow Peril. New Chinese migrants are directly associated with illegality and are perceived as a Contamination which will be explained later.

6.1 Historical Precedents

Anti-Chinese sentiments in Suriname are as old as Chinese immigration. During the late nineteenth century, colonial authorities regularly voiced objections to any large-scale Chinese immigration,
often describing Chinese as a moral, social, and hygienic contamination. Historically, anti-Chinese sentiments in Suriname are mild in comparison with other countries. In the Caribbean region, the most remarkable anti-Chinese sentiments were found in Jamaica. As noted earlier, anti-Chinese violence occurred on three occasions in Jamaica during the twentieth century (in 1919, 1938 and 1965), the scale of which was unique in the British Caribbean. The ethnic Chinese of Jamaica, who were mainly Fuidung' on Hakkas, dominated the retail trade as a middleman minority between the Afro-Jamaican majority and the small White elite. Antipathy between Afro-Jamaican clientele and Chinese shopkeepers is usually presented as the source of anti-Chinese violence, but an alternative explanation points to White resentment of Chinese social mobility. Through their control of the media, the White elite promoted the image of Chinese as parasitizing the Afro-Jamaican population, and pushed for tighter restrictions on Chinese immigration and stricter regulations to prevent Chinese dominance of the retail sector.

Ethnic Chinese were similarly targeted by the colonial elite in Suriname. Although Chinese were not portrayed particularly favourably in nineteenth century Suriname, they were not prosecuted either. In the early twentieth century the colonial media systematically began to portray Chinese shopkeepers in Suriname as too numerous, unhygienic, opium and gambling addicts, as well as parasitic, and the established business community called for limits to Chinese migration. The piauw affair of 1930 revealed strong anti-Chinese sentiments in colonial society, and the willingness of the authorities to accommodate the colonial elite in eradicating Chinese competition. The colonial elite of Dutch expat officials, white, Jewish and mulatto upper and middle class resented the change in the colonial status quo caused by ‘free migration’ (i.e. migrants who were not bonded labour). The distinct group of wealthy Chinese merchants that were leading the development of a huaqiao community symbolized social change.

\[4\] Ankum-Houwink 1974: 47-49. Non-migrant Chinese and the Chinese Empire, however, were not necessarily depicted negatively. The Koloniaal Nieuwsblad of 28 October (no. 86) and 1 November 1853 (no. 87), the year the first Chinese indentured labourers arrived, carried an extensive article on Chinese culture which described Chinese as completely alien and civilized.

\[5\] Bouknight-Davis 2004; Li 2004.

\[6\] Bouknight-Davis 2004: 86-88.

\[7\] Ibid.

\[8\] Zijlmans & Enser 2002: 48-49, 126-130.
Piauw (piauw or piao, from Kejia: piao ‘ticket’; an abbreviation of the Kejia name of the lottery: pak hap piao, ‘White Dove Tickets’) was a type of lotto that flourished in Suriname between 1912 and 1947 due to the lack of regulations with regard to non-Western gambling. Tickets were sold by agents from private homes and shops, who were backed by the Kong Ngie Tong huiguan. The piauw ‘bankers’ were well-off Chinese who supported the game as a way of providing a livelihood for Chinese tickets sellers, often unemployed immigrants have no choice but to get involved in the game. The colonial authorities had tolerated Chinese gambling and lotteries as long as these were exclusive to the Chinese ethnic group, which in practice meant people visiting the huiguan. However the urban Creole majority were the main buyers of piauw tickets, and soon real addiction set in.

The government moved to ban Piauw in 1926, but the game went underground in a reduced form and in 1928 the bankers were back in the huiguan. In 1930 things came to a head: Kong Ngie Tong was determined to continue piauw as a migrant coping strategy, and the government was determined to assert its authority. Huiguan resistance steadily grew; government officials were not invited to huiguan events, no cooperation was given to extradite Chinese piauw agents, foreign attention was sought for the Chinese point of view, and eventually the huiguan premises were fortified and police raids were repulsed. In 1930 articles appeared in De West (the newspaper of the colonial elite) attacking the Chinese in blatantly racist terms using the piauw issue. According to De West, the problem of piauw was Chinese immigration, and the most obvious long-term solution was to forbid all Chinese immigration.

On 27 June 1930 the colonial government stripped Kong Ngie Tong of its corporate capacity because of illegal gambling and drugs (opium), and the huiguan building was closed and its assets auctioned. According to government critics, the dissolution of Kong Ngie Tong had clearly been the goal of the colonial government, and Piauw had been used to criminalize the Chinese intentionally. When the government became serious about eradicating piauw in

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9 De West, 20 June 1930: ‘Een Oplossing?’ (A solution?).
10 De Surinamer, 1 May 1990: ‘Pipo uitgezet’ (Pipo extradited); De West, 6 May 1930: ‘Waarom een waarborgsom?’ (Why demand a deposit?); De West, 4 April 1930: ‘Kong Ngie Tong’; De West, 6 June 1930: ‘Inval in Kong Ngie Tong’ (Kong Ngie Tong raided); De West, 4 July 1930: ‘Slechte raadgevers’ (Bad advisors).
11 e.g. De West, 17 January 1930, 24 January 1930, 28 January 1930.
12 Suriname, 6 January 1933: ‘Piauw’.
1934 / 1935, many Chinese immigrants (often married to local women) seem to have fallen on hard times. This success of the Surinamese elite may have saved the ethnic Chinese from violent prosecution. In Jamaica the elites also targeted Chinese gambling practices, but when that proved unsuccessful they directly targeted Chinese businesses and eventually got the support of small Afro-Jamaican shopkeepers to make the charge that Chinese were the cause of job losses among the working class. Violent attacks on Chinese soon followed.

6.2 Chinese Stereotypes

No increase in anti-Chinese reporting can be found in the Surinamese media for almost seventy years. Then the first text identifying New Chinese as a threat to a stable Surinamese economy and nation appeared in De Ware Tijd of 8 January 1999, and already contained the basic objections against modern Chinese immigration. The writer worried about Chinese construction workers (apparently those imported for the Sunny Point housing project) threatening the livelihood of local, non-Chinese, workers. The article describes these Chinese as barely visible in daily life, but working as massive, close-knit teams on construction sites. Hard-working, never resting, more productive and cheaper than local labour, these people threaten annihilation of segments of the Surinamese work force. The tone of the article is generally anti-immigrant; not only Chinese construction workers are problematic, but also Haitian agriculturalists and Brazilian prospectors, and the government is urged to step in now to protect locals against these foreigners.

This chapter will discuss these facts and fantasies that made New Chinese symbolic of government failure, and ethnic Chinese symbolic of foreign threats, as well as the response of the elites of the established Fuidung’on Hakkas to these anti-immigrant

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13 De West, 21 November 1934: ‘Gevolgen van de stopzetting van piauw’ (Consequences of ending piauw).
15 De Ware Tijd, 8 January 1999, E. Goudzand: ‘Chinezen’ (Chinese).
/ anti-Chinese sentiments. Anti-immigrant sentiments are obviously not unique to Suriname, and are not even new to Surinamese history, but they need to be considered in the local context of civic discourse. Randy Kluver describes civic discourse as

...the self-conversation within a society that defines the nature of the society and its people. Civic discourse serves as the defining rubric of national identity as the participants in the social order define the nature of that order as well as their places within it. Civic discourse ultimately helps to create the society of which it is a part, as it is through discursive practice that the society articulates its expectations, assumptions, and norms, and ultimately becomes its own articulated ideal, within the bounds of human nature.17

The ubiquitous, animated, male-dominated discussions of Surinamese politics, typically fuelled by the local Parbo Beer, define and bind Surinamese in a community of victims of inept rulers, and locate specific phenomena such as migration in the context of governance failure. By the turn of the millennium New Chinese migrants had become symbolic of immigration in Suriname, and protesting against (Chinese) immigration was linked to indirect criticism of the government.18 Just as it was not always apparent which came first, objections to immigration / New Chinese migrants or resistance to the Surinamese government, anti-immigrant sentiments could also seem to target anything Chinese.

Orientalist stereotypes determined the style and vocabulary of popular objections to Chinese migrants in Suriname. This reflected the institutionalized way Surinamese think about Chinese which describes as well as prescribes Chineseness, making facts at once irrelevant and controversial. Stereotyping of ethnic Chinese in the media coverage of the ‘problems’ posed by ‘Chinese’ (New Chinese migrants and the PRC) is obvious. Chinese stereotypes in Suriname fit in complementary negative and positive sets in six domains (based on the contents of the negative set: contamination, busi-

17 Kluver 1999: 11-12.
18 Chinese-language texts produced in Suriname on piauw and the final days of Kong Ngie Tong only appear almost two generations later, e.g. Guang Yi Tang Baizhounian Jinian Tekan 廣義堂百週年紀念特刊 (Com-memorative Edition on the Hundredth Anniversary of Kong Ngie Tong Sang). S.l., 1980; A Short Biographical Sketch of Afoeng Chiu Hung / 丘鴻先生八八壽辰紀念特輯. S.l, s.a. In some of these stories, Kong Ngie Tong is the victim of persecution, and the auction of the huiguan’s assets becomes the plunder of the folk religion shrine on the third floor.
ness, submissiveness, inscrutability, alienness, and civilization; see Appendix 1, Table 6); the most important domain is ‘contamination’, in the form of the Yellow Peril stereotype and various stereotypes of Chinese as vectors of disease, sources of food contamination, and morally problematic. Most apply to Chinese migrants, although there are also some stereotypes of Chinese and China in general. Some stereotypical images of Chinese in Suriname are based on the way the older immigrants adapted to local conditions, so they are not always meaningful to non-Surinamese: Chinese language is the staccato sound of Kejia; Chinese surnames are tri-syllabic transcriptions of Dutch and English approximations of Kejia and Cantonese readings; the Chinese homeland means Hong Kong, Chinese are outsiders and must therefore be reached through Sranantongo. Most Chinese stereotypes may be listed in two complementary sets. The positive set consists of patronizing statements that keep alive the image of Chinese as innocuous outsiders. The negative set consists of a more extensive set of specific negative statements, that keep alive the vision of China / Chinese as a threat, but both sets exist in a limited number of narrative domains where race, gender and class intersect: contamination, crime, submissiveness, etc.

According to a socio-anthropological definition, stereotyping, “the consistent application of standardized notions of the cultural distinctiveness of a group” with its significant power inequalities, is widespread in polyethnic Surinamese society. Stereotyping in polyethnic societies helps “define one’s own group in relation to others by providing a tidy ‘map’ of the social world, and it can justify systematic differences in access to resources.”

Stereotypes are the performative content of Chineseness in Suriname. They generate labels and narratives that reaffirm Chinese subjectivity: “Chinese are...” What makes Chinese stereotypes particularly insidious is the fact that they continue to shape everyday opinions. One example is that the way the adjective ‘Chinese’ is used as an illocutionary speech act - by saying ‘Chinese’, one ‘does’ Chinese - both reflects and imposes blindness to complexity and change, in virtually all languages in Paramaribo. Generally speaking, the negative and positive images that have accumulated around ethnic Chinese as a consistent part of the multicultural landscape remain unchallenged despite changes in the status quo of ethnic Chinese in Suriname. The negative set of Chi-

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20 Eriksen 1993: 25
nese stereotypes reflect abjection; they are consistently dehumanizing and signal that Chinese identity in Suriname is separate and largely unacceptable.

6.3 New Chinese Migrants as a Problem: Irregular Migration

Stereotypical views of Chineseness were revived when New Chinese migration came to be associated with irregular migration, also known as illegal, undocumented, and unauthorized migration. Association does not mean a proven link; migration data in Suriname are unreliable and no detailed data on Chinese migration are systematically compiled, and so nothing is known with any degree of certainty with regard to absolute or relative numbers of irregular Chinese migrants entering Suriname or remigrating to other destinations. In other words, the fact that New Chinese were being associated with illegal activities had less to do with independently confirmed facts than with public willingness to link observations of an increased Chinese presence (migrants, *maoyi gongsi*, PRC projects) with Yellow Peril-type stereotypes.

The Surinamese public first became aware of changes in the Chinese ‘community’ in the late 1980s, and this was not only because of the construction of huge supermarkets by the latest Fuidung’on Hakka *sinkeh*. Advertisements containing names of Chinese nationals in the unfamiliar Hanyu Pinyin orthography started appearing in De Ware Tijd; the advertisements were all about PRC citizens asking the public for help in finding their lost passports. Sino-Surinamese names were based on approximations of Kejia and Cantonese pronunciations in Dutch and English orthography, but the Mandarin pronunciations made these new Chinese names seem completely alien. Suspicions that the *paspport-Chinezen* (‘Passport Chinese’) were involved in some sort of identity fraud linked to illegal immigration were eventually borne out.21

21 Apparently, this initial influx of New Chinese immigrants started when a number of earlier Fuidung’on Hakka immigrants in Paramaribo began using the business networks of Chinese travel agencies in Hong Kong to promote Suriname as a possible destination / transit point for irregular migrants. Those wishing to continue to other destinations could illegally obtain travel documents from corrupt officials at the Civil Registry Office in Paramaribo. The migrant would ‘lose’ his or her passport, and the procedure to obtain new – and different – travel documents required the migrant to file a police report and to place an advertisement in the local papers asking the public to keep an eye out for the ‘lost’ or ‘stolen’ passport. Following a number of arrests at the Civil Registry Office, this particular scam ended.
There was trade in forged passports and travel documents in Suriname long before the arrival of the New Chinese, but it is apparently becoming more widespread and internationalised, as forgery implies some sort of professional network. The most common forms of identity fraud used to involve recycling the documents of deceased Chinese in China for use by new migrants, and forging identification certificates used in lieu of Chinese birth certificates. After the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949, Fuidung'on Hakkas attempting to travel abroad along their traditional qiaoxiang network, found themselves to be political refugees on the traditional first leg of the journey to the port of Hong Kong. There they needed to build up formal identities to continue journeying, which could require an extended stay in Hong Kong. The number of undocumented Chinese immigrants seems to have been relatively substantial. In 1958 a general pardon was granted to all Chinese illegals in Suriname, this was the first and last time Chinese illegals were pardoned (see Paragraph 3.3).

Though the ‘Passport Chinese’ impacted the image of Chinese in Suriname, the public only firmly linked New Chinese to illegal migration after 2 October 1999, when the Surinamese police detained 35 Chinese after the chartered plane they were boarding turned out to have the wrong passenger list. Apparently they were to be smuggled out of Suriname, probably to Brazil. The Venezuelan pilot testified that he had flown to Suriname to transport Chinese four times before. Brazilian and Surinamese authorities suspect that this was part of a wider, organized practice of smuggling Chinese to Brazil and other countries in the region. All the detained Chinese pointed to a non-local Chinese as the

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22 De Ware Tijd, 7 August 2003: ‘Valse paspoorten nu een trend’ (Forged passports now a trend).
23 Identity fraud was extensive at the time, including forged identity papers, and fictitious family relationships. Modern identity fraud usually means forged passports, but any document that migrants might need in Suriname can be forged, such as driving licences and credit cards. Moreover, closely linked to immigration fraud is marriage fraud. This usually involves one transaction: a Surinamese citizen accepts a one-time payment to actually marry the foreigner. The foreigner becomes a legal resident and has the possibility of eventually even acquiring Surinamese citizenship. Cases of New Chinese immigrants marrying Surinamese nationals - ethnic Chinese as well as non-Chinese - are not uncommon, and the Surinamese authorities are aware of the problem. It is unusual for Chinese in Suriname to be paid to secure fake fiancés for the sons and daughters of people in China, as the Surinamese Ministry of Foreign Affairs does not issue special fiancé visas.
24 De Ware Tijd, 5 October 1999: ‘Politie verijdelt smokkel Chinezen’ (Police prevent smuggling of Chinese).
organizer, who was also later detained along with 16 other Chinese nationals managing a system of safe houses outside Paramaribo.\textsuperscript{25}

But already in 1998 a network was discovered that had smuggled at least 235 Chinese nationals to the USA, mostly via Suriname and St.Maarten, Netherlands Antilles. In the same year a Korean from New York was also caught smuggling Chinese from Suriname to the USA via Bermuda and the Bahamas, apparently all Fujianese\textsuperscript{26}. Having paid large sums of money for the trip to Suriname, Chinese illegal immigrants needed to invest more in the next leg of the trip if Suriname was not their final destination.\textsuperscript{27} Only very rarely did they directly travel to the USA, but more commonly to the Caribbean islands, French Guiana, Guyana, Venezuela, Brazil, Argentina, Chile or other places in Latin America.\textsuperscript{28} More and more reports of Chinese irregular migrants followed, and by the early 2000s the reputation of Suriname as a staging area for the smuggling of Chinese to the Caribbean islands (particularly St.Maarten) and beyond grew.\textsuperscript{29}

\textsuperscript{25} The authorities had no idea what to do with the 35 Chinese, as they had not actually done anything illegal under Surinamese law. They were placed under house-arrest for a number of months in a house on the Fred Derbystraat, but eventually released, after most had quietly slipped away. Not long after, a number of them turned up in Guyana as illegal aliens.

\textsuperscript{26} The Daily Herald, 1998, exact date unknown, (http://www.thedailyherald.com/news/daily/B147/chin147.html): ‘Flow of Chinese illegals may end; Migrant smuggling ring busted in Suriname’; Don Burgess: ‘Bermuda figures in U.S. immigrant smuggling case’. Bermuda Sun Newspaper, 15 July 1998; The Associated Press, via Nando.net, 12 July 1998 (http://www.nandotimes.com): ‘More charges emerge in smuggling of Chinese immigrants’. The Chinese illegals who were caught said they paid between US $2,000 and US $3,000, but only US $45 was required to obtain a visa for Suriname. This prompted the Surinamese authorities to summon home the diplomat responsible for issuing visas at the embassy in China. Rumours that the embassy in Beijing was involved in smuggling Chinese to the USA via the Johan Pengel International Airport in Suriname had already been circulating for some time.

\textsuperscript{27} Fees in excess of US$ 10,000 were routinely mentioned by Chinese informants and repeated by non-Chinese Surinamese, though that number might be related to the Chinese (in any variety) word for ‘ten thousand’ (萬), which has the additional meaning of ‘a lot’.

\textsuperscript{28} Another group smuggled Chinese to Guyana in small fishing boats or by land, so that they could continue to Venezuela and Argentina. One family-run smuggling ring would arrange housing for groups of irregular migrants and transport them to French Guiana by sea; there were stories of people being thrown in the sea or suffocating after being hidden under planks in the bottom of the boat.

\textsuperscript{29} Verhoeven et al 2007: 55. On 28 August 2000, four Chinese nationals were arrested trying to leave for Brazil with stolen passports, and the next day eleven Chinese nationals entering Suriname with forged passports on a flight from the Netherlands were turned back. In March 2001 the police helped US officials in St.Croix who were investigating a group smuggling people to the USA via St.Maarten,
Although the cases of Chinese irregular migrants signalled a new trend in international migration for Suriname, local authorities conducted no studies and produced no data on irregular migration in Suriname. Strictly speaking, nothing was formally known about final destinations of migrants, their numbers, and any changes in those numbers. The local press did not investigate the wider phenomenon of irregular migration and Suriname’s position in this form of globalizing migration, focussing instead on police reports of illegal Chinese. The media fed the public updated versions of persistent negative (international) Chinese stereotypes, such as the image of a flood of smuggled Chinese threatening Suriname, vehicles and victims of a Chinese mafia. But despite persistent rumours of Chinese immigrants working themselves to pulp in order to pay off the ‘loans’ involved in their irregular migration, there is no reliable evidence of trafficked Chinese or that any Chinese migrants were ever exploited by the persons who got them into Suriname.

Netherlands Antilles, from Suriname to arrest seven Chinese suspects (4 men and 3 women) in Paramaribo who were involved in forging travel documents for Chinese clients. (De Ware Tijd, 15 March 2001: ‘Chinezen aangehouden in verband met mensenomkoping’ (Chinese arrested for people trafficking)). In 2003 the FBI investigated another smuggling route from Suriname to the USA via St. Maarten, after reports that 15 Chinese drowned at sea when a boat carrying 25 illegal migrants capsized. A Chinese couple was arrested in Miami who admitted to having smuggled thousands of Chinese into the USA during the previous 20 years. Clients would be charged more than US$ 50,000 to get to the USA; US$ 15,000 was paid in advance, a further US$ 15,000 was paid by the client’s family in China when the Caribbean leg of the journey was completed, and the remainder was to be paid once the client arrived in the USA. The American authorities claimed that this snakehead couple headed a network that extended from Suriname, St. Maarten, Jamaica, the Bahamas and Guadeloupe in the Caribbean to Thailand and the Philippines in South East Asia.

Though irregular migration remains unquantified and intangible, Chinese nationals do not make up the bulk of illegal residents in Suriname, nor are they the only foreigners smuggled or trafficked to or via Suriname. Most illegal residents are from neighbouring Guyana and Brazil, but there are also irregular migrants from West Africa, the Caribbean and India. The only media reports on non-Chinese organized irregular migration were on Indian nationals. In October 2001 seven employees at the Johan Adolf Pengel International Airport were dismissed, including the head and the acting head of Airport Operations, who had been paid to help seven Indian nationals without US visa and only tickets to Trinidad, to reach the USA. After arrival in Trinidad, the Indians switched boarding passes with Surinamese in an attempt to transit to the USA. Numbers of passengers in transit flights are normally not counted, but heightened controls after ‘9-11’ meant that all passengers had to disembark as the plane could not continue to the US. The illegals were caught and sent back to Suriname. (Brabants Dagblad, 12 October 2001).

Definitions from Skeldon 2001: 7-8. Apparently, remigration of Chinese migrants in the Caribbean region (irregular or otherwise) to Suriname is developing into
On a larger scale Chinese irregular migration may be organized by ‘big snake-heads’ who control the transnational networks of ‘small snakeheads’, enforcers and debt collectors, but there is no evidence that the Chinese human smuggling business is controlled by “organised crime”. There is no hard evidence of transnational or local organized crime behind illegal Chinese immigrants in Suriname. Chinese migration in Suriname used to be a network-based individual enterprise. Individuals were helped by a third party in Suriname, and this assistance might at times have been semi-legal, with relatives or employers in Suriname at times willing to bend the rules to obtain visa and work permits. It is difficult to estimate the assistance provided by the Surinamese Chinese huiguan; their original purpose was to facilitate Chinese migration and if they were not directly involved in undocumented migration, they were at least aware of it.

But Chinese migrants were now firmly associated with illegal migration, which was assumed to be human smuggling – ‘the facilitation, transportation, attempted transportation or illegal entry of a person(s) across an international border, in violation of one or more countries laws, either clandestinely or through deception, such as the use of fraudulent documents’ as defined by the USA State Department. Human smuggling came to be confused with human trafficking, where the goal of the smugglers is to profit from the exploitation of their victims, typically through debt bondage, slave labour, and / or commercial sex work. The system of loans in the Fuidung’ on Hakka chain migration network could be abusive, but hardly ever seems to have spiralled into human trafficking. Unsubstantiated rumours of debt bondage and servitude quickly arose with regard to New Chinese migration networks. When ethnic

people trafficking. According to a Laiap informant in Paramaribo, in January 2006 Surinamese police had made arrests in the case of a Chinese national who had imported New Chinese migrants from Trinidad & Tobago to be exploited in local Chinese enterprises.

Chinese snakeheads do exist in Suriname. One 35-year old man from Liaoning Province readily admitted to having paid a snakehead US$ 7,000 to get him to Suriname, about which he knew absolutely nothing. Desperately lonely and deeply disappointed, unable to land a decent job as he spoke only Mandarin and had little access to Chinese networks, he was fed up with the place and was just trying to earn enough by waiting tables in the little Korean restaurant where I met him to pay for a flight back to China.

The website of the USA State Department stresses that human trafficking is primarily exploitation, and does not require people to be smuggled across international borders.
Chinese women sex workers were spotted, they were assumed to be trafficked.

Though marginal in the broader contexts of Chinese migration and prostitution in Suriname, Chinese sex workers contributed to the image of Chinese migrants as illicit and influenced the government's response to the issue of irregular migration. It is often assumed that Chinese sex workers are victims of people trafficking. 36 Most Chinese women engaging in paid sex are part of a network involving men; they work for pimps in the karaoke bars and undocumented brothels, or perhaps male relatives in informal massage parlours and beauty salons. It might even be possible to view them as sex workers in a family network that pools its resources for the purpose of survival or future migration. If they are victims of trafficking, that would imply infiltration of some sort of organized crime in the system of home brothels. Though they are not particularly hard to identify, Chinese prostitutes are understandably extremely unwilling to talk about the place of this coping strategy in their lives. 37 New Chinese immigrants retain the same attitudes towards prostitution which they had held in their homeland, and assume that the Surinamese State holds the same basic views on prostitution, but local judicial and popular attitudes are different. 38

36 Foreign women are trafficked via Suriname to Europe, most are from Latin America and the Caribbean. However, no reliable data are available on foreign Chinese sex workers, and in fact numbers of foreign sex workers are unclear, as they enter Suriname under tourist visa. According to some reports, there were 35 formal and more than 200 informal sex clubs in Suriname in 2000, and current numbers are probably significantly higher. Most of their sex workers were foreigners from Brazil, Santo Domingo, Guyana and Colombia, with lesser numbers from Curaçao and Haiti. (Juanita Altenberg of Stichting Maxi Linder, an NGO working for prostitutes in Suriname, quoted in De Ware Tijd, 27 June 2003, ‘Geen verplichte hiv/aidstest voor buitenlandse prostituees’ (No compulsory HIV/AIDS tests for foreign prostitutes)).

37 Their regional and linguistic backgrounds are varied; in 2002 there was a single Kejia-speaking Vietnam-born ethnic Chinese prostitute working fulltime, while prostitutes from Manchuria and Eastern China working were more common in small enterprises (massage parlours, beauty salons) were more common.

38 One bilingual Chinese and Dutch sign on a house in de Koningstraat in Paramaribo has advertised Chinese massage since 2002, with a sign in broken Dutch ‘Chinese meisje doet het’ (A Chinese girl does it) added for clarity. Like Suriname, the People’s Republic of China is also a signatory to Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), but it has been unwilling to decriminalise prostitution as sex work. Prostitution was claimed to have been eradicated from mainland China by the 1950s, and it’s ‘return’ was linked to the introduction of Deng Xiaoping’s economic reforms, as a result of Western investments and ideas. The maintenance of the ban on prostitution is mainly about moralistic assumptions about sexuality (Evans 1997, quoted in Jeffreys 2004: 118) and ideological posturing in the
Sex is a normal alternative coping strategy for women in the Caribbean, and practices range from local women occasionally supplementing income by sex for favours, through freelancing prostitutes, prostitutes working with pimps or brothels, to debt-bonded foreign sex workers. Faced with the same harsh reality as their Surinamese sisters, New Chinese prostitutes are simply choosing a familiar coping strategy. But their pragmatism has not reduced the stigma attached to ‘being a whore’ in conservative Overseas Chinese culture in Suriname. The New Chinese prostitutes shattered the myth among non-Chinese Surinamese of an ethnic Chinese social safety net, and challenged the ‘Old Chinese’ self-defining view of Chinese women as virtuous, hard-working shopkeeper’s wives, but they also fed the local stereotype of the irredeemably morally corrupt Chinaman.

6.3.1 Government Responses to New Chinese Irregular Migration: The Trafficking in Persons Reports

It should be stressed that no modern Surinamese government was ever inherently opposed to Chinese migration, and in fact Chinese migrants have not always dominated migration policy. Despite the ruling Chinese Communist Party (Jeffreys 2004: 117). Prostitution is now widespread in the PRC, in various forms that readily adapt to changing situation, and defy any attempt to narrowly define the women involved. The term ‘sex worker’ might not entirely fit Chinese prostitutes in China, because they are still used and exploited by men and cannot be considered independent economic and sexual actors (Jeffreys 2004). Prostitution (defined as sexual favours provided by women working in brothels) does not constitute a legal job under Surinamese labour law, but as a signatory to the CEDAW, Suriname is obliged to adapt its labour laws to recognise prostitution as an economic strategy. This dovetails with the use of the term sexwerkers (sex workers) as a politically correct term for prostitutes in Suriname, which was introduced by local and Dutch NGOs working with street prostitutes. The term is not used in Suriname to indicate independent economic and sexual actors (foreign prostitutes exploited in sex clubs could hardly be considered independent workers).


40 Like Chinese, Brazilian immigrants are stereotyped as polluting outsiders, who are in Suriname in huge numbers, and like Chinese there are no accurate migration and demographic data for Brazilians in Suriname. Most Brazilian migrants are artisanal gold miners (Brazilian Portuguese: garimpeiros), and the Wijdenbosch administration tried to capitalise on and perhaps harness their gold production by easing immigration procedures for Brazilians. The Venetiaan administration ended preferential treatment of Brazilian immigrants, partly in response to public concerns about the negative impact of their presence (environmental degradation through their prospecting activities, spread of Malaria and AIDS, increasing crime as perpetrators or as easy victims), but mainly in the context of dismantling the
widely shared belief that immigration has the potential to upset the delicate apanjaht consociationalist balance, no administration has challenged the basic liberal approach to free migration. Suriname remains open to immigration, with few measures to either discourage or encourage immigration or emigration. In accordance with the same logic, and despite the substantial numbers of ‘Overseas Surinamese’ in the Netherlands, the Surinamese state never institutionalized dual allegiance with regard to migration. ‘Overseas Surinamese’ are accorded special treatment in view of historic ties and demand special status because of transnational ties with Suriname, but the government is unwilling to formalise this transnationalism any further.

But by the early 2000s, public outrage at the problem of irregular migration was mounting. Still, the official response to the issue of Chinese irregular migrants was relatively muted. On the one hand restricting migration under Suriname’s liberal tradition was not up for discussion, and the state had no real reason to act on Chinese irregular migration. Irregular immigrants and illegals are no real burden to the state as they are effectively absorbed by the informal economy, and there is no evidence that Chinese immigrants (both legal and undocumented) have a negative impact on (unskilled low-income) employment. On the other hand, the slow and sometimes confused reaction of Surinamese officials to some of the more serious problems related to the presence of New Chinese (crime, illegal migration from Suriname to other destinations) is usually explained as the result of the general institutional weakness that hampers any government response to societal developments, though political influence is sometimes an important factor.41

previous administration’s policies. It was decided to register and legalize the Brazilian illegals in consultation with the Brazilian embassy, but even long-term Brazilian residents who could only renew their residency status by leaving and re-entering the country, found it completely unclear what procedures had to be followed at what locations. (De Ware Tijd, 27 January 2005: ‘Braziliaanse ambassadeur niet “content” met registratie illegalen’ (Brazilian Ambassador not satisfied about registration of illegals)). Moreover, although artisanal gold miners were formally categorized as individual entrepreneurs, the Aliens Department now demanded employer’s statements, and as a result, virtually all Brazilian nationals in Suriname, except diplomatic personnel and employees of Brazilian companies (such as Camargo Corrêia, a subcontractor for the Biliton Mining Company), suddenly became illegal.

41 No Surinamese political party has an anti-immigration agenda, and the different parties that dominated government since the late 1980s could not be considered distinctly pro- or anti-Chinese, though political opposition to immigration of non-Westerners reflects the idea that such immigration would serve to strengthen certain
The official response was bureaucratic and fragmented, and focussed on Chinese illegal immigrants; these were the stereotypically ‘real’ illegal immigrants who were more easily tracked because they were more visible in society, and because they almost exclusively entered the country via the international airport. Different ministries independently targeted Chinese illegals, mainly by tightening existing procedures regarding foreigners. Actions were not always well-informed or correctly communicated to the public. Around 1999 the Visa Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs started paying special attention when handling visa applications involving people from Fujian Province, mainly because Fujianese were the main illegal immigrants in the USA, and not because they were the most prominent applicants for entry visa. In 2002 the Ministry of Foreign Affairs announced that it had temporarily stopped issuing entry visa to Chinese nationals.42

Poor communication with the general public and the Chinese target groups (New Chinese migrants, Tong’ap who were not Surinamese nationals, and the various huiguan) made the government appear to be criminalizing ethnic Chinese. Certain departments of the Ministry of Justice and Police were more alert to the kinds of irregularities that they might face when dealing with Chinese immigrants, for instance the possibility of marriage fraud in divorce cases involving Chinese nationals and Surinamese. So the Aliens Department of the Ministry of Justice and Police added a number of requirements to tighten the procedure for obtaining residence permits by non-Dutch foreigners (e.g. health insurance, but no language tests, educational requirements, etc.). This exacerbated long-standing problems of Chinese immigrants (Hakka as well as New Chinese) who legally entered Suriname but who often wait years before extending their residence permits, despite meeting all legal requirements.

Some Chinese believed that the Surinamese government intentionally delayed issuing residence permits, so that Chinese nationals would become illegal if they decided to travel. This view...
was initially voiced by disenfranchised Hakka immigrants and it was soon reproduced by New Chinese immigrants. In the early 2000s, there were rumours among the Chinese that the order had come from East Indian Vice-President Jules Ajodhia.\textsuperscript{43} Despite the fact that his party, the East Indian VHP, was part of the ruling grand coalition including the Creole NPS, the general view among Chinese was that he was obviously looking out for the interests of East Indian entrepreneurs – the commercial rivals of the ethnic Chinese. In November 2004 the Aliens Department eventually invited the leaders of the huiguan and the embassy officials of the PRC to discuss a solution to the problem; Chinese nationals with residency problems could submit their papers to huiguan who would serve as intermediaries to the PRC embassy and the Aliens Department\textsuperscript{44}.

Other ad hoc responses to illegal Chinese immigrants were less subtle. Around 2002, PRC nationals leaving Suriname for the USA or Europe had their passports apparently confiscated, only to be returned without much explanation. The reason was that since Chinese nationals on those flights were known to destroy their passports on board, and Surinam Airways would be held liable for such passengers, so the travel documents of Chinese nationals checking in at the Johan Adolf Pengel International Airport were photocopied. Airport staff were not trained in handling language complexities that could be expected to arise when dealing with holders of Chinese passports and did not explain the reasons for unequal treatment, but no Chinese client at the airport ever formally complained. Customs officers and the Alien Police at the airport began to ask intrusive questions of Chinese nationals entering on tourist visa, such as “Who is coming to collect you at the airport?” and “Where will you be going once you leave the airport?” Stories of rough treatment by officials at the airport are not uncommon among New Chinese migrants.

The tightening of procedures by the Visa Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, especially with regard to Fujianese, was at the prompting of US; illegality might not have been much of an issue for PRC nationals entering Suriname, but those leaving Suriname tended to try to enter other countries (such as the USA) by illegal means. But Surinamese attempts at structural measures to fight illegal immigration only came after firm American pressure. After the Golden Adventure incident in 1993, when a ship carrying

\textsuperscript{43} Vice President during the Venetiaan I (1991-1996) and Venetiaan II administrations (2000-2005).

\textsuperscript{44} ZHRB 18 and 23 November 2004.
illegal Chinese immigrants was intercepted in New York harbour (which aroused public attention to Chinese illegal immigration in the USA), American authorities realised that the Caribbean was a very important transit area for alien smuggling into the USA, this was even before the Surinamese link surfaced in 1998. In the 2003 Trafficking in Persons Report, Suriname was labelled a country whose government does not fully comply with the minimum standards of the Trafficking Victims Protection Act and are not making significant efforts to do so (Tier 3). For the first time, such governments faced potential sanctions, including loss of certain types of U.S. assistance. The report criticized poor border controls, widespread corruption, the bureaucratic stance of the police, and the general indifference of the government towards the concept of human trafficking.

The assumption that Chinese prostitutes were trafficked was the basis for placing Suriname in Tier 3 in the 2003 Trafficking in Persons Report. As human trafficking was defined mainly as the trafficking in women and children, the data were derived from the Situational Analysis of Women in Suriname and the single relevant NGO working with prostitutes. In the section on Suriname of the 2003 Trafficking in Persons Report, Chinese are mentioned in only one sentence (“Suriname is a transit country for Chinese smuggled to the United States, some of whom may be trafficked.”). The local newspapers reported that the Surinamese authorities were not seriously going after prostitution but were instead focussing on Chinese illegal immigrants, apparently taking ‘irregular migration’, ‘smuggling’ and ‘trafficking’ to mean the same thing.

The Surinamese government managed to take a number of actions and enact measures that were acceptable to the US authorities and before the October deadline, and in September 2003 Suriname was moved to Tier 2. The Surinamese government had publicly recognised that human trafficking was a problem, an inter-agency task force was installed, a special prosecutor was appointed

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47 UNIFEM 2000; Stichting Maxi Linder.
48 http://www.state.gov/g/tip/rls/tiprpt/2003/
49 De Ware Tijd, 13 June 2003 ‘Suriname riskeert sancties VS omtrent mensen-smokkel’ (Suriname risks US sanctions because of human smuggling); 15 July 2003 ‘Aanpak mensensmokkel was geen prioriteit’ (Dealing with human smuggling was no priority).
50 Countries whose governments do not fully comply with the Act’s minimum standards but are making significant efforts to bring themselves into compliance with those standards. (http://www.state.gov/g/tip/rls/tiprpt/2004/).
to tackle government corruption, and a police and border control operation called *Veilig Suriname* (Secure Suriname) was launched to rescue victims and arrest traffickers. The public remained convinced that the numbers of Chinese immigrants – and thus illegal immigrants – were increasing, but investigative reporters could uncover no evidence to substantiate the rumours that Chinese illegals were still arriving.

The 2005 Trafficking in Persons Report claimed that “Chinese nationals transiting Suriname risk debt bondage to migrant smugglers who place them into forced labour.” The Surinamese government was criticized for enforcing the law against traffickers poorly and in particular for failing to investigate illegal migration. But in the 2006 TIP Report, Suriname was moved from “Tier 2 Special Watch List” to “Tier 2” status. This signified that Suriname was considered to be making significant efforts to fully comply with the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking as outlined in U.S. legislation, while not yet fully meeting those standards. In the eyes of the US State Department, the Surinamese government had increased law enforcement actions, improved efforts to identify and assist victims, and launched new training and public awareness efforts. However, the one-line statement on Chinese migrants was extended: “Chinese nationals transiting Suriname risk debt bondage to migrant smugglers; men are exploited in forced labour and women in commercial sexual exploitation.” Haitians were also

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51 http://www.state.gov/g/tip/rls/tiprpt/2004/. Though it was generally welcomed by the public, the police warned against rushing into such a project because of institutional weakness of the police and judicial system, and in fact *Veilig Suriname* ran aground three weeks after its implementation on 23 May 2004, precisely because of a lack of funds, material and manpower. (De Ware Tijd, 31 July 2004: ‘Operatie Veilig Suriname opgeschort’ (Operation Safe Suriname suspended)). Activities remained restricted to Paramaribo, and the porous southern and western borders where most illegal immigrants (Brazilians and Guyanese) entered remained unpatrolled. Military involvement was reduced (initially more soldiers than policemen were involved), and eventually the surveillance, roadblocks and raids came to resemble regular traffic controls and police crime fighting. It is unclear what impact *Veilig Suriname* had on illegal immigration in Suriname.

52 Carla Tuinfort, De Ware Tijd, April 2004: ‘Geen waarneembare toename illegale immigranten’ (No measurable increase of illegal immigration)


54 http://www.state.gov/g/tip/rls/tiprpt/2006/65990.htm. The US embassy in Paramaribo provides the State Department with information on the Surinamese situation, based on interviews with local resource persons. Interestingly, De Ware Tijd (8 June 2006, ‘Justitie gaat dwangarbeid aanpakken’ (Ministry of Justice to tackle forced labour)) noted that: “In virtually all reports on human trafficking and smuggling Washington claims that Chinese immigrants, especially men, become victims of
now mentioned as non-trafficked illegal migrants. Suriname remains in Tier 2 to this day, and its country narrative now states that: “Chinese men are subjected to possible debt bondage in Suriname, and are subject to forced labour in supermarkets and the construction sector. Chinese women reportedly are exploited sexually in massage parlours and brothels.”

The experiences with the US 2003 Trafficking in People Report notwithstanding, nothing to eliminate irregular migration was incorporated into national migration policy. Calls to rethink Surinamese immigration and emigration policies were triggered by immediate, local concerns, and usually start among the Surinamese business community (fearing unfair competition from immigrants) and politicians (usually attacks on ruling coalition parties who, in the context of partisan-political racialization of immigration, are considered pro-immigration). The link between irregular migration and local government policy is to be found in assumptions about whether irregular migrants are temporary residents or settlers and the question of how much political support can newcomers provide for them.

On the one hand Chinese settlers could eventually become voters, on the other managing large-scale temporary residency could alienate Laiap and Tong’ap support as it could be construed as an attack on ethnic Chinese interests. The challenge for Surinamese politicians was how to control fluctuations in the size of the electorate and manage ethnic support by controlling short-term residency. In the 1990-2005 period, elements in the Wijdenbosch administration were said to have facilitated Chinese irregular migrants, while the ruling coalition of the Venetiaan II administration depended on Chinese support through the Javanese Pertjaya Luhur party. But the treatment accorded to Chinese immigrants was roughly the same during both administrations, as neither had implemented overtly pro-Chinese policies for the other to dismantle, and as neither had a particularly anti-Chinese stance (both with regard to ethnicity and the PRC or Taiwan).

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56 Regionalization also adds to the pressure to review immigration policy, for instance the obligation to harmonize Surinamese immigration law to accommodate free circulation of labour in the Caribbean single market and economy (CSME).
57 E.g. De Ware Tijd, 9 December 2004: ‘Kruisland wenst aanpassing immigratiebeleid’ (Kruisland calls for change in immigration policy).
6.4 New Chinese Migrants as a Problem: Violent Crime

It did not take long before New Chinese migrants were associated with a number of remarkable cases of violent crime, and public opinion turned on them as importers of crime. There are no illegal activities that are really unique to the New Chinese, though some activities (such as prostitution) take different forms among these newcomers as coping strategies. Moreover, despite an old stereotype that holds that Chinese in Suriname are less inclined to crime than other groups, there is no evidence that Chinese have a lower arrest rate for various reported crimes, or that – conveniently disregarding illegal immigrants – legal Chinese immigrants commit fewer crimes than other immigrants.\(^{58}\) But real and perceived inaccessibility of the Chinese helped reinforce the idea that there is a lot more going on behind the scenes than one might suspect. Increasingly populist media coverage of illegal activities associated with New Chinese shaped the image of the migrants, but they also strongly influenced the way ethnic Chinese in Suriname were coming to be perceived. Things were based less on facts (e.g. police communiqués, crime statistics, social research) than stereotypes, and prompted established Fuidung’on Hakkas to respond through the same public media.

Reports of violent crimes committed by ethnic Chinese (local or foreign) were scarce before 2002, and ethnic Chinese were seen, and saw themselves as victims of crime rather than as perpetrators. The Surinamese Police Corps published statistics on robberies in Paramaribo and peri-urban areas (District of Wanica) in 2002, which incorporated ethnicity as much as possible. In this publication, Chineseness was strictly defined as Chinese citizenship – basically Tong’ap and New Chinese. According to the police, the

\(^{58}\) As is the case with all data that could involve ethnicity, data on current Chinese criminal activity in Suriname (usually limited to listings of various crimes and misdemeanours) are unreliable. The state consciously blinds itself to ethnicity with regard to crime, and sees attempts by politicians to racialize violent crime (for instance by associating violent street crime with young Maroon males) as a vindication of this stance. But lack of ethnic data complicates the interpretation of illegal activities from the viewpoint of social development; illegal activities associated with Chinese (prostitution, gambling, etc.) might better be approached as coping strategies, comparable to ROSCAs, migrant networks and family labour. There are also no criminological studies of illegal activities in Suriname, and so the existence of transnational criminal networks in Suriname is unofficially noted, but Russian, Turkish, Dutch, Chinese or other crime syndicates are not analysed as non-state actors.
data verified the idea that Chinese shopkeepers were more likely to be victims of violent robberies: in 2001 there were 64 robberies of Tong’ap and New Chinese, 7,5% of the total number of robberies, and 58,9% of these 64 robberies was committed in shops and supermarkets. Chinese immigrants were victims of 31, about 18%, of the robberies at gunpoint. The police worked with the ‘Old Chinese’ huiguan in an attempt to achieve more efficient communication with ethnic Chinese shopkeepers, and were aware of the language barriers between ‘Old Chinese’ and New Chinese and also of the fact that written Chinese bridged the communication gap with the New Chinese.59

All through 2002 the Surinamese media reported cases of kidnapping, armed robbery and murder committed by Chinese. One widely documented example was of a Chinese gang that stole US$ 70,000 from a Chinese shopkeeper in downtown Paramaribo in broad daylight.60 After consulting representatives of the “Chinese community” – Tong’ap and Laiap – the police concluded that this unusual Chinese crime spree was linked to New Chinese immigrants. Hakka immigrant informers could recount rumours of gang-related crime, such as groups of young men demanding protection money from Chinese shopkeepers, as well as other activities suggesting organized crime, such as loan sharks, drugs-related murder and cases of kidnapping that were never reported to the police. Unidentified corpses of Chinese-looking men would sometimes be found, as happened occasionally before 2001, but murder investigations are hardly ever pursued. Poor access to Chinese networks and institutional weakness prevent the authorities from studying the phenomenon of Chinese gangs in any detail. No new reports of possible Chinese gang-related crime is not a proof of the absence of Chinese gangs or criminal enterprises, nor is it proof of heightened sophistication and adaptation to the Surinamese context.

The presence of Chinese gangs / Triads in Suriname is not unimaginable; there are fairly direct links between the Chinese of

59 De Ware Tijd, 6 March 2002: ‘Zware criminelen teisteren Chinese gemeenschap’ (Chinese community plagued by violent criminals).
60 De Ware Tijd, 28 February 2002: ‘Recherche brengt klarheid in brute beroving Gravenstraat’ (Criminal investigation sheds light on violent robbery in the Gravenstraat). After two women and a man from the PRC were arrested, 23 million Surinamese guilders and 4,400 US dollars were discovered buried in someone's yard, and another US$ 10,000 was transferred to a relative of one of the suspects in the PRC via a money changer. There were no reports of non-Chinese victims of crimes, but there are indications that non-Chinese may sometimes be involved as henchmen (De Ware Tijd, 28 February 2002: ‘Vierde verdachte in ontvoeringszaak Chinees aangehouden’ (Fourth suspect in kidnapping of Chinese arrested)).
Suriname and Hong Kong, and indirectly through the Netherlands, where for instance the 14K gang is present (Chin 1990: 39). One persistent story circulating among the established Fuidung’on Hakka describes gangs in Hong Kong and Southern China sending members who are in trouble with the authorities to Suriname, to be sent back when things blow over. Stories of Chinese gangs in Suriname are more likely stereotypical assumptions: Chinese migration is undocumented migration, facilitated by a Chinese criminal organization based in an isolationist and self-reliant Chinese enclave. A chain of assumptions loops back on itself, there are self-reliant and isolationist Chinese enclaves wherever there are Chinese immigrants, there are Snakeheads (the persons in Chinese organised crime responsible for organising illegal emigration) and organised crime wherever there are Chinatowns, and thus making every Chinese immigrant into an irregular migrant.61

However, Chinese gangs are not something one would expect in Suriname. Typical Chinese gangs in the USA are youth gangs. American-born Chinese youths could grow up estranged from their constantly working parents at home and isolated from wider society in the Chinese enclaves where they were born. Such disaffected and unemployed youths formed gangs, typically well-organized, usually by emulating Tongs and Triads.62 Earlier Chinese immigrants families in Suriname tended to be just as preoccupied with work as American Chinese, but they were not geographically isolated in a Chinese enclave. Their local-born children had no lack of employment, as they were guaranteed at least a livelihood in their parents’ shop or eventually in their own business. In the early 2000s Chinese gangs in Suriname were said to consist of rough and dangerous young males, but it was unclear if these gangs were hatchet men for criminal organisations or ad hoc gatherings of disenfranchised antisocial young men, or even how many gangs there were. The types of activities they were involved in (robbery,}

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61 Outside China the facts are often informed by ‘Yellow Peril’ and ‘Mysterious Chinaman’ stereotypes. Cases of smuggled Chinese are suggested to be the tip of an iceberg; thousands of other illegal migrants probably evaded detection, themselves just a fraction of the thousands more who are waiting to leave China. Chinese organised crime is a secretive and well-organized network called a Tong or Triad. In Suriname the opposite seems to have happened; instead of assuming the existence of Chinese gangs as a convenient model with which to approach violent crime among ethnic Chinese, authorities seemed perplexed by the possibility that such gangs operated in Suriname, and were at a loss how to approach the problem. Instead, discussions of such crimes were allowed to strengthen racial discourse and criticism of immigration policy.

62 Chin 1990.
extortion) fit the pattern of Chinese gangs, but this is all that can be said about them.

The murder of the Fu children in 2005 is a particularly gruesome example of the way violent crime was associated with New Chinese. On 19 July 2005 two Zhejiangese brothers, Fu Wei (12) and Fu Tewei (6), were found brutally murdered in a bathroom of what used to be a restaurant named Sheraton at the David Simonsstraat in Northern Paramaribo (De Ware Tijd, 20 July 2005). One had been bludgeoned, the other's throat had been slit, after which they had been decapitated, scalped, disembowelled and hacked to pieces, their body parts collected in pails with some flushed down the toilet. A New Chinese immigrant who had been living in Suriname for some nine years, Chen Shaoxian (61), was also found dead, having apparently hung himself in the living room. The boys had failed to return home from the Chinese school the previous evening, when a man called the family on the phone, demanded US$ 200,000 for the release of the two boys, and warned that the police must not get involved. Chen Shaoxian's son, Chen Jie (33), a remigrant from Hungary, was arrested and charged, but evidence against him remained elusive.

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63 De Ware Tijd, 20 July 2005 ‘Barbaarse moorden in Paramaribo-Noord: “De jongens zijn afgeslacht als varkens”’ (Barbaric murders in Northern Paramaribo: “The boys were slaughtered like hogs”).
64 Times of Suriname, 23 July 2005 ‘Waarom deze man niet de moordenaar kan zijn’ (Why this man cannot have been the murderer).
65 http://www.cq-link.sr/modules.php?name=News&file=article&sid=1008, 20 July 2005, ‘Chinees vermoordt gegijzelden en pleegt zelfmoord’ (Chinese murders hostages and commits suicide); Times of Suriname, 23 July 2005 ‘Waarom deze man niet de moordenaar kan zijn’ (Why this man cannot have been the murderer); De Ware Tijd, 13 January 2006 ‘Moordzaak Chinese broertjes aangevagen’ (Trial in the murder of Chinese brothers starts); De Ware Tijd, 20 July 2005 ‘Barbaarse moorden in Paramaribo-Noord: “De jongens zijn afgeslacht als varkens”’ (Barbaric murders in Northern Paramaribo: “The boys were slaughtered like hogs”).
66 Chen Jie spoke no English, Kejia, Sranantongo or Dutch. Chinese translators were reluctant to get involved and the Chinese lawyer Chen Jie had requested spoke Kejia but no PTH. (De Ware Tijd, 5 September 2005 ‘Taalbarrière stagneert onderzoek moord Chinese jongens’ (Investigation into murder of Chinese boys hindered by language barriers)). In September Chen Jie was finally charged with kidnapping and murder, and his trial started on 12 January 2006 (De Ware Tijd, 13 January 2006 ‘Moordzaak Chinese broertjes aangevagen’ ((Trial in the murder of Chinese brothers starts)). Six months into the trial, prosecutors still only had circumstantial evidence (De Ware Tijd, 24 June 2006 ‘Bewijslast slachting Chinese jongens zwak’ (Case of slaughter of Chinese boys weak)), and eventually he was acquitted on the grounds of insufficient evidence. (De Ware Tijd, 21 July 2006 ‘Vrijspraak verdachte Chinese slachting; Moeder slachtoffers hysterisch’ (Suspect in Chinese massacre acquitted; mother of victims hysterical))
Not unexpectedly, the public reacted with horror and indignation at what was one of the most horrific murder cases in Paramaribo’s history. The media fueled the developing public discussion with a good measure of populism. The day after the story broke, an article based on an interview with an anonymous “member of the Chinese community” was published in De Ware Tijd. The source reiterated stereotypes of New Migrants in a narrative: there is a Chinese community, inaccessible and secretive; a clear distinction should be made between Surinamese Chinese and new immigrants who have been arriving since the early 1990s; weak national immigration policy means that there is nothing to prevent undesirable Chinese immigrants from entering Suriname; new immigrants are responsible for crime, and they commit more crimes than the Surinamese public is aware of — kidnappings, blackmail, assault, disappearances, etc (Times of Suriname, 21 July 2005). 

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67 De Ware Tijd, 21 July 2005 ‘Lid chinese gemeenschap over gruwelijke moord jongens: “Zo een drama zat er aan te komen”’ (Member of Chinese community on horrific murder of boys: “A drama like that was in the making”).
68 Four days after the murder, the Times of Suriname tabloid carried an article based on a source claiming to be close to the Wenzhounese group, explaining why Chen Shaoxian could not have been the murderer. The real murderer(s) – who must have suggested the kidnapping ruse to Chen – killed the boys and Chen to cover their tracks (Times of Suriname, 23 July 2005 ‘Waarom deze man niet de moordenaar kan zijn’ (Why this man cannot have been the murderer)). This was rebutted in De Ware Tijd a few days later (De Ware Tijd, 28 July 2005 ‘Vriend vermeende moordenaar: “Chen heeft de twee jongens zelf vermoord.”’ (Friend of suspected murderer: “Chen murdered the two boys himself”)). One ‘LGM’, Chen’s ‘friend and member of the leadership of a major Chinese association’ pointed out that the ransom call had originated from Chen’s residence, and Chen’s distinct speech impediment had been recognized. The medical examiner had also failed to find evidence of a struggle on Chen’s body, which pointed to suicide. Chen must have been driven to his actions by his insurmountable money problems and personal distress. ‘LGM’ clearly had little to lose by suggesting that Chinese criminal gangs were active in Suriname, as the reason for and the consequence of the presence of New Chinese. The Times of Suriname article was more seriously damaging to the image of Chinese, as its source was supposedly a well-informed New Chinese immigrant. But more interestingly, the linguistic identification of the mysterious male caller in the story (‘a dialect from south-eastern China rarely heard in Suriname’) seemed designed to shift attention away from the Wenzhounese – despite the fact that Wenzhounese language could also be described as a south-eastern Chinese dialect – at the cost of suggesting the presence of violent and possibly organized criminals among the New Chinese. LGM’s identification as someone from the top of ‘a major Chinese association’ is interesting, as that usually refers to one of the three Fuidung’on Hakka huiguan. The article was not translated in the two huiguan newspapers, Xunnan Ribao and Zhonghua Ribao. The central point of the article was that the affair was not about organized Chinese crime. The source of the Times of Suriname article was very likely Laiap, as the piece contained little else than established anti-newcomer stereotypes, the interview
Then on 2 December there was a second murder case involving ethnic Chinese, this time the victims were Fuidung‘on Hakka migrants. Harry Mo Tin Sung, owner of a shop selling bicycle and motorcycle parts, and his wife, Hoi Oi Lin, were found murdered (De Ware Tijd, 3 December 2005). Both were in their sixties and had moved to Suriname from Guangdong Province more than 40 years earlier. He was found in the bedroom, and his wife in the bathroom, tied up, with their throats slit (De Ware Tijd, 20 December 2005). The feelings of shock in the Blauwgrond neighborhood and anxiety about increasingly violent crime were fanned by the sensational handling of the affair by the media. An emotional wake and a silent procession (stille tocht) were organized in the neighborhood. The family tried to keep the funeral service and cremation as quiet as possible. It was attended by Vice President Ramdien Sardjoe. Father Gerard Gijskens praised the couple as good people, “real Surinamese Chinese.”

With the murder of the two children in July fresh in the mind of the public, the Mo Tin Sung murders gave rise to talk of “Chinese triad-style” executions. “They’re looking down on us now, because we’re Chinese after all,” Max Man A Hing commented in De Ware Tijd (6 December 2005) four days after the murders. Once more he stressed the difference between Old Chinese and New Chinese, focussing particularly on differences in upbringing and outlook. He typified New Chinese as ambitious and hard, often unable to handle freedom. About a week later, George Findlay, the editor of the evening paper, De West, and known for his anti-Chinese articles, more explicitly suggested in his weekly column (10 December 2005) that organized Chinese crime was behind the

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was conducted in Dutch, and the source seemed to flaunt his or her status as insider privy to Chinese matters.

De Ware Tijd, 3 December 2005 ‘Mysterieuze dubbele moord schokt Blauwgrond; Bejaard Chinees echtpaar gekneveld en met mes bewerkt’ (Mysterious double murder shocks Blauwgrond; elderly Chinese couple tied up and stabbed).

De Ware Tijd, 20 December 2005 ‘Echtpaar Mo Tin Sung beroofd, maar niet van geld’ (Mr and Mrs Mo Tin Sung robbed, but not of money).

This was not the first unsolved murder of an older Fuidung‘on Hakka shopkeeper in 2005. On 31 January Lou Ying Joe (62) was found murdered in her shop, where she had been living alone for two months while her relatives were abroad. No public outcry followed. De Ware Tijd, 1 February 2005 ‘Chinese winkelierster gedood’ (Chinese shopkeeper killed).

De Ware Tijd, 6 December 2005 ‘Brandkast vermoord Chinees echtpaar leeggeroofd; Blauwgrond nog steeds in greep van angst’ (Safe of murdered Chinese couple plundered; Blauwgrond still embraced by terror).
murders (De West, 10 December 2005). According to him, the presence of Chinese criminals from Chinese and Hong Kongese triads was common knowledge in Suriname, and this was murder rather than robbery committed by professionals and not the typical Surinamese criminals. But he denied that there was much difference between ‘Old’ and New Chinese, as both closed ranks against the outside world.

The Old Chinese establishment clearly felt that Chineseness was under attack in Suriname. On 29 January 2006, the first day of the Year of the Dog, President Ronald Venetiaan and Minister of Justice and Police, Chandrikapersad Santhoki, attended the public Chinese New Year’s Celebrations at the Chung Tjauw Huiguan. In his speech, Chou Joe Jin, chairman of Chung Tjauw and Fa Tjauw, the Chinese organization within the NPS, said that it was important for the Chinese community to work at improving its image. He referred to the murders and the issue of immigration, and though he spoke of new and established groups, he carefully avoided suggesting a major split. He complained that Chinese believed that the media was often biased against them, for no fact-based reasons.

There were nine online commentaries to the report in De Ware Tijd of 31 January 2006 on President Venetiaan’s visit to Chung Tjauw. Only one was positive, contrasting the Surinamese approach to integration with that of the Dutch. Six contained attacks on Venetiaan, accusing him of discriminating Surinamese-born citizens in favour of foreigners. Five of these contained anti-Chinese remarks:

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73 Keerpunt in De West, 10 December 2005 ‘Niet gepast zich met politieonderzoek in te laten’ (Not appropriate to meddle in police investigation) http://www.dewestonline.e.qc-link.sr/main.asp?id=14237
74 De Ware Tijd, 31 January 2005 ‘Chinezen willen nieuwe start naar imago verbetering’ (Chinese want new start to improve image).
75 How texts on the Internet relate to opinions in the real world is obviously very important. There are indications that certain groups of online participants (scoring higher with regard to introversion and neuroticism) locate their ‘real me’ online and can appear more extrovert online than in regular life (Amichai-Hamburger 2005, 2008; Amichai-Hamburger et al 2002). Internet empowers its users by allowing them to reframe their identity, particularly those with poor social skills in real life. Then again, the possibility of participating anonymously encourages depersonalization, which can lead to the development of a kind of group identity by which people perceive their own group as superior to others (Amichai-Hamburger & McKenna 2006; Tajfel et al 1971). Participation in the De Ware Tijd Online discussion forum is limited by computer access and not all readers actively comment on topics. Only a minority habitually post remarks, and even less dominate the discussion forum. Moreover, participants can hide behind multiple user names and even
“The dog offers a good example through its faithfulness, vigilance and loyalty,” according to Venetiaan. But does he not know that those Chinese eat dogs??

Hey, Wreed Mang... YOU MAKE ME LAUGH, BOY!!! AIN'T HE GREAT?? THEN THERE WON'T BE ANY SICK DOGS LEFT, RIGHT? SO LET MISTER VENE BE FAITHFUL AND VIGILANT TO OUR PEOPLE OF SURINAME TOO!!

Good morning Surinamese. Generally speaking, the Chinese are foreigners, and foreigners have the last say. Only in Suriname do Chinese have the authority, yes, you could put it like that? Because haven't you read that Andy Lau said that young Chinese should also be educated and that the president immediately promised statutory regulations. Why doesn't he look out for his own people first who need his help most? Children who can't go to school, but want to. You keep reading about children who can't go to school, because the school bus broke down or because the roads are bad, yes but it's the young Chinese for whom the president will be drawing up statutory regulations, foreigners being pampered in Suriname, only in Suriname does this happen? In other countries foreigners come last, but in Suriname foreigners are put on a pedestal, I mean it's not the fault of the Chinese, but of the president who does nothing for his Surinamese children. It's just like a family, father, mother and children, doesn't the father care for his own children first.

appropriate the names of others. Lastly, the physical location of participants is unclear unless they choose to reveal it; in the case of De Ware Tijd Online, the opinions of expats in for instance the Netherlands are in many ways divorced from the experience of Surinamese in Suriname. Disagreements between participants in Surinamese internet forums reflect contradictions in Surinamese society with regard to politics, race (rather than ethnicity) and gender. However, the strongest conflicts online are framed in terms of patriotism, and divide people located in Suriname from Dutch nationals of Surinamese origin either in the Netherlands or in Suriname. An interactive survey on the De Ware Tijd Online site in July and August 2007 gave some indication of the proportion of Dutch-Surinamese participants: 45.5% of those who chose to answer the question, where they planned to spend their annual vacation replied 'Suriname', which might suggest that about half of the forum participants are based in the Netherlands. In any case, anti-Chinese remarks by Surinamese on the Internet are fairly typical of the kind of remarks heard on the street in Suriname, and are actually often even less extreme than one may encounter in Surinamese everyday life.
Yeah man, you all are right, because being from the interior I’m really upset that Vene is doing this. The man doesn’t have a drop of shame. We in the interior feel it too, the roads are so bad, we don’t go to school for days and lose so much. Our parents can’t go to Paramaribo either to buy some foodstuffs. Instead of him talking with the others in the Assembly about how to start repairing the roads, he starts talking about Chinese. Look at your children first, and then at other people’s children. What do you mean Chinese, those people just bring SARS and other diseases to infect people with, next we’ll be eating roast dog or we might even be eating that already because we can’t tell what it looks like. These aren’t human beings, they just look that way.

What up !!!! | 15-2-2006 23:14:20
Hey! I just think the government shouldn’t allow any more Chinese to enter Suriname!!! Don’t you remember what life was like in Suriname, everyone was like one big family in Suriname... In these last five years more and more Chinese immigrating from China, and Suriname has just changed!! Worse and worse and decline too... WE DON’T WANT ANY MORE CHINESE FROM CHINA!! Let them stay in China, OK????!!! We live alright here with our Surinamese Chinese!!!
nese as Surinamese Chinese in contrast to New Chinese outsiders was repeated in the media.

6.5 Anti-Chinese Sentiments as Anti-Government Protest

Anti-Chinese sentiments in Suriname are anti-immigrant sentiments, and it should be stressed that anti-Chinese sentiments did not encompass all Chinese as a distinct Asian group to be demonized. 54% of the population of Suriname is Asian (under a US definition of the term), which makes it the most ‘Asian’ country in the Americas. Anti-Chinese sentiments are often voiced by other ‘Asians’ in Suriname, such as some of the people in the large East Indian segment. Anti-Chinese sentiments in Suriname may be widespread and persistent, but that does not mean that Surinamese are fundamentally ‘anti-sinitic’ or that anti-Chinese violence would be supported by the majority of the population. Elements of Chinese culture are deeply ingrained in Surinamese society, a large number of Surinamese have a Chinese ancestor, and the majority probably do believe that Suriname would not be the same without the Chinese.

By the early 2000s anti-Chinese sentiments were taking on the form of a conspiracy theory: the government was allowing Chinese, and even actually collaborating with them, to ruin the country. Even if intelligence on ethnicity and migration is gathered by the State, the information is usually not made available to the general public. Surinamese often remain completely dependent on what others claim to know about Chinese, and unsubstantiated facts and opinions become ever more plausible. Combined with the widespread sense of anomie in Surinamese, a feeling of dislocation from

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76 Affigne & Lian 1998: 10, Table 3. ‘Asian’ refers to people from East Asia, South Asia, South-East Asia and the Pacific.
77 Attitudes towards the two most controversial migrant groups were gauged in the January 2007 IDOS public opinion poll. Apparently, 69% of voters had a negative view of Brazilians, 61% had a negative view of Chinese; roughly 25% were positive with regard to Chinese, and about the same with regards to Brazilians. Remarkably, NDP-supporters (the NDP being a populist, nationalist, anti-apanjaht party) were more strongly opposed to these migrants; 75% held a negative view of Brazilians, against 70% with regard to Chinese.
The IDOS public opinion poll was carried out among 487 eligible voters in Paramaribo between 26-28 January 2007. Results were published in De Ware Tijd (3 February 2007, ‘IDOS-peiling 2: etniciteit, grondbeleid en 8 december’ (IDOS poll, part 2: ethnicity, land allocation, and ‘8 December’), but not on the IDOS website (http://www.parbo.com/idos/).
society and authority which made government incompetence indiscernible from malicious intent, the chain of plausibility made it easy to see New Chinese migrants as a shadowy, secretive group with implied links to the government – the enemy.\footnote{In 2002 the Venetiaan II administration was under fire for its foreign policy, particularly its handling of the border dispute with Guyana, which threatened to expand from the New River Triangle in the far south to all of the Corantyne River and the demarcation of territorial waters in the north. The Surinamese and Guyanese presidents met in 2002 to stress good relations in general and and exchange conciliatory words (De Ware Tijd, 7 February 2002, joint statement of President Ronald Venetiaan and President Bharat Jagdeo). The border issue was not resolved, however, and it strengthened patriotic, anti-establishment sentiments among the Surinamese public. Opposition parties, in particular the anti-apanjaht NDP of ex-military strongman Bouterse, encouraged the feeling of general discontent by linking the Venetiaan administration to the general feeling of moral decline in Surinamese society (e.g. De Ware Tijd 26 February 2002, ‘Bouterse moet in spiegel kijken, zegt Somohardjo’ (Bouterse should look in mirror Somohardjo says)).}

The theory of an adversarial government in cahoots with the Yellow Peril was woven around contemporary newsworthy events: cases of irregular migrants, instances of violent crime, scandals involving transnational companies. The theory was constructed from selected information, and items that did not fit were reinterpreted in line with the theory, and existing evidence was constantly questioned.

The conspiracy theory (re)produced the truth of a failing State via narratives of the Contamination / Yellow Peril stereotypes: no controls of food safety and health, lack of a strict immigration policy, and no integration policy. Patriotic narratives were incorporated into this picture, particularly about supposed preferential treatment of Chinese migrants over Surinamese citizens. One narrative lays the blame at the feet of the NPS, which was always too positive about Chinese immigration. Chinese migrants were said to acquire permits too easily, and driving licenses in particular became symbolic of preferential treatment.\footnote{The narratives defined the truth. In 2006 the Surinamese traffic police observed that many ethnic Chinese actually did not drive with a license (De Ware Tijd 1 June 2006, ‘Chinezen moeten verkeersregels kennen’ (Chinese should be aware of traffic regulations)). This was followed by a rumour that the police had been ordered not to fine Chinese caught without a driving license (De Ware Tijd 9 June 2006, ‘Opdracht bureau Keizerstraat om Chinezen niet te beboeten’ (Keizerstraat station ordered not to fine Chinese)).}

With the addition of populist patriotism, anti-Chinese sentiments started to resemble naïve monarchic resistance; appealing to the conservative myths of Surinamese patriotism justified resistance to the ruling elite through attacks on a particular type of dangerous foreigner: being for
Chinese was being against Suriname. For example, as an editorial in the daily Paper ‘Suriname’ stated in 2005:

Involvement with regard to the problem of the Chinese is indeed also a responsibility of the National Assembly. It should be more than merely raising questions. A parliamentary inquiry is called for. This subject has been ignored for years. We the people see very strange things going on around us. No one understands the CSME [Caricom Single Market and Economy] in Suriname. By now they have given another meaning to the acronym of CSME (Chinese Super Market Economy). Our middle class, the shopkeepers, has been decimated and it just keeps going on and now the construction sector has also been badly affected through inferior materials and cheap labour. The ease with which Chinese shops and supermarkets are set up in neighbourhoods and districts is incredible. And our government seems to tolerate that by issuing permits without taking into account zoning plans or local market saturation. One is tempted to believe that the shop or supermarket is not the main business, but just a secondary activity. Another question on our minds is: are they paying enough taxes and where do they get the capital to run the shops and supermarkets? Where do the cash flows originate and are these cash flows legal? The privileges are great and it looks like organized crime with many social consequences. By now the new groups of Chinese have introduced many effects to our society (crime, murders and hit men, inferior goods, social tensions, changes to our towns and country, etc.). Political parties have already embraced this target groups and there are certain links there as well. The average Surinamese rightly wonders about having been demoted to second or third class citizen.80

The article specifically referred to the increasing number of Chinese-owned shops and supermarkets selling cheap consumer goods from Yiwu (Zhejiang) or building materials81, which for many people confirmed the contamination / Yellow Peril stereotype while reinforcing the image of a failing government. In private and in the street, opinions were remarkably uniform: the Chinese government (the PRC) is behind the Chinese (New Chinese immigrants) overrunning Suriname, they (the PRC and the migrants) are taking over,

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80 Suriname daily paper, 13 March 2005, editorial article: ‘Countering the Chinese invasion of Suriname?’
81 Data on Chinese enterprises are unreliable. De Ware Tijd (10 November 2006, ‘Veel Surinamers leveren winkelvergunning in’ (Many Surinamese returning business permits) quoted the Shopkeepers Association (Vereniging van Winkeliers): the number of shops increased from roughly 2,000 in 1995 to more than 7,000 in 2006.
they bleed Suriname of foreign currency without contributing anything to the country, and then leave Suriname for another destination without ever having integrated into Surinamese society in any way. Chinese, along with Brazilians for that matter, were spoken of as the new colonizers and colonials.

The case of China Zhong Heng Tai, the ‘palm oil’ enterprise, is a good example of the way criticism of Chinese links to criticism of the Surinamese government. Criticism of the China Zhong Heng Tai deal focussed on, among other things, the government’s incompetence, or willingness to facilitate a deal that was so obviously flawed in many ways. The government persisted in referring to the Patamacca project as a ‘large-scale investment’ and a crucial alternative to donor aid, and the opposition continued to accuse the government of selling off Suriname’s natural resources. As expected there were oblique suggestions of government corruption, followed by direct statements about ‘the Chinese’ attempting to exploit Surinamese resources. As Richard Biswamitre Kalloe, columnist and former Minister of Trade and Industry (Venetiaan I) and Public Works (Wijdenbosch) put it:

The project is owned by Chinese, for Chinese and by Chinese. Our brothers in Marowijne can stand by and watch. It is a foreign colony and enclave, crude natural resources will be exported as in

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82 De Ware Tijd, 12 January 2004: Richard Kalloe, ‘Puntjes op de I van de Patamacca deal’ (Details of the Patamacca deal).
83 De Ware Tijd, 12 January 2004: ‘De strijd om survival behoeft een mentaliteitsverandering’ (The struggle for survival requires a change in attitude). Interview with Minister Michael Jong Tjien Fa of Trade and Industry on the Free Trade Area of the America’s (FTAA).
De Ware Tijd, 17 January 2004: ‘Patamacca palmolie deal beklonken’ (Patamacca palm oil deal finalized). Quoting Minister Franco Demon of National Resources.
De Ware Tijd, 24 November 2004: ‘President Venetiaan bij installatie stuurgroep oliepalmindustrie: “Toezien op Surinaamse belangen allereerste opdracht”’ (President Venetiaan during installation of palm oil industry steering group: “First task is to protect Surinamese interests”). Quoting Minister Geetapersad Gangaram Panday of Agriculture.
84 E.g. De Ware Tijd, 8 April 2004: ‘Venetiaan wil Suriname als doorgang voor China naar FTAA’ (Venetiaan wants Suriname to be China’s gateway to FTAA). Describing President Venetiaan’s reaction to remarks by NDP chairman Desi Bouterse.
85 De West, 7 Februari 2004: Keerpunt: ‘De week in Retro…’ (Turning Point: Looking back at the week…); 25 June 2005: Keerpunt: ‘Chinese Patamacca-deal klonk vanaf het begin ongeloofwaardig’ (Turning Point: Chinese Patamacca deal was fishy from the start).
86 Kalloe also used to be director and project manager of the original palm oil project in Patamacca.
The conclusion was that the only income the State could expect was revenue from timber exports, without any guarantee that the project would provide local jobs or that the company would not leave after clear-cutting the forest. The irony of a foreign investor financing its activities in Suriname with money made from Surinamese natural resources was not lost on anyone. Though the agreement provided for jobs, suspicions were that China Zhong Heng Tai would import more than a thousand Chinese indentured labourers. Against the background of the visible presence of New Chinese, no assurance from China Zhong Heng Tai that no imported labour would be required was believed or accepted.

‘Chinese guest workers’ are a target of particularly harsh criticism directed towards the government. Surinamese immigration procedures are predicated on livelihood and thus labour; residence permits are linked to work permits, and are not issued for any special social categories. This means that all immigrants from the PRC are technically workers, from chain migrants employed in family-run stores, supermarkets and restaurants, to construction workers imported from the PRC for the various PRC projects. However, ‘Chinese guest worker’ specifically refers to construction workers from the PRC, who are seen as a threat to the local construction sector. Already after the failure of the Sunny Point project some construction workers and technicians had remained in Suriname and set up private enterprises of their own. Ever since, guest workers imported from the PRC for various PRC building projects had the option of returning home or staying on in Suriname.

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87 De Ware Tijd, 12 January 2004: Richard Kalloe, ‘Puntjes op de I van de Patamacca deal’ (Details of the Patamacca deal).
me to continue working in construction when their contracts expired.

Not all PRC guest workers in Suriname were skilled labourers, as labour export could also be a migration strategy; PRC companies could help migrants by arranging documentation and permits, while Surinamese counterparts arranged labour and residence permits. Even without clear counterparts in the PRC, Surinamese companies and entrepreneurs can apply for labour permits on the grounds that specialized skilled labour is required. Korean-owned fishing companies used this method to import ethnic Koreans from Heilongjiang, Jilin and Liaoning Provinces in the PRC, most of whom eventually moved on to join larger Korean communities in Chile and Paraguay.

It is unclear what percentage of PRC guest workers choose to stay in Suriname and for how long, so the current number of legal or illegal construction workers from the PRC is basically unknown. In response to the widespread idea that the Surinamese labour market was being swamped by Chinese migrants and that this was linked to illegal employment and people trafficking, the Surinamese Ministry of Labour investigated the employment of PRC citizens and observance of work permit requirements by enterprises employing these foreigners in early 2003. There were in fact real reasons for the Ministry to investigate; 36.6% of all applications for work permits in 2001, and 47.3% of these in 2002, were PRC citizens. In both years about two-thirds were seeking employment as cooks, fishermen, salespersons, and low-skilled labourers. In 2003, Chinese construction companies almost exclusively employed Chinese migrants, whereas fishery companies, and bars and restaurants employed more equal numbers of Chinese migrants and locals. However, bars and restaurants employed most Chinese migrants illegally. The survey seemed to indicate a certain measure of abuse of the work permit system; 46.8% of the total number of Chinese employees with a valid work permit were not working for the employer they had been registered with. However, illegality

89 Vreemdelingen met de Chinese nationaliteit op de Surinaamse arbeidsmarkt (Aliens with Chinese nationality in the Surinamese labour market). Paramaribo: Ministry of Labour, Technological Development and the Environment, 2003.) The year before, then Minister of Labour, Tourism and the Environment, Clifford Marica, indicated that there were no data available on illegal foreign workers in Suriname (De Ware Tijd 25 January 2002, ‘Bedrijven met illegale werknemers riskeren fikse boete’ (Companies employing illegals risk hefty fine)). ‘Foreign’ was a euphemism for Chinese; the issue of illegal foreign labour had come to the fore because of rumours that Chinese were illegally employed in construction and the Dalian road rehabilitation project.
was in part an artefact of bureaucracy; the most commonly mentioned reason for the lack of work permits was that the Ministry of Labour had not (yet) issued any.

The SARS crisis of early 2003 fuelled the Contamination stereotype and the anti-Chinese conspiracy theory. The disease was first reported in Asia in February 2003, and over the next few months it spread to more than two dozen countries in North America, South America, Europe, and Asia before the global outbreak was contained by late July 2003. Authorities in the People’s Republic of China initially tried to cover up the outbreak, but eventually joined international efforts to stop the epidemic. The Asian tourism and international aviation sectors suffered badly. The economic impact of SARS on Suriname was limited. Sales of plane tickets to Asian destinations dried up, but travel to Asia was not the main source of income for Surinamese travel agents. There were fears that chicken might become scarce, which would be a real problem in a country where chicken is the only meat that is consumed and shared by all ethnic groups, but that never happened. Chinese in Suriname put off travelling to Hong Kong and Guangdong Province, and tended to avoid recent arrivals from China. It slowly dawned on the Surinamese authorities and public that the Fuidung’on qiaoxiang is located in the Pearl River Delta, where SARS arose. Immigration of Chinese, which was now routinely being described as ‘an invasion’, gave the appearance to most people that it was only a matter of time before SARS came to Suriname. The Department of Public Health Care of the Ministry of Public Health acted to reassure the public that certain necessary actions was being undertaken. The Department’s Epidemiological Division correctly assumed that Chinese-speakers in Suriname were already well aware of what SARS was, and tried to overcome language barriers in communicating local procedures, which are

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90 Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome is caused by a coronavirus (SARS-CoV) that jumped the species barrier, possibly from civet cats to humans, in Guangdong Province. The earliest known cases of this atypical pneumonia were identified in Foshan, Guangdong Province, in November 2002. (World Health Organization, http://www.who.int/csr/don/2003_07_04/en/). Once infected through close contact, victims get a high fever, followed by headache, diarrhoea, and eventually pneumonia. More than 8,000 became sick worldwide, 774 of whom died. (Centres for Disease Control and Prevention, http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/sars/factsheet.htm)

91 In April 2003, halfway through the crisis, Morgan Stanley chief economist Stephan Roach estimated the global economic impact of SARS at about US$ 30 billion.

92 De Ware Tijd, 30 April 2003 ‘Suriname bereidt zich voor op SARS’ (Suriname preparing for SARS)
required to prepare for SARS, to newcomers by involving the huiguan.

Though SARS never reached Suriname, public distrust of the government sharpened as Chinese immigration was now linked to a physical danger. The stereotype of Chinese as polluters of food, environment and society seemed vindicated by the idea that Chinese came from abroad spreading deadly disease. A large photo of the counter of the Work Permits Office of the Ministry of Labour which was closed off with a board, was printed on the front page of De Ware Tijd, over an article claiming that personnel were refusing to help Chinese for fear of SARS. An unidentified employee said that personnel were unhappy that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was continuing to issue visas to people from Guangdong, where SARS originated, and had stopped field visits to recent arrivals from China. Questions were raised in the Assembly, and the Minister of Labour, Clifford Marica, denied that his ministry was boycotting clients on the basis of disease-spreading ethnicity, but admitted that there was some unease among the personnel about measures that should be taken. But in radio talk shows, on the streets and in private settings, SARS was firmly linked with New Chinese, and seemed to prove that the government was incompetent - unable to keep SARS out with a strict immigration policy. When avian flu was identified in China in 2004, the link between Chinese and disease became even firmer in popular anti-Chinese harangues. The following is an example from George Findlay's weekly column in De West:

The president is off to China for the second time, on a State Visit no less. Now look! What are we doing there? Are we looking for a bond loan or do we think we can get more donations out of it? It's all unclear, why they're over there, in that country that is being hit by all kinds of strange viruses. First there was SARS from cats and now here we have a chicken virus. We're scared, man! Just imagine those delegates meeting chicken farmers there, now that they spread this rumour in Suriname that chicken meat will be scarce.

93 De Ware Tijd, 17 June 2003 ‘Angst voor SARS bij afdeling Werkvergunning’ (Work Permit Department scared of SARS). It later appeared that the journalist was unable to reach senior staff who were attending a meeting of the Pan-American Health Organization, and decided to speak ‘informally’ with lower-ranking employees.
94 De Ware Tijd, 18 June 2003 ‘Minister weerspreekt SARS-boycot Chinezen’ (Minister denies SARS boycott of Chinese).
95 De West, 7 February 2004, Keerpunt: de week in retro (Turning Point: Looking back at the week).
Anti-Chinese, anti-government patriotism united Surinamese in Suriname and the Netherlands. The following is a typical posting on a Dutch-based Waterkant discussion board on Surinamese topics:

Marcel, posted 05 March 2003: 20:09 PM
And when the Surinamese borders open in a short while, after the arrival of the Free Trade Area of the Americas... Then we'll automatically have Air China from Peking in Suriname, with at least 550 one-way passengers per flight. So in a couple of years we'll just be a third Chinese country, in which we Surinamese are ethnic minorities. Thanks to our leaders. When next the Victoria Plantation is chopped up and oil palms are planted for palm oil, I wonder how many Surinamese will find jobs there compared with Chinese. I think not a lot. Chinese are asphalting the roads over there in Suriname, you know how many Surinamese work for the company, few if any... Where is the Minister of Labour... or is he blind for not wanting to see...

The xenophobic language was reproduced even at the government level. Minister Michael Jong Tjien Fa of Trade and Industry – the only ethnic Chinese cabinet minister in the Venetiaan II administration – publicly voiced support for a type of citizen examination (inburgeringsplicht) for Chinese immigrants.97 The way the issue of dog meat has unfolded in the public debate was the most recent example of how the Contamination stereotype could lead to criticism of the government. In the course of 2000 the idea developed, without any clear reason, that eating dog meat reflected how abnormal and inhuman Chinese are. As an authentic Fui-dung’ on tradition,98 dog meat had been consumed by Chinese in Suriname for many years, but it was now closely associated with New Chinese. In De Ware Tijd of 6 January 2000, the columnist of ‘Dierenforum’ (Animal Forum) stated that she had warned in December 1999 that there is an increase in demand for dog meat and that this is associated with the ‘arrival of large numbers of Chi-

97 Albeit unintentionally. The minister intended to speak out for easing immigration procedures for Chinese, but in the course of the interview he agreed with and elaborated on the interviewer’s suggestion that Chinese should feel obliged to learn and understand ‘the language’. Interview with Minister Jong Tjien Fa on the six o’clock evening news on Radio Tien, 21 April 2005.
98 Qingqi Juan: 293, ‘Qingqi dog meat’.
inese in Suriname.’ By the early 2003 it was said that more and more Surinamese were eating dogs, apparently driven to it by poverty. Some of the postings on the Suriname Discussion Board’s internet discussion forum demonstrate the way the link is made with immigration: of 10 persons (14 postings) only one (2 postings) objected to the ethnocentrism of the discussion, while one person wrote openly and casually about eating dog. Here are some examples of the rest: 99

huh?, 29-03-2003
Is Suriname really so badly adrift? I wonder whether Suriname is in South America or in Southeast Asia. They are westernizing and Americanizing in Asia and we in Suriname are easternizing and Asianizing.

Stree, 27-05-2003
With hordes of Chinese coming to Suriname I’ve noticed how few stray dogs there are. Now why would that be, folks????????????

c anijs, 10-7-2003
It’s no wonder, since the Chinese and the Haitians have been brought to Suriname (read smuggled), the dogs, ground lizards, mice, tree lizards, rats, geckos, cockroaches, wrens, black tegus, worm lizards, and let’s not forget the (huge) toads have no chance of survival. Haven’t you noticed, or do you also join the Ch’s and H’s? Yours truly, Redi-moesoe

The issue of dog meat was even raised in the National Assembly, framing an oblique attack on the government. The words of a member of the opposition during the discussion of a naturalization decree in April 2003 are typical of the generalizations which were made about Chinese immigration at that time:

Mister Chairman! I have nothing against any Chinese. I raised this point precisely because it is relevant right now. You should know that the way things are right now many companies face unfair competition. It would seem that companies spring up on almost every street corner, where a few people are then given jobs. It turns out that when these are Chinese businesses, cheap labour is employed. People who hardly understand the language. They are

employed while established bona fide companies in Suriname have hundreds of employees. Those companies have to, for instance, pay benefits besides salaries and provide all kinds of things for their workers. I’m afraid that if no attention is paid to this, many bona fide established companies will find themselves in serious trouble. I would like to ask that the government look into this. As the people in the street say, that even doghouses, it would seem, are rented by people in order to set up supermarkets. Besides doghouses, the latest news is that our dogs are also under threat. I would also like to raise this issue, we have noticed that many restaurants also serve dog meat.\footnote{Transcripts of acts of the National Assembly, April 17, 2003. Speaker is Djagendre Ramkhelawan of the Millennium Combinatie opposition party.}

The image of Chinese kidnapping pets or cruelly butchering strays proved infinitely fascinating. On the frontpage news of the Times of Suriname on 21 April 2006, there was an item on a Chinese who hunted dogs and sold the meat in plastic containers. An interview with a vet in De Ware Tijd (owned by an established Fuidung’on Hakka family) which was probably intended as a source of objective information, in fact reinforced the abjection of dog meat: it is rather unnatural to eat dogs (the Ultimate Other stereotype), the dogs are slaughtered in an unhygienic and cruel manner (the Contamination stereotype), Chinese eat dog meat as an aphrodisiac (Submissiveness – ‘Chinese men are obsessed by sex’).\footnote{Public Chinese response came rather late. In 2006, Ling Nget Tet (deputy chairman of Kong Ngi Tong Sang, and self-appointed spokesperson for / gatekeeper to the ‘Chinese community’) explained that the earlier migrants were aware of negative Surinamese attitudes towards dog meat, but that more recent migrants did not know because of language barriers. In his opinion Chinese should be mindful of local sensitivities, even though processing and consuming dog meat is not illegal in Suriname. Eddy van Hoost of the Advisory Committee of the Surinamese Animal Welfare Society both criminalized and demonized dog meat consumption: dogs were ‘usually stolen’ and eating dog meat is ‘unethical’. (http://www.korps-politie-suriname.com/nieuws/nieuwsbronnen%20nationaal/archief%20nieuwsbronnen%20nationaal/2006/2006-04-nieuwsbronnen/2006-04-nieuwsbronnen.htm)}

There is no real change in attitudes towards Chinese currently posted by Surinamese on the Internet with regard to content, style, and embedding in Surinamese civic discourse; anti-Chinese posts still outnumber pro-Chinese posts. The fact that anti-Chinese invective is easily found on important Surinamese Internet forums does not mean that there are no positive Surinamese images of
Chinese on the Internet; texts in praise of or sympathetic to the Chinese of Suriname simply do not have the same role as anti-Chinese texts in Surinamese civic discourse. People who are indifferent to or enthusiastic about Chinese have no reason to express their feelings in the same way as those with an axe to grind with the government. However, when Chinese are presented in a positive light in Surinamese postings, the content of the postings can be just as offensive as that of anti-Chinese texts. For example:

krontokoekoe | 4-9-2007 12:10:42
The negroes always have some problem. Instead of work they go and protest. Look at pictures or TV images of a protest march, picket line or party and all you see is negroes. It’s as if there are only negroes in Suriname. If I have to choose between niggers and Chinese I choose Chinese. At least they work hard and are generally not known to be criminals. I REALLY MEAN THIS.
(response to De Ware Tijd 4 September 2007, ‘Chinezen hebben voorrang’ (Chinese get preferential treatment)).

lulubirds2 | 23-4-2008 01:34:05
The Chinese come to Suriname and they work very hard, rain or shine, day and night. But our Surinamese oh no, they are very lazy and just complain with their big mouths. I am convinced that if the government brings in the Chinese to clean the country, especially Paramaribo, then the country will be pretty and clean. Because what most of us do is look down on those hardworking Chinese, throw dirt and garbage everywhere and have a big mouth. BRING ON the Chinese, at least the work gets done.
(response to De Ware Tijd 22 April 2008, ‘Dalian wil 450 Chinezen importeren’ (Dalian wants to import 450 Chinese))

6.6 The Laiap Response: Hyphenating ‘Surinamese-Chinese’

In the years leading up to the 2005 parliamentary elections, ethnic Chinese in Suriname were faced with conflicting messages. On the one hand President Venetiaan of the Creole-dominated NPS coalition partner called Chinese ‘the most integrated group’ in Suriname, because many Suriname have some Chinese ancestry. On the
other hand, Minister Tjong Tjin Joe, the ethnic Chinese Minister of Trade and Industry of the Javanese-dominated Pertjajah Luhur coalition partner, pressed on with Operation Hawk (Operatie Havik) to control prices in the retail sector and threatened shopkeepers who continued to cross the line with severe repurcussions. In the mind of many if not most ethnic Chinese in Suriname, negative messages from the State added to the anti-Chinese sentiments and it tipped the balance toward the impression that Suriname was fundamentally opposed to Chinese. Laiap in particular felt that they had to respond to this.

Anti-Chinese sentiments collided with different (established) Fuidung’on Hakka views of Chineseness to produce the beginnings of new (sub-)ethnic boundaries. Othering New Chinese was not difficult for Fuidung’on Hakka. Besides different regional and linguistic backgrounds, New Chinese had different outlooks. Such attitudes were difficult to judge in this study; informants were not particularly inclined to open up or chance offending me as either one of the ‘Old Chinese’ or a local. But it was clear that their attitudes were far more varied than those of the ‘Old Chinese’. Faster and more structural communication with their homelands along with the ability to travel easier make them seem like expats rather than sojourners, and very much less like ‘Overseas Chinese’. Adding to this, the growing public perception of “large numbers of Chinese flowing into Suriname” combined with Tong’ap and Laiap view of themselves as victims rather than perpetrators to make New Chinese the real outsiders: New Chinese are non-Hakka, not Kejia-speakers, criminal, and transient foreigners instead of loyal Surinamese citizens. But language as a boundary marker was only meaningful to Kejia-speakers, as non-Chinese speaking ethnic Chinese and other Surinamese could hardly distinguish between various Chinese languages. These self-appointed representatives

103 De Ware Tijd, 2 February 2002: ‘Havik wil sluiting winkels voor langere tijd’ (Havik wants to close down shops for longer period).
104 It took a long time for ethnic Chinese respondents to venture beyond socially approved comments about life with anti-Chinese sentiments. Supportive statements from the government were generally taken as compliants given in a specific context, while negative comments were considered to be the ‘true face of the government’.
105 De Ware Tijd, 6 March 2002: ‘Criminaliteit neemt nieuwe vormen aan’ (New forms of crime appearing). Editorial article. Quote: “Large numbers of Chinese from other areas in China than those the first Surinamese Chinese came from are flooding into the country these last years.”
106 Some Kejia-speakers suggested that the most dangerous criminals among the New Chinese in Suriname were Fujianese, but as they were not able to explain what
stressed that the ‘Chinese community’ distinguished between ‘settled’ Chinese, who have been living and working in Suriname for years, and ‘newcomers, transients who were not Kejia-speakers from the Pearl River Delta’. The Tong’ap and Laiap were making sure that the public’s desire to search for outsiders to blame, was deflected away towards the ‘real’ outsiders. The police used the various media to reach the public for assistance in its investigations, and relied almost completely on the interpretations offered by the ethnic Chinese establishment who were obviously embarrassed by the problem and who preferred to see ethnic Chinese in Suriname as victims of crime, perpetuating the image of the hardworking Chinese businessman brutally robbed by non-Chinese.

Despite the general praise for educated, hard working, and successful individuals, ethnic Chinese have never had a particularly positive image in Suriname. Surinamese opinions of Chinese have not been measured recently, though a survey of Creole attitudes towards other ethnic groups in 1963 revealed a relatively low opinion of Chinese. Words referring to Chinese ethnicity in Surinamese Dutch / Sranantongo give some indication of how long that low opinion has been around. Sneisi is the normal Sranantongo word for ‘Chinese’, but a secondary meaning of ‘flea’ still survives. The human flea (Pulex irritans) was said to have appeared in Suriname only after 1858, as if it was spread by Chinese indentured labourers. The polite term to address shopkeepers, omu (‘uncle’) acquired the secondary meaning of ‘Chinese’ – or any man who can be labeled Chinese, through phenotype or culture, but it retains a negative meaning of backward, unassimilated. Most Surinamese are fully aware of the negative nuance of omu as ‘backward Chinaman’. In Surinamese Dutch and Sranantongo street slang omu becomes ‘oom’ (Dutch, ‘uncle’) in a kind of stylistic code-switching. Chinese women in shops are called vrouw (Dutch, ‘woman; madam’). Young Chinese women used to be commonly approached with the rather sexist term mis’ amoi (Sranantongo: misi, young lady, girl. In Sranantongo a moi would mean ‘she is pretty’, but it could also
reflect Kejia: a-moi, younger sister; girl; less than respectful male term of address for young women), but there is no unique word for older Chinese women. Other examples such as ‘A man na Sneisi’ (lit. ‘He is a Chinese’, meaning ‘He will try to outsmart you.’) and ‘No plei Sneisi’ (lit. ‘Don’t act like a Chinese’, meaning ‘Stop trying to fool us’), show that the discourse is negative.

The main difficulty facing Tong’ap and Laiap actors wishing to impose a positive narrative of identity is that Chineseness (the negative images associated with the Chinese label) is rather like a counter balance to Surinamese identity; as the Ultimate Other, Chinese provide the ground for defining Surinamese as central and human. In her analysis of Asian Pacific Americanness, Shimakawa views American Asian identity in relation to and as a product of ‘US Americanness’: “… the seemingly contradictory, yet functionally essential, position of a constituent element / sign of American multiculturalism and radical other / foreigner.” Shimakawa uses Kristeva’s concept of abjection to approach US Asian ethnic performativity: a state as well as a process in which things about

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110 A similar pattern produced terms of address for the other Asian ethnicities in Suriname, all used in ethnic and racial stereotyping. In the case of Javanese: pa'-e (Sranantongo / Surinamese Dutch: ‘older Javanese man, in particular a salesman; term of address for older / rural Javanese man.’ It comes from Surinamese Javanese paké: ‘father; term of address for older male, or for husband; syntactic reference to father or older man.’); ma'-e (Sranantongo / Surinamese Dutch: ‘older Javanese woman; term of address for older / rural Javanese woman’. This comes from Surinamese Javanese maké: ‘mother, the mother of; term of address for older woman; syntactic reference to mother or older woman’). In the case of East Indians: baap (Sranantongo / Surinamese Dutch: ‘older / rural / traditional East Indian man; term of address for such a man.’ From Sarnami Hindi báp: ‘father’) and babun (Sranantongo: ‘red howler monkey; less than respectful term of address for East Indian males and occasionally women’. Approximation of Sarnami Hindi bápi; mai (Sranantongo / Surinamese Dutch: ‘older / rural / traditional East Indian woman; term of address for such a woman, in the past specifically saleswomen’. From Sarnami Hindi mái: ‘mother’). Information from the dictionaries of Surinamese Dutch (Van Donselaar 1989), Surinamese Javanese (Vruggink 2001), and Sarnami (Santhoki & Nienhuis 2004).

111 Examples suggested by Hans Ramsoedh at the Stichting Instituut ter Bevordering van de Surinamistiek (Institute for the Promotion of Suriname Studies Foundation) in the Netherlands. Chinese shopkeepers were not quite the innocently passive victims of abuse as the Fuidung’on Hakka self-image would have it. Bad feelings went both ways. The potent Sranantongo expletive nyan mi pima-tyau (lit.: eat my pima-tyau), closely related to another potent expletive yu m'na pima (lit.: your mother's genitals), is usually explained as ‘originally Chinese’. It is in fact a corruption of a common Kejia expletive: nya mi bin nga diao (lit.: your mother by me fuck), a more emphatic version of diao nya mi, “May your mother be abused!” (“The usual Hakka swear-word”, according to MacIver 1926: 853, under tiâu 砾.)

112 Shimakawa 2004: 151.
oneself that are considered objectionable are jettisoned to produce “perceptual and conceptual borders around the self”, “...the condition / position of that which is deemed loathsome and the process by which the subject / “I” is produced.” Shimakawa reads Asian Pacific Americanness as an effect of ‘national abjection’; the production of national identity through the designation of things deemed un-American.

The prevalent way of thinking about Chineseness in Suriname (the one that determines the positionality of any Chinese presence in Suriname) is based on the defining of Surinamese by national abjection of ‘Chinese’. This appears ambivalent because it is based on the binary set of Chinese stereotypes (see Table 1) - a dominant negative discourse that defines speech about Chinese in terms of contamination and threat, accompanied by its positive twin. But as a performative act (an illocutionary speech act), the use of the word ‘Chinese’ in the media described as well as prescribed Chinese as irregular migrants, associated with organized crime, exploiters, and pandemics. The lack of differentiation in the word meant that all Chinese in Suriname were actually or potentially problematic.

The word Chinese has gathered a huge variety of meanings in Suriname, and negative generalizations of Chinese do not distinguish between these multiple meanings. The noun ‘Chinese’ (Chinees) referred to a ‘person with East Asian features’, ‘Surinamese of Chinese descent’, ‘person of Chinese descent in Suriname’, ‘anybody anywhere who can be called Chinese’, ‘Citizen of the PRC or the Hong Kong SAR’, ‘Chinese shopkeeper’, ‘Chinese shop’, ‘Chinese restaurateur’, and ‘Chinese restaurant’. The adjective ‘Chinese’ (Chinees / Chinese) would refer to the meanings of the noun, and also to ‘traditional’ culture, any region in the PRC, the Hong Kong SAR and Taiwan, and to cheap PRC-made commodities, etc.

Despite the generalization inherent in the word ‘Chinese’, anti-Chinese sentiments could not legitimately be both universal and strong; nothing like “all Chinese are bad” is acceptable in Surinam.

Abjection helps to reconcile the theoretical freedom of situational performative identity with the observed fact that there are limits to the freedom to choose identities; there is a gap between the identity one performs (calling oneself Chinese) and the identity one cannot shake off (being called Chinese). Different identities are not equal when race, gender and class are about power relations, so the question as Shimakawa puts is: does everyone have equal access to agency in choosing positional, multi-situated identities?
name. Because they could be labelled racist, direct public attacks on specific ethnic groups can backfire on the attackers, but patriotism allowed an acceptable distinction to be made between citizens versus foreigners – good, innocent, downtrodden, versus bad, threatening, exploiting, etc. Prejudices therefore needed to be explicitly focussed on Chinese immigrants, i.e. New Chinese, which resulted in modified generalizations distinguishing ‘bad Chinese’ from ‘good Chinese’, ‘our Chinese’, ‘Surinamese Chinese’. So rather paradoxically, anti-Chinese sentiments in Suriname fostered the articulation of sub-ethnic labels, a positive local label versus a negative foreign one.

Anti-outsider prejudices among Fuidung’on Hakkas transplanted from the qiaoxiang inherently motivated them to produce a similar set of positive-negative sub-ethnic labels, despite the general anti-Chinese sentiments of non-Chinese. Relations between the established Fuidung’on Hakkas and the New Chinese were bad almost from the start. Tong’ap – the original ‘Chinese shopkeepers’ – found themselves facing competition from the New Chinese maoyi gongsi. They also found their interpretation of Chinese identity in Suriname challenged by non-Hakkas. The established Fuidung’on Hakkas framed the new situation in terms of established-versus-outsider relationships which was familiar to them and originally grounded on shared Chinese language and ancestral homeland. Kejia speakers in Suriname call members of the Chinese out-group, i.e. (Han) Chinese people from outside one’s ancestral homeland, laoteu (no clear Chinese orthography; possibly a nominalization of a southern Chinese suffix meaning ‘man; fellow’: “those hicks”). A more neutral PTH equivalent of this pejorative term is waixiang, “(someone from) outside the county”.

Hakka identity emerged from a conflict between established and outsiders in the Pearl River Delta – remember that ‘Hakka’ basically means ‘outsider’. Kejia language had become a potent marker of Hakka identity during the Punti-Hakka conflicts of the nineteenth century, but in late twentieth century Suriname, Fuidung’on migrants (i.e. Tong’ap) were strongly associated with Hong Kong and Cantonese rather than the Hakka qiaoxiang and Kejia language. Because New Chinese used PTH as a lingua franca, the Tong’ap initially described them as ‘Northeners’, which is nominally accurate as practically any other region in the PRC (except for Hainan Province) lies to the north of the Fuidung’on qiaoxiang. Eventually the qiaoxiang of the major immigrant cohort

(the Wenzhounese, who self-identified as Zhejiangese) was generalized to indicate all New Chinese. Kejia-speakers now called them *zetgongzai*, a stigmatizing term meaning ‘those from Zhejiang Province’. The Fuidung’on stereotype of the untrustworthy *laoteu*, now updated to *zetgongzai*, nicely matched the reports of irregular migration and allegations of organized crime among the New Chinese in the local and international press.

In their study of the English village of Winston Parva, Elias and Scotson described how a new group finds itself ostracized by an existing group, exclusively on the grounds of their newness. The elite of the established group dominates the positioning of the newcomers as outsiders, shifting all negative images that could conceivably apply to both groups towards the outsiders. Elias noted that the village elite used gossip and avoidance of social contact to position the outsiders as inferior to their respectable selves. Something very similar happens in Suriname when established Fuidung-on Hakkas speak about New Chinese. It was very difficult to elicit anti-outsider gossip aimed at New Chinese from Tong’ap informants, but Laiap participants were far less circumspect. Note how the level of prejudice increases as one moves away from the Tong’ap side on the Laiap continuum.

So they’re not Hakkas? Those really are strange people. They’re a bit arrogant. I’m not acquainted with them, but I was there with my daughter not long ago, and I asked something in Kejia and they answered in Sranantongo. Rather strange.

(Kejia and Cantonese speaking Laiap informant in her sixties, fully accepted by Tong’ap huiguan elite. Telling me of her experiences in a supermarket run by Hainanese)

You know, I have shop premises to let. But I’d rather rent it to a Surinamese than rent it to a Zetgongzai. Get involved with one of those, and you can forget about being paid. Not to be trusted.

(Kejia speaking Laiap informant in her fifties. Refuses to let shop premises to New Migrants)

Those Chinese from China are not civilised like we are.

(Laiap woman in her sixties)

I understand that the police here say they keep finding bodies of murdered Chinese, and then they have to go and find the killer.

Description: Chinese, nose flat, eyes slanted, hair straight, greasy and wispy, age about 25 years, build short, slim, last seen

wearing rubber slippers. I sat waiting at the doctor’s next to a bunch of the scabbiest Chinese you ever did see here. They were actually covered in mange. The woman was there for an abortion – I was there on abortion day for my admission papers – and the man didn’t speak a word to her, if she whimpered anything he would snap at her, he was way too busy digging his filthy toenails and spreading the dirt everywhere, especially onto my nicely ironed dress, so after five toenails I roared at him to take his nasty toes outside. He understood every word! He gave me this disgusted look, as if to say: you whore, come for an abortion too, have you? When he had to pay he pulled out this humongous wad of cash. My jaw joined the nurse’s jaw on the floor, I tell you. A scabby little thing like that, where the heck do they get that money from? That kind of thing should be really interesting to investigate.

(Mixed Chinese woman in her thirties, e-mail to me, 25 September 2003)

Elias’ paradigm seems to be applicable to the Chinese of Suriname, but closer scrutiny reveals one particular problem: the contrast between the established (the established Fuidung’on Hakkas – Tong’ap as well as Laiap) and the outsiders (the New Chinese) appears to be only based on the length of residence to non-Chinese, who are less atuned to the extremes of Chinese lin-guistic (and to a lesser extent cultural) variety. As described earlier, the linguistic differences between the established Fuidung’on Hakkas and the New Chinese are so considerable that the varieties of Chinese they speak might be called distinct languages. Chain migration from the Fuidung’on qiaoxiang meant that there were always some non-integrated, non-assimilated, recent ethnic Chinese immigrants around, who had a lower status for all kinds of reasons: they were poorer, rural, unable to speak anything besides Kejia, not well-connected, or something else.

As immigrants, all Tong’ap individuals had been sinkeh to some other laokeh, newcomer outsiders to earlier cohorts of Fuidung’on Hakkas. But even there linguistic and cultural differences existed; Fuidung’on laokeh almost exclusively spoke Kejia and had grown up in the qiaoxiang during the early years of the PRC. Especially after the 1960s, Fuidung’on sinkeh were acculturated to Hong Kong and used Cantonese as a prestige language, or they entered Suriname more or less directly from the qiaoxiang. They were bilingual in PTH as well as Kejia. Fuidung’on Hakka sinkeh were positioned as outsiders by the establishment of Fuidung’on Hakka laokeh through a system of gossip and avoidance of social
contact. For example, Hong Kong immigrants were at best arrogant and untrustworthy and at the other extreme rumoured to be linked to organized crime. Such gossip and character assassinations were limited to the Fuidung’on Hakka immigrants, and only slowly percolated out to Laiap and non-Chinese.

Motivations behind Tong’ap and Laiap reactions to New Chinese were also different. Tong’ap distanced themselves from New Chinese mainly out of fear of the consequences of increasing anti-Chinese sentiments, while Laiap were strongly defending their higher status within Surinamese society. Tong’ap huiguan elite had always used Chinese ethnic identity strategically in their contacts with the Surinamese public, including Laiap, in their use of the Dutch word ‘Chinees’ (Chinese), if it was expedient to do so. The Tong’ap view of Chinese identity in Suriname was constructed to define ethnic borders: Chinese identity was patriarchal and thus excluded women; it was primordial and thus excluded any hybridization; normative huqiao cultural values such as reverence for written Chinese defined membership, and Hong Kong modernity served to provide status among Tong’ap. New Chinese presented the Tong’ap elite with a dilemma. New Chinese may have been unwelcome competitors, but Tong’ap would never deny that they were Chinese, in the sense that these were PRC citizens and/or ethnic Han-Chinese. Chinese culture was something the Tong’ap tended to downplay when it came to New Chinese, either because it was taken for granted that immigrants from China should be full representatives of Chinese culture, or perhaps because the Chinese culture and what the New Migrants represented was rather different from the traditional Fuidung’on Hakka folklore and Hong Kong modernity of the Tong’ap.

Though Laiap could also be included in the newly generalized negative meaning of ‘Chinese’ in the media, they generally shared non-Chinese and Tong’ap annoyance about New Chinese. They were equally fluent in the stereotypes and prejudices as non-Chinese, and just as blind to what exactly New Chinese were. But Laiap are different in their understanding of the exact distinction between Laiap and New Chinese. To non-Chinese the central difference between Chinese immigrants and Surinamese is like the distinction between foreigners and citizens, while to Chinese migrants the only relevant distinction among ethnic Chinese is between the established and the new (i.e. laokeh and sinkeh). To Laiap the central distinction between themselves as established, integrated and assimilated ethnic Chinese and the New Chinese was more about class. The difference between Laiap and Tong’ap
on the one hand and New Chinese on the other was basically the same - the issue of assimilation / hybridization and the Laiap lack of Chinese culture. In any case, Laiap were expected to choose between self-identifying as Chinese, or the opposite and follow their Creole reference group, invoke anti-ethnic patriotic discourse, actively voice anti-Chinese prejudices, or otherwise disassociate themselves from Chinese ethnicity or migration. In that way the basic Laiap view of Chinese identity is reactive: ‘we are not them’ or ‘we are not Chinese’. But although Laiap could also freely choose to be Chinese, those individuals harbouring any realistic hopes of political participation had little choice but to present themselves as Chinese in Surinamese apanjaht politics.

What happened next was that Laiap agents repositioned themselves in the Surinamese multicultural landscape by rearticulating their Chineseness to exclude New Chinese; Chinese stereotypes were manipulated to articulate Chinese identity. This Laiap rearticulation of Chineseness contained the patriotically correct distinction between ‘good Chinese’ and ‘bad Chinese’ arising from Surinamese civic discourse, the native Fuidung’on Hakka distinction between in-group Hakkas and out-group laoteu, and the dualistic set of negative and positive Chinese stereotypes (see Appendix 1, Table 7). All three elements create channels of agency, as ‘good Chinese’ achieve the power to define legitimacy through exclusion. Though negative stereotypes are not easily discredited, the missing positive messages in the matrix of Chinese stereotypes may be filled in to balance out the negative image: e.g. “Chinese are foreigners and temporary residents” is balanced by “Chinese are loyal citizens and successful and essential contributors to Suriname.” Excluding New Chinese as laoteu / zetgongzai reaffirms Fuidung’on Hakka unity in public settings as well as out of sight of non-Chinese; Laiap and Tong’ap are both Hakka by virtue of common ancestry in the Fuidung’on qiaoxiang. Finally, excluding New Chinese is a patriotic act, making Surinamese-Chinese loyal Surinamese citizens. Unhyphenated, the term in practice meant little more than ‘the Chinese of Suriname’. The hyphen now specifically implied that legitimate Chineseness was located in Suriname.116

Laiap agents had defined the Surinamese-Chinese label, but it is important to stress that no coherent Surinamese-Chinese

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116 Hyphenation here is metaphorical, as the term ‘Surinamese-Chinese’ does not actually contain a hyphen in Dutch. Dutch Surinaamse Chineseen can mean both ‘the Chinese of Suriname’ as a general term and ‘Surinamese-Chinese’ as a special group.
category arose, and the *Surinaamse Chinezen* / Surinamese-Chinese label could apply to any type of Fuidung’on heritage in Suriname – Laiap, Tong’ap and mixed Chinese. The Tong’ap were quiet about this strategy, but the New Chinese were basically voiceless. Language barriers are the most obvious reason for this. Newcomers speak little English, no Dutch, and it takes a few years to learn enough Sranantongo to effectively communicate with the state and clients. Communication with the established Fuidung’on Hakkas was also problematic; new-comers speak PTH, but though many established Fuidung’on Hakkas in Suriname speak Kejia and Cantonese, most (especially the older generation) are not fluent in Mandarin.

Texts voicing opinions of New Chinese were exceedingly rare in the Surinamese Chinese-language media up to 2004. Though New Migrants were acutely aware of the distinction between good ‘Surinamese Chinese’ and bad ‘New Chinese’, they were generally quiet about general anti-Chinese sentiments in Suriname. Language barriers and a weak power base made it difficult for New Chinese to retaliate against gossip among the established Fuidung’on Hakkas. New Chinese reactions ranged from studied indifference to resentment. A man from Liaoning in his forties who worked in a restaurant said “they look down on us”. Some think that this is a result of economic competition; the New Chinese are competing with established Fuidung’on Hakkas in an increasingly tight Surinamese market, but appear to be more innovative and successful than Tong’ap and Laiap in the short term. An English-speaking university graduate from Shandong in her late twenties who is married to a Laiap man put it like this:

They [Tong’ap and Laiap] are soft. They don’t know what hard work is anymore. They have no idea what you have to go through in China to achieve anything.

Tong’ap and New Chinese might not have directly challenged the articulation of ‘Surinamese Chinese’, but in many ways they also ignored it. The PRC embassy, which could be expected to speak up in defence of New Migrants (*xin yimin*) has remained silent about anti-Chinese sentiments in Suriname. It is important to note that no unambiguous equivalent of the term under discussion has ever developed in spoken or written Chinese in Suriname. The best translation in written Chinese is *sulinan huaren*, but the adjective *sulinan* (‘Suriname’ / ‘Surinamse’) makes the term hazy. Local translations favour ‘Chinese in Suriname’ (i.e. people in
Suriname who can be identified as Chinese) and / or ‘the ethnic Chinese of Suriname’ (i.e. Surinamese people of Chinese descent), but never non-inclusive ‘Surinamese-Chinese’. All things Laiap stayed encapsulated within the euphemistic term huayi ‘people of Chinese descent’. As will become clear in the following chapters, a distinctly local ‘hyphenated’ identity was at best marginal but virtually invisible within a Chinese-language context.

The ‘Old Chinese’ also fear that the stereotype of New Chinese Migrants (called cendraekook in Khmer, ‘mainland Chinese’) as only after easy money and flouting public morals damages Chinese-Khmer relations. As in Suriname, the ‘Old Chinese’ publicly distance themselves from New Chinese Migrants, labelling them ‘not proper Chinese’. The PRC is trying to rebuild its relations with the Chinese of Cambodia and to repair its image by representing the PRC as a strong, unified superpower homeland, while burying the past record of the PRC in Cambodia, fostering cultural revival, trying to reconnect with the ‘Old Chinese’ by funding Chinese associations, and by actively promoting PTH among the ‘Old Chinese’. Edwards goes so far as to claim that the PRC seems to be on a mission to modernise Cambodia through resinicization of its ethnic Chinese population.

Up to the early 1990s, ‘Surinamese Chinese’ identity was reactive, a direct response to anti-Chinese sentiments. Patterns changed after that as the variety of Chinese languages, economic strategies, and migration strategies increased; actors positioning themselves as legitimate Chinese in the Surinamese multicultural landscape could no longer refer to simple established-outsider distinctions between Laiap / laokeh and Tong’ap / sinkeh. However, reconstruction of Chineseness in Suriname was more than a simple redefinition of ‘Chinese of Suriname’ as the only legitimate kind of

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117 For example, the bilingual programme of the variety show in De Witte Lotus sports club on the Sunday evening, 19 October 2003, the day before the commemoration of 150 Years of Chinese Settlement, was printed in Chinese with Dutch translations on a sheet of A4 paper. The Chinese title was 蘇理南華人定居 150 周年聯歡晚會節目表 (sulinan huaren dingju 150 zhounian lianhuan wanhui jiemu biao, literally translated: Suriname Chinese settlement 150th anniversary variety show programme list). The Dutch title under it was: De Witte Lotus 150 jaar vestiging Chinezen in Suriname (‘De Witte Lotus, 150 years of Chinese settling in Suriname’). Written Chinese lacks an exact equivalent of ‘Surinamese-Chinese’, as the language contains no such thing as the broad term ‘Chinese’.

118 Edwards 2002: 274.

119 Ibid.

120 Edwards 2002: 283.
Chineseness in Suriname. In the narratives which are formed around anti-Chinese sentiments, Chineseness implied membership of a closed community, the unwillingness or inability to integrate, the eternal orientalist Other; Surinamese-Chinese might be better than New Chinese, but this does not mean that they are suddenly any less Sneisi. In other words, it was not enough to deflect anti-Chinese sentiments away from the established Fuidung'on Hakkas; the term ‘Surinamese-Chinese’ needed performative content.

Current anti-Chinese sentiments in Suriname could be pinned down as a reaction to Chinese globalization, in the form of a strong influx of cheap PRC-made commodities, increased migration from the PRC, and the growing influence of PRC geopolitics. The specific response of Laiap elites to New Chinese migration (i.e. the rearticulation of ‘Surinamese-Chinese’) resembles the earlier responses of Surinamese and Jamaican colonial elites to commercial competition from the Fuidung'on Hakka ethnic ownership economies in the two countries. New Chinese entrepreneurial chain migration is strongly associated with Baihuo Business, and so it should come as no surprise that Laiap elites (as members of the modern Surinamese middle classes and business elite) respond by marginalizing New Chinese as dangerous competitors. However, a more immediate concern obviously is the ‘Old Chinese’ desire to distance themselves from forms of ascribed Chineseness that threaten the harmony of their position in Suriname.

Anti-Chinese sentiments are very relevant with regard to political participation of Chinese. Any ethnic Chinese elite in Suriname with ambitions of political power would have to balance unifying as many ethnic Chinese as possible into a viable constituency while distancing itself from the image of Chinese as migrants and outsiders. With the arrival of New Chinese, relatively ‘mild’ food contamination stereotypes have re-inflated into Yellow Peril imagery. The readiness to identify a New Chinese migrant group as a threat and position it as such, is linked to well-established attitudes towards outsiders / newcomers among Surinamese and Chinese. Negative Surinamese attitudes toward Chinese migrants reflect anomie in the face of a weak state, and link anti-immigrant sentiments with disillusionment about the socio-economic and political situation. When stories involving illegal Chinese migration attracted the attention of the US State Department (e.g. the Trafficking in People Reports), the Surinamese state responded by tightening immigration procedures, aimed at Chinese nationals, as described in Paragraph 6.2.1 above.
Chinese migrants freshly arriving in Suriname are not ‘Chinese’ yet, but they become so in light of Surinamese expectations of what being Chinese means, and in terms of pragmatic choices in securing a livelihood. Fluid self-identification suits most Chinese entrepreneurial households just fine; as entrepreneurial chain migrants, New as well as ‘Old Chinese’ present themselves to the general public as citizens, stakeholders in and contributors to Surinamese society, and co-victims with other Surinamese of government policies, etc. To a local Chinese public, they represent themselves as hardworking members of Surinamese society and the state, and as victims of crime, taxes and racial discrimination. However, individual ethnic Chinese actors generally balk at the idea of permanent association with a fixed ethnic group in the spotlight of current local and global political and economic developments. New Chinese migrants, for instance, are aware that the idea of the PRC as a burgeoning superpower matches and reinforces the Yellow Peril image, the main stereotype underlying increasing anti-Chinese sentiments in Suriname. Chinese migrants appreciate that they may be considered marginal within Surinamese society and as an ethnic minority analogous to minority nationalities (shaoshu minzu) in PRC multiculturalism.

For Chinese migrants in Suriname, ‘Chineseness’ – in particular local interpretations of what that means – is therefore an important factor that limits the choices of Chinese migrants when positioning themselves in Surinamese society. Anti-Chinese sentiments cannot be separated from anti-establishment protest; any social or political issue related to the idea of Chinese identity or China becomes symbolic of perceived government failure, either consciously in naïve monarchic resistance or unconsciously in an anti-government conspiracy theory. This is embedded in a framework of stereotypes (both negative and positive) about ethnic Chinese in Suriname. These stereotypes also inform the specific anti-New Chinese stereotypes that provide the performative content for ‘Surinamese-Chinese’ identity. In this way, anti-Chinese sentiments in Suriname (generally anti-Chinese or specifically anti-Chinese immigrant) reveal the limits to situational and performative Chinese identity. In the narratives which are constructed around Surinamese anti-Chinese sentiment, Chineseness implies membership of a closed community, the unwillingness or inability to integrate, the eternal orientalist Other. Surinamese-Chinese might be better than New Chinese, but this does not mean that they are suddenly any less ‘Chinese’.
The Tong'ap response to the negative image of Chinese in Suriname had been to retreat from public view as much as the marketing requirements of their economic niche would allow, and this attitude was reinforced by concrete experiences of anti-Chinese violence in the Malaysian part of their Asian migration circuit. The Laiap power brokers responded by shifting negative imagery onto New Chinese as outsiders, and rearticulated the idea of ‘Surinamese-Chinese’ as the only legitimate Chinese in Suriname. Laiap agents had always contested Chineseness and now rearticulated a hyphenated ‘Surinamese-Chinese’ identity that distinguished ‘true and legitimate Chinese in Suriname’ from ‘alien and illegitimate’ New Chinese – basically the contention between the smugness of being Chinese and the urgent wish to be recognized as Chinese. Were Laiap speaking as if they were the only true ‘Surinamese-Chinese’ or for the Chinese of Suriname – in other words, did ‘Surinamese Chinese’ attach any meaning to Tong’ap, and what exactly had the term come to mean to non-Chinese? Intentionally or not, Laiap adopted the Fuidung‘on strategy of marginalizing Chinese outsiders through gossip in their reaction to heightened anti-Chinese sentiments. In so doing Laiap appeared to be part of the Chinese establishment in Elias’ sense, but remained an out-group vis à vis the older Fuidung‘on Hakka immigrants. The reinvented label of ‘Surinamese-Chinese’ would now be used by the ‘Old Chinese’ elite – Laiap and Tong’ap – to transcend the negative image of Chineseness to articulate ‘apanjaht Chineseness’ in the narrative of Surinamese multicultural belonging. 121

121 It is worth pointing out that ‘Old Chinese’ have limited agency with regard to public articulation of Chinese identity. They do not dominate the local media quite like the fair-skinned colonial elites of the past. The Chinese TV station SCTS in Paramaribo (Stichting Kong Ngie Tong Sang TV) which was set up in February 2008, was linked to New Chinese by the general public, if only because it was ‘new’ and ‘Chinese’. It was in fact set up by Fuidung‘on Hakkas with support from various Chinese segments and the PRC embassy. But the unavoidable universal Chineseness presented in the programmes it receives from the PRC combine with the necessity to bridge Chinese language barriers to make the broadcaster appear fundamentally non-local. In this example Fuidung‘on Hakkas lose their grip on any local image they might wish to project and lose control over what is New Chinese and what is Surinamese-Chinese.